

Saxmundham Town Council

Committee Meeting	Town Council
Meeting Date	16 June 2025
Item Number	4a
Report Title	Sea Link – Next Steps
Report Author	Sharon Smith

Next Steps in the Sea Link NSIP Process

1. Pre-Examination (current stage – completed 23 June 2025):

- Interested Parties (IPs) registered and submitted Relevant Representations.
- The Planning Inspectorate (PINS) appointed a panel of Examining Inspectors.
- PINS will publish an Initial Assessment of Principal Issues and a draft Examination Timetable.

2. Preliminary Meeting (expected July 2025):

- PINS holds a meeting (usually 1 day) to discuss and confirm the examination process and timetable.
- Only procedural matters are covered.
- The Town Council may attend and contribute on how the Examination should be managed.

3. Examination Stage (up to 6 months from Preliminary Meeting):

- Begins the day after the Preliminary Meeting closes.
- Involves:
 - Written Representations and responses to Examining Authority questions.
 - Hearings (Issue-specific, Compulsory Acquisition, and Open Floor hearings).
 - Site Inspections (accompanied and unaccompanied).

4. Recommendation and Decision (within 6–12 months of Examination start):

- Examining Authority has 3 months to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State (SoS).
- Secretary of State then has a further 3 months to issue a final decision.
- Therefore, a decision on Sea Link is likely by September 2026.

Empowering Nature

Sharing our vision for a greener future for the Fromus communities



Our Town, Our choice

National Grid's plans for converter stations outside Saxmundham will permanently alter our town and the neighbouring communities of Kelsale, Carlton, Benhall and Sternfield. No mitigation can fully offset the ecological damage to this precious and ancient landscape. Productive, arable land will be lost, soil composition altered, and irreplaceable habitats destroyed.

Yet, we believe if we can set aside our differences and come together, these projects could also become a catalyst for positive change – both for our people and for the many species that rely on this beautiful natural environment.

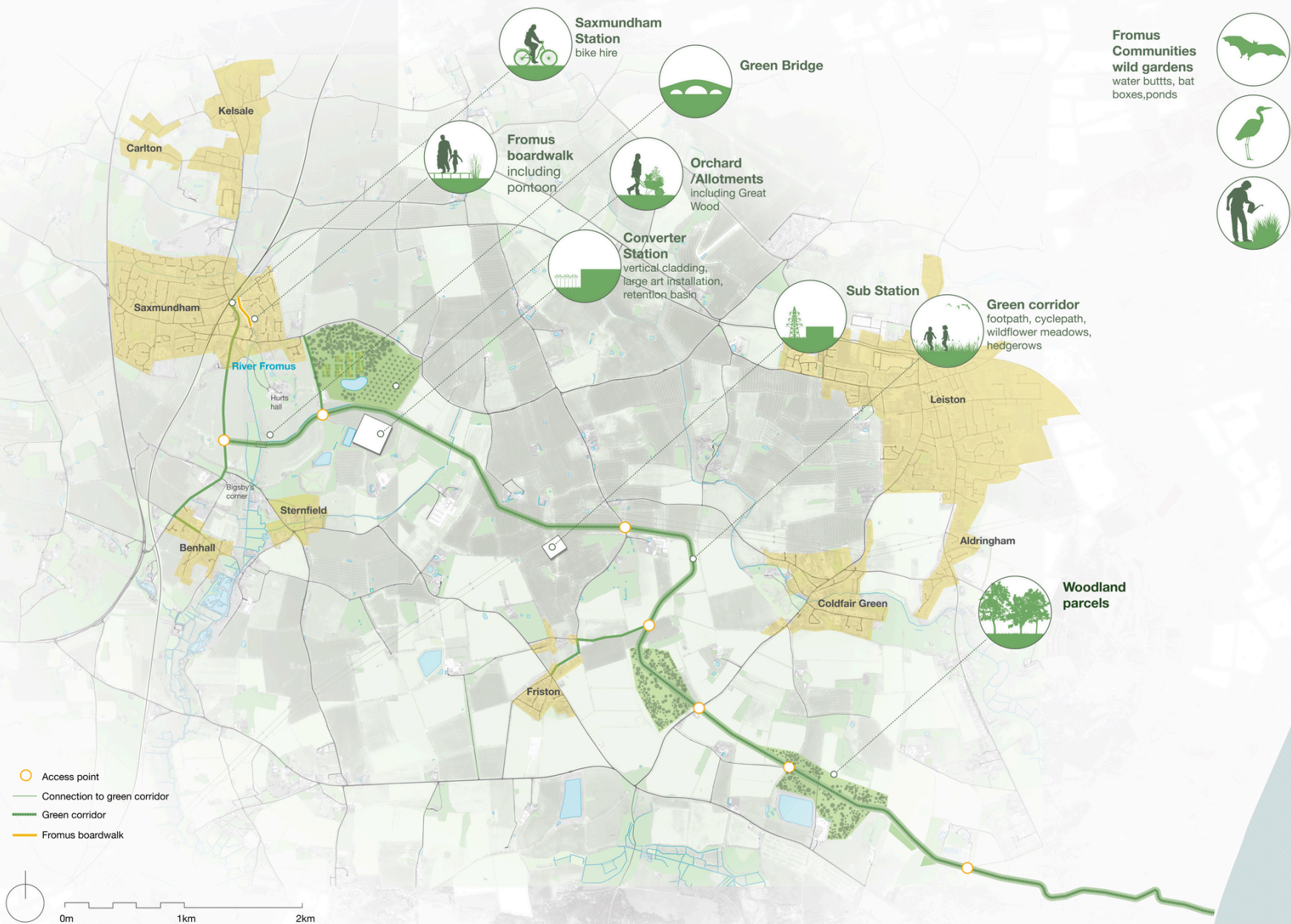
This is our proposal to the National Grid companies: we need a future landscape which will allow all of us to thrive. And this is our invitation to the residents of Saxmundham, Kelsale, Carlton, Benhall and Sternfield to shape that future - by sharing their views about what this new landscape should become.



Our Vision

- **A green corridor from Saxmundham to the sea, where wildlife can thrive along the route of the proposed bridge and cable trench, and where people can walk and cycle.**
- **A Fromus boardwalk where residents can engage with the river and surrounding nature.**
- **A community fund for new wildlife havens in our gardens: nature-friendly improvements for all, including water butts, bat boxes and ponds.**
- **Healthy, affordable food grown in a community orchard and allotment.**
- **Water harvesting to support biodiversity and to protect us from flooding.**
- **Restoration of the Great Wood for community use and biodiversity.**
- **Converter stations that also support locally-commissioned art projects, wildlife habitats and solar panels.**
- **Training and support for local people to manage these initiatives.**

Project Proposal Map



Artist's Impression - For Illustrative Purposes Only
This image represents a conceptual visualisation of a proposed large scale landscape intervention. The design is subject to ongoing development and will evolve through further design, consultation, and planning processes.



A green corridor from Saxmundham to the sea

Farmland, compulsorily purchased for cable trenches, will not be able to go back into food production. We envision it taking on a new purpose as a nature corridor, featuring hedgerows and wildflower margins, and offering an accessible route to the sea for cyclists, walkers, and wheelers. The required bridge over the River Fromus should be future-proofed as a rewilded, living structure and include an otter ledge to ensure safe passage for wildlife. The project will support local wellbeing, boost our tourism economy and enable other species to move in and out of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths National Landscape. We would also like to offer free bike hire from Saxmundham Station to promote sustainable and active travel.

A Fromus boardwalk and nature trail

After construction concludes, we propose a River Fromus boardwalk and a nature trail linking Fromus Green to the town centre. These features will allow the community to reconnect with nature and encourage sustainable tourism and footfall in the High Street via a circular route. Visitors will be encouraged to spend more time in our town—shopping locally and using it as a base for exploring the surrounding countryside on foot or by bike. The boardwalk, which will include a pontoon for safe river access, will put the river back at the heart of our community and enable the people who live here and who visit us to appreciate the rich diversity of the species it supports.

Community funds for all to support nature

We propose a Fromus Communitites Scheme funded through a toll on energy transmission passing through the converter stations and revenue from solar panels on their roofs. This fund would offer all households in the five affected communities a choice of nature-supporting products with free installation (to support the wildlife species affected by the National Grid proposals).

Residents would select from a list of items which would include:

- Hedgehog highways
- Native hedgerow saplings
- Ponds
- Bughouses
- Hedgehog hibernation and feeding stations
- Bat boxes
- Swift boxes
- Draught excluding products
- Water butts

The fund should also support solar and battery storage for community buildings.



Growing our own food

We propose creating an inclusive market gardening zone surrounding the converter station site. This can include allotments and a community orchard run on permaculture principles to support and feed local people as well as visiting swifts, pollinating insects, hedgehogs and other wildlife. Our new green space will support health and wellbeing, and reduce food miles and packaging waste. It can be irrigated by water harvested from hard surfaces and will benefit from native hedgerows, scrub and carefully managed wildflower meadows.

Managing our water to protect us and to improve our environment

Our water is a precious resource. The new bridge and converter stations will create hard surfaces which cannot absorb water. This could provide an opportunity for water harvesting solutions such as attenuation ponds, swales or bio-retention basins, which could be fully landscaped. This could help prevent runoff - reducing flood risk and mitigating the risk of pollution to the River Fromus.

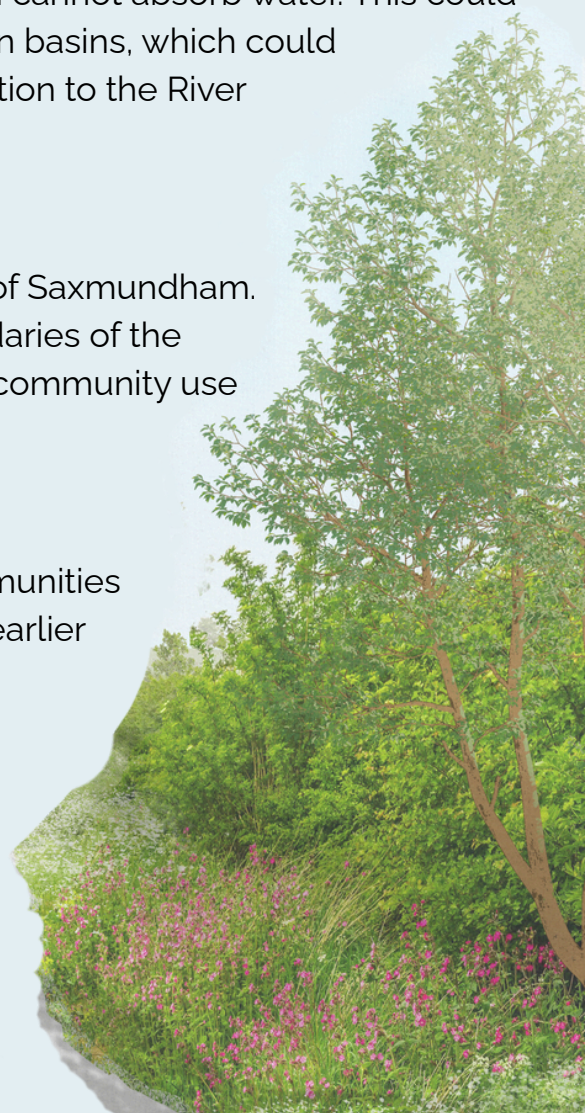
Restoration of the Great Wood

The Great Wood lay to the south of Leiston Road, and historically was a place of leisure for the people of Saxmundham. Some years ago most of the trees were cut down to increase farmland, and it now lies within the boundaries of the Sea Link proposal. Post-construction, we propose that native trees are planted to restore the wood for community use and biodiversity.

Jobs and training for local people

The converter stations will not result in long-term job creation therefore we propose the Fromus Communities Scheme is expanded to enable businesses and community groups to manage the proposals outlined earlier and to support new initiatives such as:

- Training and employing local people to run the Fromus Communities Scheme.
- Employing local people to develop a website and an app to support the scheme as well as other projects such as citizen science, energy and water management.
- Green space management of wildflower meadows and hedgerows.



Creating community benefits from the converter stations

We propose three key ways that National Grid companies can improve the visual amenity of the converter stations:

- 1. Art Spaces:** large-scale nature-themed murals commissioned by the community to reflect the local environment and to highlight flagship species.
- 2. Living Walls:** two sides of each building should feature vertical planting to create habitat for pollinators, swifts and bats.
- 3. Solar Energy:** rooftops could host solar panels to contribute to clean energy generation and feed the Fromus Communities Scheme.

A call for collaborative, nature-positive infrastructure

Planning expert Dr Andy Tickle supports many of the principles at the heart of these proposals. His report 'Greening the Great Grid Upgrade', published by CPRE, the countryside charity, calls for a more strategic and environmentally responsible approach to infrastructure delivery. He urges a new planning culture that aligns grid expansion with long-term social, ecological and landscape priorities.

It echoes our call for local voices to help shape how infrastructure is embedded into landscapes, ensuring places like Saxmundham and its neighbouring villages are not simply altered, but actively improved - with nature, community wellbeing, and heritage at the centre of design and delivery.

We call on National Grid companies to work with us; to go beyond the statutory minimums and show real leadership by delivering infrastructure that can enhance, rather than erode, the landscapes and communities it affects.



Empowering Nature

A community-driven project, in collaboration with Local Storytelling Exchange and Saxmundham Town Council.



Have your say - we welcome community views on this proposal.

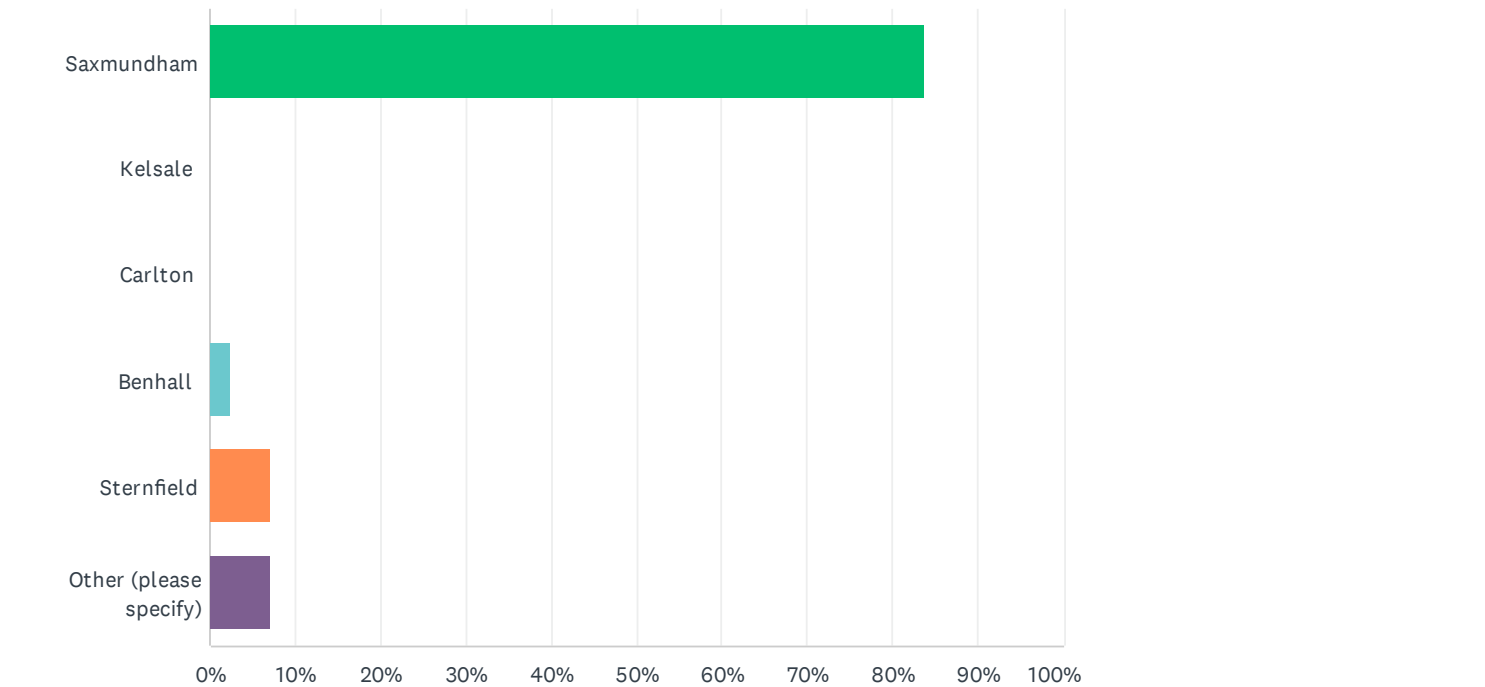
Scan the QR code or visit www.surveymonkey.com/r/XRPZLVT to take part in a feedback survey.

The closing date for all feedback is **Saturday 14 June 2025.**



Q1 Which community do you live in?

Answered: 43 Skipped: 0

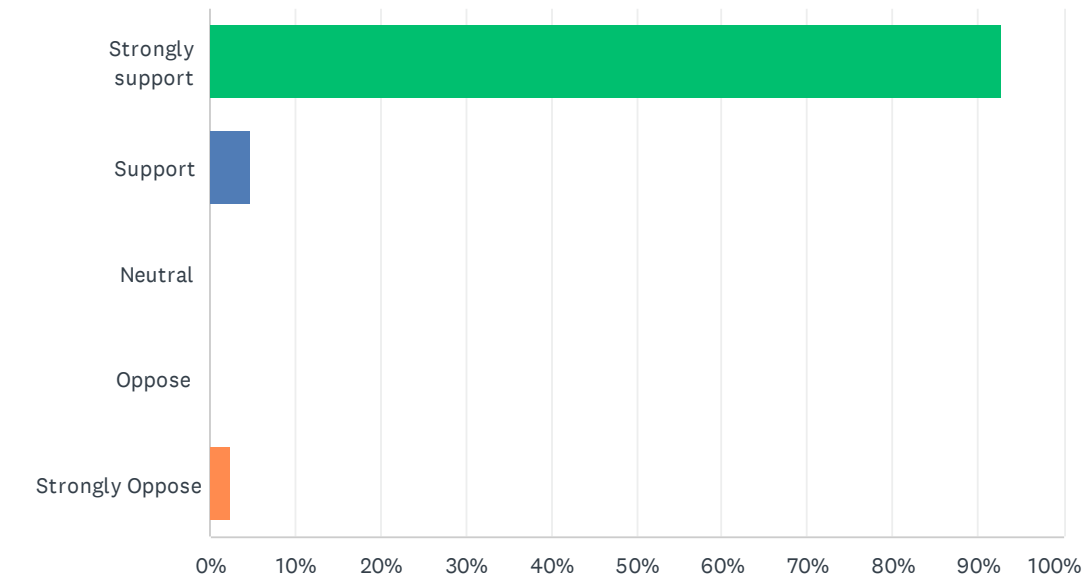


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Saxmundham	83.72%	36
Kelsale	0.00%	0
Carlton	0.00%	0
Benhall	2.33%	1
Sternfield	6.98%	3
Other (please specify)	6.98%	3
Total Respondents: 43		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Sizewell	6/13/2025 7:51 PM
2	Leiston	6/13/2025 1:09 PM
3	Westleton	6/4/2025 5:39 PM

Q2 How supportive are you of communities affected by the proposed energy projects being compensated for their impacts?

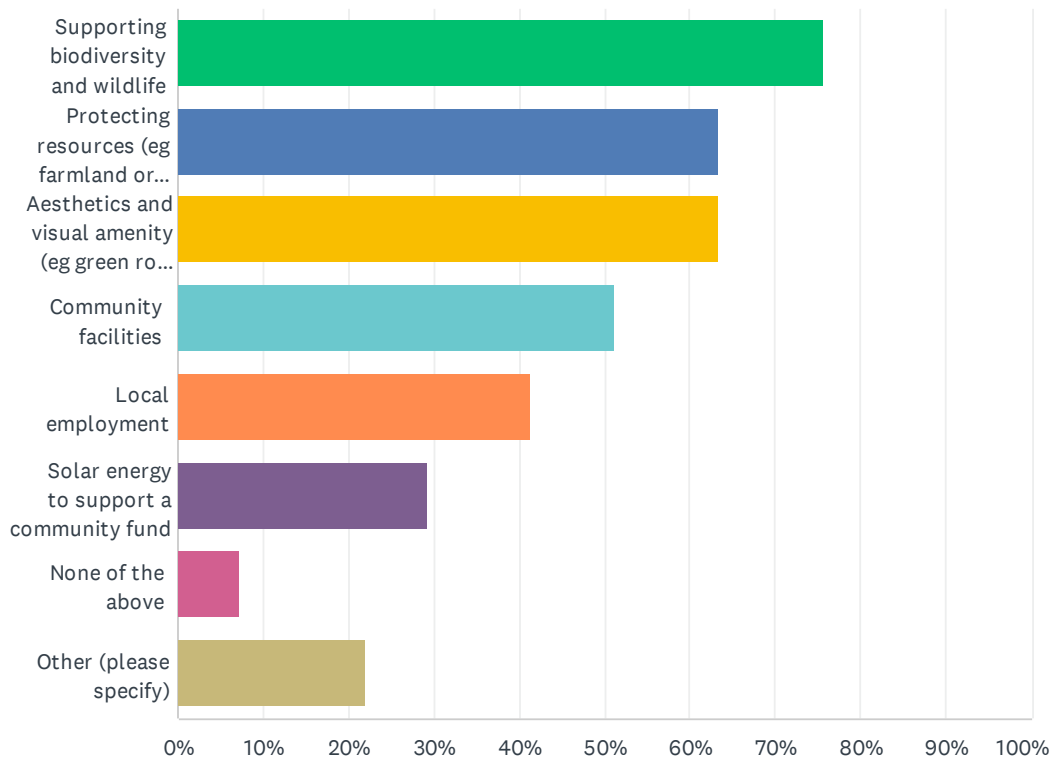
Answered: 42 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	92.86%	39
Support	4.76%	2
Neutral	0.00%	0
Oppose	0.00%	0
Strongly Oppose	2.38%	1
Total Respondents: 42		

Q3 What form do you think any mitigation should take?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Supporting biodiversity and wildlife	75.61%	31
Protecting resources (eg farmland or water conservation)	63.41%	26
Aesthetics and visual amenity (eg green roof, living walls, cladding)	63.41%	26
Community facilities	51.22%	21
Local employment	41.46%	17
Solar energy to support a community fund	29.27%	12
None of the above	7.32%	3
Other (please specify)	21.95%	9
Total Respondents: 41		

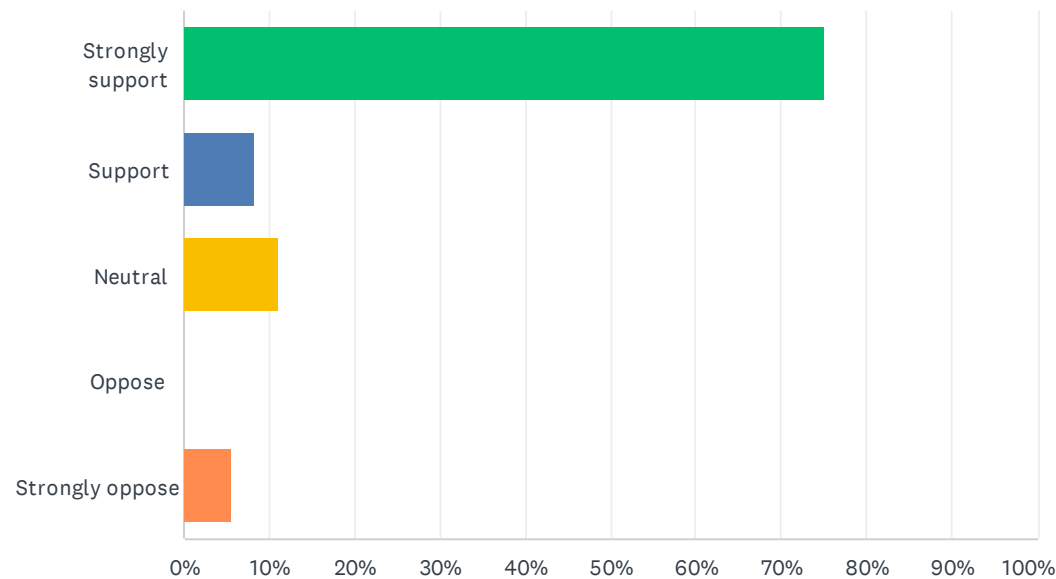
#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Significant ongoing financial support for Saxmundham from the developers and operators, for significant infrastructure and other project to improve the quality of life in Saxmundham	6/13/2025 12:37 PM
2	Financial recompense for the devaluation of the most affected housing	6/11/2025 2:47 PM
3	Footpath(s) of decent length and width for walkers and runners etc with a close to nature feel and as good views as possible.	6/9/2025 2:16 PM

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4	We should not be capitulating before the battle is lost. And if the devastation was to proceed far more significant projects than a mural and a footpath should be demanded.	6/6/2025 7:03 AM
5	Please consider space; we don't want overcrowding; which would be bad for mental health.	6/5/2025 12:15 PM
6	No mitigation until DCO over	6/3/2025 12:56 PM
7	mitigation should not yet be offered, the plan has not been approved, this suggests we have given up and holding our hands out to take pay offs.	5/27/2025 8:36 PM
8	Flood risk, fire risk, light pollution, noise pollution, traffic congestion, property devaluation.	5/24/2025 11:50 AM
9	The homes affected by traffic, noise and disruption need to be soundproofed at the expense of the national grid.	5/23/2025 10:37 AM

Q4 How supportive are you of the overall vision to create a greener landscape as part of any energy infrastructure if it is consented?

Answered: 36 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	75.00%	27
Support	8.33%	3
Neutral	11.11%	4
Oppose	0.00%	0
Strongly oppose	5.56%	2
Total Respondents: 36		

Q5 Do you have any comments on the vision outlined in the Empowering Nature document?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 22

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	It is refreshing to read some ideas for mitigation in response to Sea Link's plans rather than just blank opposition. If these projects are coming to our area then we must work together to get relevant and meaningful mitigation for the potential damage they will cause.	6/13/2025 7:51 PM
2	I am a member of Photo Shed, a photography group which has been looking through an analytical lens at the town of Saxmundham and the areas that surround it. I've discovered green spaces and watched as the river, once a last refuge for supermarket trolleys, beer cans and plastic bottles, turn into a place of beauty. All this is the work of a few dedicated souls. How wonderful it would be if their work could be taken further, with improvements that would not only serve the human population, but also the animals, birds and wildflowers that share our beloved part of Suffolk. If change must come, let it be mitigated in a thoughtful and constructive manner.	6/13/2025 1:09 PM
3	Should include measures to improve road safety and reduce traffic in Saxmundham, including 20mph limits for all of the town (as in similar towns and villages nearby), and to improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians, including at the A12 crossings, including at Rendham road	6/13/2025 12:37 PM
4	I don't think these projects ie sea link/sizewell should go ahead...but as it seems there is no stopping it, I feel the local community should receive compensation. Esp in view of noise and extra road traffic which impacts me daily. The destruction to wildlife and countryside is without precedent and nobody seems to care apart from the usual few and I have almost given up trying to get my voice heard for change!	6/12/2025 9:42 AM
5	I fully support any effort to enhance nature around Saxmundham and other villages.	6/11/2025 6:44 PM
6	The visions are wonderful, but maybe just that. None of the cost for any of these proposals should fall on the community. No element of their already extortionate Council Tax should be used as a contribution to the likely costs.	6/11/2025 12:17 PM
7	Not sure how realistic the vision is.	6/10/2025 3:30 PM
8	Needs to be a realistic and achievable and more focused on what is actually of benefit to most people in a short timescale. The period of construction is likely to be the most disruptive so the benefits need to be those that can be delivered early on, are visible and require as minimum amount of on going maintenance as possible.	6/9/2025 2:16 PM
9	It shows little insight into the needs of Saxmundham.	6/6/2025 7:03 AM
10	They talk about about planting trees to soften the converter stations ~ anyone with an ounce of sense would understand that idea would take decades for trees to grow enough to hide these planned monstrosities.	6/5/2025 12:15 PM
11	The land proposed for the substations would be turned into a nature reserve, securing it for the future	6/4/2025 8:20 PM
12	As I attended the agm and heard people better informed, such as Charlotte Mulinier I tend to think it is not fit for purpose.	6/3/2025 12:56 PM
13	Front cover - is that a foot path leading up to the converter stations which are misleadingly small - four of them at 26 metres high would dominate that view, to which no security fencing would allow walkers and families to bike ride towards. Page 1. How can the destruction of our beautiful countryside be a catalyst for positive change, we don't want a new landscape. Page 2 Why does the map depict only one small converter station, there are four monoliths proposed. How can allotments and orchards even be an idea, this land has been ringfenced by Lionlinks project and will never be accessible to the public. As for the Green Bridge, o dear. Page 3, Spell check please. What is a wheeler, I hope you're not being offensive to wheelchair users? Do we residents vote on the list of items provided - we chose either or items of nature we have	5/27/2025 8:36 PM

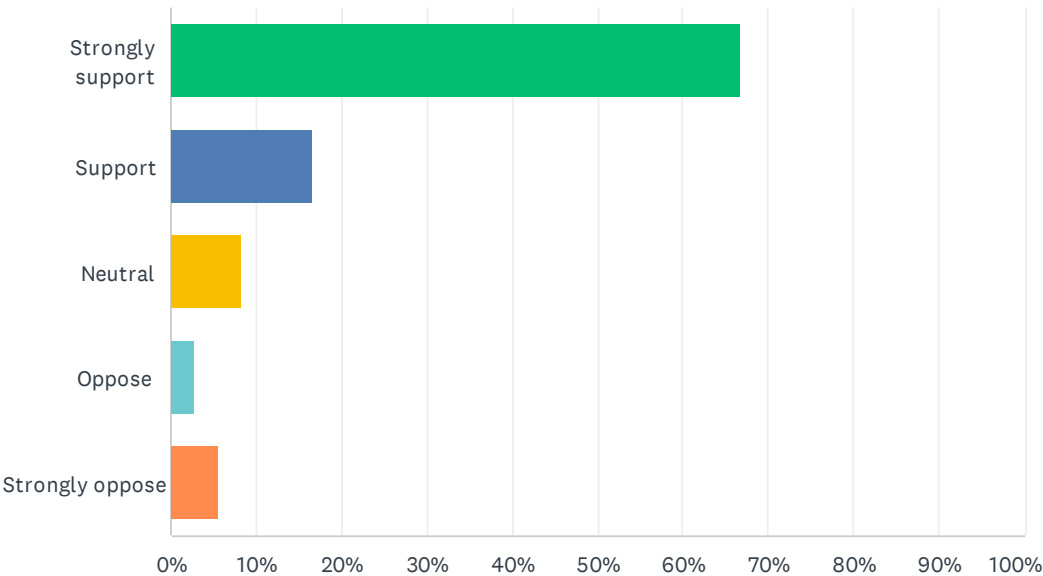
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to restore/replace and live without the rest we sold our souls for. Page 4 The food project land isn't even available, besides, have you conducted any research on the safety of the acoustic noise, radio-frequency interference (RFI), and electric and magnetic fields emitted from converter stations for people and food grown at such close proximity. The water harvesting may help us in Sternfield from getting flooded, but as you say 'could help' there is no credible research/evidence. The jobs you refer to, 10 posts this suggests. Page 5 - you cannot improve the visual impact of 4 X 26 metre high monolith buildings and the impact of their build over the years - it will devastate lives, the community, the flora and fauna, the economy - the devastating ripples gone on and on. Last page - lovely photo of what we have now - is this for us to keep and remember for old times sake - bit thoughtless really, knowing that landscape will be gone forever as they now know they can pay the local town council off.

14	It is great to see Saxmundham Town Council taking a positive approach.	5/26/2025 3:57 PM
15	I believe a robust challenge is needed to stop the converter stations being built so close to the edge of the town, it may not be by design but I think that any suggestion that the converter stations might be acceptable if a nature trail is built along the path as indicated on your map serves to weaken our challenge against the stations being built. I believe if the Sealink stations are built it will pave the way for LionLink to follow. I live in one of the closest property's to the development and believe the stations could be built in one of the numerous fields between the proposed landfall site that do not border residential properties. I have therefore had to indicate neutral support for the green corridor as I think any suggestion that people would be happy with that to offset the stations will be readily received by National Grid. I agree that biodiversity projects are a good idea so am not anti those suggestions, I just believe the stations are not something that look like are a good idea if offset by a green corridor.	5/24/2025 6:25 PM
16	While the document presents a wonderful vision, the best case for wildlife protection and conservation, and retention of farmland would be for the construction of the converter stations to not go ahead. Given the current global political situation, I personally believe the wording 'From Saxmundham to the sea' to be poorly chosen and blinkered to the wider connotations of the phrase.	5/24/2025 12:07 PM
17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firstly, I accept this is a consultation document and would ask that Sternfield and Benhall are included in future iterations prior to sharing with National Grid. • Brochure image on front page – The low-profile buildings at the top of the hill do not represent the true 26 metre height of the converter stations and give a false impression. • The map showing proposed areas do not consider the other compounds identified by National Grid, and do not reflect the possible expansion to possibly 3 converter stations. • It would be good to understand how the water harvesting will be implemented. We currently flood easily in Sternfield and the loss of water being held in the field where the converters will be can only cause an increase in flooding. • The location of the orchard and allotments are where the LionLink converter will be positioned. With the 26-metre-high buildings, have you considered the loss of sunlight to that area as it will be in shadow much of the day. • The final image of a beautiful view across Hurts Hall shows what we see today. This is not representative of the monstrous buildings and large bridge that will dominate the view. I would like to see the view from the road in Sternfield as this seems to have been omitted from every document so far as the converters will be seen from miles when coming from Friston. 	5/24/2025 11:50 AM
18	My key point is that I object to the development and feel that talk of mitigation now is damaging and plays into national grids hands	5/24/2025 9:59 AM
19	Fanciful vision and a premature consultation	5/23/2025 11:56 AM
20	The pictorial image of the vision is utopian and misleading and needs more thought.	5/23/2025 10:37 AM
21	It is an incentive, but will need to appeal to the greater community. Involving all age groups, and capabilities of helping with the ongoing planning.	5/22/2025 9:13 PM

Q6 Please indicate your level of support for a green corridor from Saxmundham to the sea with hedgerows, wildflower margins and an accessible walking/cycling route.

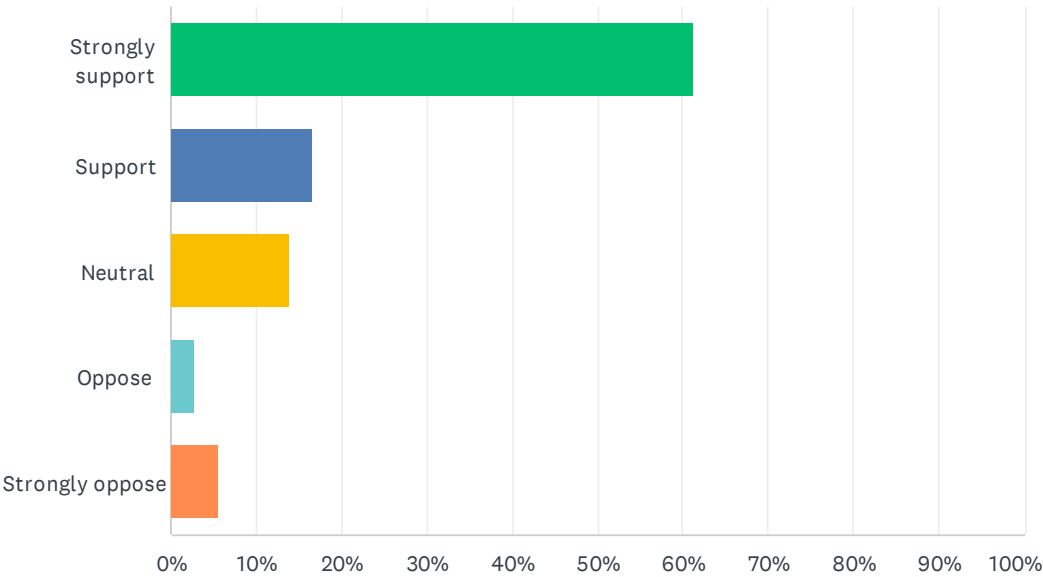
Answered: 36 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	66.67%	24
Support	16.67%	6
Neutral	8.33%	3
Oppose	2.78%	1
Strongly oppose	5.56%	2
Total Respondents: 36		

Q7 Please indicate your level of support for a Fromus boardwalk and nature trail linking Fromus Green with the town centre.

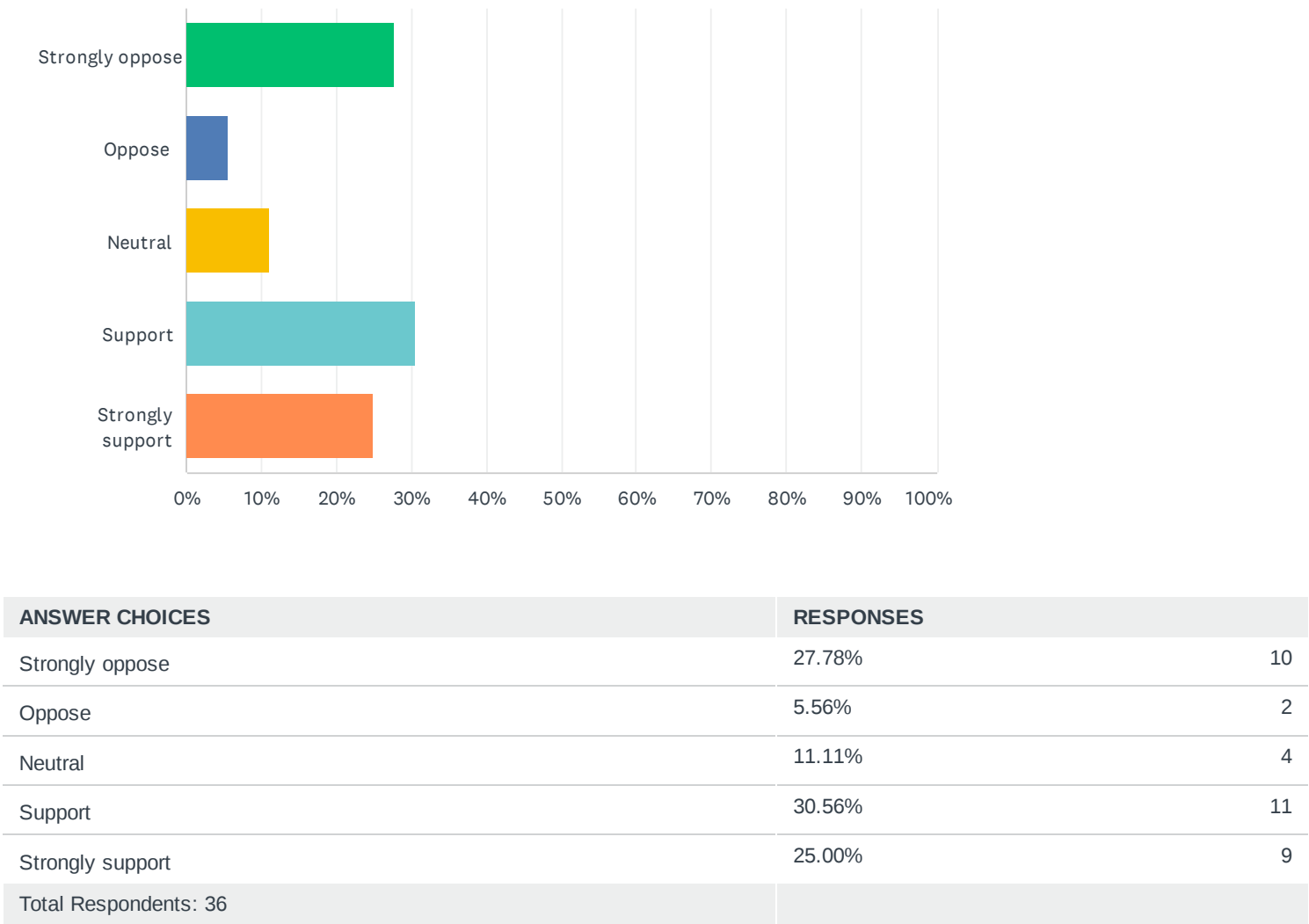
Answered: 36 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	61.11%	22
Support	16.67%	6
Neutral	13.89%	5
Oppose	2.78%	1
Strongly oppose	5.56%	2
Total Respondents: 36		

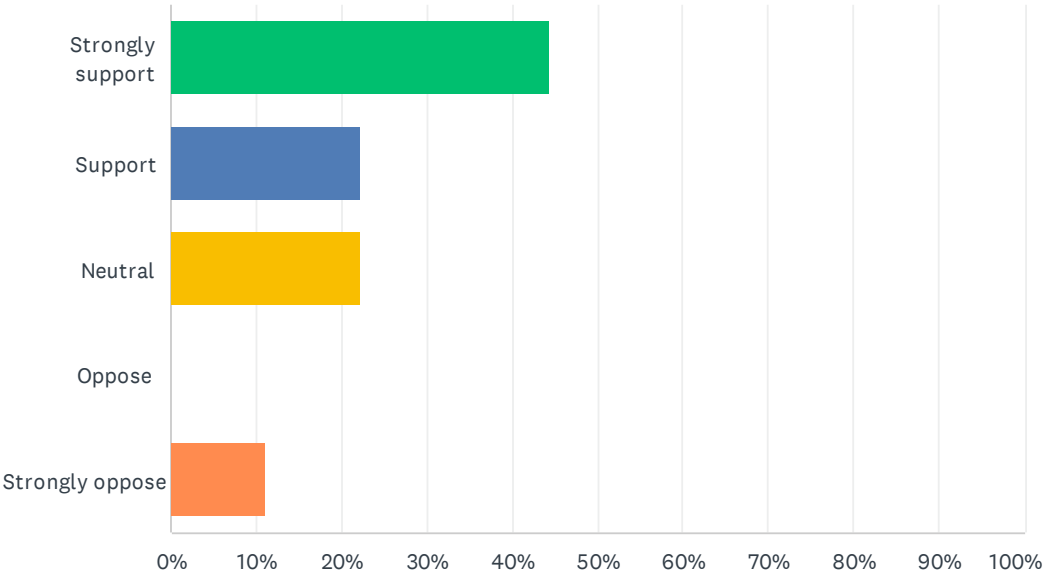
Q8 Please indicate your level of support for a community nature scheme offering homes wildlife-friendly items such as bat boxes, hedgehog highways, and water butts.

Answered: 36 Skipped: 7



Q9 Please indicate your level of support for a community orchard and market gardening area to grow healthy, affordable food.

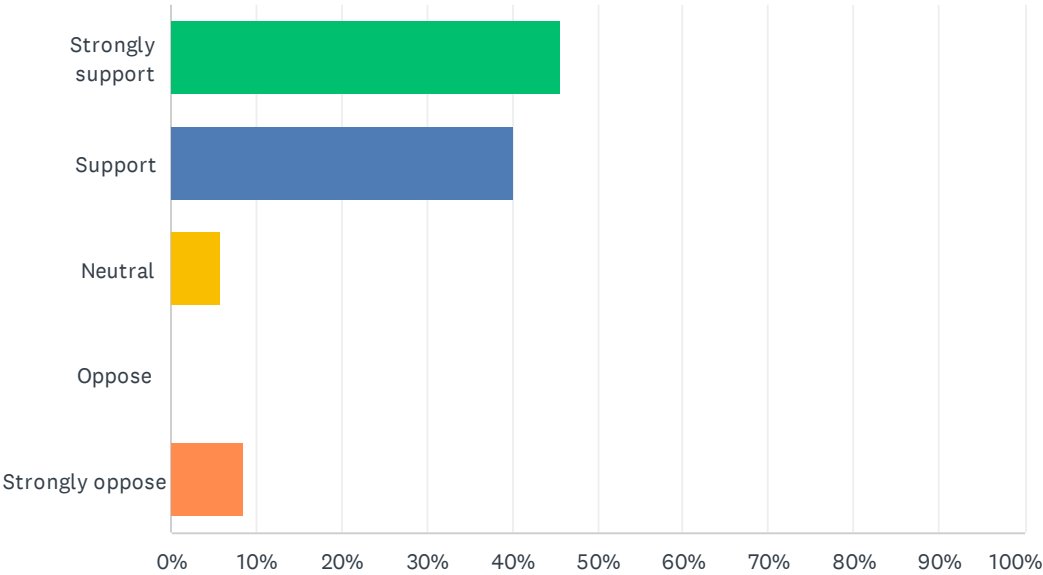
Answered: 36 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	44.44%	16
Support	22.22%	8
Neutral	22.22%	8
Oppose	0.00%	0
Strongly oppose	11.11%	4
Total Respondents: 36		

Q10 Please indicate your level of support for water harvesting and landscaping solutions to reduce flood risk.

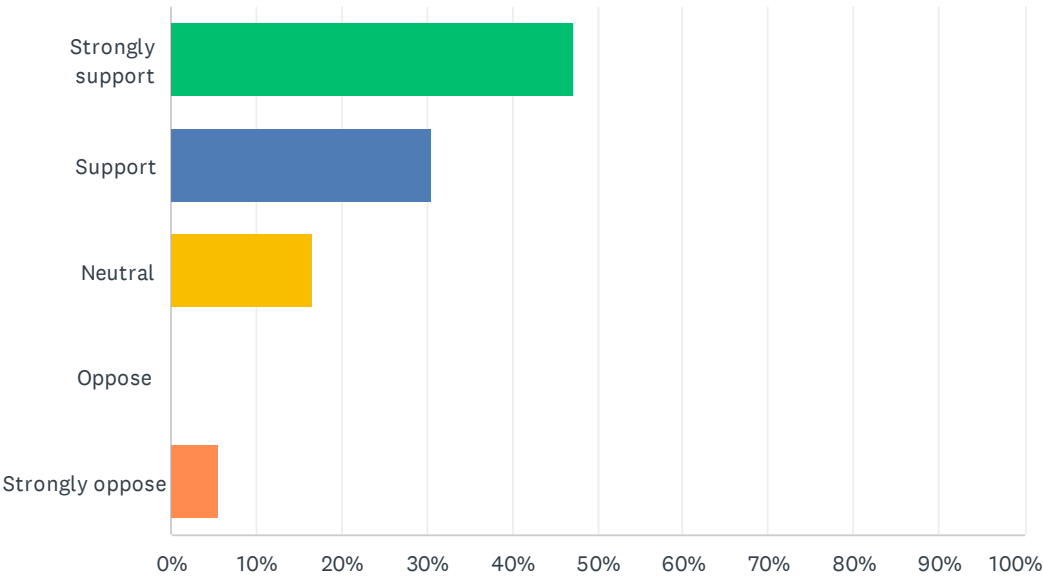
Answered: 35 Skipped: 8



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	45.71%	16
Support	40.00%	14
Neutral	5.71%	2
Oppose	0.00%	0
Strongly oppose	8.57%	3
Total Respondents: 35		

Q11 Please indicate your support for local jobs and training opportunities to manage and maintain these green initiatives.

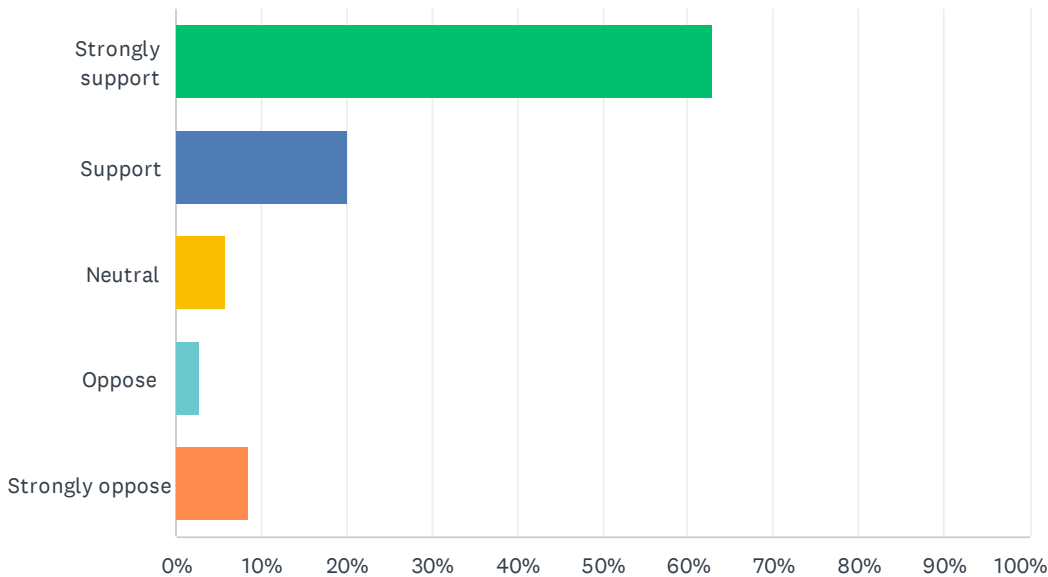
Answered: 36 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	47.22%	17
Support	30.56%	11
Neutral	16.67%	6
Oppose	0.00%	0
Strongly oppose	5.56%	2
Total Respondents: 36		

Q12 Please indicate your support for the restoration of the Great Wood for community use and biodiversity.

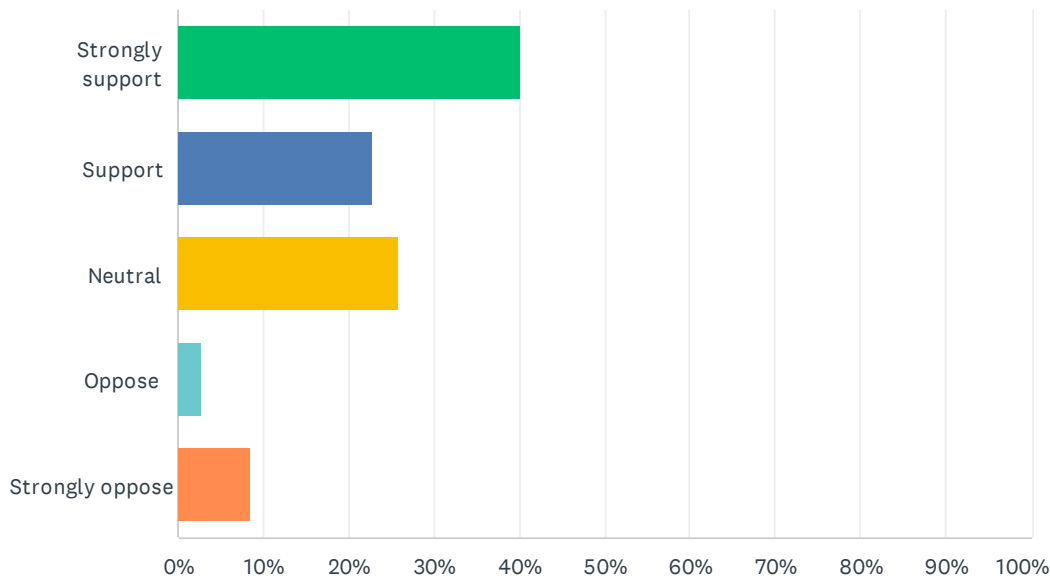
Answered: 35 Skipped: 8



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	62.86%	22
Support	20.00%	7
Neutral	5.71%	2
Oppose	2.86%	1
Strongly oppose	8.57%	3
Total Respondents: 35		

Q13 Please indicate your level of support for enhancing converter stations, if they are consented, with community-led murals, living walls for pollinators and swifts, and rooftop solar panels.

Answered: 35 Skipped: 8



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	40.00%	14
Support	22.86%	8
Neutral	25.71%	9
Oppose	2.86%	1
Strongly oppose	8.57%	3
Total Respondents: 35		

Q14 Do you have any concerns about these proposals outlined in the Empowering Nature paper?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 23

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	No.	6/13/2025 7:51 PM
2	Yes, the main environmental problem in Saxmundham is cars, both speed and numbers. Many foot paths are too narrow and there should be more pedestrian priority and pedestrian only areas. And these traffic related improvements should be the priority.	6/13/2025 12:37 PM
3	Living walls and murals is only paying lip service to these terrible proposals which will get passed as objectors will be silenced by organisers saying 'well it's ok, we will give you bat boxes on the roof of the converter station' and councils etc will probably agree! So no. I don't want to see graffiti clad public murals or similar. I rather would not have the obscene monstrosity in the first place and def not 'tarted up with a living wall' to make certain people ie councils/gov feel better about the destruction of this area. No tourists will come here eventually as it's already a nightmare on the roads A12/14 to get here and will only get worse. If there is nothing to see except solar panel farms and convert or stations and dead high streets why wud tourists come? Plus foreign workers make up majority at sizewell. All we have is kebab shops and 'Turkish barbers' in places like leiston to cater for their needs and it is becoming like a ghetto. Really run down and poor looking.	6/12/2025 9:42 AM
4	I worry about the cost	6/11/2025 6:44 PM
5	Only that they are looking to mitigate the impact on the whole of Saxmundham with little acknowledgement of those most affected, namely the residents of Manor Gardens.	6/11/2025 2:47 PM
6	The cost as all the funding will not come from the energy projects themselves.	6/11/2025 12:17 PM
7	Needs more focus on one or two specific projects which are deliverable within a short timescale and any budget constraints and which are most likely to be an immediate benefit to whole community. Also the design of those should be done to only need limited maintenance. Those suggestions which are focused on supplying 'free stuff' should be removed. Those suggestions for enhancing the converter stations should be removed. The suggestion for community orchards etc should be removed as too niche. The Great wood should be left to look after itself. You can't expect those constructing the converter stations to reduce any flood risks which they themselves are not creating.	6/9/2025 2:16 PM
8	Yes. Capitulation. Your plans are not possible based on the plans for the converters. There could be three and they will occupy the orchard space, for instance. This proposal was a waste of tax payers money and those responsible should be held to account.	6/6/2025 7:03 AM
9	Even considering these converter station/s is murdering our beautiful countryside; which is made naturally for arable farming. This country needs to be self sufficient and farming will be paramount for our existence.	6/5/2025 12:15 PM
10	N/A	6/4/2025 8:20 PM
11	Premature	6/3/2025 12:56 PM
12	I have many concerns; we are dealing with multinational conglomerates - 'Goliaths' and the people who live on and own this land are represented by 'David's'. These proposals were not appropriate, published and submitted to the Goliaths when they were.	5/27/2025 8:36 PM
13	Better to reduce the height of the converter station	5/26/2025 3:57 PM
14	As above, I think it somewhat weakens our challenge against the stations being built by suggesting we would accept the stations in return for nature trails etc.	5/24/2025 6:25 PM
15	See earlier comments	5/24/2025 11:50 AM

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16	They are getting in the way of my objection to the location of the scheme	5/24/2025 9:59 AM
17	Plenty and i have emailed Saxmundham Town Council about this	5/23/2025 11:56 AM
18	I think an expert consultant should be asked to review the proposals with a view to advising the TC on any necessary changes. This objective voice might address the concerns of those opposing the project. Mitigation is necessary and yet not everyone seems to understand this.	5/23/2025 10:37 AM
19	No concerns. Presentationally, I think the map could be improved but otherwise as a concept that is briefly and clearly presented hope it will receive wide support	5/23/2025 10:01 AM
20	It will be a great deal of work, materials, machinery, finance and people power to achieve this massive project.	5/22/2025 9:13 PM

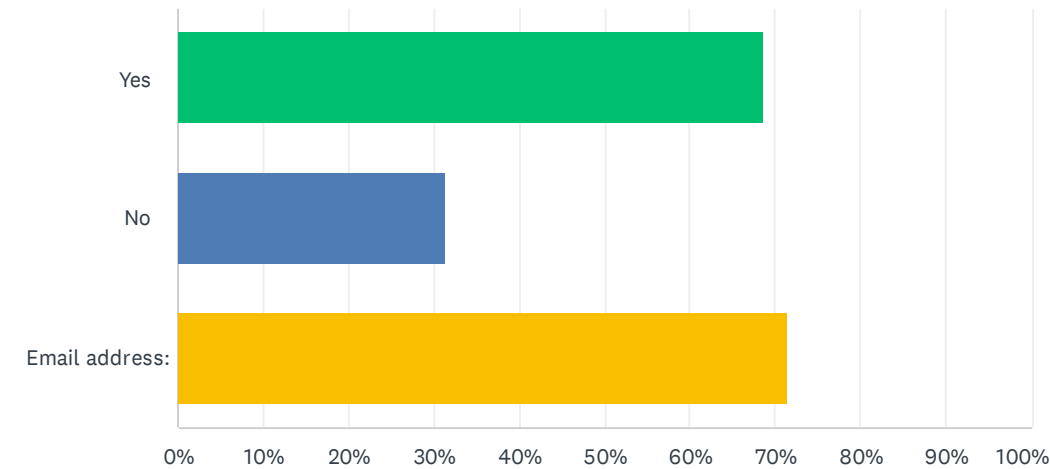
Q15 Do you have any suggestions for other community or nature-based projects you would like to see to mitigate the impact of the proposed energy projects?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 23

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Connectivity within the landscape is one of the most important ways to improve biodiversity and helps to safeguard fragmented species. I would like to see more green connectivity such as hedgerows and woodland linking Saxmundham with other nearby biodiversity hotspots, and in the regions close to the converter station these would also help to reduce its visual impact in the landscape.	6/13/2025 7:51 PM
2	Opportunities for improved flood management on the Saxmundham W/C through Brook Farm, funded by the developers of the energy projects	6/13/2025 4:30 PM
3	Actual countryside with trees that have been there for over 100 years instead of fields of saplings that will never mature in my lifetime.	6/12/2025 9:42 AM
4	No	6/11/2025 6:44 PM
5	I would lobby for Sealink to be compelled to plant a native, tall, and sufficiently deep living wall of trees, hedgerow etc. between the proposed site and the Manor Gardens estate as well as the road (from all possible angles) to screen the view of this ill thought through project.	6/11/2025 2:47 PM
6	Enhancing the children's park on Fromus Green. This could be part of the Fromus boardwalk and incorporate nature to make an educational play area	6/11/2025 1:12 PM
7	No other than that any future updates at Point 16. should be freely available to ALL residents on the Saxmundham Town Council website, not just via email or Social Media.	6/11/2025 12:17 PM
8	Besides the Great Wood, would like to see more tree planting to reverse the impact of the numerous energy projects taking place.	6/10/2025 3:30 PM
9	A circular walk or one linking Benhall, Saxmundham and Kelsale on a new path safely designed for use of both people on foot and cyclists etc.	6/9/2025 2:16 PM
10	New Surgery	6/7/2025 11:01 AM
11	Let's campaign to get them stopped. That should be our primary focus.	6/6/2025 7:03 AM
12	Consider alternative, scientific methods ~ otherwise, by the time it's implemented ~ it will be OUT OF DATE!!! Saxmundham does not need anymore stress ~ this has major impact on everyone especially children~ our future generations.	6/5/2025 12:15 PM
13	IF the project goes ahead, and it is an if, then the whole site should be screened by trees or some form of camouflage	6/4/2025 8:20 PM
14	In due course if required	6/3/2025 12:56 PM
15	Put the projects out to sea, then no mitigation would be required.	5/27/2025 8:36 PM
16	A riverside walk	5/26/2025 3:57 PM
17	Move it all offshore.	5/24/2025 11:50 AM
18	Given that I feel the timing is wrong, I also feel that the proposed mitigation does not ask for enough. It should be much more ambitious involving many many more acres of land surrounding saxmundham	5/24/2025 9:59 AM
19	No, I think the TC has proposed a workable project that just needs tweaking.	5/23/2025 10:37 AM
20	The present state of the surrounding spaces in and around Saxmundham and the estates such as Brook Farm. The river banks, woodland and general maintenance and up keep of same.	5/22/2025 9:13 PM

Q16 Would you like to be kept informed about future developments related to the Empowering Nature initiative?

Answered: 35 Skipped: 8



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	68.57%	24
No	31.43%	11
Email address:	71.43%	25
Total Respondents: 35		

Empowering Nature Community Consultation – Email Responses

Feedback from Saxmundham Residents:

1. Objection to the "Empowering Nature" Document

I am writing to formally object to the "Empowering Nature" document recently published by Saxmundham Town Council. While I recognise the importance of environmental initiatives, this document is misleading, unrealistic, and prematurely presented, failing to acknowledge critical infrastructure projects that will fundamentally shape Saxmundham's future.

1. Fromus Bridge Crossing Access Timeline

The document incorrectly suggests that residents will have access to the Fromus bridge crossing. However, public access will not be possible until at least 2035–2037, as it is entirely dependent on the completion of both the Sea Link and Lion Link converter stations—each requiring approximately 5–6 years of construction. Additionally, National Grid's Development Consent Order (DCO) documentation confirms space for a third converter station, potentially further delaying access.

2. Omission of Lion Link Converter Station

The "Empowering Nature" map fails to include the Lion Link converter station, despite its major footprint northeast of the Sea Link converter station. This omission is misleading, as the Lion Link site covers 6.5 hectares and includes a 26-metre-tall industrial hangar, significantly altering the landscape.

3. Misrepresentation of Land Use

The document presents allotments, orchards, and tree planting in an area already designated for the Lion Link converter station. Since the converter station's construction is planned for this location, these proposals are entirely unfeasible.

4. Security Restrictions on Nature Trail

The claim that a nature trail will be directed through the converter station site is highly unlikely due to strict security protocols. Each compound will be enclosed by a 5-metre security fence, with high-security measures preventing public access.

5. Premature Presentation of "Empowering Nature" Document

This document should be treated as a contingency plan, not a possible proposal. It should not have been presented to the Saxmundham community before the Sea Link DCO registration closes on 23rd June 2025. Until this process concludes, the full scope of infrastructure projects remains uncertain, making it premature to propose mitigation strategies. Only after the DCO registration period ends should mitigation proposals be shared and properly consulted on.

6. Misleading and Unrealistic Vision

The "Empowering Nature" document paints a fanciful, utopian vision that will never be achievable if the converter stations are built. By portraying an idealised future, the document risks discouraging residents from formally objecting to the Sea Link DCO, as it suggests that everything will be harmonious and well-integrated, leading people to believe there is no need to participate. This misrepresentation is deeply concerning, as it is essential that residents fully understand the true impact of these developments and have the opportunity to voice their objections.

7. Rebuttal to Saxmundham Town Council's Statement

Saxmundham Town Council has publicly stated:

"We remain opposed to these plans, but if they do go ahead, we need to be ready with a positive and credible plan for what Saxmundham and the surrounding communities should receive in return."

"Our aim is for NGET—and ultimately for the secretary of state—to view Saxmundham as a flagship case study where a potentially negative situation has been turned into something positive."

"We are calling on NGET to work with us. They are under no legal obligation to go beyond the minimum, but by doing so, they could demonstrate what genuine engagement with host communities looks like."

While Saxmundham Town Council claims to oppose these plans, its approach ultimately serves the interests of NGET rather than the community. By shifting the focus towards mitigation and compensation, the council risks weakening opposition efforts and legitimising the development before the full objection process has been completed.

Their statement—

"We remain opposed to these plans, but if they do go ahead, we need to be ready with a positive and credible plan..."

—implicitly concedes defeat, encouraging residents to accept the project as inevitable, rather than actively opposing it.

Furthermore, the idea of Saxmundham serving as a "flagship case study" for mitigation suggests that the council is resigned to the developments proceeding. This narrative plays into NGET's hands, allowing the company to present the project as a model of cooperation rather than recognising the genuine concerns and opposition within the community.

Most concerning is the statement—

"NGET is under no legal obligation to go beyond the minimum, but by doing so, they could demonstrate what genuine engagement with host communities looks like."

—which fails to acknowledge that NGET should be held accountable and pressured to minimise harm from these developments. Rather than encouraging proactive resistance, this statement sets low expectations, allowing NGET to offer only token gestures rather than meaningful concessions.

The council's position undermines the importance of fully challenging these developments before mitigation discussions take place. Residents must be encouraged to actively participate in the Sea Link DCO process before accepting compensation-based discussions, ensuring the strongest possible objection against these plans.

Given these inaccuracies, misleading claims, and premature proposals, I urge the council to withdraw and revise the "Empowering Nature" document to reflect the realities of Saxmundham's development. Transparency and accuracy are essential to ensuring that residents are properly informed and meaningfully engaged in shaping the town's future.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns further and look forward to your response.

2. Empowering nature content and release

I wish to express my real concerns regarding the timing of this press release and its wishful content.

Who made the executive decision to release this at this important juncture when submissions of genuine concern re the proposed Converter stations are imminently to be filed by the general

public by the means of submitting DCOs? The release seriously undermining much of the valuable work of both SAND and SEAS.

As for the content this surely is a wish list, a vision of a future Arcadian Saxmundham. Is the document as it stands a final draft? Surely it needs to be re examined and revised on a number of fronts?

As we experience one of the driest Springs on record where will the irrigation come from to nurture the green pathways and tree plantations. Who will be responsible for its success? Surely the town cannot expect the excellent Green team and Blue Zone of the future to do this. With dust bowl conditions likely if many experts are to be believed who in their right mind would want to walk the Saxmundham nature corridor to the sea circumventing the concrete monoliths towering around them. Will access be granted or desired by NG? Again why not include a cycle path a baby buggy highway, a mental health garden retreat where all noise of the build and its continued aftermath can be screened with natural planting? A rickety bridge where future generations of Saxmundham residents can play Pooh sticks with their children as the Fromus river winds it way to the Alde. All wish lists.

In reality Saxmundham doesn't even have any outdoor gym equipment. A poor reflection on the councils part on the physical well being of its residents.

Furthermore I would like any future TV news appearances by the town council members to include a CGI backdrop of the proposed converter stations to their conversation so the reality of what is in store can be imagined rather than the ramblings of two people through the greenery of today. Again that too is a wish. And as with all wishes much is out of reach and not grounded in any real hope of reality or fruition.

The timing is appalling, the wish list commendable but flawed.

Please revise the document and the graphics.

3. Empowering Nature

I have read the 'Empowering Nature' document which I obtained from the library.

Can you please tell me how much this premature document has cost us financially bearing in mind the impending NG proposals which might befall us?

I attended last night's meeting at the Market Hall which was interesting.

I think you will have heard that this document was not popular, premature, wrong and should be withdrawn.

4. Last Night's AGM

I attended last night's meeting, although I did not speak. I was taken aback by the degree of aggression and discord throughout the meeting and feel that Dr Fox was wrong in her quite confrontational criticism of Laura Bonnett's Empowering Nature. Dr Fox's comments basically gave the green light to the aggressive debate that followed. She was undoubtedly right that the picture on the front of the consultation document is utopian but her timing and criticism clearly blind-sided Laura Bonnett and set the tone for the rest of the meeting. Whilst I found Dr Fox's presentation on 'how we got here' interesting and informed, she did not actually contribute any solutions or positive suggestions and having initiated the attack on Ms Bonnett's consultation, she then had the cheek to appeal for unity. I do think Dr Fox should apologise to Ms Bonnett; her criticisms should have been given after the audience questions and not face to face from the front of the meeting.

I suspect the TC knew that feelings were heated regarding the Empowering Nature consultation before the meeting and yet seemed like rabbits in a headlight; the impression of being ill-prepared was made worse by the failure to print and distribute the Minutes of last year's meeting. It is a shame that the consultation has indeed divided some. And I say 'some' deliberately because I am concerned about the 5000 residents not engaging in the process. The TC member sitting in the front row gave an account of the ways the TC has tried to include residents, but for such a divisive and life changing project you need to literally knock on doors and speak to people. Instead several upset and angry residents tried to dominate the debate and the TC chairperson did well in trying to regulate the audience questions. I was particularly appalled by the man in the front row, sitting next to the TC member, who stood and blamed everyone who voted Labour! Personal politics should not be used as a weapon and his accusation was out of place - Sealink was on its way during the Conservative reign in government!

My one final comment is that I feel that Manor Gardens is your main concern regarding the construction impact and wish to remind you that my cottage, in the terrace opposite Tesco's will also be affected by the increased traffic and noise; when I mentioned this to the same front row TC member during the recent Spring Walk she was quite dismissive of my concerns, suggesting that we must already be used to traffic. I can assure you that the construction traffic and upheaval will impact on our terrace and yet the TC have completely overlooked us.

I will respond to your consultation and have registered to have my say about Sealink. It is clearly a huge workload for the TC and applaud your considerations so far and although the Empowering Nature needs changes, I also recognise the thought and time invested by Ms Bonnett and all concerned. I am just myself blind-sided by last night's meeting and hope those so angry and accusing can find a way to take part more constructively going forward.

There is so much that was not discussed last night such as the plans for the regeneration of the town centre. Making our town centre attractive and inviting is also a way to challenge the NG. I wish we had more than hairdressers and estate agents populating our high street shops. The South Entrance Garden Neighbourhood, the reopening of the middle school for SEND provision and the provision of a modern health centre are all projects that will impact residents and yet the whole meeting was hijacked by endless angry accusations about the Empowering Nature consultation that perhaps has been ill-timed.

5. Empowering Nature

It became clear at the meeting in the market hall on Friday evening that there has been no cooperation with interested parties before publication which I believe has resulted in premature publication of the above.

The timing of the release couldn't have been worse for the Council's position of wanting to stop the Converter Stations being built and has give oxygen to NG plan.

Therefore the council needs to spell out their preferred option of encouraging residents to oppose NG onshore plans in favour of the much better offshore location and only coming ashore on Brown Field sites closer to where the need is- and to register as interested parties ref the D.C.O.

The application has been submitted for examination to the Planning Inspectorate, and only those registered will be able to comment during the examination period. Organisations and individuals wishing to comment must register as an Interested Party by Monday 23 June 2025.

The above paragraph is from the East Suffolk Council website.

6. Annual town meeting response

Dr Fox's explanation and address of the proposed energy projects in and around Saxmundham district was very informative and as there were several journalists in the audience from nearby villages and towns in Suffolk, keen to learn of what is happening in our area. I felt it was an extremely good presentation of same.

Then came the presentation of Empowering Nature delivered by Laura Bonnett which wasn't on the agenda that I had printed at home prior to the meeting, there was a hard copy of the booklet with the Chairman's report for everyone.

Laura presented it as the idea and vision of her and her colleague Amy, and it was presented to the public via social media, a tv presentation on the local news, As well as the hard copy booklet. The last page is an endorsement from Saxmundham Town Council to feedback by 14 June 2025 on a survey monkey site and a QR code.

Unfortunately, this is also being presented by the Town Council as mitigation along with the DCO for the Saxmundham converter station works and site, with signatures and evidence should be completed by 23 June 2025.

The idea of the Vision for the Fromus communities with Empowering Nature is an important part of the next 15 - 25 years, if the project goes ahead. We are all working as fast as we can to prevent this happening but as was said at the meeting protocol needs to be adhered to and the first two steps of the mitigation have not yet been completed.

I have had experience of working on a New Zealand Electricity Department hydro scheme in the South Island in 1972 this was completed and running for many years before the empowering nature scheme was able to take over. It was so well done that the movie The Hobbit was filmed there and is now a tourist destination for all!

I also worked in an open cast coal mine in the outback of Queensland Australia. The coking coal was then being sold to Japan for its power stations, as far as I know this has been closed for many years now.

Both projects were put back to nature by the contractors in a sympathetic and guided way, which was the only way the Queensland Government would accept the contracts.

It did take many years and lots of hard work, I can envisage if this project in Saxmundham does go ahead, it will be even more years before we see peace, no noise, no dust and no machinery apart from the monoliths left on the top of the hill near the church and town.

The people of Saxmundham and surrounding areas don't seem to be bothered about any of it, they won't worry about the cost to the area, of the biodiversity, animals, rivers and pollution, because they have too many other problems to worry about and are not able to take all of this in at once. We as the majority of caring retired folk have the time and have the hope that we can help the future generations to survive and thrive.

If these plans could be spaced out and the towns people helped to understand what it means for the future, then perhaps we may get enough signatures on the DCO to help with combating the ridiculous plans to use Saxmundham as a lever to get Britain and all its green and pleasant land destroyed for the sake of power - both electric and man.

7. Feedback on EN

In Our Vision, third bullet point down, it refers to 'gardens' this should be more widely inclusive and not assume everyone has access to their own green space (as highlighted during Covid 19 pandemic). As such I think the vision and the scheme should include 'public and shared green space' too.

8. Empowering Nature

We are unlikely to stop the Converter Station(s) coming to Saxmundham and in my opinion any benefits we can get will be a good move for the town. I hope the green initiative will help mask the damage caused by the construction and benefit the community.

I would recommend consideration of a fishing pond for recreation. This will also provide a haven for wildlife and an asset for the town.

9. Empowering Nature

An appropriate, effective and recognised process to environmental project development would be to undergo a defined and transparent period of development during which the community are informed and could provide input and external environmental experts could be asked to provide an impartial and science based expert opinion. An inclusive and representative process could avoid division within the community which ultimately is counterproductive. For any major change or project to succeed it needs the maximum amount of people to feel they have some ownership of it and that they have a personal and individual commitment which is acknowledged and valued.

Coming together in partnership with East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council and developing a response together would offer a stronger proposal and united front.

There is a current detailed East Suffolk Council mitigation framework being prepared. There lies an opportunity for cooperation and discussion.

Given that a number of softwares like Google Earth Pro, Landsat Explorer are available in the public domain it's possible for the Town Council and community to map Saxmundham for areas of biomass density, biodiversity, fragments of ancient woodland, cooling areas. Where these areas correlate an ecologist could be commissioned to search for protected species and to map essential connectivity of biodiversity corridors necessary to provide adequate habitats across an area. This vital and locally specific information could then be used to inform any objections to infrastructure projects and also to inform everyone as to what currently exists and needs to be protected.

With detailed and shared knowledge of existing biodiversity any proposal to be developed would have a starting point which was specific to the area and evidence based.

10. Comments to “Empowering Nature” Document Consultation

I'm writing to express my concerns about the recently published "Empowering Nature" document. While I fully support the principle of enhancing our natural environment, I believe some of the content is premature, potentially misleading, and may unintentionally downplay the scale and impact of the proposed energy infrastructure developments facing Saxmundham.

1. Clarity Needed on Fromus Bridge Access

The document suggests that residents will soon benefit from the Fromus bridge crossing. In reality, this access depends entirely on the completion of both the Sea Link and Lion Link converter stations, which are unlikely to be in place before 2035–2037. National Grid's DCO documents also reserve space for a third converter station, which could extend the timeline further.

2. Omission of the Lion Link Site

The accompanying map does not include the Lion Link converter station—an important omission given its size and visual impact. At 6.5 hectares, with a 26-metre-high building, it will significantly affect the landscape and should be clearly acknowledged.

3. Feasibility of Land Use Proposals

Several features—such as orchards, allotments, and tree planting—are shown within areas already allocated for converter station infrastructure. As things stand, these proposals are not viable and may give a false impression of what is possible.

4. Security and Access Constraints

The suggestion of a nature trail through the converter station site is likely to be incompatible with the high-security and safety measures in place, including 5-metre fencing and access restrictions. The majority of the cable trench route lies on privately owned land, making it highly unlikely that a continuous nature trail, as proposed, could be established.

5. Timing and Public Engagement

While I appreciate the intent behind this document, I believe it has been shared too early. With the Sea Link DCO registration closing on 23 June 2025, the focus right now should be on ensuring residents are fully aware of the proposals and encouraged to participate in the formal planning process. Sharing mitigation ideas at this stage may unintentionally signal acceptance of a project that still faces legitimate objections.

6. Risk of Mixed Messages

The document presents a positive future vision, but without fully explaining the associated infrastructure impacts, it risks making residents feel that these developments are a done deal. It's vital we provide balanced information so the community can make informed decisions and engage effectively.

7. Clarifying the Council's Position

I understand the Council's wish to be proactive and constructive, as reflected in its statement about preparing a positive plan should the projects proceed. However, this could be interpreted as conceding the outcome too early. I would encourage the Council to continue standing firmly with the community in opposing these plans while remaining prepared for all eventualities—without undermining the current opportunity to challenge them.

In Closing

I respectfully urge the Council not to submit the "Empowering Nature" document as part of its Relevant Representation. While I acknowledge the Council's responsibility to consider potential mitigations should the project proceed, this document does not offer realistic or viable mitigation measures. I recommend that the Council raise the key concerns during the registration stage, with any discussion of possible mitigations deferred to the examination phase.

Transparency and timing are essential to maintaining public trust and engagement during this critical phase. Therefore, it would be appreciated if the Council published the outcome of this consultation.

Thank you for all the work you do on behalf of Saxmundham. I hope this feedback is helpful and constructive, and I would be happy to discuss these points further.

11. Grave concern with regard to proposed Sub Stations and infrastructure

We wish to add our voices to those of the many concerned residents of Saxmundham with regard to the plans proposed for a number of industrial scale substations in the immediate vicinity of the town.

These huge structures and the infrastructure necessary for their construction and maintenance will destroy countryside which will be lost for ever, with the loss of natural habitat beneficial for all.

These proposed plans have been shown to be ill thought out but continue to be presented as the one solution to the development of the area as a crucial energy hub.

We are astonished that the private enterprises involved have been allowed to dominate this crucial conversation involving so many residents and concerned onlookers who quite clearly disagree with what is proposed.

This is nothing short of bullying by big business under the pretence of working in the national interest.

Governments past and present seem determined to ignore the intelligent proposals suggested by SEAS and others who have studied and described ways of energy creation without the level of destruction that will ensue if these entities have their way.

We hope very much that Saxmundham Town Council will not allow themselves to imagine that they will in any way be able to soften the damage done if these disastrous plans become reality and that they remain fully aware that what is proposed is not for the benefit of the town or the locality but that this locality is seen as a resource to be used whatever the consequences for the town, its inhabitants and the Heritage Coast in general.

Feedback from Benhall/Sternfield/Kelsale Residents

1. Empowering Nature

I am commenting on your Town Council's Empowering Nature document as a resident of Kelsale. Although retired now, I have over 25 years professional experience and a lifetime interest in natural history and conservation.

Fromus Boardwalk

I can see the attraction of such a proposal but, without wishing to seem negative, I do have the following reservations:

Has a biodiversity survey of the river and its banks been undertaken to see what species are already there?

Are the council aware of the presence of protected species such as water vole and slowworm in and adjacent to the river and possible adverse effects on these species of opening up the river bank?

What will be the impact of human disturbance on birds of conservation concern such as kingfisher that use the area?

Removal of bankside vegetation can adversely affect aquatic life by raising water temperature and increasing evaporation in a river which is already at low levels for most of the time.

There is a possibility of an increase in dumping of supermarket trolleys, logs and other undesirable material due to increased ease of access.

Although not mentioned in the present document, the provision of lighting on the boardwalk would have a negative effect on nocturnal mammals and invertebrates.

Managing water

Agree the creation of ponds, damp areas etc. would positively benefit biodiversity if sited correctly and be a beneficial way to deal with water from buildings.

Restoration of the Great Wood

This is an excellent idea as long as locally sourced native trees are used and these are well tended until established.

Woodland creation often lacks the essential ground flora found in an established ancient woodland, but there are a number of ancient woodland indicator plant species still present in nearby hedgerows. These are probably remnants of a once more extensive woodland that included the Great Wood.

Seed could be sensitively collected from these for propagation in part of the area set aside for allotments and then planted out amongst the new trees to produce a more natural and biodiverse woodland.

On the subject of trees, I understand that the plan is to divert the footpath from alongside Harris's Belt and Pit to a new route on the roadside - this denies walkers a pleasant route and should be resisted strongly!

I hear on the grapevine that groups opposed to the energy infrastructure are against projects such as the Great Wood restoration as they feel it in some way gives in to the developers, I think that it is very likely that these projects will go ahead anyway and that the Town Council is taking a sensible, pragmatic approach which could result in a positive gain for both biodiversity and people, something that cannot be said of the bleak areas of intensively farmed and poisoned land existing at present!

Thank you for inviting participation of local residents in this important project. I'm very happy to discuss any of these points further if required.

2. Your document 'Empowering Nature'

I am afraid Saxmundham Town Council do not understand the first rule of negotiation. You do not give your adversary Plan B before you have fought the battle of Plan A.

Worse still you have not recognised that the upcoming DCO is not a negotiation. It is a win or lose. All your 'Empowering Nature' document has done is give National Grid oxygen for winning its case. It may be well intentioned but it is naive in the extreme. Perhaps members of the council should Google 'Risk to communities from Hydrogen Storage' which is the next in the pipeline of projects all wanting to be in the same place as the Interconnectors. Then you might realise that your community allotments and fanciful nature walks could end up being blown sky high along with most of Saxmundham Town and surrounding areas.

Your 'Empowering Nature' has unwittingly done great damage.

3. Empowering Nature

There are two Fromus valleys and three definable Fromus rivers.

The Western Yoxford/Saxmundham valley and the Eastern Sternfield/Friston Valley.

The West Fromus rises near Yoxford flowing through Kelsale and Saxmundham.

The East Fromus rises near the B1119 towards Knodishall Green and flows through Sternfield.

The West and East Fromus come together to form the South Fromus and the Sternfield/Benhall Parish border.

I think an opportunity is missed in not including the East Fromus in the plans.

A Green Corridor Connection extension from the main Corridor, Saxmundham to Coast, along the East Fromus valley to the confluence at Benhall/Sternfield Ford would create a circular route.

What is particularly valuable about the East Fromus is its, proportional, lack of pollution compared to the West Fromus by runoff.

The agricultural problems endure but the West is subject to the A12, which the East is not, nor does it suffer from the same level of hardstand, urban, runoff.

Potentially, runoff from the substation being contained, filtered, the East Fromus is a better environmental prospect than the West

4. Empowering Nature

Please can I submit my comments on the Empowering Nature consultation document.

- Firstly, I accept this is a consultation document and would ask that Sternfield and Benhall are included in future iterations prior to sharing with National Grid.
- Brochure image on front page – The low-profile buildings at the top of the hill do not represent the true 26 metre height of the converter stations and give a false impression.
- The map showing proposed areas do not consider the other compounds identified by National Grid, and do not reflect the possible expansion to possibly 3 converter stations.
- It would be good to understand how the water harvesting will be implemented. We currently flood easily in Sternfield and the loss of water being held in the field where the converters will be can only cause an increase in flooding.
- The location of the orchard and allotments are where the LionLink converter will be positioned. With the 26-metre-high buildings, have you considered the loss of sunlight to that area as it will be in shadow much of the day.
- The final image of a beautiful view across Hurts Hall shows what we see today. This is not representative of the monstrous buildings and large bridge that will dominate the view. I would like to see the view from the road in Sternfield as this seems to have been omitted from every document so far as the converters will be seen from miles when coming from Friston.

5. Empowering Nature

I am utterly opposed to the proposed converter stations and previously sent you a report detailing the environmental impacts likely to result.

At the same time I applaud your vision outlined in your Empowering Nature document and strongly support all of these suggestions. A few additions:

Community fund to enable wildlife gardens: add compost bins.

Community orchard: particularly to include old varieties of fruit (apples, pears etc), especially those traditionally grown in this area.

There needs to be a time limit on when new trees and hedges go in, bearing in mind the devastating loss of thousands of trees by Sizewell C Co. With climate change, especially more frequent droughts, it will become increasingly difficult to keep new plants alive. There needs to be a commitment to ongoing monitoring and management, otherwise this will not be a success.

Feedback from Residents Outside the Local Area

1. Consultation Proposal

It was with deep concern, indeed shock that I read of the proposals in the EADT. National Grid seems to have clearly manipulated the council. The first duty of the council should be to protect the town and its rural surroundings, not to capitulate and become the mouthpiece for Sealink.

2. Empowering Nature

I wish to submit my views on the publication of Empowering Nature.

1) This should not have been presented before the 23rd June Consultation closing date. I understand the need to have mitigation plans at the ready, but I feel these are being presented as if planning has been granted.

2) The Empowering Nature documents implies that Saxmundham/ Friston and surrounding areas will be much, much nicer places for the development. Therefore, local people might be dissuaded from raising objections.

3) On top of the Sizewell upheaval in our area we have not got the road capacity to take this scale of build over a period of five years plus. This should be a brownfield site development which should be sited of shore and brought ashore to an industrial area.

4) In no way is it compatible with National Nature Reserves, Tourist areas, Heritage Coast, agricultural and natural landscapes. Not to mention the small towns and villages it will directly affect.

5) Although you can repurpose agricultural land and add footpaths, plant trees etc.

To recreate Reed beds, marshland, shingle floral habitats etc is something that you cannot do easily and would take many, many years, if it is possible.

6) Also in my experience what is offered in mitigation is often watered down for financial reasons. What might actually come to fruition might be very scant indeed.

7) Overall, if schemes like this go ahead in Suffolk coastal my feeling is I wish I could live somewhere else.

3. Empowering anger not nature

I feel relieved that I am not a resident of Saxmundham as to have a council that can put forward such twaddle is not only demeaning but suggests that the council is in collusion with National Grid. It is disgusting and utter nonsense and do they really think people will be sucked in by it !!

Sharing their vision for fromus communities REALLY!

Destroying the community more like.

Shame on you!!

4. "Empowering Nature"?

I was genuinely shocked to read your confusing document "Empowering Nature".

Aren't you supposed to be representing the residents' views and fighting against these massive substations which are going to completely devastate the area, rather than promoting these plans prematurely before they have even been agreed?

Also, you have left off one of the proposed substations completely — the height of which, by the way, will look a lot bigger than that pictured in the drawing!

This document is admitting defeat and is extremely concerning.

5. Empowering Nature project

As a Leiston resident I have read with interest the proposal for the Empowering Nature scheme on the Town Council website.

I have been appalled by the destruction and devastation caused by Sizewell C and the National Grid as well as the various infrastructure projects that support these schemes.

We need clean energy and the proposals set out in the Empowering Nature Project will mitigate some of the impacts of these vast changes to our local communities. The provision of green spaces and environmental protections for this area will bring benefits to wildlife and nature as well as encouraging people to be more involved in local conservation efforts.

I support this initiative and hope it is looked at in a positive light.

Feedback With No Stated Location

1. Empowering Nature

I am writing to formally object to the "Empowering Nature" document recently published by Saxmundham Town Council. While I recognise the importance of environmental initiatives, this document is misleading, unrealistic, and prematurely presented, failing to acknowledge critical infrastructure projects that will fundamentally shape Saxmundham's future.

1. Fromus Bridge Crossing Access Timeline

The document incorrectly suggests that residents will have access to the Fromus bridge crossing. However, public access will not be possible until at least 2035–2037, as it is entirely dependent on the completion of both the Sea Link and Lion Link converter stations—each requiring approximately 5–6 years of construction. Additionally, National Grid's Development Consent Order (DCO) documentation confirms space for a third converter station, potentially further delaying access.

2. Omission of Lion Link Converter Station

The "Empowering Nature" map fails to include the Lion Link converter station, despite its major footprint northeast of the Sea Link converter station. This omission is misleading, as the Lion Link site covers 6.5 hectares and includes a 26-metre-tall industrial hangar, significantly altering the landscape.

3. Misrepresentation of Land Use

The document presents allotments, orchards, and tree planting in an area already designated for the Lion Link converter station. These proposals are entirely unfeasible since the converter station's construction is planned for this location.

4. Security Restrictions on Nature Trail

The claim that a nature trail will be directed through the converter station site is highly unlikely due to strict security protocols. A 5-metre security fence, with high wall will enclose each compound-security measures preventing public access.

5. Premature Presentation of "Empowering Nature" Document

This document should be treated as a contingency plan, not a possible proposal. It should not have been presented to the Saxmundham community before the Sea Link DCO registration closes on 23rd June 2025. Until this process concludes, the full scope of infrastructure projects remains uncertain, making it premature to propose mitigation strategies. Only after the DCO registration period ends should mitigation proposals be shared and properly consulted on.

6. Misleading and Unrealistic Vision

The "Empowering Nature" document paints a fanciful, utopian vision that will never be achievable if the converter stations are built. By portraying an idealised future, the document risks discouraging residents from formally objecting to the Sea Link DCO, as it suggests that everything will be harmonious and well-integrated, leading people to believe there is no need to participate. This misrepresentation is deeply concerning, as it is essential that residents fully understand the true impact of these developments and have the opportunity to voice their objections. I spoke to a neighbour recently who thought that Sea Link and Lion Link were a 'done deal' having been to a meeting in Benhall recently.

7. Rebuttal to Saxmundham Town Council's Statement

Saxmundham Town Council has publicly stated: "We remain opposed to these plans, but if they do go ahead, we need to be ready with a positive and credible plan for what Saxmundham and the surrounding communities should receive in return." "Our aim is for NGET—and ultimately for the secretary of state—to view Saxmundham as a flagship case study where a potentially negative situation has been turned into something positive." "We are calling on NGET to work with us. They are under no legal obligation to go beyond the minimum, but by doing so, they could demonstrate what genuine engagement with host communities looks like. "While Saxmundham Town Council claims to oppose these plans, its approach ultimately serves the interests of NGET rather than the community. By shifting the focus towards mitigation and compensation, the council risks weakening opposition efforts and legitimising the development before the full objection process has been completed. Their statement— "We remain opposed to these plans, but if they do go ahead, we need to be ready with a positive and credible plan..."—implicitly concedes defeat, encouraging residents to accept the project as inevitable, rather than actively opposing it. Furthermore, the idea of Saxmundham serving as a "flagship case study" for mitigation suggests that the council is resigned to the developments proceeding. This narrative plays into NGET's hands, allowing the company to present the project as a model of cooperation rather than recognising the genuine concerns and opposition within the community. Most concerning is the statement—"NGET is under no legal obligation to go beyond the minimum, but by doing so, they could demonstrate what genuine engagement with host communities looks like." —which fails to acknowledge that NGET should be held accountable and pressured to minimise harm from these developments. Rather than encouraging proactive resistance, this statement sets low expectations, allowing NGET to offer only token gestures rather than meaningful concessions.

The council's position undermines the importance of fully challenging these developments before mitigation discussions take place. Residents must be encouraged to actively participate in the Sea Link DCO process before accepting compensation-based discussions, ensuring the strongest possible objection against these plans. Given these inaccuracies, misleading claims, and premature proposals, I urge the council to withdraw and revise the "Empowering Nature" document to reflect the realities of Saxmundham's development. Transparency and accuracy are essential to ensuring that residents are properly informed and meaningfully engaged in shaping the town's future. I welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns further and look forward to your response. I was at the meeting last night at Saxmundham Market Hall.

2. Empowering Nature

- Unfortunately I was not able to attend the meeting on Thursday.
- While I recognise the initiative that went into creating the 'Empowering Nature' document, I think that it gives the wrong impression - either that permission has already been granted for the substation projects, or that Saxmundham as a community supports the development. There are all shades of opinion about this in Saxmundham, but nobody I have spoken to thinks that trying to pre-empt mitigation before any decision has been made is a good idea.

- There are many non-Nimby arguments against the siting of the substations outside Saxmundham, not least that there are better and more appropriate sites elsewhere. One cannot help but think that the developers view Saxmundham as an 'easy option' and that the Town Council plays into this role by putting out a document like this. A huge nuclear power station project on our doorstep, potentially huge life-changing construction works to construct vast concrete blocks just outside the town, and the possibility of up to 800 new houses.
- If we accept all this, we look like we'd be happy to accept more. What next?

3. Empowering Nature and National Grid proposals

I'm just writing to offer my feedback on the 'Empowering Nature' report. I think it's an excellent and very worthwhile proposal; in the very unfortunate circumstance that current National Grid plans go ahead.

I must make it clear, however, that it should not be a replacement for protesting AGAINST the proposed NSIP projects. I think the first point of consideration should be the exceptional burden of energy projects that this community and the National Landscape coast is already being asked to bear, and no more should be allowed.

If one project continually opens the door for the next, then the end result will be the total industrialisation and ruination of this coast. I believe the burden of development, the benefits of which will be enjoyed by the whole country, should be evenly distributed over the whole country, with an emphasis on offshore, brownfield and urban sites, and not concentrated in one area. Suffolk has done more than its share already!

I believe, should the DCO be granted, that would be the time to talk about mitigation proposals. Doing so before could potentially dilute the strength of feeling against the proposals.

Organisational Feedback:

1. Kelsale-cum-Carlton Parish Council

At the Kelsale-cum-Carlton Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday evening, the Empowering Nature initiative was supported by a majority of the Councillors present.

2. Suffolk Wildlife Trust

Thank you so much for this information, which looks amazing! I'll share it with the Wilder Communities Team.

3. RSPB

I am currently working on the RSPB's approach to the Sea Link project alongside Adam Rowlands. As you will know, this project is proposed to affect our North Warren reserve and potentially have wider impacts on wildlife. Whilst talking to Phil Watson at SCC recently, he mentioned your Empowering Nature project and suggested it might be useful for us to discuss this with you and see if we can share ideas. Do let me know if this would be of interest and perhaps we can set up a call.

4. Dr Andy Tickle, Planning Expert and Campaign to Protect Rural England

Requested a meeting to discuss Empowering Nature.

5. Suffolk County Council

Requested a meeting to discuss Empowering Nature.

6. East Suffolk Council

Requested a meeting to discuss Empowering Nature.

National Grid Electricity Transmission – Sea Link – EN020026

Saxmundham Town Council – Relevant Representation - Draft

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Saxmundham Town Council submits this Relevant Representation to express its serious concerns regarding the application from National Grid Electricity Transmission for a Development Consent Order for Sea Link. While we acknowledge the strategic importance of strengthening the UK's electricity transmission network, we are not satisfied that the applicant has demonstrated sufficient regard for the local environmental, social, and economic impacts of the scheme.
- 1.2 Saxmundham Town Council is **strongly opposed to the proposed siting of the converter station** in close proximity to the town's residential areas. Its dominant visual presence would irreversibly transform open farmland into an industrialised landscape, causing lasting and unacceptable harm to the character of the area and the wellbeing of local residents.
- 1.3 Our principal concerns relate to:
 - 1.3.1 **Visual and Landscape:** the converter station would constitute a permanent and dominant industrial presence into open countryside that currently defines the rural character of Saxmundham. The scale, height and lighting of the proposed infrastructure would cause long-term harm to valued views, tranquillity, and tourism appeal.
 - 1.3.2 **Construction Impacts:** the introduction of an access road and bridge, construction site and compounds, and extensive cabling works would cause long-term disruption to the local road network and raise risks to health and wellbeing.
 - 1.3.3 **Noise and Disturbance:** Construction and operational noise, dust, vibration, and light pollution are likely to have severe effects on residential amenity, especially for residents and wildlife in the vicinity of the converter station site, access road and bridge, and construction compounds.
 - 1.3.4 **Socio-Economic and Reputational Impact:** Saxmundham's growing economy is rooted in its rural identity, heritage, and landscape setting. The town's attractiveness to new residents, businesses, and visitors would be significantly diminished by the imposition of large-scale energy infrastructure. The proposal jeopardises key regeneration priorities and long-term investment in the town.
 - 1.3.5 **Biodiversity and Environmental Degradation:** the development would result in irreversible habitat loss and harm to wildlife corridors, with insufficient clarity on how biodiversity net gain would be meaningfully delivered or enforced.
 - 1.3.6 **Mitigation and Community Benefit:** the measures proposed by the applicant are inadequate and fail to reflect the scale of harm the project would cause. Saxmundham Town Council has

put forward a range of positive, deliverable initiatives that respond directly to the disruption and long-term impacts on the community. We urge that these or similar proposals be developed in full consultation with affected communities and secured through clear, enforceable commitments.

- 1.4 We respectfully request the Examining Authority to recognise that a proposal of this scale must deliver not only national energy objectives but also safeguard the wellbeing of the communities it affects. Saxmundham Town Council considers that the current application fails to achieve this essential balance.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Saxmundham Town Council is the first tier of local government for the town of Saxmundham in East Suffolk. As the democratically elected body representing the residents, businesses, and community organisations of the town, Saxmundham Town Council plays a central role in articulating local interests and safeguarding community wellbeing.
- 2.2 In accordance with the Planning Act 2008, Saxmundham Town Council is a statutory consultee in the examination of the Sea Link Development Consent Order ('DCO') application submitted by National Grid Electricity Transmission ('the applicant'). This designation recognises Saxmundham Town Council's proximity to, and likely experience of, significant impacts resulting from the proposed development.
- 2.3 This Relevant Representation sets out Saxmundham Town Council's principal concerns to the Sea Link proposal, an electricity transmission project which involves a new subsea and onshore connection between Suffolk and Kent, designed to increase network capacity and support offshore wind energy integration. The project includes a converter station near Saxmundham, underground cabling, and a marine cable route beneath the North Sea.
- 2.4 This Relevant Representation particularly objects to the siting of the converter station on the boundary of the parish. It also highlights the absence of sufficient mitigation and community benefit and puts forward constructive, community-driven proposals for consideration by the Examining Authority. Saxmundham Town Council's position is informed by formal resolutions, public consultation, and engagement with principal authorities.
- 2.5 Saxmundham Town Council welcomes the opportunity to participate in the examination process to ensure that the voices of our community are heard in the national infrastructure planning system.

3. Overview of Saxmundham

- 3.1 Saxmundham is characterful market town in East Suffolk. It serves as a rural service centre and is surrounded by environmentally sensitive landscapes. Its identity as the 'Gateway to the Heritage Coast' reflects not only its geographical position and cultural significance, but also its strong transport links that connect inland communities with the coast. The proposed siting of the Sea Link converter station on high ground just outside the town poses a serious and irreversible threat to Saxmundham's character, growth and wider reputation, with a risk of it becoming known as the 'Gateway to the

Electricity Coast’.

- 3.2 Saxmundham’s population is currently around 5,000, having experienced steady growth in recent decades. Unlike its close neighbour Leiston, known for its proud engineering heritage, Saxmundham is a service centre for the surrounding rural area and has never had an industrial base or character.
- 3.3 The heart of the town is designated a Conservation Area and features numerous listed buildings dating from the 16th to 18th centuries, as well as several imposing Victorian townhouses and the iconic Market Hall. These architectural landmarks offer tangible evidence of Saxmundham’s historical importance in the rural economy. Today, the town continues to function as a commercial and market centre for the surrounding villages, retaining its identity as a rural focal point.
- 3.4 Saxmundham’s role as a centre for trade and exchange is centuries old. Its formal history as a market town began in 1272, when King Henry III granted a Market Charter. The town grew around this marketplace reinforcing Saxmundham’s importance as a medieval trading hub. This tradition of rural centrality continued into the 19th and 20th centuries. Saxmundham hosted the Suffolk Show on fourteen occasions, often on The Layers, an open space just south of the town. The arrival of the railway in the mid-19th century was pivotal in expanding access to the town, bringing visitors not only to the Suffolk Show but also to its renowned livestock market, which operated until 1977. Though the old market has since closed, the town’s strong transport links have ensured that its market town character thrives into the 21st century.
- 3.5 Today, Saxmundham maintains its heritage through regular markets and its role as a modern retail centre - home to two major supermarkets located opposite each other on Church Street. These commercial offerings are complemented by a variety of independent shops, bars, and cafes that contribute to the town’s vibrant economy. The town also enjoys a growing calendar of community events that bring residents and visitors together throughout the year, alongside a wide range of amenities that enhance quality of life and social wellbeing,.
- 3.6 Saxmundham proudly embraces its current identity offering a unique blend of heritage, modern convenience, and connectivity. This combination lies at the heart of the town’s enduring character and fosters a strong sense of belonging, community, and pride.

4. Overview of Local Impact

- 4.1 Saxmundham is characterised by its compact settlement pattern, heritage assets, and close-knit community. The surrounding landscape of open farmland and wooded valleys forms an essential part of the town’s identity and appeal - supporting local wellbeing, biodiversity, and a modest but growing tourism economy. Saxmundham serves not only its own population but also surrounding villages that rely on it for services, education, health care, and community amenities.
- 4.2 The proposed Sea Link converter station poses a disproportionate and deeply concerning threat to Saxmundham’s rural character. Its scale, form, and proximity to residential areas are wholly incompatible with the town’s setting. Key concerns include long-term visual harm, construction disturbance, and the cumulative erosion of local distinctiveness. These matters are explored in detail

in subsequent sections.

- 4.3 This Relevant Representation outlines Saxmundham Town Council's strong objections to the siting of the converter station and associated infrastructure, as well as our wider concerns regarding:

- 4.3.1 The scale, duration, and intensity of construction-related disturbance.
- 4.3.2 Significant traffic impacts including congestion, safety risks, and disruption to residents, businesses, and emergency services.
- 4.3.3 Risks to public safety and reduced emergency response capability.
- 4.3.4 Lasting damage to the rural landscape, tranquillity, and public rights of way.
- 4.3.5 Cumulative industrialisation and loss of local identity and distinctiveness.
- 4.3.6 Harm to health and wellbeing from noise, air, and light pollution.
- 4.3.7 Socio-economic impacts, including reputational damage and reduced visitor appeal.
- 4.3.8 Absence of clear, enforceable mitigation and community benefit measures.

5. Proximity to a Rural Market Town

- 5.1 The proximity of the converter station is our primary concern. The proposed site is too close to both Saxmundham and Sternfield, situated on elevated ground and alarmingly near residential housing. Unlike comparable onshore infrastructure, such as the Viking Link and Hornsea converter stations which are located adjacent to major dual carriageway 'A' roads or sited in remote areas, this proposal represents an unprecedented imposition on a small market town and its surrounding communities.
- 5.2 The proposal would introduce a vast industrial structure into a prominent rural landscape setting near the town's eastern and southern approaches, disrupting key views and affecting heritage assets such as the Grade II* listed St John the Baptist Church and the Grade II listed Hurts Hall. The full extent of visual and landscape impacts is detailed in Chapter 6.
- 5.3 Although the applicant proposes landscaping mitigation,¹ it is acknowledged that such planting will take decades to mature, during which time the landscape will remain visibly industrialised. This prolonged visual intrusion is incompatible with the amenity of the countryside and conflicts with key policies in East Suffolk Council's Local Plan, which seek to protect and enhance rural character,² safeguard locally distinctive landscapes,³ and support the growth of sustainable tourism and outdoor

¹ Sea Link – Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan – Suffolk (Application Document 7.5.7.1) (APP-348)

² SCLP10.4: Landscape Character – Requires that new development protects and enhances the distinctive landscape character of the district.

³ SCLP11.1: Design Quality – Emphasises the importance of protecting visual amenity and securing high-quality design that respects local context.

recreation.⁴ The siting of large-scale industrial infrastructure in open countryside undermines these objectives and risks long-term reputational harm to the area's visitor economy.

- 5.4 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully invites the Examining Authority to undertake an accompanied site visit to fully appreciate the proximity of the proposed Sea Link infrastructure to residential properties and the town itself. A site inspection will provide essential context to understand the potential visual, acoustic, and amenity impacts on the local community - many of which cannot be fully conveyed through plans or written representations alone.

6. Visual and Landscape Impact

- 6.1 The landscape to the south of the proposed site is not naturally screened, leaving the 26-metre-high converter station highly visible. Its scale, industrial form, and prominence are wholly out of keeping with the character of the area. The development would represent a significant industrialisation of the countryside east of Saxmundham and would severely compromise the wide, open views towards the south of the town, particularly those adjacent to the historic setting of Hurts Hall.
- 6.2 The development would dominate key approaches to Saxmundham from the south and east, obstructing views from the B1121 and other local vantage points, including designated public rights of way. Particularly affected are open views across the River Fromus valley, an area valued for its tranquillity and natural beauty, and views towards the heritage assets of St John the Baptist Church and Hurts Hall. These features contribute meaningfully to the town's wider landscape setting and are referenced in the Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment as part of the 'Estate Sandlands' character area.⁵
- 6.3 Saxmundham's Neighbourhood Plan reinforces the importance of protecting these landscape views, that are central to the town's rural character and sense of place.⁶ Among them are key vistas across the Fromus Valley and the southern approaches to the town, which are visible from publicly accessible footpaths, roads, and open spaces. The Plan recognises these views as integral to the parish's landscape character, stating that "development that would significantly harm the character or appearance of these important views will not be supported."⁷ The proposed converter station would directly conflict with these policies, resulting in enduring visual harm and erosion of local distinctiveness.
- 6.4 In addition, the proposed access road and associated bridge, reaching heights of up to six metres, would introduce visually intrusive infrastructure into an otherwise undeveloped rural location. This would require the removal of established trees and hedgerows and would result in permanent and irreversible harm to the landscape character and setting of Saxmundham's southern approach.
- 6.5 Saxmundham Town Council acknowledges that the applicant proposes tree planting around the converter station site as a form of visual mitigation.⁸ However, the applicant concedes that even after 15 years of operation, the converter station "would remain visible and a noticeable change in the composition of the view would remain, due to the scale and massing of the infrastructure." We note that newly planted vegetation takes decades to reach maturity, and during that time the converter

⁴ SCLP6.4: Tourism Development – Encourages tourism that supports the rural economy and protects the natural and built environment.

⁵ Suffolk Coastal District Council (2011). Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment, Part 2: Landscape Character Areas

⁶ Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Policy SAXS11

⁷ Sea Link – Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan – Suffolk (Application Document 7.5.7.1) (APP-348)

⁸ Ibid.

station and its associated infrastructure - including fencing, lighting columns, and security measures - will remain highly visible. This prolonged visual blight, extending for over 40 years, is wholly unacceptable.

- 6.6 In addition, the applicant states that "the construction works associated with the River Fromus bridge crossing would result in significant visual effects."⁹ While such assessments are frequently caveated, Saxmundham Town Council remains deeply concerned that the views identified as important in the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan, particularly those across the Fromus Valley and southern approaches to the town, will be irreversibly harmed. We therefore reiterate the objections raised in our formal response to the applicant's statutory consultation.¹⁰
- 6.7 Furthermore, tree planting along the River Fromus bridge crossing is anticipated to only "partially" offset the loss of existing vegetation, indicating that the effectiveness of landscaping in restoring the area's character is limited and long-term.¹¹
- 6.8 The visual impact during construction will be even more severe. The applicant anticipates the presence of "large-scale uncharacteristic machinery and materials" and acknowledges the obstruction of "views across arable farmland," which form part of the open rural character valued in East Suffolk's countryside.¹²
- 6.9 Saxmundham Town Council therefore considers the proposed siting of the converter station to be in direct conflict with multiple objectives and policies of its adopted Neighbourhood Plan. Policy SAXS11 seeks to safeguard key landscape views and preserve the rural setting of the town – both of which would be severely affected by the scale, massing, and industrial character of the proposed development. More broadly, the scheme undermines the Neighbourhood Plan's core vision to maintain Saxmundham's distinct identity as a rural market town within a countryside setting. The imposition of large-scale energy infrastructure on elevated land to the east of the town would erode this identity, diminish local amenity, and compromise the Neighbourhood Plan's sustainable development objectives.
- 6.10 Saxmundham Town Council considers it wholly unacceptable that no finalised exterior design for either the converter station or the proposed access bridge has been submitted by the applicant at the pre-examination stage. This lack of detail prevents the local community and statutory consultees from fully assessing the visual, environmental, and heritage impacts of the development.
- 6.11 The converter station site is also crossed by, or near, several public rights of way, including footpaths 491/006 and 460/023, which currently offer countryside walking routes connecting Saxmundham to Sternfield and Benhall. The industrialisation of these landscapes, both visually and audibly, will erode their appeal, reduce usage, and detract from East Suffolk's aspirations to support health and wellbeing through access to the natural environment.¹³
- 6.12 The cumulative impact of Sea Link and the likely future addition of National Grid Ventures' Lion Link, also proposed in the same location, raises further concern. If both converter stations proceed, Saxmundham would be encircled to the south and east by vast infrastructure, creating a 'wall of steel effect' and fundamentally changing the town's rural setting. The resulting visual degradation would

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Sea Link – Consultation Report Appendix F Targeted Consultation Part 2 of 2a (APP-314)

¹¹ Sea Link – Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan – Suffolk (Application Document 7.5.7.1) (APP-348)

¹² Ibid.

¹³ SCLP8.2: Open Space, Play and Outdoor Recreation

be incompatible with the town's designation as a rural market town¹⁴ and undermine its appeal to visitors, residents, and businesses alike.

- 6.13 Saxmundham Town Council considers the proposed location is wholly inappropriate for industrial infrastructure of this scale. We call on the Examining Authority to give full weight to the irreversible and cumulative visual harm this proposal would cause to Saxmundham's rural character and to reject any proposal that fails to protect the distinctiveness of this valued landscape.
- 6.14 Saxmundham Town Council recommends that the applicant adopts enhanced measures to mitigate the visual impact of the converter station and associated infrastructure. In particular:
- 6.14.1 The applicant should excavate or partially recess the converter station into the landscape and consider adjusting its massing and form to reduce overall height and prominence. Bunding, even when combined with tree planting, will be insufficient on its own to screen the development effectively.
 - 6.14.2 The architectural design of the converter station should be sympathetic to the rural character of the area. Saxmundham Town Council supports the inclusion of the proposed green roof and recommends its incorporation into the final design to help the building blend into its surroundings.
 - 6.14.3 Additional natural screening should be provided through the planting of shrubs and copses of native trees around the converter station site. This will help to obscure its scale, preserve important views, and enhance local biodiversity. While some planting is proposed by the applicant,¹⁵ Saxmundham Town Council notes with concern that no early planting is planned to the north of the access bridge in the region of Wood Farm, nor on either side of the bridge where it traverses elevated farmland.
 - 6.14.4 The exterior of the converter station should be clad in materials with colours and textures that are sympathetic to the surrounding landscape to minimise visual intrusion.
- 6.15 In addition, Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests the Examining Authority to require the applicant to consider and present alternative access routes to the converter station site, such as via the new Sizewell Link Road, to mitigate harm to the rural landscape, local heritage assets, and the surrounding environment.

7. Impact of Traffic and Traffic Management

- 7.1 Saxmundham Town Council strongly objects to the proposed siting of the Sea Link converter station due to inadequate road infrastructure, the inter-project cumulative impacts from multiple Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), and the implausibility of the proposed access route for Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AILs).

¹⁴ SCLP12.28: Strategy for Saxmundham

¹⁵ Sea Link – Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan – Suffolk, 7.5.7.1 (APP-348)

- 7.2 If a Development Consent Order is granted, Saxmundham will be encircled by concurrent or sequential NSIPs and major housing developments. These include:
- 7.2.1 Sizewell C nuclear power station, approximately 6.5 miles east, with construction ongoing until the mid-2030s.
 - 7.2.2 ScottishPower Renewables' EA1N and EA2 consented substation at Friston, approximately 4 miles southeast, with construction planned between 2025 and 2030.
 - 7.2.3 The South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood, which is designated in East Suffolk Council's Local Plan, is set to deliver around 800 new homes between the town and east of the A12, with an associated employment area to the west of the A12.
 - 7.2.4 Carlton Park Industrial Estate extension in neighbouring Kelsale-cum-Carlton, currently in planning with eleven additional units proposed.
- 7.3 The local road network is fundamentally unsuitable to accommodate the volume, scale and frequency of HGV and AIL movements associated with these developments. Despite Sizewell C not yet reaching peak workforce levels, Saxmundham and the surrounding area already experience increased congestion. The A12, the only major arterial route, has limited capacity to absorb additional demand. Sea Link construction traffic will rely heavily on the B1122 and B1119 leading from the A12 - both narrow, rural roads that are ill-equipped for such sustained use.
- 7.4 The A12 is primarily single carriageway from south of Wickham Market northwards to Lowestoft. Whilst the A12 traffic around Saxmundham is forecasted during peak traffic periods for the Sea Link project to be within theoretical capacity, problems are envisaged further south.¹⁶ Traffic modelling shows that:
- 7.4.1 The A12 from the Wickham Market by-pass to Friday Street will exceed its theoretical capacity during the August peak.
 - 7.4.2 The A12 north of Woodbridge is forecast to operate above theoretical capacity before it transitions to dual carriageway.
- 7.5 Even where traffic volumes on the A12 are forecast to remain within theoretical capacity near Saxmundham, construction-related temporary works and traffic management interventions will disrupt flow. Within a 2-mile stretch of the A12, multiple overlapping roadworks are planned:
- 7.5.1 A1094/Friday Street - roundabout for Sizewell C - to end circa 2026.
 - 7.5.2 A12 - temporary traffic management for EA1N and EA2 - 2025-2026.
 - 7.5.3 A12/B1121 - junction works for Sea Link - from 2026.
 - 7.5.4 A12 between B1121 and B1119 - roundabout and pedestrian crossing for the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood - from 2026.

¹⁶ Appendix 1 - Suffolk Heritage Coast Energy Projects, Traffic Impact Summary, 13/02/25, pp. 18-19

- 7.6 Further north, at Kelsale-cum-Carlton, the A12 will be realigned to accommodate the Sizewell Link Road, including a new roundabout anticipated around 2026-2027. While the Sea Link applicant suggests it will not overlap with other NSIPs, Saxmundham Town Council is concerned that schedule slippage, a common risk in major infrastructure delivery, could result in simultaneous, overlapping works and associated congestion.
- 7.7 Notably, every main junction serving Saxmundham is designated a primary access route for one or more NSIPs:
- 7.7.1 A12/A1094 Friston - EA1N and EA2
 - 7.7.2 A12/B1121 Benhall - Sea Link
 - 7.7.3 A12/B1122 Yoxford - Sizewell C
 - 7.7.4 A12/North of Kelsale - Sizewell Link Road
- 7.8 Sea Link's preferred route for HGVs and AILs is via the A12 and B1121. However, the applicant has not proposed any enhancements for the dangerous A12/B1121 junction. This junction requires vehicles to enter a central refuge to turn right across oncoming traffic; a manoeuvre made riskier by increased volumes and slow-turning construction vehicles.
- 7.9 The B1121 railway bridge at Benhall is another key concern. A Suffolk County Council inspection resulted in a weight restriction of 46 tonnes.¹⁷ Accommodating AILs would necessitate constructing an overbridge or extensive reinforcement, potentially requiring temporary road and rail closures. These disruptions would not only affect residents and businesses but could compromise Sizewell C's freight rail logistics and escalate traffic pressure elsewhere.
- 7.10 Although the proposed Sea Link access road between Benhall and Saxmundham would relieve some pressure from the town centre, it would impose severe impacts on Benhall. This rural route is regularly used by pedestrians, cyclists, horse-riders and children walking to the local primary school. Increased traffic movements here pose clear safety and wellbeing concerns.
- 7.11 Saxmundham Town Council anticipates that traffic congestion and construction delays on the A12 will encourage 'rat-running' via unsuitable rural roads, especially:
- 7.11.1 Southbound: Sternfield, Snape, Tunstall, Eyke, Melton
 - 7.11.2 Northbound: Kelsale, Carlton, Clay Hills to Leiston and Sizewell
- Such diversions would increase accident risk, endanger vulnerable road users, and disrupt small communities unprepared for such traffic volumes.
- 7.12 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests the Examining Authority to urge the applicant to
- 7.12.1 establish and operate a vehicle movement identification and compliance scheme (e.g. GPS tracking or permit-based system) to ensure all HGVs and LGVs strictly adhere to approved construction routes.

¹⁷ Sea Link – Consultation Report, Section 5.1.7, Part 2 of 2 (APP-314)

- 7.12.2 fund additional ambulance capacity, paramedics and community midwifery support to serve Saxmundham and the wider district, in coordination with the NHS. This should include either a dedicated local ambulance unit or support for enhanced coverage from nearby stations, to address the heightened risk of delays to emergency care caused by road congestion.
- 7.12.3 coordinate with Sizewell C Co to share its northern and southern Park and Ride facilities, thereby reducing the volume of construction workforce vehicles travelling into and through Saxmundham.
- 7.12.4 coordinate with Sizewell C Co to make use of the existing offsite freight management facility at Orwell Logistics Park to regulate HGV movements along the A12 corridor and avoid congestion hotspots.
- 7.13 The cumulative impact of construction traffic, workforce vehicles, and delivery movements associated with Sizewell C, EA1N, EA2, Sea Link, Lion Link, and the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood will place the local road network under intolerable and unsustainable strain. The existing infrastructure is wholly inadequate to accommodate the scale and concurrency of these developments. This will lead to:
 - 7.13.1 Long-term operational challenges for nationally critical energy infrastructure.
 - 7.13.2 Severe disruption during construction, with reduced connectivity and economic resilience for Saxmundham.
 - 7.13.3 Unacceptable risks to community safety, health and wellbeing.
- 7.14 The applicant proposes that, in the event of a closure of the B1121, a temporary diversion route would be implemented via the A12 to the B1119 at Rendham Road, continuing through to Mill Street and Chantry Road.¹⁸ Saxmundham Town Council considers this diversion wholly inappropriate and unsafe due to the following reasons:
 - 7.14.1 The route passes through densely populated residential areas.
 - 7.14.2 Roads and pavements are narrow and unsuitable for increased HGV volumes.
 - 7.14.3 The area includes a primary school, a nursing home and a facility for vulnerable adults.
 - 7.14.4 The former high school site is expected to accommodate SEND provision, increasing the presence of vulnerable children.
 - 7.14.5 The fire and ambulance stations are accessed from side streets leading to Rendham Road, creating potential delays to emergency response times.
 - 7.14.6 A level crossing on this route restricts traffic flows up to twice an hour.

¹⁸ Sea Link – Rights of Way and Access Plans, Sheet 1 of 6 (APP-025)

- 7.14.7 The route traverses a traffic-light-controlled junction that is already subject to congestion.
- 7.14.8 Sections of the route fall within the town's Conservation Area, including Chantry Road with a 7.5-tonne weight restriction, raising concerns about the structural integrity of older properties.
- 7.14.9 The increase in heavy traffic may deter residents and visitors from using the town centre, adversely affecting local businesses and economic vitality.
- 7.15 The applicant indicates that, in addition to the newly proposed access road from the B1121, access will be provided via an existing track leading to Wood Farm from the B1119.¹⁹ Saxmundham Town Council understands that to reach this route, construction HGVs will travel along the B1121, passing directly through the centre of Saxmundham, before ascending the B1119. The applicant estimates that approximately 3% of construction vehicles will use this route. We respectfully request that the Examining Authority seek clarification as to whether this 3% figure applies solely to early mobilisation works—and, if so, the anticipated duration of that phase—or whether it relates to the entire construction period, including peak traffic phases.
- 7.16 Saxmundham Town Council further requests that the Examining Authority clarify whether the applicant anticipates five²⁰ or ten²¹ HGVs using this route daily, as both figures appear in the documentation. Greater transparency is essential to properly assess the scale, frequency, and localised impacts of construction traffic on Saxmundham's road network and residential amenity.
- 7.17 Saxmundham Town Council objects to the proposal that Sea Link construction traffic be routed through the centre of the town. The town's existing infrastructure is wholly unsuited to accommodate this level of disruption, and the consequences for public safety, accessibility, and quality of life would be significant. Specific concerns include:
- 7.17.1 Noise and disturbance to residential properties situated near main roads through the town, particularly along South Entrance, Church Street and the High Street.
- 7.17.2 High pedestrian activity, including children and older residents, at the crossroads where compliance with signal-controlled crossings is inconsistent. The risk of accidents will rise significantly with additional traffic.
- 7.17.3 Congestion on the High Street is regularly exacerbated by delivery vehicles and motorists stopping illegally, particularly shoppers with mobility issues. Increased HGV traffic will worsen safety risks and traffic flow.
- 7.17.4 Sun glare during winter months can obscure driver visibility on key routes through the town, further increasing accident risk in the presence of larger vehicles.
- 7.17.5 Church Street frequently experiences bottlenecks, with supermarket traffic, bus stops on

¹⁹ Sea Link – Environmental Statement, Chapter 7, Part 2, 6.2.2.7 Traffic and Transport (APP-054)

²⁰ Sea Link – 5.17, Appendix F, Targeted Consultation, Part 2 of 2, pp. 145-152 (APP-314)

²¹ Ibid.

both sides of the road, and a zebra crossing that is partially obscured by queuing vehicles.²²

7.17.6 Unsafe pedestrian behaviour on Church Street, particularly by vulnerable pedestrians who do not always use the zebra crossing, is already a concern and would be exacerbated by additional traffic volumes.

7.17.7 Lack of a footpath from Manor Gardens into the town centre means that pedestrians must cross Church Hill at an informal and already hazardous location. Increased traffic movements will make this route significantly more dangerous.

7.18 Saxmundham Town Council further objects to the proposal that Sea Link construction traffic be routed through the centre of town, due to the daily movements of school children, as follows:

7.18.1 School children congregate daily at the South Entrance traffic lights to board and alight from school buses, often during peak periods of proposed construction vehicle movements. This location is already busy at peak times and lacks sufficient space or infrastructure to safely accommodate high volumes of traffic alongside vulnerable road users.

7.18.2 Saxmundham has only one primary school and no secondary school provision. As a result, all children above primary school age, and many younger pupils attending schools of choice, are required to travel by car or bus to access state education in neighbouring towns including Leiston, Framlingham, and Woodbridge. Post-16 students must travel further afield by road to Framlingham, Halesworth, Lowestoft, or Ipswich to attend sixth forms or colleges. In addition, all special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision currently requires road transport to specialist settings in Lowestoft or Ipswich, placing additional strain on transport infrastructure and increasing the frequency of journeys involving vulnerable children.

7.18.3 This daily movement of pupils, many of whom rely on school buses or parental transport, already presents a significant traffic and safety consideration. The introduction of heavy construction traffic during peak travel times poses a serious risk to the wellbeing of school-age children and their families and must be factored into any construction and traffic management planning.

7.19 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests that the Examining Authority considers the following specific mitigation measures in relation to construction traffic entering the town. Many of these recommendations were previously submitted by the Town Council during the applicant's statutory public consultation but were, in our view, insufficiently addressed:²³

7.19.1 All Sea Link construction traffic should be restricted from travelling through Saxmundham during peak shopping hours and weekday rush hours to reduce disruption and risk to residents.

7.19.2 The applicant must coordinate closely with Suffolk County Council to ensure traffic

²² Appendix 2 – View of Church Street Traffic

²³ Sea Link - Environmental Statement, Chapter 5.1.6, Part 4 of 4 (APP-312)

management measures do not conflict with other scheduled or ongoing roadworks.

- 7.19.3 The existing zebra crossing on Church Street should be upgraded to a signal-controlled pedestrian crossing to enhance safety in an area with high footfall and vehicle congestion.
- 7.19.4 A new zebra crossing should be installed at the top of Church Hill, opposite the bus shelter, to provide a safe route for pedestrians including students crossing the road to access school transport.
- 7.19.5 The applicant should develop and implement measures to discourage 'rat running' or informal diversions by construction traffic through unsuitable residential streets such as Rendham Road, Mill Road and Chantry Road.
- 7.19.6 No HGV deliveries should be permitted on Sundays or public holidays to reduce disruption and protect residents' amenity during rest days.
- 7.19.7 All HGV deliveries should be restricted to the hours between 08:00 and 22:00 to minimise noise impacts on residents, in line with existing planning restrictions in the area (such as those imposed on supermarket deliveries).
- 7.19.8 In conjunction with Suffolk County Council and Saxmundham Town Council, the applicant should fund a 20mph speed limit zone throughout key areas of the town to enhance pedestrian safety and discourage rat-running through residential streets.

7.20 Saxmundham Town Council has serious concerns regarding the robustness and validity of the applicant's traffic assessments, particularly in relation to baseline monitoring data. The applicant's assumptions are derived from highway monitoring conducted during January and February 2024 - periods that are typically among the quietest months for traffic movements in this area. By contrast, traffic data collected by Sizewell C Co in October 2024 (excluding the static point on the A12 at Farnham) records generally higher volumes, which may already reflect increased activity from early works on Sizewell C. Saxmundham Town Council is therefore concerned that the applicant's traffic model underrepresents HGV movements and overall traffic volumes, potentially leading to a significant underestimation of baseline conditions projected for 2028. This discrepancy could compromise the accuracy of predicted impacts and the adequacy of proposed mitigation.²⁴

7.21 The choice of January and February for data collection fails to account for seasonal fluctuations. These months are characterised by low levels of tourism, agricultural, and construction activity. By contrast, August represents a peak period for holiday travel and concurrent agricultural activity, and infrastructure works, making it a more appropriate benchmark for assessing true cumulative impacts. Saxmundham Town Council notes that Sizewell C Co is currently undertaking an additional round of traffic monitoring. We respectfully request the Examining Authority to require the applicant either to conduct supplementary traffic monitoring during peak periods or to collaborate with Sizewell C Co to present a more accurate and representative dataset to inform the examination process.

7.22 Sea Link represents the third NSIP proposed within a six-mile radius, all of which rely on a rural road

²⁴ Sea Link – Environmental Statement, Appendix 2.7.D (APP-125)

network that is already under considerable pressure. Several sections of the A12, particularly around Woodbridge, are already operating near capacity, raising concerns about their ability to accommodate additional traffic associated with multiple infrastructure projects. Notably, the applicant has not conducted traffic monitoring or included any assessment data for areas south of Farnham, including the Woodbridge corridor. Saxmundham Town Council considers this a significant omission, particularly given the following:

7.22.1 Existing evidence indicates that roads in and around Woodbridge are already subject to congestion and delay.

7.22.2 The applicant's own assessment confirms that the construction workforce will be drawn from within a 60-minute drive-time radius, meaning that a substantial proportion of workers will travel northbound along the A12, passing through Woodbridge and other constrained areas.

This lack of assessment fails to account for likely increases in daily commuter and freight traffic through an already stressed transport corridor and risks undermining the integrity of the applicant's overall traffic impact analysis.

7.23 Saxmundham Town Council notes with concern that the applicant's traffic collision data includes the COVID-19 period.²⁵ As a result, it does not reflect normal traffic conditions and is not a reliable basis for assessing existing or future road safety risks. Traffic volumes during the pandemic were significantly reduced due to national lockdowns and remote working arrangements, which resulted in an atypical decrease in collision rates. This omission is particularly significant given that both the A12/B1121 junction at Benhall and the B1119 route through Saxmundham are known accident hotspots. The B1121 junction requires vehicles turning across fast-moving dual carriageway traffic, presenting a serious hazard. Similarly, the B1119 passes through residential areas with limited pedestrian infrastructure, busy school and retail zones, and complex junctions - all of which increase the risk of vehicular and pedestrian collisions.

7.24 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests the Examining Authority to consider the broader transport corridor, including the area around Woodbridge, when considering the cumulative impact of traffic generated by Sea Link and other NSIPs. The consequences for Saxmundham and district residents include:

7.24.1 Significant delays for people travelling to workplaces, schools, and further education institutions.

7.24.2 Disruption to those attending essential medical appointments, including at Ipswich Hospital and clinics in Woodbridge.

7.24.3 Increased response times for emergency services (ambulance, police, and fire), potentially endangering public safety.

These impacts will compound the cumulative strain on local infrastructure and require a more holistic assessment that reflects real-world usage across the wider travel network.

²⁵ Sea Link - Environmental Statement, Appendix 2.7.A (APP-125)

- 7.25 Saxmundham Town Council is concerned about the anticipated increase in traffic travelling from the A12 via the B1121 to Bigsby's Corner in Benhall, particularly considering associated highway works proposed in the area. These changes are likely to have a significant and detrimental effect on the daily lives of Benhall residents, many of whom regularly travel by car, bus, mobility aid, cycle, or on foot to Saxmundham for school, work, healthcare, and essential services. Specific concerns include:
- 7.25.1 Increased risks to the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and horse-riders along rural routes not designed for high traffic volumes.
 - 7.25.2 Greater danger for school children walking to and from local primary schools, including those from Saxmundham crossing into Benhall.
 - 7.25.3 Delays to public transport services, which many residents rely upon for commuting and essential travel.
 - 7.25.4 Disruption to residents' access to healthcare, retail, and other essential services in Saxmundham.
 - 7.25.5 Obstruction and delay to emergency vehicles which depend on timely and reliable access routes.
- 7.26 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests the Examining Authority to require the applicant to implement, as a minimum, the following mitigation measures to protect the safety and wellbeing of local communities:
- 7.26.1 Enhancement of footpaths, cycle paths, and bridleways to ensure safe and accessible routes for non-motorised users, particularly in areas experiencing increased construction traffic. This could include specific support for the 3 Communities Link Project which aims to improve walking and cycling connectivity between Benhall and Sternfield, Saxmundham, and Kelsale-cum-Carlton.
 - 7.26.2 Installation of traffic light-controlled pedestrian crossings at key junctions near Benhall Primary School to safeguard children and families navigating these routes during peak hours.
- 7.27 The A12/B1121 junction presents a significant safety concern, particularly in the context of increased traffic volumes associated with the Sea Link proposal. The A12 bypass has physically divided the village of Benhall, placing key community facilities, such as the church, on the opposite side of the dual carriageway from much of the residential area. As a result, residents are required to navigate this busy junction to attend services or access the churchyard, greatly heightening the risk of accidents. Saxmundham Town Council therefore considers that substantial safety upgrades to this junction are essential to mitigate the risk to pedestrians and road users.
- 7.28 While the proposed Sea Link access road may help mitigate the impact of HGV traffic entering Saxmundham, provided that strict and consistent traffic management is enforced, Saxmundham Town Council remains concerned that increased volumes of cars and light goods vehicles will continue

to pass through the town. Drivers are likely to divert from the A12 to avoid congestion and take shorter routes, bypassing the designated haul roads associated with multiple NSIPs. The cumulative increase in traffic from Sea Link and other major developments is expected to negatively affect Saxmundham residents and businesses in the following ways:²⁶

7.28.1 Residents travelling south by bus or car to Woodbridge, Ipswich, and beyond for school, college, work, or medical appointments are likely to face significant delays.

7.28.2 Local businesses dependent on timely road transport may suffer economically due to increased journey times and disruption to supply chains.

7.28.3 Shops and visitor attractions in Saxmundham may experience a decline in footfall, as extended travel times and traffic congestion deter customers - potentially leading to business closures.

7.29 Saxmundham Town Council further notes the absence of adequate consideration of air quality impacts caused by construction-related HGVs and increased congestion. Stationery traffic at key junctions, traffic lights, and pedestrian crossings, especially in the town centre, will significantly elevate exposure to airborne pollutants. This poses health risks to residents and may deter visitors, thereby impacting local businesses. The Examining Authority is respectfully requested to ensure that the applicant's air pollution assessments reflect realistic, worst-case traffic modelling and that robust mitigation measures are secured.

7.30 The cumulative impact of increased traffic is not only likely to undermine the mental wellbeing of Saxmundham residents, through heightened stress, frustration, and disruption to daily life, but also raises serious concerns about public safety. The potential for delays on the A12, caused by the overlapping demands of multiple infrastructure projects, represents a critical risk to life. The nearest Accident and Emergency department is at Ipswich Hospital, more than 21 miles away. Any obstruction or congestion on this key route could hinder timely access to urgent medical care, increasing the likelihood of avoidable harm or even mortality. This issue does not affect Saxmundham alone but extends to neighbouring towns and villages such as Kelsale-cum-Carlton, Leiston, Aldeburgh, Benhall, Sternfield, and beyond.

7.31 Additionally, the B1121, B1119 and A12 form part of the designated emergency evacuation routes from the Sizewell B Nuclear Power Station. Any increase in traffic congestion or obstruction on these critical routes poses a significant risk to public safety in the event of an emergency.²⁷

7.32 Saxmundham Town Council considers the cumulative saturation of consented and proposed energy projects in this region to be unsustainable. We therefore strongly oppose the application for a Development Consent Order for Sea Link on the grounds that the existing road infrastructure is wholly inadequate to accommodate the associated traffic. The resulting congestion would severely undermine the socio-economic wellbeing of our town, impede timely access to emergency medical care, and significantly heighten the risk of road traffic accidents as drivers divert onto narrow, unsuitable rural routes to avoid delays.

²⁶ Sea Link – Environmental Statement: Volume 6.2.5.3, Part 5, Chapter 3 (APP-087); Volume 6.2.2.7, Part 2, Chapter 7 (APP-054); and Volume 6.2.2.10, Part 2, Chapter 10 (APP-057)

²⁷ Sea Link – Consultation Report, Section 5.1.7, Part 2 of 2, pp. 154–155 (APP-314)

8. Impact on Public Rights of Way

- 8.1 Saxmundham Town Council objects to the proposed temporary diversion route of Public Rights of Way 491/006 and 460/023, which currently provide safe and scenic walking routes between Saxmundham and neighbouring parishes. The proposed diversion runs adjacent to the heavily trafficked B1119, subjecting users to increased noise, air pollution, and a less attractive walking experience. It will also lengthen journey times and remove the tranquillity that is central to countryside access.²⁸
- 8.2 The proposed converter station site intersects a historic network of public footpaths that have long connected Saxmundham to Sternfield and the coast. Whilst, no longer used for livestock or goods transport to market, the paths form part of the area's rural heritage and continue to play a vital role in promoting physical activity, mental wellbeing and wildlife connectivity. Disrupting or downgrading access to these routes risks severing important recreational and ecological corridors and diminishing the quality of life for both residents and visitors.²⁹
- 8.3 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests that the Examining Authority requires the applicant to develop and consult on a new, safer and more appropriate diversion route for footpaths 491/006 and 460/023. This should be agreed in collaboration with Suffolk County Council, Saxmundham Town Council, and the affected neighbouring parishes of Benhall and Sternfield.
- 8.4 Saxmundham Town Council notes that the applicant has proposed a permissive path across the converter station site as partial mitigation for the permanent loss of access. However, this proposal is not guaranteed, and its status is uncertain.³⁰ Saxmundham Town Council requests clarification as to whether this permissive path corresponds to the route illustrated in Figure 1 of APP-348. Furthermore, this figure assumes that the Lion Link converter station will not be built. If a second converter station is subsequently approved, the diverted footpaths would remain alongside the B1119 indefinitely, prolonging the loss of rural access and further exposing users to traffic-related impacts.
- 8.5 Saxmundham Town Council contends that the industrialisation of the area and the degradation of its rural views and tranquillity, will act as a deterrent to walkers, tourists and local users of the public rights of way network. While the applicant proposes landscape planting to mitigate the visual harm, it will take many years, potentially decades, before such measures reach maturity.³¹ In the intervening time, the visual and sensory experience of using these paths will be dominated by large-scale infrastructure, undermining the value of countryside access and the aspiration of East Suffolk Council's Local Plan to promote health, active lifestyles and sustainable tourism.³²

9. Noise and Other Disturbance

- 9.1 If construction compound S02,³³ located to the north-east of the proposed converter station site, is

²⁸ Sea Link - Public Rights of Way Diversion Plans, Sheet 1 of 6 - 491/006 and 460/023 [APP-025]

²⁹ Sea Link – Public Rights of Way Diversions and Descriptions, including 491/006 and 460/023 adjacent to Wood Farm (APP-025)

³⁰ Sea Link - Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan 7.5.7.1 (APP-348)

³¹ Ibid.

³² SCLP8.2 and SCLP12.25 support countryside access and sustainable tourism.

³³ Sea Link - Environmental Statement, Volume 2, Chapter 2: The Proposed Development, paragraph 2.14.1. (APP-038)

used as anticipated, it would place several residential properties in unacceptably close proximity to significant construction activity. Homes in Manor Gardens would be within 200-300 metres of the compound and approximately one-quarter of the properties in Prior's Grange would lie within a 500 metres radius³⁴. These residents would be subjected to sustained levels of noise, dust and light pollution throughout the construction period.

- 9.2 Construction activity at the compound is also likely to disrupt services and community events held at St John the Baptist Church, a prominent and active place of worship situated close to the construction site.
- 9.3 Residents of Sternfield and Hurts Hall will be impacted by elevated noise generated by site traffic, particularly given their location within 700 metres of the construction area. In particular, residents of Hurts Hall will be acutely affected by noise from vehicles accessing the site via the proposed new access road and bridge, which passes just 250 metres from the property.
- 9.4 Site traffic travelling uphill into Saxmundham will require the use of lower gears, significantly amplifying engine noise and vibration. This is especially problematic along Church Hill, where the gradient will cause additional acoustic disturbance. Saxmundham Town Council strongly recommends that this route is avoided for construction traffic in favour of alternatives that minimise residential impact.³⁵
- 9.5 Saxmundham Town Council objects to the applicant's proposal for extended working hours, including Sunday operations. Seven-day working - from 07:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday, and 07:00 to 17:00 on Saturday and Sunday - would result in near-constant disruption for residents near the site.
- 9.6 The cumulative effects of construction noise, prolonged working hours, HGV movements, light pollution and airborne dust pose a serious risk to the physical and mental wellbeing of affected communities. In addition to Manor Gardens and Prior's Grange, residents of South Entrance, Church Street, and Church Hill would face significant disruption from site-related traffic. Properties on Church Hill are particularly vulnerable, as many front doors open directly onto a narrow pavement with no front garden or buffer zone between the home and the road, leaving residents exposed to noise, vibration, and reduced air quality at very close proximity³⁶
- 9.7 Saxmundham Town Council also opposes the siting of the converter station near residential areas due to serious concerns about ongoing operational noise, especially at night. We note that East Suffolk Council have not yet reached agreement with the applicant regarding acceptable noise thresholds.³⁷
- 9.8 In addition to concerns raised by East Suffolk Council, Saxmundham Town Council wishes to highlight the following:

³⁴ Measurements are approximate and based on the shortest straight-line distance between the edge of construction compound S02 and the nearest residential properties.

³⁵ Sea Link – Environmental Statement, Introduction of the Proposed Project, Figure 6.4.1.4.7 (APP-207)

³⁶ Sea Link – Environmental Statement, Traffic and Transport, Chapter 7 (APP-054) and Sea Link – Appendix F, Targeted Consultation, Part 2 of 2, pp. 153-154 (APP-314)

³⁷ Sea Link – Draft Statement of Common Ground, 7.4.8 (APP-329)

- 9.8.1 The transformation of soft agricultural land into hard surfaces will alter the propagation of sound waves, increasing both the intensity and range of noise impacts on nearby homes and community assets.
 - 9.8.2 The applicant's proposals do not adequately address the potential cumulative noise impact from future infrastructure, including the likely addition of a second converter station (Lion Link) on the same site.
 - 9.8.3 Noise surveys submitted by the applicant do not identify specific human receptors such as residents of Manor Gardens and Prior's Grange, thereby underestimating the true extent of community impact.³⁸
- 9.9 In light of the above, Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests the Examining Authority to give serious consideration to the following measures:
- 9.9.1 The converter station and all associated site compounds should be relocated further from residential areas to minimise direct disturbance.
 - 9.9.2 Sunday working should be strictly prohibited. Weekday and Saturday working hours should be limited to 08:00 to 17:00, and noise mitigation measures such as acoustic screening, low-noise machinery and dust suppression systems should be mandatory.
 - 9.9.3 All HGV movements must be confined to 08:00 to 17:00, Monday to Saturday, with strict enforcement mechanisms in place to prevent out-of-hours operations and associated disturbance.

10. Socio-Economic, Recreation and Tourism Impact

- 10.1 Saxmundham Town Council strongly opposes the proposed siting of the Sea Link converter station, both during the construction phase and - more significantly - during its long-term operation. The applicant's justification for the environmental and economic impacts is narrowly focused. Its assessment emphasises temporary disruption to Public Rights of Way, suggests economic benefit through the potential employment of workers from within a 60-minute radius, and fails to account for any adverse effects on businesses located more than 500 metres outside the project's red line boundary. As a result, the vast majority of Saxmundham's businesses have been effectively excluded from consideration. Saxmundham Town Council considers this approach fundamentally flawed and unrepresentative of the true and lasting damage that would be inflicted on the town's economy, environment, and overall wellbeing if the Sea Link project is granted consent.³⁹
- 10.2 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests the Examining Authority to consider the following shortcomings in the applicant's assessment and approach:
- 10.2.1 The absence of any meaningful assessment of the impact that construction will have on local businesses, particularly in the town centre.

³⁸ Sea Link – Environment Statement, Appendix 2.9D, 6.3.2.9D, Suffolk Noise Survey Data (APP-138)

³⁹ Sea Link - Environmental Statement: Volume 6, Document 6.2.2.10 Part 2 – Suffolk Chapter 10: Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism (APP-057)

- 10.2.2 The applicant's reliance on a 60-minute drive-time catchment to suggest employment benefits, which does not translate into any clear advantage for Saxmundham or its immediate surrounding parishes.
- 10.2.3 The use of a 500-metre radius to assess construction impacts on businesses is wholly inadequate and excludes the majority of Saxmundham's commercial areas.
- 10.2.4 There is no evidence of any planned or proposed measures to support or safeguard local businesses during the construction or operational phases.
- 10.2.5 The applicant provides no indication of how the development will contribute to the health, social, or cultural wellbeing of the community. On the contrary, it is explicitly stated that no mitigation in these areas is proposed.
- 10.3 During the construction phase, particularly considering the cumulative impact of multiple major developments, Saxmundham Town Council is concerned that the following consequences will arise:⁴⁰
 - 10.3.1 Increased traffic congestion and disruptive construction activity will deter tourists from visiting the area.
 - 10.3.2 Shoppers may avoid the town due to congestion and restricted access, negatively affecting high street footfall and retail trade.
 - 10.3.3 The demand for temporary lodgings for construction workers will drive up holiday accommodation prices, discouraging tourists and resulting in lost revenue for visitor attractions and hospitality businesses.
 - 10.3.4 The influx of workers could inflate rental costs, making properties unaffordable for residents and potentially forcing long-term tenants to relocate.
 - 10.3.5 Prospective homebuyers may be dissuaded from purchasing properties in the town during the extended period of disruption.
 - 10.3.6 The combined effects of reduced consumer activity, escalating housing costs, and disrupted town centre access, risks triggering a broader economic downturn, from which Saxmundham may take years to recover.
- 10.4 While effective mitigation can reduce the direct impacts of construction, without meaningful investment in the host community, where infrastructure is being imposed in the name of the 'common good', residents will inevitably bear the burden. Although the applicant refers to community benefits, they have, to date, failed to engage substantively with the community or demonstrate a commitment to delivering tangible, locally driven outcomes.

11. Intra-Project Cumulative Effects

⁴⁰ Sea Link - Environmental Statement Volume 5, Chapter 3: Health and Wellbeing, 6.2.5.3, Part 5, Chapter 3 (APP-087)

- 11.1 As part of its application for a Development Consent Order, the applicant is required to assess intra-project cumulative effects - that is, the combined impact of multiple individual elements of the Sea Link project (e.g. construction noise, loss of public rights of way, air pollution, and visual intrusion) on human receptors, particularly where these impacts overlap spatially and temporally.
- 11.2 Saxmundham Town Council contends that the applicant's Environmental Statement underrepresents the full range and severity of these cumulative impacts on the town's residents, visitors, and local infrastructure. While individual impacts such as visual blight, construction dust, or traffic-related noise may be considered manageable in isolation, their simultaneous occurrence over an extended period has the potential to create significant, sustained, and harmful effects on quality of life, physical and mental health, and community wellbeing.
- 11.3 This section sets out Saxmundham Town Council's concerns regarding these intra-project cumulative effects, which we believe must be given greater weight by the Examining Authority. The analysis is grouped by theme - health and wellbeing, air quality, noise and vibration, and socio-economic impacts - each of which reflects the lived experience of human receptors located near the proposed converter station, construction compounds, access roads, and associated infrastructure.
- 11.4 Effects of Health and Wellbeing - Saxmundham Town Council is seriously concerned about the cumulative effects of the Sea Link project on the physical and mental health of human receptors living near the proposed converter station, construction compounds, and access roads. These include:⁴¹
- 11.4.1 Loss of landscape character and visual amenity, contributing to stress, reduced quality of life, and feelings of enclosure.
 - 11.4.2 Continuous exposure to noise, dust, and light pollution over an extended period.
 - 11.4.3 Disruption caused by prolonged and unsocial construction working hours.
 - 11.4.4 Loss of access to public rights of way, limiting opportunities for outdoor recreation and social interaction essential to wellbeing.
- 11.5 Effects on Air Quality - Saxmundham Town Council highlights the significant potential for cumulative air quality impacts, particularly in areas close to site access points, construction compounds, and vehicle routes.⁴² Specific concerns include:
- 11.5.1 General deterioration of local air quality due to concentrated and prolonged construction activity.
 - 11.5.2 Exposure to diesel emissions from HGVs, construction machinery, and generators.
 - 11.5.3 Increased health risks for vulnerable groups, particularly children, the elderly, and individuals

⁴¹ Environmental Statement, Summary of Likely Effects, 6.2.5.3, part 5, Chapter 3, (APP-087) and Traffic and Transport, 6.2.2.7, Chapter 7, (APP-054).

⁴² Sea Link – Environmental Statement Volume 6.2.5.3 Part 5 Combined Chapter 3: Summary of Likely Significant Effects (APP-087) and Sea Link – Environmental Statement Volume 6.2.2.7 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 7: Traffic and Transport (APP-054)

with pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma or COPD.⁴³

11.6 Noise and Vibration Impacts - In addition to operational noise from the converter station, residents will be exposed to multiple overlapping noise and vibration sources during the construction phase. These include:

11.6.1 Elevated traffic volumes on the B1121, B1119, and A12, causing road noise and delays.⁴⁴

11.6.2 Constant noise from construction vehicles, especially properties near compound S02, including high-frequency reversing alarms and low-frequency engine idling.⁴⁵

11.6.3 Ground vibration from plant movement, excavation, and soil compaction, with the potential to disturb residents and affect nearby buildings.⁴⁶

11.7 Socio-Economic Effects - The project also risks cumulative negative impacts on Saxmundham's local economy and community fabric, particularly during the lengthy construction period. Concerns include:

11.7.1 Increased use of already busy supermarkets and other facilities by construction workers, contributing to congestion in car parks, surrounding roads, and within the shops themselves.

11.7.2 Potential rise in anti-social behaviour associated with a transient workforce.

11.7.3 Displacement of regular customers from local shops and supermarkets, leading to a possible decline in footfall for High Street businesses that rely on linked trips.⁴⁷

12. Water Resource Management and Flood Risk

12.1 East Anglia is among the driest regions in the country, and Saxmundham Town Council is concerned about the adequacy of water resources to support the Sea Link project. We respectfully request the Examining Authority to require the applicant to:

12.1.1 Specify the source(s) of all water to be used during construction and operation.

12.1.2 Confirm that proposed abstraction rates are agreed with the Environment Agency.

12.1.3 Clarify whether the Environment Agency retains the right to suspend or revoke abstraction licences during drought conditions.

⁴³ Sea Link – Environmental Statement Volume 6.2.2.8 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 8: Air Quality (APP-055), Sea Link – Environmental Statement Volume 6.2.2.11 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 11: Health and Wellbeing (APP-058) and Environmental Statement Volume 6.2.2.10 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 10: Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism (APP-057)

⁴⁴ Outline Construction Traffic Management and Travel Plan, 7.5.11 (APP-337)

⁴⁵ Sea Link – Environmental Statement Volume 6.2.2.9 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 9: Noise and Vibration (APP-056) and Indicative General Arrangement Plans, 2.1.4.1. (APP-038)

⁴⁶ Indicative General Arrangement Plans, 2.14.1, (APP-038); Sea Link – Environmental Statement Volume 6.2.2.9 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 9: Noise and Vibration (APP-056)

⁴⁷ Indicative General Arrangement Plans, 2.14.1, (APP-038); Sea Link – Environmental Statement Volume 6.2.2.9 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 9: Noise and Vibration (APP-056)

- 12.1.4 Detail contingency plans or alternative water sources to ensure continuity of operations during periods of water scarcity.
- 12.1.5 Confirm the availability of water supplies for firefighting and the operation of cooling systems throughout all project phases.
- 12.2 The proposed converter station site, situated on deep clay over a sand and shingle base, presents significant drainage challenges. Saxmundham Town Council is concerned about:⁴⁸
 - 12.2.1 The management of stormwater during construction and operation.
 - 12.2.2 Effective flood mitigation strategies to prevent localised flooding.
 - 12.2.3 The risk of surface water runoff from new hardstanding areas leading to flooding of adjacent land and public highways.
 - 12.2.4 Preventing contaminated surface water runoff during construction from entering nearby watercourses, which could threaten aquatic ecosystems.
 - 12.2.5 Safeguarding groundwater recharge rates to ensure they do not negatively impact local flora and fauna, particularly during drought conditions when ecosystems are most vulnerable.
- 12.3 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests that the Examining Authority require the applicant to publish a comprehensive Water Management Plan as part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), covering the full life of the facility. This should include:
 - 12.3.1 Effective management of surface water runoff and protection of water quality during both the construction and operational phases.
 - 12.3.2 Regular maintenance of attenuation ponds to prevent surface water flooding and uncontrolled runoff into the River Fromus.
 - 12.3.3 A schedule for the routine inspection and clearance of debris from the proposed access road bridge to ensure it does not obstruct the natural flow of the River Fromus, thereby mitigating the risk of upstream flooding.
 - 12.3.4 A continuous water quality monitoring regime to ensure that runoff and site discharges do not degrade local watercourses or groundwater resources.
- 12.4 The applicant has not submitted the final design for the proposed access road bridge over the River Fromus. Saxmundham Town Council wishes to raise the following concerns that:

⁴⁸ Sea Link - Environmental Statement Volume 2, Chapter 4: Site Selection and Consideration of Alternatives, 6.2.2.4, Part 2, Chapter 4 (APP-051) and Environmental Statement, Volume 6, Part 2, Chapter 5: Geology and Hydrogeology (APP-052)

- 12.4.1 The bridge may act as a physical barrier across the River Fromus, which may impede natural water flow and create a damming effect.
- 12.4.2 Associated earthworks could lead to surface water runoff entering nearby watercourses, increasing the risk of upstream flooding.
- 12.4.3 Altered hydrological patterns caused by the bridge's construction and operation could result in downstream flooding in Benhall.
- 12.5 In addition, Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests that the Examining Authority confirm the proposed discharge location(s) for surface water runoff and clarify whether the applicant has undertaken modelling to assess the impact of this discharge on existing drainage infrastructure and receiving watercourses.
- 12.6 Saxmundham Town Council is concerned about the adverse effects of the Sea Link development on geology, hydrogeology, the water environment, and local ecology, particularly where changes to groundwater levels may impact both human receptors and wildlife.⁴⁹ Potential impacts include:
 - 12.6.1 Dehydration and degradation of local flora due to altered water tables or prolonged dry conditions.
 - 12.6.2 Increased surface water runoff from impermeable areas leading to soil erosion and disruption of natural watercourses.
 - 12.6.3 Construction-phase runoff contaminating and degrading wildlife habitats and natural ecosystems.
 - 12.6.4 Additional pressure on the existing stormwater drainage system, increasing the risk of surface flooding and local infrastructure stress.
- 12.7 Saxmundham Town Council considers that tanker-based dust suppression is insufficient, especially during dry and windy conditions, leading to poor air quality and associated health impacts. Robust contingency plans are therefore essential to ensure consistent dust control in dry conditions. We respectfully request the Examining Authority to require the applicant to:
 - 12.7.1 Implement a fixed sprinkler system to deliver continuous and targeted water application to access roads.
 - 12.7.2 Assess and manage the risk of surface water runoff from such systems to prevent pollution of adjacent land, watercourses, and existing drainage infrastructure.

⁴⁹ Sea Link - Environmental Statement, Volume 6, Chapter 5: Geology and Hydrogeology, 6.2.2.5 Part 2, (APP-052) and Sea Link Environmental Statement, Volume 6, Chapter 4: Water Environment, 6.2.2.4 Part 2 (APP-051) and Sea Link Environmental Statement, Volume 6, Chapter 3: Summary of Likely Significant Effects, 6.2.5.3 Part 5 (APP-087)

13. Ecology and Biodiversity Impacts

- 13.1 Saxmundham Town Council's Wildlife, Biodiversity and Environmental Policy recognises the leadership role we play in fostering a sustainable environment where biodiversity can thrive. The Town Council acknowledges its current and future responsibilities not only to conserve and promote local biodiversity, but also to take positive, proactive action, through sensitive management of open spaces, verges, and natural habitats, to support Suffolk County Council's 'Local Nature Recovery Strategy' and broader national objectives for ecological resilience.
- 13.2 Saxmundham Town Council does not suggest that the area surrounding the town ranks as one of the most environmentally sensitive in the UK. However, as a predominantly rural location, it supports a rich diversity of flora and fauna that warrants careful protection. The proposed converter station will result in the permanent loss of productive farmland, the destruction of habitats, and long-term disturbance to the ecological balance; not only during construction, but again during eventual decommissioning.⁵⁰
- 13.3 Saxmundham Town Council objects to the applicant's proposal to remove existing hedgerows and replace them with camouflaged Heras fencing as a form of temporary screening.⁵¹ This approach is wholly inadequate and cannot be considered a meaningful substitute for the ecological, landscape, and amenity value of established hedgerows. Hedgerows are recognised as Priority Habitats under the Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan⁵² due to their vital role in supporting biodiversity, providing wildlife corridors, and enhancing ecosystem resilience. The use of camouflaged fencing does not replicate the biodiversity, habitat connectivity, or visual integration that native hedgerows provide. It is not an appropriate form of 'dead hedging' and falls short of acceptable mitigation. The Examining Authority is respectfully requested to require the applicant to retain existing hedgerows wherever possible and, where removal is unavoidable, to provide ecologically beneficial and visually sympathetic alternatives that contribute positively to the local landscape character.
- 13.4 Suffolk is among the driest regions in the UK, and dust pollution will present a significant challenge throughout the construction period. Dust can severely damage vegetation by coating plant surfaces and inhibiting photosynthesis, leading to long-term ecological degradation. Saxmundham Town Council notes that this issue extends beyond the designated Sandlings SPA and SSSI sites and could affect the entire 50-metre margin zone across the Sea Link development area during both construction and decommissioning phases.⁵³
- 13.5 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests the Examining Authority to consider the cumulative ecological impacts arising from the concurrent development of the Sea Link converter station and the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood. The prospect of sustained construction activity on both the eastern and western edges of the town present a significant threat to wildlife and their habitats, resulting in fragmentation, displacement, and long-term ecological degradation.

⁵⁰ Sea Link - Environmental Statement, Chapter 2, Ecology and Biodiversity, 6.2.2.2, (APP-049); Chapter 6: Agriculture and Soils, 6.2.2.6, (APP-053).

⁵¹ Sea Link - 6.2.2.2 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 2 Ecology and Biodiversity and Application Document 6.2.3.2, Document 7.5.3.1 Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC)

⁵² Suffolk Biodiversity Information Centre

⁵³ Sea Link - Environmental Statement: Combined Chapter 3 – Summary of Likely Significant Effects, Volume 6.2.5.3, Part 5. (APP-087)

- 13.6 Additionally, Saxmundham Town Council requests that the Examining Authority consider the following specific impacts during both the construction and decommissioning phases:⁵⁴
- 13.6.1 Permanent loss of habitat will disrupt bird breeding cycles due to the destruction of nesting and feeding grounds.
 - 13.6.2 Disturbance to ground-nesting birds from vehicle movements, noise, and human activity.
 - 13.6.3 Residual ground heat from buried cables may alter soil conditions, with detrimental effects on agricultural productivity and surrounding ecological systems.
- 13.7 Saxmundham Town Council acknowledges the applicant's physical survey of the River Fromus and concurs with the Environment Agency's classification of the river as a salmonid watercourse, which is highly sensitive to gravel disturbance and serves as a critical migratory route for the European Eel. In addition, Saxmundham Blue Spaces, a community-led voluntary group supported by the Town Council, has observed a range of wildlife in and around the river. Although the group has not formally identified fish species, numerous sightings have been reported, alongside frequent observations of grass snakes and common frogs. A resident population of kingfishers is also regularly seen along the river corridor. These species may not have been recorded by the applicant due to the limited temporal scope of their survey or its spatial restriction to within just two metres of the riverbank.⁵⁵
- 13.8 Saxmundham Town Council expresses concern regarding the applicant's reliance on the District Licensing Scheme for great crested newt mitigation. Local community group, Saxmundham Blue Spaces, has observed evidence of great crested newts within the vicinity of the River Fromus in Saxmundham. Accordingly, we request that the Examining Authority exhort the applicant to provide appropriate compensatory habitat within walking distance of this stretch of the river, to ensure that local populations are protected and ecological connectivity is maintained.
- 13.9 Saxmundham Town Council asserts that the construction of the proposed converter station will result in the displacement of local fauna and significant disruption to both territorial and migratory species. The applicant has not proposed adequate mitigation for the following wildlife known to inhabit the area:
- 13.9.1 Grass snakes, common frogs, and the broader ecosystem that supports regular sightings of kingfishers along the River Fromus.
 - 13.9.2 Great crested newts, which have been recorded locally by community conservation groups in Saxmundham.
 - 13.9.3 Brown hares, a priority species in Suffolk.
 - 13.9.4 Multiple species of deer, whose established movement corridors would be interrupted.

Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests the Examining Authority to ensure that the

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Sea Link - Environmental Statement: Appendix 2.2.F – Aquatic Ecology Survey Report, Volume 6.3.2.2.F. (APP-104)

applicant fully assesses these impacts and provides meaningful ecological mitigation and habitat connectivity measures.

- 13.10 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests that the Examining Authority require the applicant to appoint a resident ecologist to be present on site throughout the construction phase. The ecologist should be responsible for conducting daily inspections of habitats prior to the commencement of any works, to ensure protected species are not harmed and sensitive habitats are not disturbed or destroyed. This is essential to safeguard local biodiversity and uphold ecological best practice.

14. Reputational Damage

- 14.1 Saxmundham, commensurate with so many small towns, is fighting to maintain a vibrant town centre and is constantly trying to reinforce community spirit and identity. However, the proposed converter stations, even before development consent is considered, are leading to Saxmundham's reputation as an historic Suffolk market town coming under serious threat.
- 14.2 If the Sea Link proposals proceed, Saxmundham risks becoming nationally known not for its character, history or location, but as the centre of a vast electricity infrastructure hub: the 'Gateway to the Electricity Coast'.
- 14.3 Unlike nearby towns such as Woodbridge, Aldeburgh or Southwold, Saxmundham's image is less firmly established and more vulnerable to negative transformation. Its identity is fragile, and this development threatens to overwhelm the town's character and appeal. The scale and siting of the converter stations would permanently and detrimentally alter how the town is perceived, deterring residents, businesses, and visitors alike.
- 14.4 Saxmundham Town Council questions the rationale behind selecting this location for the Sea Link converter station. Whilst it is situated close to the consented ScottishPower Renewables substation in the neighbouring parish of Friston, the proposed development would impose yet another substantial onshore energy infrastructure on a small geographical area. The resulting impact would blight not just one, but four rural and historic settlements - Friston, Benhall, Sternfield and Saxmundham - for generations to come.
- 14.5 The proposed Sea Link site sits between Saxmundham and Sternfield, a small historic hamlet to the south. All construction traffic will pass through Benhall, a village already fragmented by the A12 bypass. The cumulative effects of noise, disruption, and visual intrusion will profoundly affect not only Saxmundham, but also its close-knit neighbouring communities of Sternfield and Benhall.

15. Lack of Local Economic Benefit

- 15.1 The short-sighted approach to site selection for electricity transmission infrastructure will lead to the erosion of rural character, tranquillity, biodiversity and productive agricultural land, causing long-lasting reputational harm to an area renowned for its natural beauty and heritage. The overconcentration of energy infrastructure in this part of Suffolk directly contradicts the advice of

planning experts such as Dr Andy Tickle,⁵⁶ who has warned against energy 'cluster points' for grid extensions citing that greater societal acceptance would be gained if numerous electrical infrastructures were not located in single locations.⁵⁷

- 15.2 Whereas industrialisation in previous eras often brought jobs and prosperity, Saxmundham stands to gain none of these economic benefits. Instead, our town faces a fundamental, externally imposed overturning of its character, heritage and identity.
- 15.3 In addition, Saxmundham Town Council is concerned that there is no assessment of the impact to local businesses caused by construction of the Sea Link converter station. Similarly, there is no acknowledgement of the detrimental effects on Saxmundham businesses for hosting electrical infrastructure during the operational stage.
- 15.3 Crucially, this large-scale industrialisation brings virtually no long-term employment or economic benefit to the local population. For some residents, particularly those already vulnerable, the cumulative impacts of successive major infrastructure projects risk exacerbating rural poverty and deepening social inequality across the region.

16. Housing Pressure, Displacement and Rural Inequality

- 16.1 Saxmundham, like many rural communities in Suffolk, faces significant challenges related to poverty and deprivation. While Suffolk generally reports lower poverty rates compared to some regions, residents often grapple with lower-than-average incomes and higher housing costs.
- 16.2 The 2022 report 'Tackling Poverty in Suffolk' by Suffolk County Council highlighted that 17.77% of the county's population - approximately 135,314 individuals - live in poverty.⁵⁸ Notably, gross pay in Suffolk is £40 less per week than the national average, and housing affordability remains a pressing issue, particularly for those in the lowest 25% income bracket.
- 16.3 In the Aldeburgh, Leiston, and Saxmundham area, 10.9% of residents experience income deprivation, slightly above the Suffolk average of 10.0%. Additionally, 15.3% of children in this area are affected by income deprivation, compared to the county average of 13.7%. These statistics underscore the financial hardships faced by many local families.
- 16.4 Saxmundham Town Council is increasingly concerned about the cumulative impact of multiple NSIPs - particularly Sizewell C, EA1N, EA2, and now Sea Link—on the local housing market. The influx of contractors is intensifying demand for affordable rental housing, driving up costs, and displacing vulnerable groups such as retirees, single parents, individuals with disabilities, and low-income workers.⁵⁹ Without targeted mitigation, these pressures will deepen rural poverty and risk forcing long-standing residents to relocate, undermining community cohesion.

⁵⁶ Dr. Andy Tickle, *Greening the Great Grid Upgrade*, commissioned by CPRE Essex, CPRE Norfolk, and the Suffolk Preservation Society, May 2024

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Suffolk County Council, *Tackling Poverty in Suffolk*, 2022

⁵⁹ "£3,000 rents cause fears for people living near Sizewell," BBC News, 22 March 2025

- 16.5 The introduction of additional infrastructure projects is likely to intensify existing housing pressure. Travelling contractors already compete for limited accommodation, pushing residents out of the area in search of affordability. Saxmundham could witness a diaspora of residents, disrupt community cohesion and increase commuting distances for those maintaining employment or school placements in town. In some cases, holiday accommodation is being repurposed for workers, potentially reducing tourism-related footfall and negatively impacting local businesses.⁶⁰
- 16.6 Whilst the applicant assumes that most contractors will travel daily within a 60-mile radius - all forms of skilled and unskilled construction labour are scarce in the area due to the demands of Sizewell C. It is likely that there will be insufficient local labour available, and that most workers will travel from further afield and require lodgings as close as possible to site. Furthermore, the applicant's assumptions for temporary accommodation are based on data from 2022⁶¹ and 2023⁶² - neither of which accounts for the overlapping demand generated by Sizewell C.⁶³

17. Security Vulnerability

- 17.1 Saxmundham Town Council is concerned about the security implications of hosting electricity infrastructure in our community. Concentrating many electricity generation and transmission assets within one small geographic area, particularly where up to 30% of the UK's energy is forecasted to pass through East Suffolk, raises significant and unresolved security concerns.
- 17.2 In the event of a deliberate attack, such as the detonation of an explosive device delivered via drone, the consequences could be catastrophic. Emerging global security analyses highlight the increasing use of drones to target power infrastructure. A drone carrying an explosive could create a blast radius of up to 1.9 kilometres, depending on payload and design. If such an attack were to occur at the proposed Sea Link converter station, the resulting damage could extend well beyond the site itself, posing grave risks to life, property, and public safety in the nearby residential settlements. Saxmundham Town Council finds no evidence that the applicant has assessed this scale of impact or presented any credible mitigation for such a scenario.
- 17.3 The recent catastrophic fire at the North Hyde Substation in Hayes which led to a complete shutdown of Heathrow Airport in March 2025 provides a stark warning. The government deemed the incident serious enough to warrant investigation by SO15 Counter Terrorism Command,⁶⁴ highlighting the acknowledged risk that such critical infrastructure may be targeted by hostile actors. Unlike North Hyde, which benefits from robust emergency services, including the rapid deployment of up to seventy-five firefighters, East Suffolk is far less equipped. Saxmundham relies on retained (volunteer) fire crews, with the nearest full-time firefighting resources located in Ipswich, some 18-20 miles away.
- 17.4 The risk of wildfires in Suffolk is notably heightened during periods of summer drought. Suffolk's predominantly rural landscape, comprising agricultural land, heathland, and forests, presents a high risk of wildfires during prolonged hot, dry summer months. In 2022, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service

⁶⁰ Sea Link - Environmental Statement: Volume 6, Document 6.2.2.10 Part 2 – Suffolk Chapter 10: Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism, pp. 42–44 (APP-057)

⁶¹ Office for National Statistics. (April 2025). *Private Rental Market Summary Statistics in England: April 2025*.

⁶² Visit England. (2023). *Annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions: 2022 Results*

⁶³ Sea Link - Environmental Statement: Volume 6, Document 6.2.2.10 Part 2 – Suffolk Chapter 10: Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism, p. 42 (APP-057)

⁶⁴ The Daily Telegraph, 21 March 2025

responded to over 500 fires in open areas such as woodlands, heaths, and farmlands during July and August alone, a significant increase from approximately 100 incidents in the same period the previous year.⁶⁵ This surge in wildfire activity was attributed to extreme temperatures and dry conditions, leading the service to declare a major incident for the first time in decades in 2022. Such incidents not only endanger human life but also devastate wildlife habitats and cause property damage. The combination of these factors underscores the vulnerability of the region to wildfires during drought conditions.

- 17.5 Policing provision is similarly limited; Saxmundham has no permanent police presence, with officers travelling from Halesworth (12 miles) or Martlesham (15 miles). To place a concentration of nationally critical energy assets in an area with limited emergency and security infrastructure represents a high and unjustified risk to both national and regional security. It should also be noted that the Civil Nuclear Constabulary is solely responsible for the security of nuclear power stations and offers no protection for other forms of critical energy infrastructure, such as the proposed Sea Link site. This issue has not been addressed by the applicant.
- 17.6 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests that the Examining Authority requires the applicant to fully assess and address the security vulnerabilities associated with the converter station and related infrastructure. We ask that the applicant provides a clear and detailed explanation of the measures proposed to mitigate these risks, including physical, cyber, and operational security provisions.

18. Constraints on Sustainable Town Growth

- 18.1 Beyond the serious concerns around security, reputational harm, rural inequality, community wellbeing and cumulative traffic impacts of traffic, the proposed location of the converter stations is wholly inappropriate in planning terms, as it severely restricts Saxmundham's future growth potential.
- 18.2 Saxmundham is identified as a growth node⁶⁶ in East Suffolk Council's Local Plan, with proposals for a 'Garden Neighbourhood' comprising 800 new homes, to be developed between the railway line and A12 over the next decade.⁶⁷ This strategic development also includes plans for a new employment zone to the west.
- 18.3 However, through the Local Plan process, Saxmundham Town Council has consistently argued that the long-term expansion of Saxmundham is best located to the east of the town.⁶⁸ The proposed Garden Neighbourhood is poorly connected to the town centre and existing residential areas, while land to the east offers far greater potential for integrated and sustainable development.
- 18.4 Siting multiple large-scale converter stations in the proposed area would irreversibly block the town's most logical direction for future growth. However, regardless of whether future housing development takes place to the west or to the east of the town, the looming presence of converter stations would deter prospective homeowners, suppress the local property market, and act as a disincentive for

⁶⁵ Shotley Peninsula Nub News, 5 June 2023

⁶⁶ SCLP12.28: Strategy for Saxmundham

⁶⁷ SCLP12.29: South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood

⁶⁸ Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan SAX2

private and public investment. The visual, environmental, and reputational impacts of such infrastructure would undermine confidence in Saxmundham as a desirable place to live and do business. The result would be not only the stifling of the town's physical expansion but a long-term constraint on its economic vitality and social renewal.

19. Cumulative Impact

- 19.1 While outside the formal remit of the Sea Link examination, Saxmundham Town Council is deeply concerned about the cumulative burden being placed on our town and surrounding parishes by multiple NSIPs. While each scheme may be presented and examined in isolation, their combined impact on the local landscape, population, and infrastructure is both significant and unsustainable.
- 19.2 The Sea Link project is only one of several major developments proposed for this area. Saxmundham lies near the onshore substation complex at Friston for the EA1N and EA2 offshore windfarm projects. These substations, already approved despite strong local opposition, have introduced permanent industrial infrastructure into the countryside and are expected to bring long-term noise, visual, and environmental impacts. Their construction is yet to begin, meaning there will be significant temporal overlap with Sea Link.
- 19.3 In addition, National Grid Ventures is advancing proposals for a second high-voltage interconnector - Lion Link - which, if consented, could result in the construction of another converter station adjacent to the Sea Link site. This would double the scale of industrialisation around Saxmundham, locking the town into a prolonged phase of development, traffic disruption, and loss of amenity.
- 19.4 This is in parallel with the Sizewell C nuclear power station development, which will bring thousands of HGVs, A12 upgrades, and worker accommodation pressures across East Suffolk, including in Saxmundham. The cumulative traffic, noise, air quality, housing, and public service pressures have not been fully assessed in relation to Sea Link.
- 19.5 At present, there is no joined-up strategy that addresses the combined effects of EA1N, EA2, Sea Link, Lion Link, and Sizewell C, all of which intersect in this part of Suffolk. Saxmundham is being disproportionately burdened with infrastructure projects of national scale, without a corresponding benefit to the community or meaningful engagement in spatial planning decisions.
- 19.6 In addition to the physical and environmental impacts, the cumulative burden on affected communities from overlapping statutory consultations and examinations is considerable. Saxmundham residents, councillors and officers, and community groups have had to engage with multiple complex and technical NSIPs, each requiring detailed scrutiny within strict timeframes. This repeated demand for input, with little evidence that community concerns materially influence outcomes, contributes to growing fatigue, disillusionment, and disengagement. The public's capacity to participate meaningfully is being stretched beyond what is reasonable or fair, particularly in small towns with limited administrative resources. This undermines the integrity of the consultation process and calls into question the democratic legitimacy of such decision-making.
- 19.7 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests the Examining Authority to consider the Sea Link proposal within the wider infrastructure context and require a full and transparent cumulative impact

assessment. The town cannot continue to absorb such large-scale development without permanent damage to its character, wellbeing, and future resilience.

20. Re-evaluation of Saxmundham as the Preferred Location

- 20.1 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully submits that the selection of the proposed converter station site near Saxmundham is no longer justified considering recent developments, particularly the confirmed relocation of the Nautilus interconnector to the Isle of Grain in Kent. This significant change reduces the cumulative infrastructure burden initially anticipated for the Saxmundham area and necessitates a re-evaluation of the necessity and appropriateness of the current site selection.
- 20.2 Originally, the Saxmundham site was considered suitable due to plans to co-locate multiple converter stations, including those for Sea Link, Lion Link, and Nautilus, thereby optimising land use and minimising environmental impact. However, with Nautilus now set to connect at the Isle of Grain, the rationale for concentrating such substantial infrastructure near Saxmundham has weakened. This shift presents an opportunity to reconsider the location of the Sea Link converter station, potentially favouring sites closer to demand centres or existing industrial zones, which could offer better alignment with strategic energy distribution goals and reduce the environmental footprint on rural Suffolk.
- 20.3 Furthermore, the cumulative impact of multiple large-scale energy projects on the Saxmundham area has been a point of concern for local authorities and residents. The removal of Nautilus from this cluster alleviates some pressure but also underscores the need to reassess the remaining infrastructure plans to ensure they are proportionate and necessary. A comprehensive review could lead to more balanced development that aligns with both national energy objectives and local community interests.
- 20.4 In conclusion, the Town Council respectfully requests the Examining Authority to reconsider the suitability of the Saxmundham site for the Sea Link converter station considering these developments. Exploring alternative locations that may offer strategic advantages and reduced environmental impact could lead to more sustainable and community-aligned outcomes.

21. Mitigation and Community Benefit

- 21.1 Saxmundham Town Council is deeply concerned by the limited and generalised nature of the applicant's proposed mitigation measures. These measures do not sufficiently address the scale, duration, and cumulative impact of the proposed infrastructure on the local community, landscape, and environment. A project of this magnitude, particularly one involving major above-ground infrastructure such as a converter station and access road, must bring with it a proportionate and enduring package of mitigation and benefit for the host community.
- 21.2 Should the Sea Link project be consented, Saxmundham Town Council considers it essential that a package of meaningful mitigation and community benefit measures is secured to address the significant and long-lasting harm to the town and its surrounding environment. We wish to make it clear that our call for mitigation and community benefit **does not imply support for or acceptance** of the Sea Link proposals. These requests are made **without prejudice** to our formal objection and are

intended solely to ensure that, in the event the scheme proceeds, the local community is not left without redress for the disruption and damage caused.

- 21.3 Mitigation measures must extend beyond the scope of statutory planning obligations, which are primarily concerned with minimising direct harm to the environment and local infrastructure. Community benefits serve a distinct and vital purpose: to acknowledge the substantial burden placed on host communities that are required to accommodate nationally significant infrastructure for the wider public good. Saxmundham and its neighbouring parishes face long-term landscape, amenity, and socio-economic impacts that cannot be fully addressed through standard mitigation. The community benefit offer must therefore reflect both the scale of the disruption and the critical role the local area is being asked to play in enabling the UK's national energy strategy. Without such recognition, public trust and resilience may be further eroded, and the town will be left bearing a disproportionate cost for national infrastructure from which it derives no direct local benefit.
- 21.4 At present, the mitigation proposed is insufficient in scale, substance, and specificity. The project would introduce a vast industrial presence into an open rural landscape, near a rural market town. The limited landscape mitigation measures offered, such as sparse visual screening, are wholly inadequate to address the permanent change in character and setting. Saxmundham Town Council therefore respectfully requests the Examining Authority to require the applicant to deliver a significantly enhanced and enforceable mitigation strategy for the converter station, as detailed earlier in this representation. This should include substantial landscape integration measures to reduce visual harm and industrial prominence, such as earth-sheltering, sensitive massing and cladding, green roofing, and reinforced natural screening. These measures are essential to preserve rural character, protect key views, and support local biodiversity.
- 21.5 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests the Examining Authority to require the applicant to implement a robust and enforceable Construction Traffic Management Plan, developed in close consultation with local councils and residents, as detailed earlier in this representation. The strategy must include strict routing controls, time-limited HGV deliveries, real-time monitoring, and community reporting mechanisms. It must also provide targeted investment in road safety improvements, pedestrian infrastructure, and emergency services capacity. Given the cumulative impact of multiple NSIPs in the area, this strategy must be coordinated with other major infrastructure projects to reduce disruption, protect public safety, and maintain essential access for local communities.
- 21.6 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests the Examining Authority to require the applicant to deliver a substantially strengthened and enforceable noise and disturbance mitigation strategy, as outlined earlier in this representation. Given the proximity of residential areas, the strategy must include comprehensive acoustic measures, transparent monitoring and reporting systems, enforceable construction hour limits, and effective controls on light and dust pollution. These provisions are essential to protect public health, residential amenity, and overall community wellbeing throughout the construction and operational phases.
- 21.7 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests the Examining Authority to require the applicant to deliver a comprehensive and enforceable water management and flood risk mitigation strategy, as detailed earlier in this representation, to address the identified risks to water supply, surface water

drainage, flood prevention, and ecological integrity throughout both the construction and operational phases.

- 21.8 Saxmundham Town Council respectfully requests the Examining Authority to consider imposing a statutory levy on each unit of electricity transmitted through the Sea Link converter station. This levy should be ringfenced in full for the benefit of the communities most affected by the onshore infrastructure. The scale and permanence of the disruption imposed on Saxmundham and its neighbouring parishes demand a proportionate and enduring mechanism to redress long-term harm. A community benefit fund, secured and administered independently, would ensure that meaningful compensation is delivered directly to the communities hosting this nationally critical infrastructure.

Note:

The inclusion of the following paragraphs is subject to the outcome of the ongoing community consultation and formal consideration by Saxmundham Town Council at its meeting on 16 June 2025. The proposals referenced below, while previously endorsed in principle, remain under active review considering community feedback.

- 21.9 *[The Empowering Nature proposals, formally endorsed by Saxmundham Town Council, present a practical and visionary framework for delivering meaningful community benefits in response to the Sea Link project. Outlined in the public consultation document Empowering Nature: A Greener Future for the Fromus Communities,⁶⁹ the proposals set out an ambitious strategy to achieve biodiversity net gain, climate resilience, and improved community wellbeing.]*
- 21.10 *[They include the creation of new habitats, green corridors, and accessible public footpaths; targeted investment in local biodiversity and nature-based recreation; and initiatives promoting environmental education, physical and mental health, and social cohesion. Enhancements to existing community infrastructure and amenities also form a key part of the plan. Flagship projects include a new local nature reserve, the Fromus Boardwalk and Nature Trail, and the development of sustainable travel corridors. These priorities are consistent with national environmental policy, aligning with the principles of the Environment Act 2021 and the National Infrastructure Commission's call for host communities to benefit meaningfully from major infrastructure investment.]*
- 21.11 *[Saxmundham Town Council considers that the community benefit proposals put forward, including but not limited to the Empowering Nature framework, must not be dismissed as aspirational or secondary. Together, they represent a locally grounded, community-authored response to an imposed national infrastructure project, offering tangible and enduring benefits to help offset the harm caused. These initiatives reflect the priorities of residents and would deliver a meaningful and legacy, aligned with national environmental goals and the principle that host communities should be recognised.]*
- 21.12 We therefore respectfully request the Examining Authority to consider these proposals and to seek formal undertakings from the applicant to engage with and deliver appropriate elements. Such benefits could be secured through a Deed of Obligation made under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, between the applicant and East Suffolk Council or Suffolk County Council, in consultation with affected parishes. Unlike traditional planning obligations, such agreements are not limited to mitigation alone and can be used to secure voluntary community benefits in recognition of the substantial burden placed on the local area in hosting nationally significant infrastructure.

⁶⁹ Appendix 3 - Empowering Nature: A Greener Future for the Fromus Communities

22. Conclusion

- 22.1 Saxmundham Town Council recognises the strategic importance of strengthening the UK's energy infrastructure. However, the Sea Link proposal, as currently presented, would impose disproportionate and long-term harm on our town and its surrounding rural communities - harm that is neither sufficiently mitigated nor offset by tangible community benefit.
- 22.2 The cumulative impact of the converter station, access road, cable corridor, and associated construction activities poses a serious threat to the natural environment, landscape character, public health, and the local economy.
- 22.3 The siting of the converter station would introduce permanent industrial infrastructure into open countryside, undermining decades of careful stewardship and investment in tourism, recreation, and sustainable growth.
- 22.4 Saxmundham Town Council does not accept that the harms outlined in this Relevant Representation are outweighed by the asserted national benefit of the Sea Link project. While the national need for infrastructure is acknowledged, it must not override the rights and wellbeing of local communities. We are also particularly concerned by the inadequacy of the applicant's approach to mitigation and community benefits.
- 22.5 The Examining Authority must ensure that Saxmundham's voice is heard and heeded throughout this process. In the unwelcome event that consent is granted, it must be conditional on the strongest possible mitigation measures and a binding, transparent programme of community benefit.