

Email Submission to National Grid Sea Link Consultation

For Receipt by January 12th 2025

by email to contact@sealink.nationalgrid.com

cc:

Thanet East MP polly.billington.mp@parliament.uk

Sea Link project manager Adrian.Pierssene@nationalgrid.com

Dear Sirs

Sea Link Project, Pegwell Bay Landfall

We have been made aware that a further consultation process is underway with a restricted set of stakeholders, following modifications to the original Sea Link proposal.

Stakeholders have been too narrowly defined for the new consultation. Everyone in Thanet and around the Marsh and Pegwell Bay has a stake in this project proposal. Stakeholders and members of the public who responded to the original consultation have not been informed about this new consultation.

However, in the absence of a formal request for comments on the proposal, please find below our reasons as to why the proposed modifications to the Sea Link proposal do not make the project acceptable and alternative locations for landfall should be reassessed.

Please note that the Society is committed to addressing climate change and the importance of green energy is not disputed. What is disputed is the choice of a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) for the cable landfall and the choice of a rare RAMSAR-protected wetland for the converter station and ancillary equipment. The environment cannot be saved by destroying the environment, and cost should not be the major determinant of the project's planning process.

Regarding the proposed location, the following points are pertinent:

Damage to Wildlife and Habitat

- There will be great destruction of unique and irreplaceable habitats and wildlife at Pegwell Bay and Minster marshes affecting significant populations of 27 red listed bird species, 39 amber listed birds, and 74 other species
- Endangered bee and lizard orchids are present
- The Minster Stream and Stour are home to critically endangered European Eels
- Beavers are building habitats along the River Stour and the streams
- The area is part of the UK's avian migration 'super highway'
- Increased pylon heights and adding new pylons creates a deadly net for migrating birds
- There is considerable loss of important Stewardship Scheme agricultural land reducing our food security

Neglect of Legal Land Protections

- Legal land protections are being ignored. Minster Marshes is a RAMSAR protected wetland, Pegwell Bay is a National Nature Reserve (NNR), it an important Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- Functionally linked land between Pegwell Bay, Hacklinge Marshes and Stodmarsh along the rivers will be removed
- The area is under consideration for a UNESCO World Heritage site

Climate Change issues

- The marshes are important for flood mitigation and are a carbon sink
- The area is predicted to be at risk from rising sea levels and is unsuitable for construction – which will itself also increase flood risk.

Unsuitability of the new mitigation area

A new mitigation area is proposed. We feel that it is unsuitable for the following reasons:

- The newly proposed mitigation area does not make up for the loss of the marsh and damage to the bay
- It is 3 miles from Pegwell Bay, outside the flight range of the Golden Plover which rely heavily on Minster Marshes at high tide
- It does not represent the claimed 10% Biodiversity Net Gain as the area is already useful for wildlife and so cannot be assessed as adding 10% biodiversity.
- The site is across the road from 112 newly consented houses at Discovery Park which will cause light pollution and bring domestic cats which are the bane of wild birds
- The location is currently an area with high levels of light pollution from Thanet Waste, Stevens & Carlotti, Discovery Park and Kent Renewable Energy plant and is next to an important arterial road which causes pollution and noise
- The site appears to need a new access road through an existing area of scrub and trees destroying more existing habitat

All of the above indicate that the proposed landfall of the Sea Link cable is completely inappropriate and other more suitable and less damaging sites should be considered. It is apparent that the Pegwell/Minster Marshes site is chosen purely on cost grounds without considering the environmental value.

We also consider that the cost is not fully accounted for, even excluding the environmental cost, as the additional work for rafting and piling to build on the marshland has not been included.

We urge National Grid to look again at this proposal and consider all aspects, beyond just profit, when selecting a suitable landfall.

Dr Philip Shotton
Lead on Environment and Climate Change
The Ramsgate Society