



## SEA Link Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	South East Anglia Link
<b>File reference</b>	EN020026
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	10 September 2024
<b>Meeting with</b>	National Grid Electricity Transmission
<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

The Applicant updated that its statutory consultation finished end of 2023 and it is currently updating the stakeholders. The Applicant is intending to submit the DCO application towards the end of January 2025. The Inspectorate queried if the Applicant completed its targeted consultation as mentioned in the previous meeting, to which the Applicant confirmed that the targeted consultation ran from 8 July 2024 to 11 August 2024. The Applicant is currently reviewing the feedback and is in process of design control internally.

The Applicant updated that it has also shared the draft documents with the local authorities and Natural England (NE). It is currently awaiting response on various documents. It has also updated its Offshore Coordination Support Scheme (OCSS) on its [website](#).

The Applicant updated that it is having ongoing discussions with National Grid Ventures (NGV) regarding coordination and master planning. It is also producing a technical note looking at the alternatives and have had meetings with the local authorities about alternative access routes in Suffolk. The Applicant has produced a design principles document which has been reviewed by NGV and will be shared with the local authorities. It has also progressed organising design panel review meetings with Frame in both Kent and Suffolk and the Applicant has met East Suffolk Council to understand the lessons learnt from a similar exercise undertaken with Sizewell C

The Applicant updated that its intrusive archaeological work is in progress and other surveys are ongoing. The Applicant updated about the continuing design and access

issues related to the River Fromus Crossing structure. A six-metre bridge height was initially suggested by the Environment Agency (EA) which would require a structure that is minimum 6.3m above the existing bank level. The Applicant continues to have discussions with the EA and local authorities to finalise an appropriate bridge scale. The Applicant is currently responding further to the technical note, and assessments covering flood modelling, ecology surveys, river conditions, and Water Framework Directive Appraisal. The Applicant highlighted that it is involving highway engineers in evaluating all potential access routes to the site. The Inspectorate emphasized the need to provide detailed technical drawings, structural specifications, an alignment with the relevant Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedures (APFP) regulations upon submission of the application.

The Applicant provided pictorial representation of its construction compound and updated that the design is ongoing, based on technical and archaeological design and statutory consultation feedback.

### **Draft Document Review**

The Applicant summarised the draft documents review from the Inspectorate and acknowledged the comments. The Applicant queried some of the Inspectorate's comments on the draft Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) report. Regarding point 30 of the draft documents review, the Inspectorate advised to demonstrate agreement with the NE, being clear about the condition of site and what the Applicant is intending to do on it. Regarding points 31, 32 and 34, the Inspectorate advised to provide justification and agreement with the NE or at least agreement over the disagreement with NE. The Inspectorate reiterated the need to engage with NE. The Applicant mentioned that it is intending to share the draft HRA with NE before the submission of the DCO application.

The Applicant queried feedback on the draft DCO to which the Inspectorate confirmed that case team does not check the draft DCO content and that this will be examined during the Examination by the Examining Authority.

The Inspectorate noted the need to consider the cumulative assessment of impacts from related projects, ensuring agreement on the correct projects to be considered. This was highlighted as a critical area to ensure accurate environmental impact assessments.

### **Pre-application service, Submission and Examination**

The Applicant updated that it is currently awaiting confirmation of next steps since receiving confirmation of standard tier pre-app service. The Applicant queried the updated guidance referring to Adequacy of Consultation Milestone (AoCM) document being no later than around three months before the intended submission, it queried the timescales and whether this affects the Applicant, the Inspectorate will clarify this point.

#### *Post meeting note*

*Where the Applicant's programme does not allow for the submission of the AoCM then this should be fully explained in the submission including why the Applicant considers that consultation carried out to date has been adequate. In addition to this, the Applicant should ensure that Consultation Report demonstrates the applicant's regard to the advice that the Inspectorate and affected statutory bodies have issued during the pre-application stage as well as other feedback received during consultation.*

The Applicant queried whether a fee for the new pre-application regime would apply for this project, given its advanced stage of development. The Inspectorate confirmed that as the Applicant scoped before April 2024 it will not pay any pre-application service fee unless the Application is submitted after 1 April 2025 as set out in the Inspectorate's pre-application prospectus.

The Applicant mentioned that it has followed a robust process in terms of the Consultation Report and queried whether it could do more to ensure it passes the acceptance process to which the Inspectorate recommended to follow the required structure, ensuring that consultation periods are clearly defined and aligning the report with updated advice and avoiding any procedural inconsistencies.

The Applicant queried whether Inspectorate required printed application documents to which the Inspectorate confirmed that these are not required but might be requested by the Examining Authority if the application is accepted. The Applicant also enquired about the locations for hearings to which the Inspectorate confirmed that this will be decided by the Examining Authority if the application is accepted.

The Applicant confirmed that it is exploring the most appropriate method of submitting the application documents. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to consider how other NG projects had submitted applications.

The Applicant queried the timeline of the Pre-examination period to which the Inspectorate confirmed on current timescales that it is a period of approximately four to five months after acceptance.

The Inspectorate enquired whether Applicant is having ongoing discussion with Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm and North Falls Offshore Wind Farm. The Applicant responded that it attended a workshop with both, including Port of London Authority, Trinity House and Harwich Haven Authority to discuss plans, programme, methodology and construction of the cable. Location was highlighted where they do not want any simultaneous operations between Applicant and Five Estuaries. The Applicant confirmed it is not planning to take part in the Examination hearings of the Five Estuaries or North Falls projects. The Inspectorate highlighted the need to keeping aware of the co-ordination and commonality with different projects.

The next meeting to be organised to discuss practical arrangements of submission of the application was planned to take place in November 2024.