

Meeting note

Project name	Sea Link
File reference	EN020226
Status	Draft
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	20/10/2022
Meeting with	National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET)
Venue	Microsoft Teams meeting
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

The Applicant, NGET, provided an overview of the Proposed Development (Sea Link Project) which includes a High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) marine cable, approximately 130 km in length, from Sizewell in Suffolk to Richborough in Kent, and 10km of underground cable along with two converter stations, one in Suffolk and one in Kent. The Sea Link Project also comprises an extension to the proposed new substation at Friston in Suffolk.

The Applicant confirmed that non-statutory consultation will commence on Monday 24 October 2022 and end on 18 December 2022. The Applicant confirmed it will also be submitting a request for a Scoping Opinion to the Inspectorate on Monday 24 October 2022. The Inspectorate reminded the Applicant of previous advice recommending that the request for a Scoping Opinion to be delayed until the close of the non-statutory consultation. The Applicant acknowledged the Inspectorate's advice given previously advising that having a non-statutory consultation in parallel with a submission of the EIA Scoping Opinion Request may cause confusion with consultation bodies as to which consultation they are responding to and where to send the responses. The Applicant has had regard to the advice given as well as advice in the Inspectorate's Advice Notes. Before commencing the non-statutory consultation and submitting an EIA Scoping Request to the Inspectorate, the Applicant has coordinated with the other live project in the Suffolk area to ensure that all consultation material and media coverage was clear on this matter to avoid any confusion.

The Applicant explained that there is an ongoing regular engagement with the relevant Local Authorities and key stakeholders and that there is an ongoing landowner engagement to agree land access in both Suffolk and Kent. The Applicant stated that construction of the Sea Link Project is planned to take place between 2026-2030 with the statutory consultation planned in 2023 and DCO Submission in 2024.

The Sea Link Project currently consists of:

- Extension to the proposed Friston substation;
- AC underground cable between the proposed substation and a converter station in Suffolk;
- A HVDC converter station in Suffolk;
- An underground HVDC cable between the converter station and landfall location in Suffolk;
- 130 km (approx.) High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) marine cable from the proposed landfall in Suffolk to the proposed landfall in Kent;
- An underground HVDC cable between the converter station and landfall location in Kent;
- A HVDC converter station in Kent;
- AC connections between the Richborough to canterbury overhead line in Kent; and
- Upgrading of the Richborough to canterbury overhead line to cater for increased power flows.

The Applicant advised it will be proposing two emerging preferences for the onshore part of the Sea Link Project in Suffolk and three alternatives.

Regarding the Sea Link part of the Project in Kent, one option has been proposed, however the technology choice for the AC connection (either by overhead line or underground AC cable) between the converter station site to the network connection point onto the existing Richborough to Canterbury overhead line has not yet been made.

The Applicant explained the proposed coordination activities in Suffolk area between Sea Link Project and the proposals by NGV for the Eurolink and Nautilus interconnector projects. The Applicant explained that the HVDC cable corridors on the two emerging preference options could accommodate coordination of the projects, but the alternative HVDC corridors would not be able to facilitate a coordinated solution.

Environmental and Marine Surveys

The Applicant confirmed that environmental surveys, including surveys in the marine environment, had commenced for the Sea Link Project. Land access has not yet been obtained in some areas, thus wintering bird surveys had only been conducted on public land to date. A marine survey had been conducted from the coast and within the proposed marine corridor for the Sea Link Project.

Stakeholder Consultation

The Applicant explained its proposed approach to the upcoming non-statutory consultation, including information about consultation zones and consultation activities. The Applicant confirmed the different ways it would raise awareness of the Project through advertisements, newsletters and the use of deposit locations, as well as the use of face to face events and webinars. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to ensure that consultees are able to understand the differences between the various proposals in the East Anglia area whilst at the same time combining consultation resources for the various projects where this is appropriate.

AOB

The Inspectorate directed the Applicant to the advice contained in [Advice Note 7](#) related to the Applicant's forthcoming request for a Scoping Opinion.

The Inspectorate confirmed that a file sharing platform/transfer site is acceptable for the submission of the Applicant's Scoping Report, which was anticipated to be submitted in several parts.

The following actions were agreed:

- The Applicant would provide the slide deck shared at the meeting.
- A follow up meeting will be set for February 2023

Post meeting update:

- Slide pack shared with the Planning Inspectorate.
- Non-statutory consultation has commenced on 24 October and will run until 18 December, and
- Scoping Request was submitted to PINS on 24 October. The Scoping Opinion is to be issued on or before 4 December 2022. The Applicant had regard to Advice Note 7.