

Westleton Parish Council response to the National Grid's Sea Link consultation July 2024

The July 2024 proposed changes to the Sea Link project do not change Westleton Parish Council's (WPC) view on the project as presented in the WPC response to the Statutory Consultation in December 2023 (see Appendix). In summary, WPC opposes the project:

- Because of the detrimental economic, social and environmental effects that it will cause locally; and:
- Because a better (and we understand cheaper), off-shore solution is possible. All the cable projects proposed to landfall in Suffolk should instead landfall on brownfield sites nearer the point of the energy use. This would negate the need for the Sea Link project.

We also reiterate that the Sea Link project must be viewed together with the other energy projects planned for the area to appreciate the full scale of economic, social and environmental damage that the projects together will cause.

Additionally:

- We note that National Grid is now proposing to allow construction on Sundays and Bank Holidays from 7am to 5pm. The lives of the local communities are already going to be severely disturbed and disrupted by the years of construction of this and the other energy projects. To try to take away the one day per week of respite they rightly expect is completely unacceptable.
- We note news that Scottish Power Renewables may not now build its planned substation at Friston. In this scenario, the National Grid's rationale to locate its projects along this section of the Suffolk Coast is invalidated as a core reason to base the projects here was the ability to co-locate with the Scottish Power Renewables infrastructure.

August 2024

Appendix

Westleton Parish Council response to the National Grid's Sealink statutory consultation

Westleton Parish Council is opposed to the Sealink plan as presented by the National Grid. Central to this view is that we believe that the project cannot be looked at in isolation. It is one of a number of energy infrastructure projects which are all due to be implemented at the same time in East Suffolk and so our response reflects this fact.

Each of the projects - Sizewell C, the Scottish Power Friston Substation, the National Grid's Sealink, Lionlink and Nautilus proposals - is inappropriate for their location. Cumulatively, their impacts will irreparably damage the Suffolk Heritage Coast, its communities and its economy. Together they will require years of construction work: digging up the countryside; causing road congestion and road

safety issues; causing traffic air and noise pollution; and causing air, noise and light pollution at the sites themselves. Each will result in buildings completely out of proportion and inappropriate to their rural settings; and each will blight the lives of residents. They will cause the Suffolk Heritage Coastal area to become an industrial zone at the expense of the wildlife, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and an Area of Natural Beauty, at the expense of the lives of the residents, at the expense of the tourist industry which is central to the local economy and resulting in the loss of valuable agricultural land.

Yet the damage which Sealink and the other cabling and associated infrastructure projects will cause can be avoided. As we have noted in responses to previous consultations, expert third parties have shown that the cabling could and should be laid along a corridor under the North Sea, could and should meet at a converter station on a platform sited on the corridor, and could and should make landfall much closer to the electricity demand in the Southeast and London. Moreover, close to this demand is the Bradwell brownfield site which is ideal for the needed infrastructure. This approach would minimise the overall infrastructure as it would require only one offshore converter station, whilst avoiding the need for the multiple landfall channels, the onshore burial of the Sealink, Lionlink, Nautilus and Scottish Power cables and avoiding the need for the substation and converter stations. The economies of scale and the lack of on-shore disruption means that this option is likely to also be the cheaper option. Westleton Parish Council does not understand why this option is not being considered as it surely would be the logical design and business solution which would also address the concerns of the Suffolk Heritage Coast communities.

To sum up, Westleton Parish Council understands the need for the *Great Grid Upgrade*, but believes that the proposed implementation programme is ill-conceived. Crucially, the proposed plans for each of the projects should not be looked at in isolation as their cumulative impact will be environmentally, socially and economically disastrous for the Suffolk Heritage Coast. The construction work will cut through protected environmental areas and damage wildlife, the buildings will blot the landscape, the quality of life of the residents will suffer, the local economy will suffer as tourists will avoid the area and the projects themselves will not generate local jobs. Conversely, taking all the cable projects off-shore and making landfall at a brownfield site closer to the demand not only avoids all of these impacts, but surely also makes good business sense.

Westleton Parish Council therefore urges that National Grid re-think its approach, cooperate with the other energy interests, and develop a programme of works which better meets its needs whilst avoiding the damage that the current proposal presents to the Suffolk coast, its communities and its economy.

December 2023