

SOUTHWOLD TOWN COUNCIL



Mrs. L. Beevor
Clerk of the Council

Town Hall
Southwold
IP18 6EF

9th March 2026

Response of Southwold Town Council to Lionlink Statutory Consultation

Closing Date 10 March 2026

While acknowledging the benefit of Lion Link providing additional electricity security to the UK, Southwold Town Council objects to Lion Link coming onshore anywhere along the Suffolk Heritage coast, and specifically at Walberswick, to connect with the Kiln Lane sub-station, and we wholly endorse the detailed response of Walberswick Parish Council to Lion Link's statutory consultation.

We would like to stress the consequential impact on Southwold which would be caused by landfall at Walberswick.

While Walberswick and Southwold are physically separated by the River Blyth, the two communities are very much a joint attraction for their respective residents and visitors with the ability to walk, cycle and boat between the two and enjoy their individual charms and surrounding peaceful common areas. This is a year-round feature, and any period of disruptive construction on the scale of Lion Link will have a particularly detrimental influence on tourism which is the life blood of both communities.

All routes of access from the A12 to the Lion Link route and landfall site are unsuitable for multiples of HGV traffic and will have a severe impact on local traffic, including traffic to and from Southwold.

Given the width of the B1387, as Walberswick PC correctly points out, the use of this road for access to the landfall site will in effect limit the only access into Walberswick during the construction phase of 2 years into one way traffic and/or temporary closure, an intolerable situation for residents and tourists alike. And if that isn't disturbance enough, the combined effects of HGV traffic noise, piling, boring, digging and drilling so close to the village, the beach and popular PRoWs will inevitably drive tourists away from the area and local businesses in Walberswick and Southwold will suffer and, in some cases, fail.

This is not to overstate the fragility of coastal tourism and hospitality businesses, and there has already been a significant year on year decrease in visitors to Walberswick and Southwold (in Southwold's case a fall of 9% to February 2026 according to data supplied by East Suffolk Council) as SZC and other NSIPs have begun to scar the local landscapes and make travel a burden.

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Taking data produced by Destination Research Ltd using the Cambridge Model for East Suffolk's visitor economy, tourism value for 2024 was £743m and supported 15,500 jobs. Even modest declines translate into significant economic and employment losses concentrated in frontline sectors. A 5% decline results overall in £37.1m lost value and 775 job losses. Coastal towns are disproportionately reliant on tourism with local economies dominated by hospitality, retail and accommodation sectors and businesses operating on tight seasonal margins, so a small percentage drop in visitor numbers will have long-lasting economic consequences to these towns with businesses finding it hard to survive.

Tourism underpins local identity and vitality, and any decline erodes social cohesion and cultural vitality, destroying the very fabric of East Suffolk as it is today.

The implication of coastal erosion on all of the NSIPS in progress and being proposed along this coastline requires significant financial consideration. This seems to have been underestimated by all. The impact on Thorpeness, only 10 miles south along the coast, is already being evidenced – with properties being lost to the sea.

Quite apart from the socio-economic impact on Southwold, we are also concerned by the potential ecological damage that would be caused by the choice of Walberswick for landfall and the lasting deprivation this would cause for Southwold's residents and tourists. We won't repeat the failings of the PIER related to Ecology set out by Walberswick PC, but it is another strong reason for Lion Link reconsidering its choice of landfall.

In closing, this area of East Suffolk is already suffering from the upheaval caused by the preparation for the Sizewell C build, and we are aware of the several other NSIPs consented or planned, whose cumulative effect would be devastating for local communities. The well-being of residents, particularly in the towns and villages around the proposed converter stations and sub-stations is already being adversely affected, and NGV will be aware of the arguments being propounded in the Sea Link DCO examination against that project and the lack of coordination between the multiple schemes.

It is to be hoped that following its statutory consultation, NGV will think again about its Lion Link proposal which will inevitably meet strong local resistance.

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