

Meeting note

Project name	Grimsby to Walpole
File reference	EN020036
Status	Draft
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	18 October 2023
Meeting with	National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET)
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Inception 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.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted (if requested by an Applicant for commercial reasons).

The Applicant

National Grid Electricity Transmission owns and manages the high voltage electricity transmission system in England and Wales. The purchase of Western Power Distribution in 2022 means that National Grid through its National Grid Electricity Distribution business also provides electricity at distribution level to large parts of the UK through the midlands and south west.

Due to the limited amount of transmission infrastructure in the East Coast region, coupled with the need for customer connection infrastructure in the Lincolnshire area, the project is being proposed to provide both direct customer connections and an increase to the system capability in this part of the UK, helping to increase north/south power flows through the Humber, East Coast and Midlands areas, from 11GW to 34GW.

The Proposed Development and Site

The Applicant is proposing a new, approximately 140km long (400kV) overhead line (OHL), starting at Grimsby West in North East Lincolnshire and ending at Walpole in Norfolk. There are currently five proposed new substations included in the project:

- Grimsby West
- Lincolnshire Connection Substation A
- Lincolnshire Connection Substation B
- Weston Marsh
- Walpole 'B'

The Applicant indicated that the current emerging preferred corridor for the project avoids the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB and proximity to designated sites along the Lincolnshire Coast. It has been developed in line with the Holford and Horlock Rules and current and draft National Planning Policy.

Flood risk has been identified as a key constraint at the southern end of the route and has been difficult to avoid.

Constraint mapping, heat mapping, 'least cost path' analysis and corridor development has been undertaken utilising both GIS software and expert technical specialists and using National Grid's internal options appraisal approach to determine and develop OHL corridors and substation areas.

Activities to Date

The Applicant has undertaken two rounds of strategic optioneering as a result of changes required in 2022 from publication of the Holistic Network Design (HND) work. Routing and siting study consultants were appointed in 2021 and their work on the draft route corridors, preferred route corridor, graduated swathe and Corridor Preliminary Routing and Siting Study (CPRSS) is now largely completed. There has been 'non-contact' land referencing undertaken to date only in preparation for full contact referencing commencing when the non-statutory consultation launches.

Engagement

The Applicant will be commencing engagement with key stakeholders ahead of the consultation launching including MPs, ward councillors and parish councils.

Multiple Local Planning Authorities (LPA) have been identified and engaged with on an ongoing basis through 2022/23. The Applicant has sent a written project update to all affected LPAs earlier this month and a next round of engagement is planned through November 2023 to update on the project pre-non stat consultation starting, and to check on comments on a circulated draft Non-statutory Consultation Strategy.

Environmental stakeholders have been engaged throughout 2023. These stakeholders include Natural England, Historic England, the AONB Partnership and Environment Agency. Future engagement with the environmental stakeholders will be driven by Arup/Aecom as the Applicant's EIA consultants.

Surveys

Early wintering bird surveys were undertaken in Winter 2022.

Arup/Aecom will be further engaging with key stakeholders in relation to a full suite of surveys once fully onboarded – this will likely tie into conversations regarding the scoping of the Environmental Statement.

The Applicant advised that a survey strategy is being prepared. Species specific surveys will be picked up where possible and National Grid would be discussing ways on how to reduce the amount of surveys needed and to mitigate the survey data becoming too old during the pre-application process.

Scoping

A scoping strategy for the project is being prepared and stakeholders will be engaged with prior to the formal request for a scoping opinion from the Inspectorate. The strategy/timing of scoping the Environmental Statement is under consideration. It is likely that scoping will be undertaken in parallel with non-stat consultation and be issued towards the end of the non-statutory consultation period in quarter 1 2024. The Inspectorate advised that having an overlap between the non-statutory consultation and the consultation undertaken by the Inspectorate as part of the scoping request should be avoided if possible. This is to avoid causing confusion for stakeholders – there is a risk that stakeholder responses on the scoping request may be sent to the Applicant rather than the Inspectorate. This was noted by National Grid.

Key Dates

The Applicant gave an overview of its programme and highlighted the following key dates:

- Non statutory consultation: January 2024
- Potential request for scoping opinion: February – March 2024
- Statutory consultation: Summer 2023
- DCO Application submission: April 2027
- Start Construction: Summer 2029
- Construction to be complete: Summer 2033

Actions

The Planning Inspectorate will send a blank template for project information required for the Planning Inspectorate website. **Post Hearing Note:** this has been shared with the Applicant.

In relation to the next meeting, it was agreed that a project update meeting ahead of the request for a scoping opinion would be helpful, early in 2023. The Inspectorate agreed to arrange that meeting. **Post Hearing Note:** these have been shared with the Applicant.