

Energy Projects Report - 14 April 2025

Introduction:

Whereas the last report was sparse on information, this is not mirrored in March! Lion-Link held a community 'drop-in' on 14 March 2025 in the Market Hall, Saxmundham plus webinar sessions for parish councils and the general public on 17 and 19 March respectively. The Fromus Energy Project Team provided an opportunity to discuss energy projects. The bi-annual Sizewell C Community Forum on 27 March was well attended and delivered some lively dialogue, but was somewhat overshadowed by the Planning Inspectorate's (PINs) announcement that National Grid Electricity Transmission had submitted their Sea-Link Development Consent Order for acceptance.

Sea-Link:

PINs have until 24 April 2025 to confirm if they will accept the Sea-Link application for approval. Thereafter, councils, residents and other bodies have 28 days to register to become an Interested Party (IP) and submit their proposals (the Relevant Representations, RRs) for examination. All involved are working extremely hard to get the responses ready for review by the Town Council prior to submission to PINs. Moreover, the Town Council hopes to run drop-in sessions to help residents register and submit their RRs. Concurrently with dealing with the Sea-Link DCO, Lion-Link will likely submit their statutory consultation in late summer.

Lion-Link:

Councillor Tim Lock and I attended the National Grid Ventures, (NGV) Lion-Link drop in session at the Market Hall on 14 March 2025 and had a long discussion with the Project Manager, Phil (Spain). Whilst objecting to the project, it is vital to keep lines of communication, friendly and open. The Lion-Link exhibition was rather paltry with few visuals. Primarily the event was held to confirm that Walberswick was the preferred landfall site. The proposed project connects the Netherlands via a Dutch windfarm with an inter-connector in the North Sea before landfall at Walberswick with cables to a new converter site on the east side of Saxmundham. Whilst bringing Dutch wind generated energy to Britain, it also transmits carbon fuel generated electricity from Europe.

Sharon Smith, Town Clerk and I also attended the webinar on 17 March 2025. Disappointingly the presenters concentrated on Walberswick landfall site. I specifically asked about traffic routes and requested that vehicles should not enter Saxmundham. The presenter said that she could not guarantee this. Obviously this will be a significant issue for the Fromus Project Energy Team during the statutory consultation.

Fromus Energy Projects Team:

The group discussed 'Why not Saxmundham' for the Sea Link converter with the responses being the starting point for the forthcoming Written Representation, (WR). It was good to learn that SEAS will share their expert's reports for utilisation in the WR. SEAS's traffic report is very interesting and highlights the necessity of insisting that NGET provide traffic data for the peak flow month of August. Undoubtedly some parts of the A12 and A1094 will be under great stress from the cumulative impacts of multiple Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, (NSIPs). This issue is not lost on Sizewell C.

Sizewell C Community Forum:

Sizewell C advised that during a meeting facilitated by OFGEM, they met all NSIP developers a fortnight earlier (seemingly the start of March) to discuss cumulative impacts. 'All' being, Scottish Power Renewables (SPR) – EA1N, EA2 and the Friston Substation, NGET Sea Link, NGV Lion Link. One questions why it has taken so long for all of them to sit around a table and discuss the implications of cumulative impacts of their projects on such a small geographical area! Apparently discussions included collaboration; the possibility of utilising offsite freight management, park and ride facilities and possibly accommodation.

Accommodation was a key question during the Forum with contractors living in Aldeburgh holiday lets and also the increasing number of Leiston properties being used as serviced houses for contractors. Increased costs of rental properties in Leiston were the subject of a BBC Look East report screened on 31 March 2025. The paucity of rental properties will affect Saxmundham too, especially should Sea Link proceed. This plays into rural poverty, with low wages in comparison to property prices. This is just one issue that will be raised in Saxmundham's WR to NGET.

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