

Sea Link Non statutory consultation

Response from the Alde and Ore Association

The Alde and Ore Association exists to protect for the public benefit the Alde, Ore and Butley rivers and their banks from Shingle Street to their tidal limits together with features of public interest. It has some 2000 members.

As there is very little information to date that can be given by the developers on the possible impacts on the dynamic, and fragile Heritage Suffolk coast and shoreline, despite having attended webinars and open days, it is not possible to comment on most of the questions in the questionnaire

Questions 1 and 2 concern the proposed landfall for the Sea Link Projects. It is not possible to favour any one because the developers have, at the moment, very little understanding of the coast on which they propose land falls, nor is there is any option to leave the coast alone and try an offshore grid arrangement. The latter would get the power more directly to the area where the power is needed and would not involve tampering with the fragile coast.

It is noted that the developer had already eliminated its landfall point, S1 position. It is astonishing that it should have even been contemplated at all: such a site would involve going under the deep concrete wall which was built as a sea defence for the town and the river in the 1960s, and if that wall collapsed there would be considerable flooding and damage to housing and the estuary. Furthermore, the pathway for the cable would not only pass through the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, but through doubly precious land and water edges covered by multiple protection designations – SAC, SPA, Ramsar, SSSI, go twice under the river and at its north-western extremity on land the swathe would cut near the site of the Snape Ship Burials (of the same era as the Sutton Hoo ship burials)

The proposed emerging preference, S2, which the Nautilus project said was its least favourite, would have to go under deep shingle shoreline with a wide stretch of fanwash shingle (some 150 metres at its widest). It would then , possibly, go under the North Warren marshes, a managed nature reserve where the cables would have to go through an area of peaty marshy ground to a considerable depth as that area was a small fishing port until the mid-17th century and has since been silted up and even the 1884 Ordnance Survey map comments that it is liable to flooding.

Any works which led to changing or deflecting the normal shingle sedimentary flow and either upset the sea defences as they are now or led to depletion of the shingle eastern bank of the Alde and Ore estuary could endanger the economy of the area. It is worth noting in passing that even 5 years ago the estimated cost for a shingle engine bank to be installed by the Martello Tower to renew the shingle shore line would be well over £20 million and shingle renewal for the narrowest point at least some £9-13 million.

The developer needs also look at the impact of sea surges in the area. S2 was well under water in the winter of 1953, and most catastrophic in recent history when a massive sea surge caused huge damage and flooding, throughout North Warren all through Aldeburgh Town and the town marshes and estuary.

The developer should also study the Shoreline Management Plan 7, for the area, and avoid anything that might run contrary to the accepted policies along this stretch of coast from Sizewell to the southern end of the Orfordness.

Question 3 coordination of convertor sites: without a reasonable level of information, it is not possible to comment on whether coordination would be a good thing. Further there is no option for an offshore grid which is far less likely to affect this fragile shoreline.

Question 4- inland cable routes sharing corridors: of those put forward as emerging preferences the Association will not comment directly unless and until routes emerge with might damage the estuary landscape and its precious environmental and wild life features.

Question 5 Sharing a landfall site: without any evaluation being available about the shoreline it is not possible to comment except to say that the greater the need for open trenches or closely packed HDD entries that could destabilise the coastline, the worse the impact on the coast and the sea defences for the town of Aldeburgh and the Alde and Ore Estuary. (The Estuary is a considerable source of income for the area. (See AOA economic survey of 2013/3- www.aldeandore.org a ten year update will shortly be undertaken.)

Question 6 views or local knowledge to be taken into account: In addition to coastal and flooding considerations, attention must be paid to the adequacy of road access to the two landfall sites as well as the possible convertor sites. This area owes its economic prosperity to tourism, the chief attractions being the unspoiled landscape, the interesting shoreline, the wild life and the peace and tranquillity. The latter exist as the road system is a limited one and rural in nature- any huge addition of heavy traffic quite unsuitable for the local road structure, could deter visitors and adversely affect tourism and people's access to the river and all the enjoyment its waters and walks provide.

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