The Great Grid Upgrade

Sea Link

Sea Link

Volume 9: Examination Submissions

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16 September 2025

The Planning Act 2008 (as amended) section 89(3)

Application by National Grid Electricity Transmission (the 'Applicant') for an Order Granting Development Consent for the Sea Link Project ('Proposed Project')

Section 89 (3) Request 5 September Covering Letter

I write in response to your Section 89 letter dated 5 September **[PD-008]** requesting further information to inform the Sea Link DCO Examination. It is understood that the purpose of requesting this information is to enable the Examining Authority (*'ExA'*) to better utilise the pre examination stage of the process by requesting information as early as possible.

We also submit alongside this letter **9.19 Sea Link DCO notification of change to DCO application** setting out the details of a Change Notification that the Applicant submits alongside this letter.

For ease of reference the Applicant has responded using the headings in your letter.

Neolithic hengiform monument

As the ExA will be aware, today the Applicant has submitted a Change Notification for the Proposed Project. This Notification includes a proposed change to the Order Limits around Friston that is designed to allow the re-routing of the cable and access track to entirely avoid the location of the Neolithic hengiform monument, which would allow the Applicant to pursue a mitigation strategy of preserving the feature in situ.

The Applicant submits alongside this letter the results of the **Suffolk Phase 2a** and **2b trial trenching reports** which set out the details of the trial trenching exercise that revealed the

nature of this feature. As requested, the Applicant also submits an extract of the Phase 2b Report that shows **the location of the henge in relation to the Proposed Project**.

Kent Wildlife Trust

The Applicant is asked to respond to the concerns raised in the Kent Wildlife Trust letter dated 27 August [**AS-077**].

The letter from Kent Wildlife Trust presents the ExA's 8 July [**PD-005**] and 5 August [**PD-006**] Section 89 letters as identifying '*significant and wide-ranging errors'* that require the withdrawal of the DCO Application. The Applicant firmly disagrees with this characterization of the Sea Link application, which is a robust submission reflecting years of rigorous consultation, survey, and design.

The views regarding withdrawal are also inconsistent with the fact that the application has already been deemed acceptable in accordance with the requirements of Section 55 of the Planning Act 2008. These requirements include a provision that the Applicant has complied with the pre-application procedures set out in of the Planning Act 2008 as well as the application being of a *'satisfactory'* standard to the Secretary of State. The fact that the DCO application for the Proposed Project is in accordance with these statutory requirements is confirmed in the Notification of Decision to Accept Application [**PD-001**] issued on behalf of the Secretary of State on 23 April 2025.

It is not unusual for an ExA to request further information and that '*other matters and errata*' are dealt with at the pre-examination or examination stage of a DCO application. Such requests are an entirely appropriate use of the pre-examination or examination period and are consistent with the objectives of the DCO process. Indeed, the ExA's stated aim in issuing the Section 89 letters (contained in both **[PD-005**] and [**PD-006**]) is as being: '*to enable the ExA to better utilise the pre-examination stage of this process to ensure that it has as much of the information it needs as early as possible in the overall process*'.

It is common for ExAs considering Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects to identify issues that require further information and explanation at the pre-examination or examination stage of the process. Given that the examination phase of the process has not yet begun the Applicant's view is that it is self-evident that *'the necessary time'* is available to be able to address ongoing issues.

<u>Lack of meaningful consultation and route selection transparency</u>

The Kent Wildlife Trust letter highlights the requirements of Section 47 of the Planning Act 2008, the Government Guidance on the pre-application process (albeit that the guidance was withdrawn and replaced in April 2024) and the policies of the National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1), concluding that: '*the Applicant has not met these requirements*'.

The Applicant does not accept that it has not fulfilled the requirements of Section 47 of the Planning Act 2008. The Applicant notes that compliance with Section 47 is part of the Section 55 Acceptance process for the Application [**PD-001**] and that, of the fifteen Adequacy of Consultation Responses received from Local Planning Authorities, [**AoC-001 to AoC015**] none raised a failure by the Applicant to comply with Section 47 of the Planning Act 2008 in their responses.

It is not correct to say that consultees '*were invited to comment only on a single, preferred option, rather than being presented with a range of reasonable alternatives*.' By way of example, and in addition to the strategic optioneering work set out in detail in the Applicant's **Strategic Options Back Check Report** [**APP-320**], the **Executive Summary** to the **Option Selection and Design Evolution Report** [**APP-369**] confirms that a range of options (comprising five different corridor options in Suffolk, two corridors for the offshore works, and alternate technologies for the High Voltage Alternating Current connection in Kent) were the subject of a Non-Statutory Consultation undertaken between October 2022 and December 2022. Furthermore, extensive detail was presented of the various alternatives that were considered during the process of identifying the emerging preferences in Suffolk and Kent. This was set out along with information on the environmental and technical factors that influence National Grid's decision making, to inform consultees' responses. The consultation exercises at all stages included open-format questions which invited comments on the proposals generally.

Details of this consultation are set out in **Appendix C of the Non Statutory Consultation Part 3 of 3** [**APP-307**], and the feedback received during this consultation was carefully reviewed and considered as part of the design evolution of the Proposed Project, alongside ongoing environmental and engineering studies.

The Applicant undertook an extensive exercise to identify various environmental, socio-economic, technical and cost constraints that materially impact upon the selection of routeing and siting options. These are set out in the Corridor Preliminary Routeing and Substation Siting study [**APP-368**], and as a result of this process a single preferred landfall location within Kent was identified as the emerging preference. Clearly the Applicant can only consult upon Route Options that are assessed as being feasible, and as set out in **Chapter 10** of the **Consultation Report [APP-301]** a further Pre-Submission Engagement was undertaken seeking views on, amongst other issues, the design changes included alterations to construction and maintenance compounds and methodologies, and mitigation and enhancement land in Kent.

Notwithstanding that the Application has already been through an extensive consultation process that has been found to be consistent with the requirements of the Planning Act 2008, there is in any case nothing in the DCO process that would prevent consultees from raising concerns over the route selection process for consideration by the ExA, as evidenced by KWT's letter.

Failure to meet the Planning Act 2008 application standards

As set out above, the Application has been through a statutory process that has assessed the application to be of a standard such that it must now proceed to statutory examination.

The Applicant acknowledges that a number of the DCO submission documents have contained errata type errors or have otherwise required updating. This is simply a reflection of the fact that the Proposed Project is a very complex Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, some 138 km in length and involving substantial physical works proposed in both Suffolk and Kent as well as an offshore undersea cable. Naturally such a large and complex scheme requires the Applicant to produce and submit of a great deal of information.

In the Applicant's experience it would be unusual if a DCO submission of such complexity, comprising hundreds of documents and many thousands of pages, were not to contain at least some errors, which is one of the reasons why the DCO process has well-established mechanisms for correcting and updating documents. The Applicant cannot accept that any party is disadvantaged by a process of correcting documents at the pre-examination stage of the DCO process.

The Application is accompanied by a substantial Environmental Statement that fully assesses the direct and indirect effects of the Proposed Project in an appropriate manner. The Applicant stands behind the DCO Submission as a robust submission that should now work through the statutory examination, such that the decision maker will have available all the information that is required to fully assess the Application including the impacts of the Proposed Project.

Environmental information and survey gaps

The Applicant provides elsewhere in this letter details on the feasibility and suitability of trenchless crossings in both Suffolk and Kent. These details include an explanation of why it is considered that they are feasible and how the effects of it can be quantified and controlled. For the reasons set out in this letter, the Applicant remains confident in its explanation of the feasibility of Trenchless Crossing techniques for the Proposed Project.

As explained elsewhere in this letter, the Applicant has committed to the use of trenchless landfall techniques within the application. The KWT Letter anticipates that the additional information will highlight a number of risks, but the Applicant strongly disagrees that the

Application '*inadequately addresses the environmental implications of a proposed development*' based on an assumed outcome. The Applicant does not accept that new surveys are required for: '*breeding birds, reptiles, amphibians, dormice, bats, beavers, otters, seals and water vole*' based on an assumption that trenchless crossings are not feasible. The Applicant highlights the confirmation contained in **Section 3** of Natural England's Relevant Representation [**APP-3920**] that in relation to surveys:

'Natural England has been working with the Applicant to provide pre-application advice and guidance on SeaLink Energy Cable since 2022. Natural England has engaged with the developer regularly throughout the last 3 years. This has included meetings on a range of technical topics, review of draft documents and survey methodologies.'

Inadequate and unproven mitigation measures

The Applicant notes the concerns expressed in the KWT Letter over the adequacy and credibility of the proposed mitigation measures contained within the application.

The aim of the examination is to ensure that issues such as the adequacy and credibility of the proposed mitigation measures contained within the application are proportionately, and reasonably, considered. In the Applicant's view there is no reason why these issues should not be fully examined and considered as part of the examination process to allow the ExA to reach an informed view upon which to make its recommendation. The Applicant does not agree with the points made by KWT and submits that, in the context of this application, it would be premature to take a view at the pre-examination stage of the DCO Process that the mitigation strategy is not only flawed, but so flawed that it is not capable of resolution within the timescales of the examination.

Consistent concerns across Interested Parties

It is not unusual in a DCO to see a number of interested parties make the same, or very similar, points particularly prior to the start of the examination. This is not evidence of '*extensive unresolved issues*' that cannot be resolved within the timescales of a DCO examination.

As an example of this, Kent County Council's Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statement (PADSS) confirms that there is a *'high'* likelihood that the issues around drainage and flood risk mitigation, raised in the KWT Letter, can be resolved during the course of the Examination.

Once again, the Applicant disagrees with KWT and its characterisation of the Application.

In conclusion, in respect of the KWT letter, the Applicant is firmly of the view that the Application has been properly made and accepted, and should now continue through the examination process, without delay, where issues can be raised and addressed, via evidence to the ExA.

Land and related matters

The Applicant notes the comments made by the ExA in this regard. The Applicant confirms that all land shown as being within the Order Limits as 'Order Land' is necessary for the Proposed Project, as explained in the Statement of Reasons [**AS-091**] (and its appendices).

Turning then to the Works Plans, as noted in the Applicant's letter of 1 September 2025, '*only the principal works have been given works numbers in Schedule 1 to the dDCO, and all other works form part of the Associated Development listed in Schedule 1. The numbered works are mostly the permanent electrical assets and their accesses (noting that the temporary works compounds have also been given numbers – 4 and 8)*.' The Applicant has taken this approach to Works Plans on multiple granted DCOs to date; however, the Applicant notes the comments made by this ExA in respect of compulsory acquisition. The Works Plans are but one of the 'control mechanisms' bound into the draft order, and hence it is open to an Applicant to control the proposed land use (and noting the case being made in respect of compulsory acquisition) via mechanisms other than the Works Plans. As an example, on the recently granted Bramford to Twinstead Order, the locations of the construction compounds were secured by a DCO Requirement, linked to a management plan which contained co-ordinates.

The Applicant notes that the ExA asks that the intended use of land is '*made clear in the plans, and the DCO and schedules*'. The draft DCO [**AS-087**] and its schedules fulfil particular functions (explained in the Explanatory Memorandum [**AS-089**]) and do not specify the particular purposes for which each plot is proposed to be used, save that the articles are expressly linked to the 'authorised project'. This is well precedented.

The Applicant notes that certain documents within the wider DCO submission explain the proposed uses of plots – for example, the example given in the Applicant's letter of 1 September [**AS-084**], addressing the Suffolk converter station, which notes that the DCO Requirement secures the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [**APP-349** and **AS-049**] which itself sets out detail of proposed land use.

However, the Applicant appreciates the point raised by the ExA and will reflect on how the DCO documents (including the plans) can more clearly explain the proposed uses of plots. This may include ameliorated General Arrangement Plans.

Diligent enquiry into land interest

As requested, the Applicant includes with this letter a plan setting out the locations used for the site notices in Suffolk and Kent.

In relation to the two caravans identified by the ExA during the unaccompanied site visit, the Applicant has continued to exercise diligent enquiry, and can confirm that letters have previously been hand delivered to the occupiers of both caravans notifying them that the

Sea Link Project has been accepted for Examination, providing the Applicant's contact details and providing details for the Planning Inspectorate should the recipients wish to engage in the examination process. The Applicant will in any event continue to liaise with and keep updated both occupiers of the caravans during the course of the Examination.

The Applicant is continuing discussions with the landowners of the relevant plots in relation to the nature of any interest in land and will revert to the ExA as soon as possible with confirmation of the outcome of these discussions.

Land rights tracker

The Applicant can confirm that the Applicant held a follow up meeting with PINS on 8 September to agree the final format of the Land Rights Tracker (LRT) and that a fully populated version of the LRT will be submitted to the ExA by **8 October**.

Surveys

Detailed responses to each suggestion made in a Relevant Representation to the need for additional survey will be provided in the Applicant's Response to Relevant Representations to be submitted in due course. However, initial responses to some of the points raised in Relevant Representations are set out below. The Applicant notes, in particular, the concern of the ExA pertaining to the timing of surveys.

Other Types of Surveys Required in Response to Relevant Reps

Interested Party	Reference to survey requirement	Applicant's response
East Suffolk Council	A full tree survey and Arboricultural assessment for trees adjacent to the Fromus crossing should be prepared for discussion using up to date 2025 guidance materials.	The publication date for the updated version of BS5837 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction was due to be Spring 2025. However, the British Standards Institution website has been updated to state a publication date of 27 March 2026. As such, **no further survey or assessment is considered necessary.**
	In reference to Breeding and Wintering Birds, the assessment of impacts in the Applicant's submission appears to be based on incomplete survey coverage which lowers the level of significance assigned to the	The purpose of the wintering and breeding bird surveys is not to census every field, but to generally characterise the bird populations of the area and determine their overall value, particularly given the temporary nature of the impacts in most fields. Two years of breeding bird survey was undertaken (whereas for

Interested Party	Reference to survey requirement	Applicant's response
	impacts identified.	many projects only one year is undertaken) while in some areas three seasons of wintering bird survey was undertaken. The Applicant is confident that they have good survey coverage of the Order Limits and a good knowledge of the ornithological interest of the area. It is therefore considered highly unlikely that the value assigned to ornithology in the ES chapter would be raised further if additional survey was undertaken and there is no reason to consider that impacts have been missed or downgraded. As such, **no further survey or assessment is considered necessary**.
	In reference to Hazel Dormouse, further survey work is needed to investigate potential presence of this species along part of the cable route.	The Applicant has undertaken a dormouse survey that complied with guidance (and in most areas exceeded guidance) as it existed at the time the survey was undertaken. That survey did not confirm presence of dormouse, and reference to other dormouse surveys in East Suffolk and previous discussions with ESC have not identified the presence of hazel dormouse. As a precaution the ES assumes that dormice could be present (despite the fact the survey did not confirm presence) and a precautionary method of working has been set. **As such, no further survey or assessment is considered necessary.**
	References concern around equipment failure during bat surveys and whether this has limited the results collected.	Although some localised equipment failures did occur, additional survey effort was deployed to address it, and across the survey area, the survey exceeded the minimum standard required in guidance at that time. **As such, no further survey or assessment is considered necessary**.

Interested Party	Reference to survey requirement	Applicant's response
Environment Agency	ID: EA010 states that a single run electrofishing survey is not deemed appropriate for detecting the presence of eel or lamprey.	A semi-quantitative electric fishing survey was completed to supplement existing fish monitoring data in the catchment and, as per best practice guidance (WFD-UKTAG, 2008), counts of fish species present were obtained from a single removal, using data from the first pass of depletion sampling. Although not found during the survey, both brook lamprey and eel were identified to be present in the River Fromus during the desk study and potential impacts on these species are assessed. As such, the presence of eel and brook lamprey in the electrofishing surveys would not change the findings of the assessments or mitigation proposals, as these species are assumed to be present. **No further survey or assessment is considered necessary**.
	ID: EA011 states that records of European smelt are omitted.	Smelt records on the River Alde were included in **Application Document 6.3.2.2.F ES Appendix 2.2.F Aquatic Ecology Survey Report [APP-104]**. Smelt is considered in the assessment and newly established records in the Alde/Ore estuary would not result in any changes to the assessment based on the lack of suitable spawning habitat for this species in the Fromus at the location of the proposed bridge crossing. **As such, no further survey or assessment is considered necessary**.
	ID: EA024 states that Sea Trout is missing from fish surveys.	Sea trout were not recorded in the fish surveys reported in the ES. However, it is noted that "*sea trout are widely distributed across the UK"* and *"overall, sea trout is reported to attempt to enter most of the south coast's rivers*."

Interested Party	Reference to survey requirement	Applicant's response
		The Assessment of impacts and likely significant effects within the Biodiversity & Ecology chapter of the Environmental Statement and the WFD assessment therefore considers brown/sea trout wherever "fish" are mentioned. **As such, no further survey or assessment is considered necessary**.
Natural England	No detailed botanical surveys have been carried out at Leiston-Aldeburgh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to inform a bentonite management/break out plan.	Natural England's Relevant Representation (NE Ref A4) identifies that this request is specifically within the context of pre-construction botanical surveys to support monitoring of any impact of the Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) (or other trenchless technology). The Applicant can agree to that commitment being added to the Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC). **This survey is not therefore needed to inform the examination**.
	Further Ground Investigation surveys may be required…there is a risk to ecological receptors from having to retrieve stuck bore equipment from under the SSSI.	No further ground investigation is required to confirm the feasibility of trenchless construction. Further ground investigation may be required to inform detailed design, but this will not be determined until the detailed design stage (post-DCO) when a contractor has been appointed. **As such, no further survey or assessment is considered necessary**.
	Natural England is concerned that there is insufficient information to determine the extent of loss of Best and Most Versatile land.	Although the Applicant considers that the predictive ALC mapping that has been undertaken is sufficient to inform the assessment of the Proposed Project, the Applicant has also made a commitment to complete Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) and soils surveys during the examination phase, following appropriate

Interested Party	Reference to survey requirement	Applicant's response
		Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) risk assessment and implementation of the required mitigation measures. **The information gained from these surveys will be used to update Application Document Reference 7.5.10.1 Outline Soil Management Plan – Suffolk [APP-354]** and **Application Document 7.5.10.2 Outline Soil Management Plan – Kent [APP-355]** where necessary and soil handling measures can be updated based on confirmation of the soils identified on site.
Kent Wildlife Trust	The lack of complete ecological data at the pre-application stage and the omission of key survey findings from the final DCO submission significantly undermine the integrity of the ES.	The reference to 700 golden plovers was an error in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) report. The survey recorded a flock of 370 golden plover and 700 lapwings. The error was picked up in discussion with the surveyors in October 2023, was raised with stakeholders during thematic meetings and discussions around the compensation land and has been corrected for the ES. **There is therefore no missing data in the ES**.
	Challenged the baseline having been developed based upon one season of ecological survey data and two seasons of wintering bird survey.	One season of ecological survey data is standard for ecological receptors other than breeding and wintering birds (for which two seasons of survey have already been undertaken). Survey proposals were shared with Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Councils early in the survey work and discussed in thematic meetings, including numbers of seasons of survey. No statutory bodies requested a need for additional seasons of survey during those discussions. The Applicant is engaging directly with those statutory bodies who have raised survey coverage in their

Interested Party	Reference to survey requirement	Applicant's response
		relevant representations but does **not consider further detailed survey is required**.

Manston Airport

The Applicant is aware of the email from Riveroak Strategic Partners [**AS-105**] received on 2 September 2025. The Applicant shares the Strategic Partnership's view that the two projects can co-exist, and the Applicant proposes to engage with them directly over subsoil acquisition and the acquisition of rights of access.

B1121 Access

The ExA requests that the Applicant provides further clarification for the chosen location of the western access from the B1121 (S-BM09) which requires a bridge over the River Fromus.

Paragraph 3.8.3 of **Chapter 3 'Main Alternatives Considered'** of the **Environmental Statement [APP-044]** confirms that initially three potential accesses to Saxmundham Converter Station were initially considered:

- access from the south (to the east of Sternfield);
- access from the west (from the B1121 to the south of Saxmundham); and
- access from the north (from the B1121 to the north of Saxmundham).

These options are illustrated in **Application Document 6.4.1.3.19 Saxmundham Converter Station Access Options at Statutory Consultation,** and all three access options required a crossing of the River Fromus or its tributary.

The western access was initially selected as the preferred option, as it provided the shortest access to the site from the A12, had fewer technical constraints than the northern access (associated with the crossing of railway and branch line) and facilitated a permanent means of access for abnormal indivisible loads (AIL) vehicles, which the southern option could not.

Following stakeholder engagement, the Environment Agency specified a required soffit height of the proposed bridge crossing of the River Fromus to mitigate potential effects on weak-dispersing riverfly species within the waterbody.

Further detailed site survey work identified the presence of veteran and ancient trees along the River Fromus corridor, that the Applicant sought to avoid, and further environmental and technical studies also identified the need to site the proposed bridge abutments outside of Flood Zone 3. These factors were considered, and the Applicant adjusted its proposals to

move the proposed access further north from where it was illustrated on **Application Document 6.4.1.3.19 Saxmundham Converter Station Access Options at Statutory Consultation**.

Alongside this detailed work, the Applicant undertook a further exercise to assess four alternative access routes alongside the preferred route. Details are set out in **Part 3.8** of **APP-044.** The five assessed comprised:

- access from the west (as described above);
- access from the north (as described above);
- access from the south (from the A1094, different to that described above);
- access from the east (contiguous with the temporary cable haul road); and
- access from the east (using either the consented Sizewell Link Road or the B1122, depending on programme).

These five alternatives are shown on Figure 6.4.1.3.20 Saxmundham Converter Station Access Options in **Application Document 6.4.1.3 ES Figures Introduction Main Alternatives Considered [APP-206]**. The conclusion was that the western access remained the preference.

The proposed western access provides the shortest access from the A12, minimising the amount of construction traffic on the rest of the local road network. While all five options considered would introduce an off-highway access road into the landscape, the western access would require the shortest stretch, reducing the potential for construction risks, impacts, and delays.

Using the shortest route from the A12 to site would reduce travel distance for every construction vehicle compared to the alternatives considered (by a considerable amount in the case of the longest alternative considered, the Sizewell Link Road or B1122 option), with associated construction phase and environmental benefits.

All accesses considered require crossings of various types, with different access options interacting differently with roads, rail lines, watercourses, and/or public rights of way, and these all represent constraints which would require solutions.

While the proposed western access requires a crossing of the River Fromus, this has been subject to extensive technical discussions, consultation, and assessment. The Applicant notes the ongoing discussion with the Environment Agency (as set out in the relevant PADSS [**AS-081**]) regarding their view that a precautionary principle will need to be applied to inform the soffit height of the River Fromus crossing, but notes that the Environment Agency does not question the fundamental acceptability of a bridge crossing of the River Fromus. The Applicant is giving further consideration to the final soffit height within the range assessed, balancing this with the views of other stakeholders; however, the Applicant

does not consider this a substantive issue in the principle of selecting the western access option.

Noise and Vibration

Noise Sensitive Receptor Identification

Additional figures have been prepared to show the locations of the receptors identified in Table 9.24 of **Application Document 6.2.2.9 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration [APP-056]** and Table 9.25 **Application Document 6.2.3.9 Part 3 Kent Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration [APP-069]**. These figures are provided in **Application Document Figure 6.4.2.9.5 Construction Noise and Vibration 'Hot-Spot' Receptor Location IDs – Suffolk Onshore Scheme** and **Application Document Figure 6.4.3.9.5 Construction Noise and Vibration 'Hot-Spot' Receptor Location IDs – Kent Onshore Scheme**.

Address information for the potentially affected receptors has been included in the two chapters for reference (refer to Table 9.27 in **Application Document 6.2.2.9 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration [APP-056]** and Table 9.28 in **Application Document 6.2.3.9 Part 3 Kent Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration [APP-069]**).

Noise important areas

Refence to noise important areas (NIA) NI_4484 and NI_12465 has been added to the baseline section of **Application Document 6.2.3.9 Part 3 Kent Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration [APP-069]**. These were considered as part of the assessment but there are no significant adverse effects at these locations, even when considering the nature of the NIAs.

For completeness, the additional sensitivity of receptors within NIA to increases in traffic noise would mean that a small magnitude change (≥1.0 dB) due to additional construction traffic would be considered potentially significant. For receptors not in NIAs, a medium magnitude change (≥3.0 dB) would be considered potentially significant. However, increases in traffic noise levels due to additional construction traffic on all routes are negligible, with the highest change being 0.1 dB, and therefore no further consideration of impacts on receptors within NIA is required.

Great Oaks Small School

There has been extensive liaison between the Great Oaks Small School and the project team to look at potential ways the Applicant can minimise effects on the school. Although this liaison has not been specifically with the project noise and vibration team, as noted in paragraph 9.3.6 of **Application Document 6.2.3.9 Part 3 Kent Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration [APP-069]**, discussions have been held between the project noise and vibration team and the Senior Environmental Health Practitioner of the Environmental Protection

team of Thanet District Council, during which potential impacts on the Great Oaks Small School were discussed. As noted in paragraph 9.9.10 of **Application Document 6.2.3.9 Part 3 Kent Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration [APP-069],** the Great Oaks Small School is highlighted as a high sensitivity receptor and a lower (more stringent) threshold for potential significant adverse effects has been applied. This threshold is not expected to be exceeded as a result of the proposed construction works, even without mitigation. Although not assessed as significant, construction noise may still be audible at this receptor, and that this may lead to adverse effects.

Specific construction mitigation measures have not been identified at this stage to mitigate these less than significant effects. However, further detailed construction noise assessments will be undertaken by the contractor(s) based on their specific construction methodologies. Specific noise mitigation measures will be identified at that stage by the contractor(s), and this will include reducing potential impacts on the Great Oaks Small School as far as practicable. This additional detailed assessment and the implementation of best practicable means (BPM) to reduce potential effects of construction noise (and vibration) is committed to in control and management measure NV03 and NV01, as detailed in **Application Document 7.5.3.1 CEMP Appendix A Outline Code of Construction Practice [APP-341]**.

Reference is also made specifically to the Great Oaks Small School in paragraph 4.3.4 of **Application Document 7.5.8.2 Outline Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan – Kent [APP-351]** such that it is highlighted to the contractor(s).

Control and management measure GG27, as detailed in **Application Document 7.5.3.1 CEMP Appendix An Outline Code of Construction Practice [APP-341]** requires that the local community be kept informed regularly of the works through active community liaison. This will include notification of noisy activities, heavy traffic periods and start and end dates of key phasing. Through this process, the school (and wider community) will be provided with a contact number to raise any concerns or complaints about the project.

Noise metrics

The metric has been corrected and clarified in **Application Document 6.2.3.9 Part 3 Kent Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration [APP-069]** and **Application Document 6.2.2.9 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration [APP-056]**.

The values in the assessment make a worst-case assumption that the activities occur continuously throughout the whole of the respective working period. In practice, should an activity only occur for part of a day (or night), the average noise level of that period would reduce. The revised reports therefore revert to using a time period ‘T’ and clarify this worst-case assumption in a note.

Construction noise - temporal restrictions

Potential examples of temporal restrictions that could be applied during weekends for works that may exceed the relevant weekend construction noise level threshold[1] at nearby noise sensitive receptors include (but are not limited to):

- alternate weekend working (e.g. one weekend on, one weekend off);
- alternate weekend day working (e.g. Saturday or Sunday working, but not both on the same weekend);
- no more than two weekends in any consecutive three weekends; or
- no more than four weekends of working in any consecutive eight weekends.

The appropriateness of which temporal restrictions may be considered at specific locations would be subject to further review. The necessity for such measures would depend upon implications for construction programme and contractor working practices.

Vibration assessment parameters

The scaling factor used (1.5) is detailed in the bottom bullet point of **paragraph 1.3.3** of **Application Document 6.3.2.9.B ES Appendix 2.9.B Suffolk Construction Noise and Vibration Data** and **Application Document 6.3.3.9.B ES Appendix 3.9.B Kent Construction Noise and Vibration Data**, for Kent and Suffolk, respectively.

A value of 1.5 is representative of 'stiff cohesive soils,' 'medium dense granular soils,' or 'compacted fill.' This is deemed to be a relative worst-case for both Kent and Suffolk sites given the agricultural land and underlying ground conditions of the areas being sand, gravel, silt and clay. The outcome of the assessments presented in the ES is indicative and further detailed assessments would be undertaken by the contractors(s) based on their specific construction methodologies. This may include further detailed information of ground conditions, where applicable.

Construction traffic noise assessment

Thank you for bringing this to the Applicant's attention. This has been reviewed and the values in the 'baseline data plus construction' column were incorrectly copied from the calculation spreadsheet for light vehicles flows, rather than total traffic flows. The calculated noise levels are correct, referring to the correct 'total traffic flows' in the calculations. As such, there is no impact on the outcome of the assessment. The correct values have been incorporated into an update to **Application Document 6.3.2.9.C ES Appendix 2.9.C Suffolk Construction Traffic Noise Assessment [APP-137]**.

Ecological receptors

[1] As defined in Table E.1 (Example method 1 - The 'ABC' method) of BS 5228-1:2009+A1:2014 Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites – Part 1: Noise (BS 5228-1).

Regarding the **Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan (oCNVMP) for Kent [APP-351]**, this only refers to the Sandwich Bay to Hacklinge Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Abbey Farm Wetlands because no potential significant effects are predicted on receptors susceptible to noise disturbance that are associated with other designated sites in the Pegwell Bay area.

For construction works in the terrestrial environment the assessment is reported in paragraphs 2.9.20 to 2.9.25 in **Application Document 6.2.3.2 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 2 Ecology and Biodiversity (Clean) [AS-047]** which conclude as follows:

"2.9.24 Noise modelling undertaken for all elements of construction (such as the overhead line installation, the haul road construction and the converter station platform creation) of the Kent Onshore Scheme has identified that the 60 dB contour would not reach Thanet Coast & Sandwich Bay SPA/Ramsar site. There would thus be no disturbance of breeding or non-breeding birds for which the SPA/Ramsar site is designated.

*2.9.25 This is therefore a negligible impact on a receptor of international importance, resulting in a **negligible** effect that is not significant."*

For works in the marine and intertidal area, this is reported in paragraphs 5.9.23 to 5.9.37 of **Application Document 6.2.4.5 Part 4 Marine Chapter 5 Marine Ornithology [APP-078]**, which concludes:

"*5.9.37…The combination of distance of works from key roosts locations, restricted duration and extent of works within the intertidal zone, limited intertidal zone at risk of significant noise and visual disturbance in the context of the wider Pegwell Bay intertidal resource and predicted seasonal timing for these works reduces the overall effect on key waterbird species and assemblages. As a result, given the temporary, short-term nature of the construction works at the landfalls, it is not anticipated that the addition of a small number of vessels and machinery in the intertidal area will considerably increase disturbance and displacement of waterbirds. In addition, with the implementation of mitigation measures outlined in section 5.8, the impact of disturbance and displacement on waterbirds, which are of high/medium sensitivity, has been assessed as having a magnitude of small which results in a **minor** adverse effect, which is considered to be not significant.*"

<u>Friston substation operational noise assessment</u>

Substation plant noise data were provided by the National Grids engineering team. Generator noise data were taken from BS 5228-1:2009+A1:2014 'Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites – Part 1: Noise' (BS 5228-1), Table C.4. reference 76 (corrected from sound pressure level at 10 m to sound power level). The backup diesel generator would be installed for use during emergency conditions to ensure the proposed substation system remains operational, for example during an unforeseen

outage. Additionally, backup generators are run briefly on a monthly basis to test their operation. This varies from manufacturer to manufacturer but is typically for around 5-10 mins approximately once a month.

With regards to the time internal 'T', the assessment presented in Table 1.1 of **Application Document 6.3.2.9.E ES Appendix 2.9.E Friston Substation and OHL Operational Noise Information (Informative) [APP-139]** assumes that the generator is running continuously, as a worst-case with no correction applied for 'on-time' within the standard BS 4142 reference time periods of 1 hour during the day and 15 minutes at night. In practice, as noted above, testing would be for a shorter duration and therefore the average over the reference period would be reduced. However, during an outage the duration of the operation of the generator is unknown. The time interval used in the assessment is therefore more akin to the worst-case outage scenario.

As noted in paragraph 1.2.15 of **Application Document 6.3.2.9.E ES Appendix 2.9.E Friston Substation and OHL Operational Noise Information (Informative) [APP-139]** limited noise data is available for noise levels from GIS switchgear operation. The assessment is therefore based on indicative information provided by National Grid's internal noise team, as noted in the appendix. Specification data is not currently available. It is accepted that there is potential variation in noise levels from switchgear. However, for such noise sources (e.g. rare and impulsive), the noise level is only one factor in the assessment.

The assessment concluded that the noise rating level would be significantly below (12 dB below) the background sound level, even during night-time periods, with a specific sound level of 3dB at the nearest NSR and a rating level of 12 dB (a worst-case 9 dB correction applied for impulsivity).

Should the actual noise of the switchgear exceed the indicative values there is a large margin before the noise rating even exceeded the representative night-time background sound level of 24 dB L_{A90}. Should the background sound level be exceeded, further consideration of context may be applied.

The predicted maximum noise level from switchgear is 30 dB $L_{Amax,F}$ externally at the nearest NSR. World Health Organization (WHO) Guidelines for Community Noise (GfCN) recommends that for a good sleep the indoor sound pressure level should not exceed approximately 45 dB L_{Amax} more than 10 to 15 times per night. Assuming a 15 dB attenuation through an open window, this equates to an external noise level of approximately 60 dB L_{Amax}. This threshold is 30 dB higher than the predicted external level at the nearest NSR and therefore provides a comfortable margin for not exceeding the 'good sleep' noise level threshold.

Taking this argument a step further, should the 60 dB L_{Amax} threshold be exceeded, the exceedance would need to occur often enough to exceed the 10 if 15 times per night

temporal criteria to prevent a 'good sleep'. As noted in paragraph 1.2.11 of **Application Document 6.3.2.9.E ES Appendix 2.9.E Friston Substation and OHL Operational Noise Information (Informative) [APP-139]** switchgear would rarely operate, and it may be months or years between switching events. Switching would typically occur for maintenance (most likely during daytime periods) but would be rare, or as a safety mechanism for faults, which could occur at any time but would also be rare. Switching events exceeding or approaching 10 times per night would therefore never occur in practice.

As such, although it is not possible to provide definitive data for noise levels from switchgear, noise from switch events (as well as generator use) could never be considered to be significant purely due to rarity, practically irrespective of the noise levels (although the noise levels are also shown to be expected to be low). This rarity was the basis for scoping out of noise from such auxiliary sources. These sources are scoped out of the ES, as agreed in the Scoping Opinion, and the assessments provided in **Application Document 6.3.2.9.E ES Appendix 2.9.E Friston Substation and OHL Operational Noise Information (Informative) [APP-139]** are for information only to demonstrate that switchgear, and other auxiliary plant operation is unlikely to result in significant effects (as requested by the Scoping Opinion).

In Principle Monitoring Plan

The Applicant has not objected to the implementation of an In Principle Monitoring Plan but is seeking further engagement with Natural England who requested this document within their Relevant Representation.

The Applicant is preparing to engage further with Natural England, to establish the intention of any expected monitoring. The ES identifies that there are no significant impacts within the marine environment, and therefore the Applicant does not consider that a monitoring programme would introduce any change or measures, that would alter any potential impacts from the project. The Applicant is, at this time, unclear on the expectation or purpose of monitoring but expects that further engagement with NE will resolve this issue.

Traffic baseline data

The Applicant recognises that traffic flows vary across the year and are higher at certain times such as the Summer due to tourism and local events for example. Although the traffic surveys within Suffolk and Kent were carried out in January and February, the Baseline traffic flows which have informed **Application Document 6.2.2.7 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport [APP-054]** and **Application Document 6.2.3.7 Part 3 Kent Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport [APP-067]** are based on agreed survey methodologies with SCC and KCC Highways respectively, and are considered to be appropriate and robust for the purposes of the assessment work. Had higher Baseline traffic flows been adopted to consider seasonal fluctuations during the Summer for example, then the percentage

increases as a result of forecast construction traffic associated with the Proposed Project would have been lower than the levels reported and assessed for the majority of the assessment criteria in **Application Document 6.2.2.7 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport [APP-054]** and **Application Document 6.2.3.7 Part 3 Kent Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport [APP-067]**, resulting in fewer potential impacts being identified (except for the assessment of driver delay – see below). In addition, the majority of seasonal traffic (during summer months) is likely to be less peaked but instead expected to be spread across the day and will therefore be less impactful during the typical (assessed) network and shoulder peak hours. Therefore, no seasonal adjustments were made, as increasing the baseline would have generally offered a less robust approach.

In terms of road congestion and junction performance, the assessments of driver delay within Suffolk and Kent were informed by queue length surveys at junctions within the Study Area during the network peak hours. As set out above, the majority of seasonal traffic (during Summer months) is likely to be less peaked but instead expected to be spread across the day and will therefore be less impactful during the typical network and shoulder peak hours. Nonetheless, following feedback received for the assessment work in Suffolk, a sensitivity test has since been explored for the assessment of driver delay within Suffolk (as originally reported in **Application Document 6.2.2.7 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport [APP-054]**) by reviewing the potential outcome of increasing the sensitivity level of each junction to driver delay by a single category (e.g. from medium to high) to reflect higher vehicle flows and queuing at the busiest times of the year. This results in seven junctions reporting either a very high or high sensitivity level for driver delay within Suffolk. The same conclusion is reached, that the likely impact of the Proposed Project on driver delay for all junctions within the Study Area (in Suffolk) is considered to be negligible or minor adverse (not significant) based on the increased sensitivity levels and small / negligible magnitudes of change identified for these junctions as a result of the Proposed Project. The proposed working hours within both Suffolk and Kent are designed to minimise additional construction worker vehicle trips on the surrounding highway network during the weekday network peak hours.

In terms of the assessments of road safety, Personal Injury Accident data was obtained separately from SCC and KCC for the agreed Study Area, covering the most recently available five-year period when the data was obtained. The collision rates identified for highway links within **Application Document 6.2.2.7 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport [APP-054]** and **Application Document 6.2.3.7 Part 3 Kent Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport [APP-067]** would have been lower had these been based on higher Baseline flows (to consider seasonality), given that the same number of collisions would have been recorded and compared against higher traffic volumes (resulting in fewer collisions per vehicle mile). Therefore, the sensitivity levels assigned to the receptors for the

assessment of road safety are considered to be robust, with no adjustments deemed to be required.

Most Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within the Order Limits are non-trafficked routes which route through agricultural fields, with some lightly trafficked routes running along agricultural access tracks. The assessments of non-motorised user amenity of PRoW are therefore based on potential interactions with construction traffic and the management and mitigation outlined within **Application Document 7.5.9.1 Outline Public Rights of Way Management Plan – Suffolk [APP-352]** and **Application Document 7.5.9.2 Outline Public Rights of Way Management Plan – Kent [APP-353]**. The assessments of PRoW amenity are therefore not influenced by baseline traffic levels or the seasonality of these traffic levels.

The assessments within **Application Document 6.2.2.7 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport [APP-054]** and **Application Document 6.2.3.7 Part 3 Kent Chapter 7 Traffic and Transport [APP-067]** adopt worst-case assumptions for construction traffic volumes, which each provide a robust basis for impact evaluation by considering the busiest day of the construction programme. Therefore, whilst seasonal fluctuations in Baseline traffic levels are acknowledged, the methodology adopted for the assessment work is considered to be robust by adopting peak construction traffic levels, rather than average or seasonal construction traffic levels which would be lower. This applies to all assessments including driver delay (junction capacity) and road safety. This also applies to the assessments of cumulative effects within **Application Document 6.2.2.13 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 13 Suffolk Onshore Scheme Inter-Project Cumulative Effects [APP-060]** and **Application Document 6.2.3.13 Part 3 Kent Chapter 13 Kent Onshore Scheme Inter-Project Cumulative Effects [APP-073]**.

In view of the above, whilst it is acknowledged that the traffic surveys were carried out in January and February, the Baseline is considered to be both appropriate and robust for the purposes of the assessment work without the need for any seasonality adjustments.

Landfall Horizontal Direct Drilling (HDD)

HDD (identified as the worst-case scenario trenchless technique) has been assessed as feasible in reviews by trenchless specialists, as reported in **Application Document 7.3 Design Development Report [APP-321]** Appendix A Landfall HDD Feasibility Technical Note. The Applicant will be responding directly to the comments that were raised through the relevant representations regarding on the feasibility of trenchless techniques.

While the Applicant notes that a number of RR's have provided comment relating to trenchless techniques at the landfall locations (which include HDD as one of the proposed methodologies), the Proposed Project has committed to the use of trenchless landfall techniques within the application and as such it has not needed to assess alternative

methods. This commitment is secured via **Application Document 3.1 draft Development Consent Order (DCO) [AS-012]** Schedule 16, Part 2(10) as well as via commitments W12, W18, LV08, B12, TT05, SE02, GG35, B42, W22, and TT08 of **Application Document 7.5.3.2 CEMP Appendix B Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) [APP-342]**.

There are no proposals in the DCO to allow open cut trenching, even as a fallback position, and it is not within the scope of the Proposed Project to consider alternative methods outside those included within the design envelope. If trenchless techniques were for any reason identified as not feasible, any proposals for alternative methods would require a formal amendment to the DCO, with a new supporting environmental assessment.

Flood Risk

The flood risk sensitivity and history of flooding at Friston is detailed **in Application Document 6.8 Flood Risk Assessment [APP-292]**. The Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) (Table 4.1) references the Friston Surface Water Study (BMT, 2020) and also provides information from a review of relevant Section 19 flood investigation reports. An extract of the modelling data outputs from the BMT study is presented in Plate 4.1 of the FRA, and the data has been used to inform the assessment of surface water flood risk during construction and operation of the Proposed Project (FRA Section 4).

The outline drainage strategy for the scheme is being updated to align with the National Standards for Sustainable Urban Drainage that were published in June 2025. Once the documents for Suffolk and Kent are completed, they will be shared with the LLFAs to provide further assurance that the order limits provide sufficient space for the required drainage.

The drainage strategy for the proposed development in Suffolk has been developed based upon the following guidance:

- National Policy Statement for Energy EN-1 November 2023;
- Flood and Water Management Act 2010;
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF25);
- The SuDS Manual (C753);
- Generic Electricity Substation Design Manual for Civil, Structural and Building Engineering:
    - Section 01 Oil Containment (TS 2.10.01);
    - Section 09 Site Drainage (TS 2.10.09);
    - Section 13 Flood Defences for Electricity Substations (TS 2.10.13).
- SCC Local SuDS Guidance (March 2023)
    - For assessing water quantity, SCC LLFA's preferred method for calculating greenfield runoff rates is the FEH methodology.

- Trial pits are to be carried out across schemes to BRE365 methodology with a minimum infiltration rate of 10mm/hr if infiltration is to be the sole method of drainage.
- Plans to be provided of how surface water runoff is to be managed during the construction phase, including plans of any temporary drainage.
- Temporary SuDS designed and built for the construction phase only must be designed to manage runoffs for all events up to and including the 1 in 100 (1%) AEP storm (SCC local standard), but no allowance for climate change is required (subject to national climate change guidance) unless construction is intended to take place over a long period of time (i.e., 10+ years).

The Applicant is also aware of the S19 reports in relation to flooding in Friston and the BMT technical report 'Friston surface water study' and has considered these reports in the development of the drainage strategy for the Friston substation.

The drainage criteria for permanent work will follow the design stated on the National Grid design document TS 2.10.13 as highlighted above, this requires:

- 1 in 30-year rainfall event – no flooding on site.
- 1 in 100-year rainfall event – no flooding on operational areas of the site (car parks may flood in this scenario).
- In both 1 in 30-year and 1 in 100-year scenarios, the design shall ensure that excess runoff from the drainage system does not impact third-party land.
- Where discharge consents or downstream capacity restrictions are in place the design shall restrict flows and incorporate attenuation to achieve the requirement.

The National Grid design standards therefore align with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Sustainable Drainage Systems Non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems.

The proposed climate change allowance for the permanent development drainage scheme is 45%.

The method to produce the drainage calculations has used the following input data:

- The proposed catchment areas have been extracted from the scheme plans and assigned the appropriate design criteria (for temporary and permanent design).
- Catchment descriptors have been imported from the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) Flood Estimation Handbook (FEH) for three catchments in Suffolk. This FEH data has been used to obtain Qbar in accordance with SCC Local SUDS Guidance dated March 2023.

Point descriptors for runoff rate estimation have been imported from the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) Flood Estimation Handbook (FEH) in three locations in

Suffolk to provide representative rainfall prediction throughout the scheme. FEH data is used to estimate the rainfall depths and volumes in accordance with the requirements of National Grid guidance TS 2.10.09 and SCC Local SUDS Guidance dated March 2023. The guidance and methods outlined above have been followed to design the outline drainage strategy represented within the Indicative General Arrangement Plans [**APP-038** and **APP-039**]. These designs have followed the SuDS principals allowing for infiltration where the ground conditions indicate this is feasible and attenuation and discharge to a local watercourse where infiltration is not considered feasible. The outline designs have informed the order limits; however, it is acknowledged that changes could occur at detailed design. Once additional survey data becomes available and the detailed layout including extent of impermeable surfacing is confirmed, the detailed design of the drainage will be finalised. To allow for this design development capacity has been maintained within the order limits so that reasonable variations to the drainage design can be accommodated.

Water Supply

Water supply requirements have not been finalised to the extent that orders can be placed with suppliers, therefore the Proposed Project is unable to confirm the water sources for tankered supplies at this time. Due to the extended period between submission of the DCO and commencement of works on site, the strategy for supply of materials may change, particularly with regards to water. Supply and demand are subject to seasonable and annual variation depending on weather and are dependent on the contractors' methodology for delivery and the detailed design. The Applicant will be developing the water supply requirements along with their contractors and their supply chains as detailed design progresses.

In terms of the strategy for water consumption the Applicant has determined not to extract groundwater locally to the site for construction purposes. Water for construction will be tankered into site to broaden the source area. With respect to the domestic water supplies, applications will be made to the local water companies to provide temporary supplies to the construction compounds and permanent supplies to the Converters and Substations. Should the supply companies be unable to meet the temporary domestic requirements then that water would also be tankered in.

Peak temporary potable water usage is based on the estimate of 327 staff in Suffolk and 241 staff in Kent at the peak of construction. From the Institute of Plumbing, Plumbing Engineering Services Design Guide the daily water demand from Table 2 based on 'Offices and General Workplaces – Without Canteen' is 40 litres per person per day. Therefore, the total daily potable water demand is estimated to be 327 x 40 = 13,080 Litres in Suffolk and 241 x 40 = 9,640 litres in Kent, spread across multiple compound locations. Therefore, should the supply companies be unable to meet this demand an additional tanker would be required every 2 to 3 days. This supply of potable water by tanker was not considered within

the traffic figures as it was not felt to be likely; however, the associated number of trips is so small that they would have no potential to influence the findings of the assessment, even if the scenario did occur.

To inform the traffic and transport assessment an estimation of the construction vehicle movements was undertaken. This estimation included the movement of tankers to supply water to the site for construction purposes.

Estimates of the water consumption to inform the tanker requirements were based on heavy use activities including a possible concrete batching plant (Kent only due to proximity of concrete suppliers) and the trenchless drilling activities in both Kent and Suffolk. An allowance of 60,000 litres per day has been allowed for the batching plant during periods of operation, equating to 2 tankers, and 30,000 litres per day has been allowed for trenchless crossings during drilling works, which equates to 1 tanker. An additional tanker per week per main construction compound has been allowed to cover additional construction activities. Therefore, at peak periods the Applicant has allowed for 22 tankers per week in Kent and 10 tankers per week in Suffolk. This is based on a conservative assessment of the batching plant in Kent operating 6 days per week and trenchless activities potentially operating 7 days per week and allowing for 3 main compounds being used simultaneously in both Suffolk and Kent.

Operational management measures

Operation and maintenance related measures are clearly identified within the REAC [**APP-342]** (please refer to column (6) Project Phase within REAC Tables 1.1. to 1.4). This REAC forms Appendix B of the Outline Onshore Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) **[APP-340]** and compliance with the measures set out in the REAC, including those relevant to the operation and maintenance phase, is secured through DCO Schedule 3 Requirement 6. In some instances, specific operational measures, such as habitat creation, are additionally secured through other management plans such as the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plans **[APP-349** and **APP-AS-059]**. It is not considered necessary to produce a separate operational management plan as this would likely lead to unnecessary duplication of information already contained within relevant control documents (i.e. REAC, LEMP) and potentially lead to contradictory securing mechanisms.

Shipping and Navigation

The Applicant acknowledges the ExA's query and confirms that a positive meeting was held with Sizewell C on **September 10th**, which discussed approach to their concerns, next steps and agreed that Sizewell C Statutory Harbour Authority will be consulted on the outline NIP, in addition to providing a targeted Hazard Workshop to be held as soon as possible

prior to examination. The Applicant also confirms that the Maritime and Coastguard Agency will be consulted on the next version of the outline NIP.

However, with the goal of the NIP being a 'live' document, , the Applicant considers that the list of consultees in relation to the outline NIP should be kept as streamlined as possible while including the key relevant stakeholders. The Applicant wishes to be able to update the NIP swiftly, as required, in order to get information out in a timely manner up to and throughout the construction phase. It therefore seeks to limit the number of consultees on the NIP to only those that overlap with the Proposed Project's NIP Areas of Interest, including other offshore developments that may be in construction at a similar timeline through the Sunk region, and those parties identified through consultation as expressing a need for enhanced communication through the consultation phase.

Regarding Trinity House, the justification for not including Trinity House as a consultee in the development of the NIP is that there are no proposals to install temporary or permanent Aids To Navigation (AtoN) as part of the Sea Link project.

Marine Mammals

In line with the updates to **6.2.4.4 (D) Part 4 Marine Chapter 4 Marine Mammals [AS-095]**, the outline **Application Document 7.5.11 Outline Marine Mammal Mitigation Plan [APP-356]** has been updated to reflect the latest Joint Nature Conservation Committee guidelines. This will be submitted at Deadline 1 of the examination process.

Benthic Ecology

The Applicant acknowledges that a number of comments were raised within NE's RR appendix E (Benthic Ecology) **[RR-3920]**. The Applicant has set out in this letter how these comments are being and will continue to engage with NE to provide further clarity on the project design and potential impacts.

Point E1, regarding potential pathways of effect on intertidal and subtidal benthic habitats, this will be addressed within the RR response to NE with technical answers that address the comments raised. These technical responses will be further supported by additional detail in the Pegwell Bay Construction Technical Report that will be submitted to PINS in October. Where necessary, impact assessments will be updated in an update to the ES chapter (**Application Document 6.2.4.2 (C) Part 4 Marine Chapter 2 Benthic Ecology [AS-020].**

Point E6 states that the Applicant has not considered the potential impacts to outcropping clay and soft chalk, and peat and clay exposures. This will be addressed within the RR response to NE with technical answers that address the comments raised. Impact assessments will be updated, if necessary, in an update to the ES chapter (**Application Document 6.2.4.2 (C) Part 4 Marine Chapter 2 Benthic Ecology [AS-020].**

Regarding the assessment of impacts to Thanet Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (points E26) as detailed in the NE RR response, this point will be addressed in both the benthic ecology chapter **Application Document 6.2.4.2 (C) Part 4 Marine Chapter 2 Benthic Ecology [AS-020]** and the **Habitats Regulations Assessment Report [AS-007].**

Regarding E43, the Applicant will address this point in an update to the **Habitats Regulations Assessment Report [AS-007].**

In point E34, NE raised concerns of potential benthic 'ecological halo effects', which will be fully responded to within the NE RR response to be submitted in due course. This a detailed technical answer which concludes that when considering the extent and nature of cable protection, which is substantially different from offshore wind turbine substructures and scour protection, the potential for a halo effect that could have a significant effect on habitats beyond the immediate area is highly unlikely.

Errata and related issues

As requested, the Applicant submits the following documents alongside this letter.

Document	**Reason for Submission**
1.3 (D) Navigation Document [AS-086] & [AS-087]	Updated to reflect the updated suite of documents as part of the response to the s89 (3) letter
6.2.2.9 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration [**APP-056**]	As requested by the ExA in **PD-009**.
6.2.3.9 Part 3 Kent Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration [**APP-069**]	As requested by the ExA in **PD-009**.
6.2.4.1 Part 4 Marine Chapter 1 Physical Environment [**APP-074**]	Table 1.17 has been updated to ensure both Suffolk and Kent state 200m^2 for the HDD exit pit footprints. The wording of paragraphs 1.7.129, 1.9.28 and 1.9.46 have been updated. The sensitivity criteria for Table 1.8 has been corrected.
6.2.4.5 Part 4 Marine Chapter 5 Marine Ornithology [**APP-078**]	Table 5.16 has been updated to ensure both Suffolk and Kent state 200m^2 for the HDD exit pit footprints.
6.3.2.9.C Appendix 2.9.C Suffolk Construction Noise Assessment [**APP-137**]	Updated as requested in **PD-009**.

Document	Reason for Submission
6.3.2.9.D Appendix 2.9.D Suffolk Operational Noise Assessment [**APP-138**]	The document has been updated to amend two incorrect cross-references to a mitigation commitment.
6.3.2.9.E Appendix 2.9.E Friston substation and OHL operational noise (informative) [**APP-139**]	The document has been updated to correct the value in Table 1.1 as well as to correct the incorrect cross reference to a mitigation commitment.
6.3.3.9.D Appendix 3.9.D Kent Operational Noise Assessment [**APP-191**]	The document has been updated to correct the incorrect cross reference to a mitigation commitment.
6.4.2.5 ES Figures Suffolk Geology and Hydrogeology [**APP-232**]	This document has not been updated as the layer showing the Red Crag Formation boundary on Figure 6.4.2.5.2 Bedrock Geology is correct. The layer shows data that was provided by the British Geological Society.
6.4.2.9 ES Figures Suffolk Noise and Vibration [**APP-236**]	Updated as requested in **PD-009**.
6.4.3.9 ES Figures Kent Noise and Vibration [**APP-268**]	Updated as requested in **PD-009**.
7.5.3 Outline Onshore Construction Environmental Management Plan [**APP-340**]	This document has been updated to amend incorrect reference.
7.5.3.1 CEMP Appendix A Outline Code of Construction Practice [**APP-341**]	The document has not been updated as whilst cross reference to GG19 is included in Table 5-1 of both Application Document 7.5.6.1 Outline Air Quality Management Plan -Suffolk and Application Document 7.5.6.2 Outline Air Quality Management Plan – Kent, the measures listed are derived using the Institute of Air Quality Management construction dust guidance and therefore are not intended to be included word for word in this document but are the same in principle.
7.5.6.1 Outline Air Quality Management Plan – Suffolk [**APP-346**]	The document has been updated to add the additional clause that is included in Application Document 7.5.6.2 Outline Air Quality Management Plan – Kent.

Document	Reason for Submission
7.5.6.2 Outline Air Quality Management Plan – Kent [**APP-347**]	This document has not been updated as Application Document 7.5.6.1 Outline Air Quality Management Plan - Suffolk has been made consistent with this document.
7.5.8.1 Outline Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan – Suffolk [**APP-350**]	The document has been updated to correct the wording in paragraph 4.6.8 and to provide the correct cross reference of a paragraph within the document.
7.5.8.2 Outline Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan – Kent [**APP-351**]	The document has been updated to correct the wording in paragraph 4.6.8 and to provide the correct cross reference of a paragraph within the document.
9.3.1 Suffolk Section Phase 2A Archaeological Evaluation Report	This report was prepared after the application had been submitted. It is provided now as supplementary information.
9.3.2 Suffolk Section Phase 2B Archaeological Evaluation Report	This report was prepared after the application had been submitted. It is provided now as supplementary information.
9.3.3 Suffolk Section Phase 2B Archaeological Evaluation Report Extract illustrating the location of the henge in relation to the proposed scheme	As requested by the ExA in **PD-009**.
9.19 Sea Link DCO notification of change to DCO application	This document has been produced in relation to the change request.
9.22.1 Plan to Illustrate the locations used for the site notices in Suffolk	As requested by the ExA in **PD-009**.
9.22.2 Plan to Illustrate the locations used for the site notices in Kent	As requested by the ExA in **PD-009**.

I trust that the above information is satisfactory but please let me know if you require anything further.

Yours sincerely,

Sebastian Stevens

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