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From: SMM@saveminstermarshes.com

Ms Sarah Holmes
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National Infrastructure Planning
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08/10/2025

PLANNING ACT 2008 APPLICATION BY NATIONAL GRID ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION FOR AN ORDER GRANTING DEVELOPMENT CONSENT FOR SEA LINK PINS REFERENCE: EN020026

Submission Reference: FF0A893ED

Response to the Rule 6 letter regarding the examination procedure and draft examination timetable.

Dear Ms Holmes,

Following our registration to attend the Preliminary Hearing (PH) on 5th November, Issue Specific Hearing (Scope) on 11th November and in person hearings at Discovery Park starting the same day, we submit this summary of the key points we wish to raise at the Preliminary Hearing and our request for attendance at further Issue Specific Hearings as scheduled.

Introduction

We have collaborated with CPRE Kent, Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT), RSPB Thanet, Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory, and other groups, as well as our online membership of over 3,300 individuals, to avoid duplication of comments. We request permission to speak on behalf of our members and endorse the points raised by these organisations, while also highlighting our own concerns.

Lack of meaningful consultation

We endorse the points made by KWT in their letter of 14/08/25 where they highlight to you the lack of meaningful consultation on this project. The applicant's approach appears inconsistent with OFGEM's guidance that "Stakeholder feedback should be used to inform project development and routing decisions, rather than being treated as a formality."

Predetermination of landfall in Kent: We are concerned that only Pegwell Bay was considered as a landfall site in Kent, as evidenced by the applicant's Appendix A from the preliminary meeting on 29 November 2021. Despite stakeholder engagement beginning in 2020, relevant documentation has not been made available to the public. At the meeting, the Inspectorate advised "the drainage outfall for Manston Airport was located in Pegwell Bay and queried whether the onshore connection route in Kent would have any interface with this infrastructure. The Applicant responded that the matter would be considered."

Yet here we are in October 2025 and your question is still unanswered. Is this not showing contempt for the process?

We respectfully request that the Examining Authority pause the process and require the applicant to consult on alternative sites in Kent before proceeding further.

Planning application standards:

We endorse KWT's observations regarding failures to meet documentation standards. We are particularly concerned about the quality of environmental assessments and the omission of key species, such as Daubenton's bats and European Eels, from the reports (6.4.4.3 and 6.4.4.4). The survey of seals at Pegwell Bay is also inadequate, failing to account for seasonal differences between species and significant underreporting of numbers. The proposed mitigation measures are insufficient, and previous conduct by the applicant (e.g., blocking Barn Owl boxes during the NEMO project) raises further concerns. We request to be present at all Issue Specific Hearings related to environmental matters.

Increase in documentation following submission:

Since the application was accepted in April 2025, **the number of documents has increased by 41%**, from 412 to 582. This volume places an unreasonable burden on affected parties, many of whom are volunteers. The ongoing addition and revision of documents, combined with unanswered questions, undermines public confidence in the process. We urge the Examining Authority to consider pausing the process until all outstanding issues are addressed.

Failure by applicant to contact affected parties

Contrary to the applicant's claims, not all affected parties have been contacted. For example, residents of Ebbsfleet Lane and homeowners overlooking Pegwell Bay were unaware of their opportunity to participate in the hearings. This lack of notification is a further reason to pause the process.

RESPONSE TO RULE 9 LETTER

Use of the Hoverport

We note also that you have unanswered questions about the change to the Hoverport draft order limits. We also note that Thanet District Council has not given permission for the use of the Hoverport. The area is recovering Mosaic Habitat and has rare lizard and man orchids as

well as increasing populations of lizards and slow worms. The applicant has not conducted an EIA for this area and winter is unsuitable to do so as the plants and animals are now dormant/hibernating/in brumation.

We support CPRE Kent's letter to the EA on 7th October, drawing attention to the late changes to the project made by the applicant. The changes will require the applicant to revise Works Plans, Land Plans, Book of Reference, Statement of Reasons and draft DCO [AS-138].

The EA has indicated that the proposed changes would be considered as part of the first written questions, published on or before 17th December 2025, with all Interested Parties expected to respond by Deadline 3 (7th January 2026). We think this is unreasonable as follows:-

- There is insufficient time for consideration of the new documentation during the holiday season
- The applicant and the EA will also be unavailable for answering questions through much of the same period

The revised timescale required to review these changes significantly disrupts the established examination timetable you are proposing. We would suggest it would be procedurally inappropriate to convene the first Issue Specific Hearing on 11th November prior to the submission and consideration of the requisite revisions. We reiterate the request for a formal pause to allow the applicant to finalise all documentation before the examination proceeds.

Methodology of the Examination Hearings

We welcome the decision to hold in-person hearings near affected locations. However, we are concerned about the reliance on digital solutions, which may disadvantage elderly individuals and those with limited literacy or digital skills. The responsibility for supporting these individuals should not fall on the public, and the applicant has not adequately addressed this issue.

We have tried to fill this gap ourselves – but the onus should never have been on members of the public to take this responsibility and the applicant has failed to engage with this problem.

Issue Specific Hearings

Finally, we would like to be present as Issue Specific Hearings to cover the points we have raised in our initial submission as follows:-

- Need case and compliance with mitigation hierarchy
- Consideration of alternative landfall options
- Project costs and construction methods
- Ecology and habitat impacts
- Agricultural land use & soils
- Heritage impacts

- Public Rights of Way
- Cumulative impacts of development
- Economic and social impact
- Traffic, Pollution and Health
- Flooding impacts

We trust that the Examining Authority will give due consideration to these points and take appropriate action to ensure a fair and transparent ongoing process.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Lorenzo
Chair Save Minster Marshes