



# SEA Link Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	Sea Link
<b>File reference</b>	EN020026
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	08 June 2023
<b>Meeting with</b>	National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET)
<b>Venue</b>	Microsoft Teams
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	Project Update Meeting
<b>Circulation</b>	All attendees

## Summary of key points discussed and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

## ***Project Update / Timeline***

The Applicant provided an overview of the Proposed Development, which was unchanged from the last project update meeting.

Timeline:

- 2022: Non-Statutory Consultation;
- 2022: EIA scoping submitted to the Inspectorate;
- 2023: Pre-consultation stakeholder briefings;
- 2023: Update Stakeholders;
- 2024: Submission of development consent order application; and
- 2024-2025: Pre-examination, examination and reporting.

The Applicant confirmed that Statutory Consultation is currently planned to take place from 24 October to 18 December 2023, and that a report on the previous Non-Statutory Consultation will be published alongside the Statutory Consultation documents. The Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) is currently being prepared and the final document will be shared with relevant local planning authorities for comments at the end of June 2023.

There are ongoing thematic environmental meetings and monthly meetings with relevant stakeholders including local authorities and marine stakeholders. The Applicant confirmed that the Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) and Host Authority Engagement Plan are ongoing.

The Applicant confirmed that they are continuing to engage with relevant stakeholders and are keeping track of matters agreed and to be agreed for the Statements of Common Ground (SoCG). Progress is also being made with environmental surveying and assessments and drafting the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) report based on the proposed project design for the Statutory Consultation, which will follow the same structure as the Scoping Report.

The Inspectorate confirmed that a copy of the SoCC should be included with the section 46 notification bundle of documents. The Inspectorate advised that s46 notification can be provided before the start of the s42 consultation or at the same time as the commencement of the s42 consultation.

The Applicant provided an update on ongoing and proposed surveys which included:

- Marine surveys for additional areas: July/August 2023;
- Intertidal surveys at each landfall: June to September 2023; and
- Terrestrial Ground Investigation (GI) work to be undertaken Summer 2023 and environmental surveys ongoing.

The Applicant confirmed that all relevant consents had been received for the surveys.

The Applicant explained that it was continuing to seek voluntary agreements to gain access to land for surveys with the fallback position of using Section 172 of the Housing and Planning Act. National Grid have stated that they prefer to obtain access under a voluntary basis.

### ***Non-Statutory Consultation***

The Applicant provided a summary of the feedback received during Non-Statutory Consultation.

Key themes received in Suffolk:

1. Alternatives:
2. Consultation:
3. Coordination of multiple projects:
4. Cumulative effects:
5. Design:
6. Landscape and visual:
7. Needs case:
8. Onshore ecology and biodiversity
9. Onshore socio-economics, recreation and tourism:

## 10. Traffic and transport:

### Key themes in Kent:

1. Alternatives
2. Consultation
3. Cumulative effects
4. Design
5. Landscape and Visual:
6. Needs Case:
7. Onshore ecology and biodiversity
8. Onshore socio-economics, recreation and tourism
9. Traffic and Transport:

The Inspectorate asked the Applicant whether there is overlap for this project and the Lower Thames Crossing project. The Applicant confirmed that there is no overlap.

### ***Coordination – construction and consultation / PA 2008 processes***

The Applicant confirmed that there is a need to obtain consent for Sea Link on its own merits and that its needs have to be incorporated into its approach to the application, while seeking opportunities to co-ordinate with other significant proposals i.e. Nautilus and LionLink.

The Inspectorate advised that if the Applicant wished to include coordination with other projects within the draft Development Consent Order, that the Environmental Statement (ES) chapters should clearly set out the assessments undertaken. The Applicant confirmed its intentions for the structure of the ES to enable understanding of the assessment scenarios. At present, the Applicant proposes this would be in the form of a) Sea Link on its own and then b) Sea Link with coordination and colocation with the other projects in relation to landfall, cable ducts and converter station.

The Applicant explained that the approach to the PEIR will depend on its timing, and that it has been speaking to National Grid Ventures (NGV) with this in mind to ensure clarity in the information presented on the proposed project alone and on the proposed project in coordination with other proposed developments where possible.

The Inspectorate asked what information was being shared with stakeholders in relation to coordination from both a construction perspective and from the approach to the DCO application.

The Applicant confirmed that it has had regard to all feedback received from respondents during the non-statutory consultation and is engaging with queries from stakeholders. The Applicant confirmed that Statutory Consultees had provided meaningful feedback and that engagement has been productive.

The Inspectorate confirmed that it would continue to advise parties to contact the Applicant as the Applicant was in a position to discuss what engagement it has been undertaking and to discuss the current position of other projects and its approach to co-ordination.

The Inspectorate advised that whilst the Proposed Development referenced and assessed the potential for coordination with other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, the examination of each Application, should they be accepted, would be considered on its own merits. A comparison was drawn with the approach taken for the Examinations of the two East Anglia projects, East Anglia One North and East Anglia Two which had overlapping Order limits. The approach taken by the Inspectorate was a response to the concurrent submission by Scottish Power Renewables of two separate DCO applications for the projects, contrary to the Inspectorate's pre-application advice to consider submission of one DCO application for both proposals. As such, the Inspectorate does not consider this to be a precedent for project co-ordination but a specific approach brought about by the specific circumstances of those applications.

The Applicant acknowledged this and explained that there are different commercial elements to be taken into consideration when considering coordination of the NGV and NGET projects.

### ***Approach to Coordination in Suffolk:***

The Applicant intends to explore opportunities to facilitate co-ordination with the other projects with respect to the onshore cable element of the proposals where possible. It confirmed that there has been a slight update to the number of ducts. The Corridor could accommodate up to 10 ducts at the landfall to the TJB; 11 ducts for HVDC cables (TJB to converter); and 24 for ducts HVAC cables (converter to sub-station). Work is ongoing to explore options for the co-ordination of works associated with the proposed converter substation.

The Applicant is also looking into co-ordination with the other projects regarding the converter stations co-location and overall landscaping/screening.

### **Next Steps:**

The Applicant confirmed each consultation response received has been analysed and requests for changes considered. The feedback from this consultation will now be used to inform the design for the project as it is developed further.

The Applicant confirmed that prior to the Statutory Consultation, a SoCC will be published, and a draft version of this document will be shared with local authorities for comment, and the final version will be published at the consultation. Following the Statutory Consultation, further design work will be carried out, taking into account the responses received from the Statutory Consultation and a final design prepared, along with documents required for the DCO application.

The Applicant confirmed that the Consultation Report, submitted as part of the DCO application, will outline how both, Non-Statutory Consultations and Statutory Consultations were undertaken, the feedback received and how NGET has responded to this feedback. The Non-Statutory Consultation Report will inform and be appended to the Consultation Report.