

# **A1 in Northumberland: Morpeth to Ellingham**

**Scheme Number: TR010059**

## **7.6 Statement of Commonality for Statements of Common Ground**

Rule 8 (1)(e)

Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010

Planning Act 2008

May 2021

Infrastructure Planning

Planning Act 2008

**The Infrastructure Planning  
(Examination Procedure) Rules  
2010**

**The A1 in Northumberland: Morpeth to  
Ellingham**

Development Consent Order 20[xx]

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**Statement of Commonality for Statements of  
Common Ground**

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# CONTENTS

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<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1</b>	<b>PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>STRUCTURE OF STATEMENTS OF COMMON GROUND</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>LIST OF STATEMENTS OF COMMON GROUND</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF CURRENT POSITION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>CURRENT POSITION</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>POSITION AT DEADLINE 6</b>	<b>11</b>

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## TABLES

Table 3-1 - List of SoCGs	4
Table 4-1 - SoCGs High Level Position	6
Table 5-1 - Table of Commonality at Deadline 6	10

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This Statement of Commonality for Statements of Common Ground (this “Statement”) relates to an application made by Highways England (the “Applicant”) on 7 July 2020 to the Secretary of State for Transport via the Planning Inspectorate (the “Inspectorate”) under section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 (the “2008 Act”) for a Development Consent Order (DCO). If made, the DCO would grant consent for A1 in Northumberland, Morpeth to Ellingham (the “Scheme”). The application was accepted for examination by the Inspectorate on 4 August 2020.

The Scheme is formed of two parts as follows: A1 Morpeth to Felton (Part A) and A1 Alnwick to Ellingham (Part B). A detailed description of the Scheme can be found in Chapter 2: The Scheme of the Environmental Statement (ES) [APP-037].

This Statement has been prepared to provide the Examining Authority (ExA) with the current position on Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) between the Applicant and prescribed consultees, statutory undertakers and interested parties (“other parties”) in relation to the Scheme.

This Statement sets out the position on the commonality on specific SoCGs at Deadline 6.

## 2 STRUCTURE OF STATEMENTS OF COMMON GROUND

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To ensure consistency in the approach taken to documenting matters agreed, matters subject to further negotiation or matters not agreed, each of the SoCG adopted a standard format in order to provide clarity to other parties and ultimately the ExA.

Each SoCG has the following structure:

- a.** Section 1: introduces the SoCG and a description of its purpose;
- b.** Section 2: states the engagement that has occurred between the Applicant and other Party; and
- c.** Section 3: sets out any issues that have arisen, reporting on the status of each issue, i.e. whether it is agreed, still under discussion or not agreed, and any remaining actions.

### 3 LIST OF STATEMENTS OF COMMON GROUND

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The Applicant has prepared SoCGs with a number of other parties that it considers beneficial to do so with during the preparation of the DCO application. These comprise:

- a.** Northumberland County Council (as the local authority for the area in which the Scheme is located);
- b.** Natural England;
- c.** The Environment Agency; and
- d.** Historic England.

In the Rule 6 letter dated 19th November 2020, the ExA requested that the Applicant enter into SoCG in relation to the effect of the Scheme on trees and woodlands, including ancient woodland, and the proposed mitigation measures in respect of trees and woodlands with the following bodies:

- a.** Forestry Commission; and
- b.** The Woodland Trust.

The Woodland Trust confirmed by an email dated 12/01/20 that: “the Trust is unable to participate in any Statement of Common Ground agreements for road schemes. As we are currently considering both our internal and external position on involvement with transport schemes, we have put in place a moratorium on partaking in any such agreements.” As such, the Applicant has not progressed a draft SoCG with the Woodland Trust. Discussions with the Woodland Trust are however still ongoing.

The ExA also requested that the applicant enter into SoCGs with affected statutory undertakers, in relation to protective provisions.

The affected statutory undertakers are set out in Appendices CA.2 [REP1-038] and CA.3 [REP1-039] of the Applicant’s Response to ExA’s First Written Questions [REP1-032], submitted at Deadline 1. These appendices identify the extent to which each statutory undertaker would be affected, whether a relevant representation has been submitted and the extent of discussions (if any) with the Applicant as to protective provisions.

The Applicant has reviewed the statutory undertakers listed in appendices CA.2 [REP1-038] and CA.3 [REP1-039] to identify those statutory undertakers which have submitted a relevant representation or otherwise requested that the Applicant engage in discussions in relation to protective provisions. Through this process, the Applicant identified the below affected statutory undertakers. Draft SoCGs have been prepared for each of these statutory undertakers:

- a.** National Grid Gas;
- b.** Northern Powergrid;
- c.** Northern Gas Networks; and
- d.** Northumbrian Water.

There are no other statutory undertakers that have submitted relevant representations or otherwise requested that the Applicant engage in discussions in relation to protective provisions. As such it is not proposed at this stage to enter into any further SoCGs with additional statutory undertakers.

The parties which the Applicant has prepared SoCG with are therefore listed in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3-1 - List of SoCGs**

<b>Stakeholder</b>
<b>Local Authorities</b>
Northumberland County Council
<b>Prescribed Consultees</b>
Historic England
Environment Agency
Natural England
Forestry Commission
<b>Statutory Undertakers</b>
National Grid Gas
Northumbrian Water
Northern Powergrid
Northern Gas Networks

Further detail about the current position of each SoCG can be found at Chapter 4, Table 4.1 of this Statement.

## 4 SUMMARY OF CURRENT POSITION

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This section provides the position of each SoCG at Deadline 6, Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021. As final versions of the SoCGs are agreed as the DCO Examination progresses, they will be submitted alongside this Statement.

Table 4.1 below provides a high level position and where necessary includes further detail to aid understanding of the ExA. The high level positions used in the table are:

- a.** Final Signed SoCG all matters agreed – The final SoCG has been signed by both parties and all matters are agreed.
- b.** Final Signed SoCG with matters outstanding – The final SoCG has been signed by both parties, and there remain matters outstanding that the Applicant and the other party agree will not be resolved during the Examination.
- c.** SoCG in draft – The SoCG has been drafted by the Applicant, it has been shared with the other party and comments have been provided. Discussion is ongoing to reach a 'Final Signed SoCG all matters agreed' or 'Final Signed SoCG with matters outstanding'.



**Table 4-1 - SoCGs High Level Position**

Doc Ref	Party	Position Deadline 1	Position Deadline 2	Position Deadline 3	Position Deadline 4	Position Deadline 5	Position Deadline 6	Position Deadline 7	Position Deadline 8	Position Deadline 9	Position Deadline 10	Position Deadline 11
<b>Local Authority</b>												
7.6A	Northumberland County Council	Draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 1.	Updated SoCG not submitted at Deadline 2.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 3.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 4.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 5.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 6.					
<b>Prescribed Consultees</b>												
7.6B	Natural England	SoCG in draft and submitted at Deadline 1.	Updated SoCG not submitted at Deadline 2.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 3.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 4.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 5.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 6.					
7.6C	Environment Agency (EA)	SoCG under preparation, to be submitted in draft at Deadline 2.	Draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 2.	The Applicant emailed the EA on 19 January 2021, 11 December 2020, and 13 October 2020 to arrange a meeting to discuss the draft SoCG. However, a response from the EA has not yet been received and, therefore, it has not been possible to arrange a meeting prior to Deadline 3. Revised SoCG therefore not submitted, and the Applicant intends to submit a revised version at Deadline 4.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 4.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 5.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 6.					
7.6D	Historic England	SoCG in draft and submitted	Updated SoCG not submitted at Deadline 2.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 3.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 4.	Updated SoCG not submitted at Deadline 5.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 6.					

Doc Ref	Party	Position Deadline 1	Position Deadline 2	Position Deadline 3	Position Deadline 4	Position Deadline 5	Position Deadline 6	Position Deadline 7	Position Deadline 8	Position Deadline 9	Position Deadline 10	Position Deadline 11
		at Deadline 1.										
7.6E	Forestry Commission	SoCG in draft and submitted at Deadline 1.	Updated SoCG not submitted at Deadline 2.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 3.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 4.	<p>The Applicant had intended to hold a further meeting with the Forestry Commission ahead of Deadline 5.</p> <p>However, the Forestry Commission has not yet responded to an email from the Applicant dated 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021 or a follow up email responding to a request for information from the Forestry Commission dated 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021.</p> <p>As such an updated SOCG is not submitted at Deadline 5.</p>	<p>A draft SoCG was submitted to the Forestry Commission on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 for review and comment.</p> <p>Comments were again requested of the Forestry Commission on 13<sup>th</sup> April and 21<sup>st</sup> April.</p> <p>On 27<sup>th</sup> April, it was agreed that a further meeting would be held to progress the SOCG, but that this would be after Deadline 6. The meeting has been arranged for Week Commencing Monday 10 May 2021.</p> <p>As such an updated SoCG is not submitted at Deadline 6.</p>					
7.6F	National Grid Gas	SoCG under preparation, to be submitted	SoCG in draft and submitted at Deadline 2.	Not submitted at Deadline 3.	Not submitted at Deadline 4.	Not submitted at Deadline 5.	Discussions with National Grid Gas are ongoing. However, an updated SoCG is not submitted at Deadline 6.					

Doc Ref	Party	Position Deadline 1	Position Deadline 2	Position Deadline 3	Position Deadline 4	Position Deadline 5	Position Deadline 6	Position Deadline 7	Position Deadline 8	Position Deadline 9	Position Deadline 10	Position Deadline 11
		in draft at Deadline 2.										
7.6G	Northern Powergrid	SoCG under preparation, to be submitted in draft at Deadline 2.	SoCG in draft and submitted at Deadline 2.	Not submitted at Deadline 3.	Not submitted at Deadline 4.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 5.	A holding response was received from Northern Powergrid on 30 April 2021. As such, an updated SoCG is not submitted at Deadline 6.					
7.6H	Northern Gas Networks	SoCG under preparation, to be submitted in draft at Deadline 2.	SoCG in draft and submitted at Deadline 2.	Not submitted at Deadline 3.	Not submitted at Deadline 4.	Not submitted at Deadline 5.	Discussions with Northern Gas Networks are ongoing. However, an updated SoCG is not submitted at Deadline 6.					
7.6I	Northumbrian Water	SoCG under preparation, to be submitted in draft at Deadline 2.	SoCG in draft and submitted at Deadline 2.	Not submitted at Deadline 3.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 4.	Updated draft SoCG submitted at Deadline 5.	The Applicant awaits a response to its emails of 14 and 28 April 2021. As such, an updated SoCG is not submitted at Deadline 6.					

## 5 CURRENT POSITION

This section of the Statement provides a summary of principal issues covered in the SoCG and demonstrates where there is commonality in the topics or matters. The table is presented in such a way to show topics covered within the various SoCG and how these are relevant to each other party and a position for each topic as follows:

	Matter agreed
	Matter subject to further discussion
	Matter not agreed

Where a matter is not relevant to the other party, it is not included within the SoCG and therefore not covered in Table 5.1 and shown as a blank.

Updated versions of the SoCGs with Northumberland County Council, Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England are submitted at Deadline 6.

Table 5-1 - Table of Commonality at Deadline 6

SoCG Ref	Party	Topics																
		Development Consent Order	Environmental Impact Assessment	Air Quality and emissions	Biodiversity, ecology and nature conservation	Economic and social effects	Historic Environment	Landscape and visual effects	Noise and vibration	Traffic and transportation	Green Belt Considerations	Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan	Water Environment Effects	Water Framework Directive compliance	Drainage and Flooding	Environmental permits	Effects on heritage assets	License applications
7.6A	Northumberland County Council																	
7.6B	Natural England																	
7.6C	Environment Agency																	
7.6D	Historic England																	
7.6E	Forestry Commission																	
7.6F	National Grid Gas																	
7.6G	Northern Powergrid																	
7.6H	Northern Gas Networks																	
7.6I	Northumbrian Water																	

## 6 POSITION AT DEADLINE 6

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This section provides a summary of the position between the Applicant and each party at Deadline 6. This section provides the ExA with a summary. The individual SoCGs should be referred to for the full detail on specific matters.

### **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

Substantive progress has been made in a number of areas, and, subject to the topics listed at 6.1.3 below, the Applicant considers that the following topics are now substantially 'agreed':

- a.** Air Quality and emissions;
- b.** Biodiversity, ecology and nature conservation;
- c.** Economic and social effects;
- d.** Historic Environment;
- e.** Landscape and visual effects;
- f.** Noise and vibration;
- g.** Green Belt Considerations;
- h.** Effects on heritage assets;
- i.** Water Framework Directive compliance;
- j.** Traffic and transportation
- k.** Water Environment Effects; and
- l.** Drainage and Flooding.

Good progress is being made in the remaining areas, which still remain as 'subject to on-going discussion' as set out below:

- a.** Development Consent Order;
- b.** Outline Construction Environment Management Plan; and
- c.** Environmental permits.

### **HISTORIC ENGLAND**

There are at present no principal matters outstanding between Historic England and the Applicant.

The Applicant received an email from Historic England asking that the SoCG be revised to provide further clarity on several issues. The SoCG has been updated to reflect these comments and returned to Historic England for agreement ahead of Deadline 6. At Deadline 6 the remaining matters that are still "under discussion" are a clarification in the naming of two affected Scheduled Ancient Monuments and also details of the built heritage assets in the Outer Study Area that were scoped out of further assessment.

### **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY**

There have been a number of meetings between the Applicant and the Environment Agency (EA) ahead of Deadline 6.

As at Deadline 6, the primary areas of discussion are over the Culvert Mitigation Strategy [REP1-066]. The EA considers that additional mitigation / compensation / offsetting is required for the impacts on the watercourses caused by the Scheme. The Applicant is of the view that the impacts of culverting are relatively minor and localised and do not need to be compensated for, especially as the Applicant considers that the Scheme will not cause a deterioration in the overall waterbody status for any waterbody, nor will it prevent them from achieving their WFD objectives.

At Deadline 6, the Environment Agency consider that the proposed activities outlined in 6.38 Environmental Statement Addendum: Stabilisation Works for Change Request [REP4-063] and 6.40 Environmental Statement Addendum: Southern Access Works for Change Request [REP4-064] are a significant variation to the original proposals. The Environment Agency do not agree with the suggestion in 6.44 Water Framework Directive Addendum for Change Request [REP4-068] that rock armour will provide adequate and suitable mitigation for the loss of 62m of riparian marginal habitat. All these matters are currently “under discussion”. The approach to the Assessment of Losses and Gains of Watercourses [REP2-010] is also under discussion.

At Deadline 6, the Environment Agency disagree with the Applicant’s conclusion that Otters are ‘likely absent’ due to the presence of historic records of Otter within 2 km of Part B, including Otter deaths on the A1. The EA also consider that earlier records of Otter activity from 10 years ago may not be relevant to the current ecological baseline.

The following Scheme wide documents are now all ‘agreed’:

- a.** Flood Risk Addendum - Rev 0 [REP1-067];
- b.** Environmental Impact Assessment - Flood Risk Outside Order Limits [REP3-007]; and
- c.** Environmental Impact Assessment - Surface Water Outfall Strategy [REP3-011].

As set out above, the Applicant will arrange further meetings with the EA to progress these issues.

## **NATURAL ENGLAND**

The position of the Natural England at Deadline 6 is currently Under Discussion. There are broad areas of common ground for Part A and Part B a draft SOCG is being produced. Matter relating to the recent change request are still ‘*under discussion*’.

The Applicant has requested a timeframe for anticipated updated Letters of No Impediments for the Scheme as a whole. The applicant to continues to engage with NE regarding the Air Quality Assessment on Biodiversity in relation to the DMRB sensitivity test.

## **FORESTRY COMMISSION**

The position of the Forestry Commission at Deadline 6 is currently Under Discussion.

A meeting was held with the Forestry Commission 8 March 2021 and it was considered that there is potential for agreeing some a number of areas of common ground between the Applicant and the Forestry Commission. It has been agreed that the SoCG will be progressed



at a further meeting to be held after Deadline 6 during week commencing Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021. An updated SoCG will be submitted after this meeting has been held.

### **NATIONAL GRID GAS**

Work on this SoCG and discussions as to protective provisions are ongoing.

### **NORTHUMBRIAN WATER**

The Applicant awaits a response to its emails of 14 and 28 April 2021. As such, an updated SoCG is not submitted at Deadline 6.

### **NORTHERN POWERGRID**

A holding response was received from Northern Powergrid on 30 April 2021. As such, an updated SoCG is not submitted at Deadline 6.

### **NORTHERN GAS NETWORKS**

Work on this SoCG and discussions as to protective provisions are ongoing.



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