



Meeting note

Project name	LionLink Interconnector
File reference	EN020033
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	12 December 2023
Meeting with	National Grid Interconnector Holdings Limited
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.

Supplementary non-statutory consultation update

The Applicant explained that it had undertaken a supplementary non-statutory consultation as it had identified an alternative cable route from the Southwold landfall and an alternative landfall site at Walberswick. The consultation also included all previously considered options. It stated that there had been 1,317 in-person attendees across three exhibition events and 146 attendees across two webinars. Emerging themes include:

- Impacts on the heritage coast;
- Public access to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) during the construction phase (please note that as of 22 November 2023, AONBs have been re-branded as National Landscapes);
- Concerns of rapid coastal erosion between Thorpeness and Aldeburgh;
- Impacts on tourism; and
- Cumulative social, economic and environmental impact from other proposed schemes along the east coast.

The Applicant confirmed that the consultation feedback report is currently being prepared and is targeted to be published on the Applicant's website in March 2024. Key stakeholders will also be notified of its publication.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping update

The Applicant stated that it intends to submit the Scoping Report in the week commencing 4 March 2024 and the GIS shapefile will be issued 10 working days before submission. The Applicant will consider the practicalities for submission of the documents and will carry out a trial run with the Inspectorate prior to the formal submission, to ensure there are no difficulties accessing the documents.

The Applicant explained that it is still in the process of analysing feedback from stakeholder engagement undertaken and supplementary non-statutory consultation, which will influence the Applicant's emerging preferences for the project (and content of the Scoping Report).

Scoping is expected to include two potential landfall locations, HVDC cable routes from the two landfall locations to a single converter station site, and HVAC cables from the converter station site to the proposed National Grid Friston substation.

The Inspectorate asked whether the Friston substation will be shared between planned and consented projects off the East Coast. The Applicant confirmed that the proposed Friston substation would serve a number of projects and amendments to its design may be required, including possible amendments to East Anglia One North and East Anglia Two Development Consent Orders (DCO), as part of the Lion Link DCO.

The Applicant explained that the content of the scoping report takes into account meetings held with local authorities and specialist teams. It may include optionality for features of the project (for example landfall sites). The Inspectorate queried whether optionality will be included in the draft DCO. The Applicant explained it would be refined before submission.

The Applicant outlined the likely structure of the Scoping Report. The Inspectorate referred the Applicant to Advice Note 7, which contains practical information about submission of scoping requests.

Key programme dates

The Applicant provided a summary of key programme dates:

- Consultation feedback report – March 2024;
- EIA scoping report – March 2024; and
- DCO submission – Q4 2025.

The Inspectorate advised that a review of draft documents can take between six to eight weeks and this should be reflected in the Applicant's programme. The Applicant confirmed that it intends to include this in the programme and that it is in the process of selecting which documents should be included in the review. The Inspectorate advised that it is helpful to receive drafts of the consultation report, DCO and Land and Works Plans. The Inspectorate can also review draft habitats regulations assessment (HRA) reports and the project description chapter of the environmental statement (ES). The Inspectorate advised that the Applicant should provide an accurate date for the likely submission of documents for review, in due course.

The Applicant explained that it has had discussions with Natural England (NE) and that the next round of meetings with NE and local authorities were being planned in the new year.

Contact plan

The Applicant stated that it will update the contact plan which will include potential meeting dates. The Inspectorate advised that it should be provided with at least one month's notice.

Optioneering and coordination

The Applicant provided a summary of what is included in the options appraisal process for siting and routing:

- Local and national policy;
- Committed developments;
- Onshore and offshore technical feasibility;
- Onshore and offshore environmental factors;
- Stakeholder engagement and consultation feedback;
- Landownership;
- Cost; and
- Coordination/Colocation

The Applicant explained that it is currently coordinating with the applicant for the Sea Link project on how projects are securing consent, consideration of parameters to agree and sharing local knowledge on safety and security for surveys.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to consider how it presents information in the application documents, including the ES (and assessments), about project interfaces and flexibility sought including any steps taken to avoid affecting mitigation from other projects. The Inspectorate asked whether there would be coordination of Sea Link and LionLink DCO application submission dates. The Applicant explained that a consenting strategy between the two projects is to be developed.

Ongoing and expected surveys

The Applicant provided a programme outline of surveys to be undertaken:

- Specialist surveys ongoing until December 2024;
- Onshore ground investigation surveys at converter station site 3;
- Onshore geophysical survey;
- Wintering bird surveys ongoing until March 2024; and

Onshore ground investigation.

The Applicant explained that its lands team is working with landowners to secure access. It stated that so far access had been gained for all parcels of land required.

Approach to Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statements (PADSS)

The Applicant explained that it proposes to include PADSS in response to the Examining Authority's (ExA) need for a concise understanding of primary issues. The Applicant stated

that this approach is supported by host local authorities and will be discussed further with NE. The Inspectorate advised that although PADSS have not been rolled out to all projects as yet, the general feedback was that PADSS are helpful documents.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

- Review meeting note.
- Communicate through project mailbox.
- Provide update on submission date for the project website.
- Trial for submission of scoping report.