



Meeting note

Project name	Sea Link
File reference	EN020026
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	20 February 2024
Meeting with	National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET)
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Update Meeting
Circulation	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 and Timelines

National Grid (The Applicant) provided an overview of its updated project timeline. An 8-week statutory consultation was undertaken from 24 October to 18 December 2023. Analysis and consideration of feedback from this consultation is currently ongoing. The Development Consent Order (DCO) application submission date is targeted for the end of 2024 or early 2025 if required. Design development and environmental survey work is currently ongoing. Local Authorities and other stakeholders are being met with regularly in addition to coordination discussions with National Grid Ventures.

The statutory consultation period produced over 2800 items of feedback from approximately 1300 members of public who attended the consultation events. 14 meetings were held with local councils, statutory agencies and local groups. Common themes among feedback from Suffolk groups related to ecology, landscape and community benefit/ compensation. Issues identified amongst Kent groups were similar with additional topics of soil quality and traffic impacts. Feedback which requests a change to project design will be separated and reviewed with the intention to incorporate these into the design where appropriate.

Coordination

The Applicant detailed the 'Saxmundham Masterplan'. This plan would place Sea Link's converter station with up to two other projects' stations on the wider site. Within the application these projects will be named as National Grid Ventures projects LionLink and Nautilus.

A masterplan is being discussed with local planning authorities to help guide the co-location site. In advance of seeking development consent, the Applicant will develop landscape mitigation proposals and an illustrative masterplan to indicate how multiple converter stations could be accommodated within the Saxmundham site. The project will only consent for Sea Link though and not the two other projects.

The Inspectorate inquired about how the shared site would be controlled within the DCO application.

Enhanced Pre-Application Service

The Applicant inquired about the opportunity to join an enhanced pre-application service. The Inspectorate provided information about the Early Adopters Programme scheme although it noted that it is not currently seeking further projects to work with on the programme.

Order Drafting and document review

The Inspectorate provided answers to queries relating to draft document submission such as time required for review and notice beforehand. The Applicant provided a series of suggested documents for submission. The Inspectorate advised that reviews are completed during the Pre-Application stage typically on the draft versions of standard documents such as the land and work plans, Consultation Report, Explanatory Memorandum and the DCO, and they may not have the resource or time to review additional documents. The Inspectorate asked the Applicant to signpost any particular areas in the documents that they would like the Inspectorate's review to focus on. The date for this submission is currently estimated to be during summer of 2024.

