

XLINKS' MOROCCO-UK POWER PROJECT

Outline Skills and Employment Strategy

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XLINKS' MOROCCO – UK POWER PROJECT

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Glossary

Term	Meaning
Alverdiscott Substation	The existing National Grid Electricity Transmission substation at Alverdiscott, Devon, which comprises 400 kV and 132 kV electrical substation equipment.
Alverdiscott Substation Connection Development	The development required at the existing Alverdiscott Substation Site, which is envisaged to include development of a new 400 kV substation, and other extension and modification works to be carried out by National Grid Electricity Transmission. This does not form part of the Proposed Development. However, it is considered cumulatively within the Environmental Impact Assessment as it is necessary to facilitate connection to the national grid.
Alverdiscott Substation site	The National Grid Electricity Transmission site within which the Alverdiscott Substation sits.
Annoyance (dust)	Loss of amenity due to dust deposition or visible dust plumes, often related to people making complaints, but not necessarily sufficient to be a legal nuisance, as defined by the Institute of Air Quality Management.
Applicant	Xlinks 1 Limited.
Bipole	A Bipole system is an electrical transmission system that comprises two Direct Current conductors of opposite polarity.
Converter Site	The Converter Site is proposed to be located to the immediate west of the existing Alverdiscott Substation site in north Devon. The Converter Site would contain two converter stations (known as Bipole 1 and Bipole 2) and associated infrastructure, buildings, and landscaping.
Converter station	Part of an electrical transmission and distribution system. Converter stations convert electricity from Direct Current to Alternating Current, or vice versa.
Development Consent Order	An order made under the Planning Act 2008, as amended, granting development consent.
Earthworks	Covers the processes of soil-stripping, ground-levelling, excavation, and landscaping, as defined by the Institute of Air Quality Management.
Environmental Impact Assessment	The process of identifying and assessing the significant effects likely to arise from a project. This requires consideration of the likely changes to the environment, where these arise as a consequence of a project, through comparison with the existing and projected future baseline conditions.
Environmental Statement	The document presenting the results of the Environmental Impact Assessment process.
Horizontal Directional Drilling	Horizontal Directional Drilling is a method of installing underground pipelines, cables, and service conduit (or ducts) through trenchless methods to avoid obstacles and sensitive features (e.g. roads, watercourses, woodlands, etc.).
HVAC Cables	The High Voltage Alternating Current cables which would bring electricity from the converter stations to the new Alverdiscott Substation Connection Development.
HVAC Cable Corridors	The proposed corridors (for each Bipole) within which the onshore High Voltage Alternating Current cables would be routed between the Converter Site and the Alverdiscott Substation Site.
HVDC Cables	The High Voltage Direct Current cables which would bring electricity to the UK converter stations from the Moroccan converter stations.
Landfall	The proposed area in which the offshore cables make landfall in the United Kingdom (come on shore) and the transitional area between the offshore cabling and the onshore cabling. This term applies to the entire landfall area at Cornborough Range, Devon, between Mean Low Water Springs and the Transition Joint Bay inclusive of all construction works, including the offshore and onshore cable routes, and compound(s) at Landfall.

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Term	Meaning
Mean High Water Springs	The height of mean high water during spring tides in a year.
Mean Low Water Springs	The height of mean low water during spring tides in a year.
Onshore Infrastructure Area	The proposed infrastructure area within the Order Limits landward of Mean High Water Springs. The Onshore Infrastructure Area comprises the transition joint bays, onshore HVDC Cables, converter stations, HVAC Cables, highways improvements, utility diversions and associated temporary and permanent infrastructure including temporary and permanent compound areas and accesses.
Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor	The proposed corridor within which the onshore HVDC Cables would be located.
Order Limits	The area within which all offshore and onshore components of the Proposed Development are proposed to be located, including areas required on a temporary basis during construction (such as construction compounds).
Proposed Development	The element of the Xlinks' Morocco-UK Power Project within the UK. The Proposed Development covers all works required to construct and operate the offshore cables (from the UK Exclusive Economic Zone to Landfall), Landfall, onshore Direct Current and Alternating Current cables, converter stations, and road upgrade works.
Xlinks' Morocco-UK Power Project	The overall scheme from Morocco to the national grid, including all onshore and offshore elements of the transmission network and the generation site in Morocco (referred to as the 'Project').

Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
AIL	Abnormal Indivisible Load
DCO	Development Consent Order
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EMS	Environmental Management System
HDD	Horizontal Directional Drilling
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicles
HVAC	High Voltage Alternating Current
HVDC	High Voltage Direct Current
LPA	Local Planning Authority
MLWS	Mean Low Water Springs
NGET	National Grid Electricity Transmission
oSES	Outline Skills and Employment Strategy
PEIR	Preliminary Environmental Information Report
SES	Skills and Employment Strategy

Units

Units	Meaning
km	Kilometre
m	Metre
mph	Miles per hour

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. This document forms the Outline Skills and Employment Strategy (oSES), which has been prepared for the United Kingdom (UK) elements of Xlinks' Morocco-UK Power Project (the 'Project'). For ease of reference, the UK elements of the Project are referred to as the 'Proposed Development.'
- 1.1.2. This document will form the basis for a final Skills and Employment Strategy.
- 1.1.3. The relevant local planning authorities are Torridge District Council and Devon County Council.

Purpose of the Outline Skills and Employment Strategy

- 1.1.4. The draft Development Consent Order (DCO) (document reference 3.1) includes a requirement for the preparation of a final Skills and Employment Strategy (SES). This is secured under DCO Schedule 2, Requirement 15. The final Strategy must be submitted to and approved by the relevant planning authority prior to the commencement of the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.5. The oSES provides an outline strategy that can be developed further with the relevant key consultees into a final Skills and Employment Strategy that will facilitate positive and meaningful commitments and activities.
- 1.1.6. The final Strategy would be produced by the Principal Contractor(s) for the Proposed Development. As far as reasonably practicable, the following principles would be relied upon when establishing/refining objectives and commitments with the final SES:
 - Collaboration
 - Delivering strategic outcomes by working with key stakeholders to build and add value to existing programmes and activities.
 - Inclusivity and accessibility
 - Consider and develop inclusive objectives that provide opportunities which are accessible by all.
 - Sustainability and legacy
 - Aim to set the workforce on a sustainable career path, leaving a lasting legacy of transferable skills and experience.

Scope of the Outline Skills and Employment Strategy

- 1.1.7. The scope of this oSES is to provide the basis for a SES to underpin the development and subsequent construction and operation of the Proposed Development. The oSES sets out the approach that will be adopted with the aim of promoting skills and employment opportunities for local economic benefit.

1.2. Project Description

- 1.2.1. The Proposed Development forms part of the wider Project proposed by the Applicant to develop a sub-sea electricity connection between the UK and Morocco. The Project would be an electricity generation facility entirely powered by solar and wind energy combined with a battery storage facility which would be connected exclusively to the UK via High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) sub-sea cables. The Project would include an offshore route of approximately 4,000 km, which would run through Moroccan, Spanish, Portuguese, and French Waters before arriving within the UK Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- 1.2.2. The Proposed Development (the UK elements of the Project) covers an approximate area of 206 km². This includes approximately 2 km² for the onshore elements and approximately 204 km² for the offshore elements.
- 1.2.3. The onshore elements are wholly located within the local authority area of Torridge District Council (and Devon County Council at county level) in north Devon and extends from the Alverdiscott Substation Site to the Landfall at Cornborough Range.
- 1.2.4. The offshore elements are to be located within the Offshore Cable Corridor, which lies within the South West Inshore and South West Offshore Marine Plan Areas (Marine Management Organisation, 2021). The Offshore Cable Corridor is proposed to be routed through the Bristol Channel and Celtic Sea, extending from the Landfall to the limit of the UK EEZ, south west of the UK.
- 1.2.5. The key components of the Proposed Development would include the following:
 - Onshore elements:
 - Converter Site: which would contain two converter stations (known as Bipole 1 and Bipole 2) immediately west of the Alverdiscott Substation Site, as well as associated infrastructure (e.g. access roads, security fencing, etc.) and landscaping to provide visual screening.
 - HVAC Cables: underground cable connection between the proposed converter stations and the national grid connection would be via the new 'Alverdiscott Substation Connection Development', of which planning and construction is to be taken forward by National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET). This is assessed cumulatively in the ES. The HVAC Cables would be located within the HVAC Cable Corridors.
 - HVDC Cables: underground cable connection of approximately 14.5 km between the proposed converter stations and the transition joint bays at the Landfall. The onshore HVDC Cables would be located within the Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor.
 - Other works to facilitate the development, including permanent road improvement works, temporary and permanent utility connections, permanent utility diversions and temporary construction compounds, drainage, and access. The Proposed Development also includes opportunities for environmental mitigation, compensation, and enhancement.
 - Landfall:
 - This is where the offshore cables are jointed to the onshore cables. This term applies to the entire area between Mean Low Water Springs and the transition joint bays. This includes all construction works, including the

offshore and onshore cable corridors and Landfall construction compound.

- Offshore elements:

1.2.6. Offshore cables: Approximately 370 km of subsea HVDC Cables, which would be routed from the Landfall at Cornborough Range to the UK EEZ boundary. The offshore cable infrastructure would continue beyond the UK EEZ; however, this does not form part of the Proposed Development but is part of the wider Project. The offshore cables would be situated within the Offshore Cable Corridor.

1.3. Skills and Employment Baseline

1.3.1. The Environmental Statement (ES) (Volume 4 - Chapter 3: Socio-Economics provides a baseline assessment of the existing and future environment from the perspective of socio-economics. Relevant to the oSES, the Chapter addresses demographics, labour market performance, industrial structure, and education levels.

1.3.2. The Outline Accommodation Strategy (Document ref 7.13) considers construction workforce requirements, including how they are expected to change throughout delivery, and the operational workforce requirements. Furthermore, the Outline Accommodation Strategy reviews the existing labour profile and dynamics, local recruitment, and the North Devon and Torridge Economic Strategy Economic Strategy 2024-2029, including its vision, ambitions, and areas for improvement.

1.4. Policy Context

1.4.1. A review has been undertaken of planning policy, national frameworks, and regional/local economic development strategies relevant to the oSES.

National Policy Statements

1.4.2. There are currently six energy National Policy Statements (NPSs), three of which contain policy relevant to the Proposed Development, specifically:

- Overarching NPS for Energy (NPS EN-1) which sets out the UK Government's policy for the delivery of major energy infrastructure (Department for Energy Security & Net Zero 2023a).
- NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (NPS EN-3) (Department for Energy Security & Net Zero 2023b); and
- NPS for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (NPS EN-5) (Department for Energy Security & Net Zero 2023c).

1.4.3. Key aspects from the NPSs relevant to the Proposed Development and the oSES are outlined below.

- NPS EN-1
 - Where the project is likely to have socio-economic impacts at local or regional levels, the applicant should undertake and include in their application an assessment of these impacts - EN-1 paragraph 5.13.2.
 - The assessment should include the creation of jobs and training opportunities. Applicants may wish to provide information on the

sustainability of the jobs created, including where they will help to develop the skills needed for the UK's transition to Net Zero - EN-1 paragraph 5.13.4.

- The assessment should consider the contribution to the development of low-carbon industries at the local and regional level as well as nationally - EN-1 paragraph 5.13.4.
- The assessment should consider any indirect beneficial impacts for the region hosting the infrastructure, in particular in relation to the use of local support services and supply chains - EN-1 paragraph 5.13.4.
- The assessment should include the impact of a changing influx of workers during the different construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of the energy infrastructure - EN-1 paragraph 5.13.4.
- The assessment should include cumulative effects - EN-1 paragraph 5.13.4.
- Applicants should describe the existing socio-economic conditions in the areas surrounding the Proposed Development and should also refer to how the development's socio-economic impacts correlate with local planning policies - EN-1 paragraph 5.13.5.
- Consideration of any impacts that are linked to socio-economic impacts - EN-1 paragraph 5.13.6.

The National Planning Policy Framework

1.4.4. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2012 and updated in 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2023 (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2023). The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England.

1.4.5. The Government published proposed reforms to the NPPF for consultation on 30 July 2024 (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024). Following consultation, the NPPF will be updated.

1.4.6. The NPPF policies relevant to the oSES are summarised below:

- The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate. – NPPF, Section 14, paragraph 157.
 - New development should be planned for in ways that avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change.
 - New development plans should consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources and supporting infrastructure. – NPPF, Section 14, paragraphs 159, 160.
- Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand, and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity. – NPPF, Section 6, paragraph 85.

- The Government's commitment to creating jobs and prosperity through continued economic growth is defined within NPPF, which sets out the importance of:
 - local and regional economic market business needs (paragraphs 81, 85).
 - setting out a clear economic vision and planning for economic development (paragraph 86); and provision and accessibility of new jobs.
 - NPPF, Section 6, paragraphs 85, 86. The assessment should consider any indirect beneficial impacts for the region hosting the infrastructure, in particular in relation to the use of local support services and supply chains - EN-1 paragraph 5.13.4.

Local Planning Policy

- 1.4.7. The onshore elements of the Proposed Development are located within the administrative area of Torridge District Council (and Devon County Council at the County level). The relevant local planning policies applicable to the oSES are summarised below:
- Devon County Council Strategic Plan 2021-2025
 - The Devon County Council Strategic Plan is designed to set out a road map that will help Devon recover from the pandemic and work towards creating a prosperous and inclusive future for the area. The strategy identifies six main priorities:
 - responding to the climate emergency.
 - creating an ambitious environment for children and young people.
 - supporting sustainable economic recovery.
 - tackling poverty and inequality.
 - improving health and wellbeing; and
 - helping communities be safe and connected.
 - Heart of the South West LEP, The Local Industrial Strategy
 - The Local Industrial Strategy sets out a comprehensive plan on how the South West Region, and its 16 local authorities, can deliver sustainable economic growth. The document has prioritised three areas of focus to grow the economy in a clean and sustainable way. These are energy, engineering and digital.
 - North Devon and Torridge Local Plan 2011-2031
 - The plan sets out the spatial planning policy for the area and how the area can deliver sustainable developments that meet economic, social, and environmental objectives.
 - The most relevant policy to the socio-economic impact of the Proposed Development is Policy ST11: Delivering Employment and Economic Development which states that the Councils will maintain and enhance a diverse local economy and encourage inward

investment. In order to do this, the strategy outlines a number of policies, relevant ones include Policy ST16: Delivering Renewable Energy, Policy ST23: Infrastructure, Policy DM09: Safeguarding Green Infrastructure.

- North Devon and Torridge Economic Strategy Economic Strategy 2024-2029
 - The strategy places emphasis on Net Zero and seeks to put North Devon and Torridge on the map in terms of green energy. A key ambition of the strategy is also to support local procurement and supply chains, so that spend recirculates within the local economy.
 - The strategy considers 3 key and inter-related areas for improvement:
 - improving productivity and raising the Gross Value Added (GVA) across key sectors.
 - generating employment opportunities which raise salary levels and gross weekly pay.
 - supporting and inspiring higher skill levels, through creating pathways and upskilling, allowing local people to benefit.
 - The strategy aims to deliver on skills pathways from school into the workforce that underpins a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) economy.
- The Great South West Tourism Partnership, Towards 2030
 - This strategic plan highlights the current priorities and challenges to the South West's tourism economy, as well as key objectives to make the region the most accessible and inclusive destination in the UK. The priorities of the strategy include:
 - zero carbon: reducing carbon footprint of local businesses, and making it easier for visitors to make sustainable choices.
 - accessible and inclusive: meeting the accessibility needs of visitors to make the South West an inclusive destination; and
 - improving productivity: to address seasonality, value per visitor, research collaboration.

2. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

- 2.1.1. The Applicant recognises that working with relevant external stakeholders is vital for the delivery of the final SES.
- 2.1.2. To develop the final SES, the Applicant and its contractors would actively engage with a number of key stakeholders including education, training and employment skills sector, local business/industry groups and other developments in the pipeline within the region.
- 2.1.3. Stakeholders and consultees engaged in relation to skills and employment in the development of the oSES are detailed in
- 2.1.4. Existing programmes and activities
- 2.1.5. **Table 1 - Stakeholder Consultation** Engagement undertaken to date has included discussion in relation to:
 - Key concerns and issues regarding skills and employment within the local communities
 - Opportunities for collaboration
 - Existing programmes and activities

Table 1 - Stakeholder Consultation

Sector/Industry	Organisation
Education / FE and HE College	Petroc College, Barnstaple, North Devon
Training Providers	Devon & Cornwall Training Providers Network Limited
Training College (Morocco)	IFMERE (Institut de Formation des Energies Renouvelables et Efficacité Energétique)
Local Authority	Torrige District Council (ref North Devon & Torrige Economic Strategy 2024-2029)
Local Authority	Devon County Council (ref Devon Strategic Plan 2021 2025)

- 2.1.6. Further stakeholders and consultees may be identified by The Applicant and Principal Contractor(s) to inform final SES, as the strategy develops.

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1. Commitment

- 3.1.1. The Applicant is committed to leaving a lasting, positive legacy of skills and employment within the region through implementation of the SES.
- 3.1.2. To achieve this, the Applicant has identified a number of objectives. The objectives are outlined below and have been grouped into four strategic focus areas:
- Zero Harm
 - Supporting and Developing Future Talent
 - Supporting Local Labour
 - Revitalising the Skill Base

3.2. Zero Harm

- 3.2.1. The Applicant is fully committed to protecting its workforce and those impacted by the Proposed Scheme and recognises the importance of mental and physical well-being. In support of this commitment, the Applicant has set an objective that aims to ensure that health, safety, and well-being are at the forefront of all aspects of the Proposed Development.

Objective 1: Making health, safety, and well-being the top priority.

- 3.2.2. Activities relating to this objective include:
- Actively promote a culture that puts safety, mental and physical well-being first, providing a supportive environment where everyone can thrive and succeed.
 - Where relevant, ensure safety modules are included in all training.
 - Require construction personnel to hold a valid Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card.
 - Promote a 'without blame' culture to encourage the reporting, effective investigation, and communication of incidents.
- 3.2.3. Require its Principal Contractor(s) to demonstrate a commitment to zero harm through the tender process and development of supporting management plans.
- 3.2.4. Outreach into local schools to deliver an educative programme on construction site hazards and health and safety relating to the programme of works.

3.3. Supporting and Developing Future Talent

- 3.3.1. The Applicant seeks to motivate and inspire young people and students to pursue careers in construction and STEM, in addition to providing skills to support and better prepare young people for work.

- 3.3.2. To effectively support and develop young people into areas of STEM education and to establish clear pathways into employment, the Applicant has established the following objectives.
- 3.3.3. To support where possible the delivery of the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks within local schools and colleges:
- A stable careers programme
 - Learning from careers and labour market information
 - Addressing the needs of each student
 - Linking curriculum learning to careers
 - Encounter with employers and employees
 - Experiences of workplaces
 - Encounters with further and higher education
 - Personal guidance

Objective 2: Support initiatives to promote STEM education, careers, and pathways into employment.

- 3.3.4. Promote STEM education and work-based learning to raise young peoples' interest in STEM subjects and career paths. The initiatives put in place to take forward this activity will be designed based on engagement with local schools/education facilities in the early years of the Proposed Development.
- 3.3.5. Promote routes into STEM education and transferable employment skills for young people not attending school, as those outside of established educational settings are at greater disadvantage and likely be provided with less information about pathways from education into work.

Objective 3: Facilitate work experience, placements, and internships.

- 3.3.6. Provide young people with opportunities to gain practical work experience.
- 3.3.7. Work with local and regional schools and further education providers to develop and make available high-quality experiences for young people.

Objective 4: Promote Apprenticeships and Graduate Schemes

- 3.3.8. Where appropriate and deliverable, work with local colleges and learning providers to create Apprenticeship vacancies in line with available frameworks to provide 'earn while you learn' opportunities.
- 3.3.9. Work with local and regional Universities to implement and embed Graduate Apprenticeship schemes where viable.

3.4. Supporting Local Labour

3.4.1. The Proposed Development would generate economic opportunities in terms of jobs and contracts. To maximise the economic benefits for local people and companies, The Applicant would, as far as reasonably practicable, encourage its Principal Contractor(s) to provide opportunities to local people and local supply chain companies through the following objective.

Objective 5: Encourage and support growth and employment within local communities

3.4.2. Maximise the opportunities for the local community, providing employment and addressing under-employment/employment poverty in the local area.

3.4.3. Promote access to jobs generated to local workers and engage with the local supply chain. Although most opportunities would be associated with the construction phase of the Proposed Development, the aim is to provide the local communities with a legacy of skills and improved employment prospects.

3.4.4. Encourage and support interested local community who are keen to work within the construction industry to achieve a CSCS card to enable working on construction sites such as the proposed development as well as other local construction projects.

3.4.5. Support paying the workforce, employed directly or by contractors, the living wage.

3.4.6. Set specific and achievable targets for the employment of:

- Local workers
- Local unemployed workers
- Ex-Military
- Ex-offenders
- Other disadvantage groups currently underrepresented in the workforce

3.4.7. Seek to increase of diversity of the workforce, e.g. gender, ethnicity, disability, social mobility, improving inclusion in the offshore industry.

3.5. Revitalising the Skill Base

3.5.1. The Applicant recognises that many local people hold skills that can be adapted for the energy sector. As such, through the following objective, the Applicant seeks to revitalise the skill base and support the transition from other sectors, which may be in decline, into the offshore and energy sector.

Objective 6: Support transition from other sectors

3.5.2. Through employment, provide local people the opportunity to address skill gaps and provide tools to access higher skilled jobs.

3.5.3. Explore opportunities to support those with transferable skills with key stakeholders.

- 3.5.4. Upskill the workforce by supporting them with industry specific qualifications and encourage Continuing Professional Development.
- 3.5.5. Work with stakeholders to provide opportunities for ex-military living locally or wishing to return to the area at the end of their military service.

4. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

- 4.1.1. This oSES provides outline commitments to skills and employment which are to be confirmed through further stakeholder engagement. As the commitments are confirmed, the approach to implementation and the measures for monitoring will be developed.
- 4.1.2. A final SES will be produced by the Principal Contractor(s) for the Proposed Development.
- 4.1.3. Monitoring is to include the identification of measurable outputs and outcomes, which are to be reviewed periodically to determine performance and if any changes are required to ensure successful delivery of the Strategy.
- 4.1.4. Monitoring will support determining the success of final SES and the wider economic benefits, locally and regionally. As part of the monitoring, periodic discussions would be held with the relevant LPAs.
- 4.1.5. The Applicant is committed to working closely with different groups including employers and contractors; intermediaries; educators; and Local Authorities and agencies to achieve the objectives of the SES.