

Energy Projects Report, Saxmundham Town Council, 14 July 2025

Introduction:

After submission of the Sea Link Relevant Representation (RR) to the Planning Inspectorate (PINs) we are now awaiting any questions they may wish to ask the Council. To date the Examining Authority (ExA) queries have been addressed to major consultees only (i.e. District and County Councils plus N.G.O.s) and our request to attend the site inspections were unheeded when the ExA undertook unaccompanied visits to the area. During this (relatively) quiet time Councillor Findlay and the Clerk have been busy promoting Empowering Nature.

Empowering Nature:

It is gratifying to read from the Clerk's Report that Empowering Nature is gaining considerable support. Holiday commitments prevented my attendance at many meetings but after attending the meeting with East Suffolk Council officers and Councillor Tom Daly on 8 July, I am reassured that Saxmundham Town Council made the correct decision to support Empowering Nature and include it within the Sea Link Relevant Representation.

National Grid Electricity Transmission, (NGET) Sea Link:

Site Visits:

The ExA visited the area during 25 – 27 June 2025. Locations viewed included:

- Thorpeness to Aldeburgh road, including SSSI, RSPB and AONB sites
- Saxmundham from Church Hill on B1119, Grove Road (Friston), Friston Church, Snape, Sternfield Low Road to Red Lane, Saxmundham to Clay Hills, Leiston to Knodishall Common
- Centre of Saxmundham, along the High Street and Main Road (B1121) to the A12 Junction, HGV route (for cabling) of Yoxford to Theberton then to A1094.
- A1094 Aldeburgh and A12 to B1121 Benhall Rail Bridge 'observing residential and other development fronting onto the road in Benhall and Saxmundham'. The location of the proposed access bridge next to Hurts Hall, construction compound S01 and position of the proposed converter station. Thereafter the ExA travelled on foot from Saxmundham centre up Church Hill, past the church and they noted the position of Manor Gardens. They viewed the proposed converter site, noting position of proposed compounds S02, S03 and veteran trees in Bloomfield's Covert. After extending the walk via Friston they walked back to Church Hill via footpaths to Saxmundham.
- Friston to Sternfield via B1121. Footpath walks around Saxmundham to observe Hurts Hall and the proposed access and bridge and car journey along B1119 from Saxmundham to observe the HGV route.
- For full information see: [Notes of the Examining Authority's Unaccompanied Site Inspections held Monday 23 – Friday 27 June 2025](#)

Communications:

The first letter from the ExA to the applicant (Sea Link) dated 8 July 2025 highlights several concerns:

- The ExA consider the Statements of Common Ground and Local Impact Reports do not fully identify disagreements and thus they are requesting 'Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statements' (PADSS). At the present time the County and District Council need to complete PADSS, however Saxmundham Town Council may be requested to undertake this task. This will not be too onerous as our disagreements are recorded within our RR.
- PINs have questioned NGET on a further DCO application for Friston substation where Scottish Power Renewables (SPR) already have a development consent order granted. Importantly, this includes a request for comparison of mitigations already granted for the SPR development compared to NGET's proposals and visualisations of both the converter station and substation.
- Further visualisations are requested to show the visual cumulative effect of the Sea Link and National Grid Venture's Lion Link converter station. (These visualisations were included in the Statutory Consultation documents but excluded from DCO documentation). It is gratifying to note that, irrespective that the DCO is for Sea Link only, the ExA are considering the cumulative effects of Lion Link.

Other issues in the letter of 8 July 2025 relating to Saxmundham and district include a reminder for NGET to adhere to the National Standard for Sustainable Urban Drainage published in June 2025, concerns relating to mistakes in the documentation and the need to adhere to new standards of air quality monitoring. Importantly, the ExA are concentrating on visual issues and considering the impact of more than one monolithic structure in a small geographical area. For full information see: [letter under s89\(3\) of the Planning Act 2008](#)

Next steps:

We envisage that we will be advised shortly about the date of the Preliminary Meeting. This covers:

- The 'Initial Assessment of Principal Issues' (IAP), namely the main issues that may be involved in the examination. This document should be published within 21 days of the deadline for RR, in fact very shortly.
- Draft Timetable
- Details of how people and organisations can register to speak at the preliminary meeting
- Deadline for registering to speak at the preliminary meeting

Whilst the council will not be meeting during August, I will keep Councillors updated by email of important issues.

Gnb/9 July 2025