

PINS REFERENCE: EN020026

Written representation for Submission Reference [REDACTED]

1. Introduction:

- 1.1. This document comprises a Written Representation (WR) by myself (I/me) as an Interested Party in respect of a Development Consent Order application (“the DCO Application”) for the National Grid (“NG”) Sea Link project (“Sea Link”).
- 1.2. These comments are made without prejudice to any future representation I may make about the DCO Application throughout the examination process and tracked changes this copy indicate where I have added to my original response
- 1.3. I support the Government’s drive to clean energy, a move away from reliance on fossil fuels and investment in existing renewables (hydro, wind and solar), new renewables (nuclear fusion, hydrogen, wave) and nuclear fission. But the energy market is changing so rapidly that this project is already left behind. Indeed just this week the Government has announced consultation on indexation of Renewables Obligation and Feed-in Tariffs in an effort to reduce the cost of subsidies to consumers¹ and this will have a marked influence on their sparse cost justification for the project.
- 1.4. In addition, the Government DESNZ Select Committee on the cost of energy, 15th October, took oral evidence from the Energy Companies, in which they questioned the modelling of future energy needs², invalidating National’s Grid’s cost justification for the project, which is clearly now out of date.
- 1.5. My concerns are that this may be the right scheme towards achieving Net Zero, but a) I question the Needs Case and b) I believe it is the wrong location for landfall in Kent for a variety of reasons outlined in my initial response and expanded on here.
- 1.6. Other locations that would be less environmentally damaging, were a) discounted before dialogue with the Inspectorate began in 2022 and b) pre-empt the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan that NESO is currently working on to deliver a truly integrated modelling of location choice. The project is Cart before the Horse.
- 1.7. Indeed, the choice of location for the Kent end of Sea Link breaches their own guidelines for site selection, and the document APP-320 7.2 **Strategic Options Back Check Report** appears to work backwards to justify the site that was chosen, rather than having worked through a fully informed site selection process. An option to bring cables through to Dover, through the rail tunnel to Sellindge appears not to have been considered even though this is supported by Kent County Council.
- 1.8. I also have many concerns about the adequacy of the consultation process; Interested Parties have been given 6 weeks to read and respond to 412 detailed documents that are only available online and require a powerful computer to manage (which is unreasonable) and it appears that feedback from consultees in previous statutory and non-statutory consultations have been ignored.

1.1.1. 1 <https://www.osborneclarke.com/insights/energy-transition-government-consults-indexation-renewables-obligation-and-feed-tariff>

1.1.2. 2 <https://committees.parliament.uk/event/25089>

My concerns are outlined at a high level in this document as I am not an expert – but an informed and interested member of the public and resident of Thanet. I have tried without success to be brief considering there are 412 documents and now another 65 have landed superseding many previously supplied.

- 1.9. I hope to be given the opportunity to continue in the DCO process and participate in future Issue Specific Hearings as they are scheduled.

2. Structure of Comments

My Relevant Response is structured as follows.

- The ‘need’ case is not made
- Site Selection goes against their own guidelines
- Site Selection pre-empts the work of NESO on Strategic Spatial Energy Plan
- Non-compliance with mitigation hierarchy in site selection
- There is no local benefit
- Local house price blight is
- Damage to Tourism & Local Economy
- Cost of the project
- Land use issues
- Inadequate Surveys
- Cumulative Impacts of development
- Flood Risk
- Carbon/Climate justification
- Environmental Surveys
- Environmental Mitigation
- Construction Methods Unclearified
- Impacts on Health & Wellbeing
- Traffic Impact
- Inadequacy of consultation

3. Need case is not made

National Grid makes a case for the need for Reinforcement of this section of the grid to carry additional power from wind farms in the North Sea. I understand that there is a pressing need for the government to be able to stop paying constraint fees to Wind Farm operators by ensuring that excess generated power can be carried around the network to where it is needed or traded abroad. The NEMO Interconnector at Richborough was built to trade power between UK and Belgium.

- 3.1. NG’s argument that they need to be able to trade more power to Europe when we have excess power generated by wind in the North Sea fails to consider that the wind will be blowing equally strongly in Western Europe at the same time – it’s the nature of the European weather systems and they are unlikely to need our power.
- 3.2. para 3.4.3 of APP-320 **7.2 Strategic Options Back Check Report** states “Without reinforcement the capacity of the East Anglia and South East existing network is insufficient to accommodate the connection of the proposed new power sources. The ‘Thermal Boundary Export Limit’ – the physical maximum energy capacity the system can accommodate during planned system faults – would be exceeded, preventing export of power to demand centres beyond East Anglia.” And Para 3.4.4 (Ibid) “To address these SQSS compliance issues reinforcement of the network is required. Without reinforcement, in some conditions generators connecting in the area would be required to reduce their output. Generators would then have to be compensated via a ‘constraint’ payment, and additional payments made to non-constrained generators outside of the area to ensure that supply matches demand. These costs would be passed on to end consumers. Previously ESO analysis shows that, in

this case, predicted constraint costs are likely to significantly exceed those of reinforcement, providing a further driver to reinforce the system in addition to meeting the criteria of the SQSS.” Generators are already paid constraint costs when power cannot be utilised – details of these current payments and predictions are not supplied as far as I can see in the same document or elsewhere in the pack – although a bit of digging elsewhere turns up NESO’s Future Energy Scenarios Workbook that contains the predictions that were queried by the Energy Sector representatives at the DESNZ Select Committee Hearing on 15th October.

- 3.3. Previous ESO analysis is not referenced so we are expected to take it as read that the cost of the project is mitigated by reducing constraint costs.
- 3.4. Customers are already picking up the constraint costs through payment of taxes. It is inconceivable that taxes will go down if constraint payments are reduced, so to say that “these costs would be passed on to end consumers” is somewhat trite and may even be misleading.
- 3.5. There is no explanation why reinforcing across the network at EC3, EC5N, EC5, EC6, Essex Coast and LE1 could not all be brought into a link north of Kent and East of Canterbury and straight into the Canterbury SubStation or round the coast through Dover to Sellindge or to Dungeness – obviating the need for the Sea Link being brought into such a precious area.
- 3.6. Energy surge from faults across the SC2 boundary as per 3.7.2.1 (Ibid) could be channelled to and from NEMO or the other Interconnectors until the fault is repaired.
- 3.7. At 3.7.21 it appears they introduce a new argument – “The transfer required by 2037 following the closure of Dungeness Nuclear Power Station is 12,689.2 MW. This is in excess of both the capability and capacity of SC2 causing both overloads and voltage stability issues on the south coast.” Would it not therefore make more sense to bring Sea Link into the Brownfield Site at Dungeness where the cable lines are already capable of massive power transfers? Is all this network infrastructure at Dungeness to be mothballed?
- 3.8. EDF have recently announced that they plan to keep Sizewell B going until 2055 provided there is a sustainable commercial model. The investment model for Sizewell C is still not agreed, so there is no guarantee that the additional energy premised by NG from Sizewell B will be generated within the timeframes cited in their documented needs case.
- 3.9. The timelapse of planned generation capacity and requirement is opaque. The figures in the tables (see 3.2 Energy Generation Capacity) have to be picked apart to make sense and it is not made clear how much of the planned capacity that is referred to by 2022 to 2024 has actually been built or has started. Indeed Lion Link has only just started pre-examination.
- 3.10. NESO, who manage connections to the grid have said “ More than 280GW of generation projects are currently seeking connections to the transmission network and an increasing number of those projects have dates into the mid to late 2030s. We’ve seen huge increases in the numbers and capacities of projects seeking to connect, **yet our data shows up to 70% of those projects may never be built**”³. So how can the generation figures that NG are using to describe the need for SeaLink be relied upon?
- 3.11. I find the needs case unconvincing in the extreme with insufficient referencing to demand predictions, generation type balance and cost analysis.

4. Site Selection goes against their own guidelines

- 4.1. National Grid doesn’t in any document explicitly state “don’t build on marshland,” but their design and planning guidance does emphasize avoiding unsuitable or environmentally sensitive ground conditions, which includes marshes, wetlands, and flood-prone areas. See the following documents that they produce to support their own work.
 - **EDS 07-4000: Grid and Primary Substation Civil Design** – This UK Power Networks document (used in National Grid contexts) outlines civil design standards. It stresses the importance of ground investigations and avoiding unstable or waterlogged soils where possible.
 - **NG DH 10 – Design Handbook: Electricity Substation Construction** – This handbook includes requirements for ground improvement, drainage, and site selection. While it doesn’t single out

³ <https://www.neso.energy/news/connections-reform-consultation-now-open> - accessed 20/6/25

marshland, it implies that such areas would require significant mitigation or should be avoided due to stability and access issues.

- **National Grid's Technical, Policy & Engineering Documents** – This repository includes the **G81 series** and other planning standards. These often reference the need for geotechnical assessments and avoiding high-risk ground types.
 - The Holford Rules guidelines that NG refer to, whilst primarily dealing with Overhead Power Lines, should surely also inform the process for this project.⁴ This states “We consider at a broad regional scale where the required infrastructure could be accommodated (with no corridors or sites considered at this stage), along with the most appropriate technology to be used. Options appraisal is the method we use to compare options and differentiate between their relative costs and benefits to best meet the needs of our customers and consumers whilst also meeting our various statutory duties and other commitments”. I cannot see evidence of the broad regional scale investigations since the Inception meeting for the project.
- 4.2. The location is unsuitable for development due to the nature of alluvial clay soil on the selected site which NG mainly assessed via desktop surveys. The shrink/swell capacity of the soil on the marsh is very high. Participants at OFH 2 & 3 at Discovery Park 11th and 12th November and who farm the land referred to it as 1meter crust with blanchmange underneath. It needs careful management for farming.
 - 4.3. The land is unsuitable for construction of large heavy developments. Their surveys should have found this. Ground water was found 1m below ground in some of their surveys. Their test bores went 20m down and failed to find bedrock. These findings appear to have been ignored in the push for this location at all costs.
 - 4.4. Indeed they are still completing bore-hole work in an attempt to make the engineering fit the site. If they haven't found bed-rock yet, how can you rely on any of the cost data on which this project is built.
 - 4.5. Previous trenches for archaeology (for this scheme) when backfilled have left the ground unusable for agriculture. A tractor tipped over into the slumped ground (photos can be supplied)
 - 4.6. Previously located portacabins and heavy machinery have left other areas too compacted and now more prone to flooding (from the previous NEMO scheme) (see image below).



- 4.7. From the previous NEMO scheme damage to river banks along public footpaths has not been repaired.
- 4.8. From the previous NEMO scheme trees and hedges were removed without discussion and the replanting left un-watered and an-attended to blow over and die, leaving plastic detritus from the tree guards (see photos). Choice of trees was not discussed.
- 4.9. From their own document 8.2: Options Selection and Design Evolution Report (October 2023), page 15, shows their approach should be that after the strategic proposal they “engage stakeholders and

1.1.3. ⁴ <https://www.nationalgrid.com/document/342336/download>

consultee feedback to shape the development of the project”. Followed by “Develop project design in response to feedback, identify PEIR” etc. Numerous people including KWT, Sandwich Bird Observatory, National Trust, Cliffsend and Minster Parish Councils have told you that throughout the project, affected parties and communities have simply been ignored as NG push on regardless. This document is meaningless – it’s just Words to tick a box.

- 4.10. I understand that the project is ‘accelerated’, but they have been working on this since 2021 and still don’t know the condition of the soil in Minster Marshes to inform the engineering and the cost of the build. As a retired project manager I would be seriously embarrassed to have got this far in the project without basic information for my stakeholders (ie. the public) to review.

5. Site selection pre-empts NESO work on Strategic Spatial Energy Plan

- 5.1. I am delighted to see that NESO are finally working with the Government on a modelling tool of how to assess land for energy infrastructure, taking into account spatial constraints that include important Environmental matters. It seems ludicrous that the Inspectorate should be pushed into a decision on this case on the one hand while the Government is doing its best to come up with modelling that will take account all the important environmental concerns that I and others are outlining to you in this document. You can find more about this initiative here <https://www.neso.energy/what-we-do/strategic-planning/strategic-spatial-energy-planning-ssep>
- 5.2. As per previous section NESO are currently consulting and their evidence should feed into this massive project, it should not start before NESO can give strategic guidance – otherwise this runs the risk of becoming a hugely expensive and ecologically damaging white elephant.

6. Non-compliance with mitigation hierarchy in site selection (same as lack of consideration of alternatives), SPA, SSSI, RAMSAR, SAC

- 6.1. NG has failed to correctly apply the mitigation hierarchy as required under NPS EN-1. For example, given the preferred single option of landfall at Pegwell Bay, **avoidance measures have been ruled out entirely – bypassing a critical element of the mitigation hierarchy**. The area benefits from the following National and International designations:-
- 6.2. Two Special Areas of Conservation (Thanet Coast SAC & Sandwich Bay SAC) Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are internationally recognized. They are designated under the European Union's Habitats Directive to protect habitats and species of European importance. The UK government and other member states designate these areas, and they are part of the broader Natura 2000 network, which is an international network of protected areas.
- 6.3. A Special Protection Area (Thanet Coast & Sandwich Bay SPA) Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are internationally recognized, specifically within the framework of the European Union's Birds Directive. They are designated for the protection of wild bird populations, including those that are rare, vulnerable, or migratory, and form a key part of the Natura 2000 network. DEFRA notes that this is a vital area for the bird species Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), the European Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) and the Little Tern. The area regularly supports up to 940 individual turnstones (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) which represents at least 1.3% of the Western Palearctic wintering population (JNCC, 2015). The conservation aims are “Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;
- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
 - The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
 - The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
 - The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
 - The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.
- 6.4. The further damage to the bay by construction and disturbance to the bird life is underplayed by NG. The damage to the bay from the previous NEMO link project has not recovered and promised mitigation did not

take place. The local population have no cause to believe NG's promises about minimising disturbance and making good on damage as they have failed to do so and try to wriggle out of their obligation when questioned at the ISH by stating that NGET was a different company. This is totally disingenuous, they have the same parent company and Board of Directors

- 6.5. A Wetland of International Importance (Thanet Coast & Sandwich Bay Ramsar site) Ramsar sites are internationally recognized as they are designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, an intergovernmental treaty focused on wetland conservation. These sites are recognized for their international importance in conserving wetland biodiversity and are included on the List of Wetlands of International Importance.

Before the pandemic in 2020 we faced related and escalating crises – climate breakdown, biodiversity loss and our deteriorating wellbeing. These crises are interlinked, and at the heart of them is our loss of connection to the natural world. The Ramsar Convention is more important now than ever before and we, as a partner, must continue to raise the profile of wetlands, designate and protect more wetlands, and encourage the wise-use principles so that generations to come can benefit.

James Robinson, Director of Conservation at WWT

Have we forgotten so much, so soon?

- 6.7. National Nature Reserve (Sandwich and Pegwell Bay NNR). NNRs are recognized for their important habitats, geology, wildlife, and species. The NNR is so important for the health and wellbeing of Thanet residents. It's the only bit of 'wild' that we have left.
- 6.8. Site of Special Scientific Interest (**Thanet Coast SSSI and Sandwich Bay to Hacklinge Marshes SSSI**) While Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are primarily a national designation in the UK, many SSSIs are also internationally recognized as part of broader international conservation efforts. The Sandwich Bay to Hacklinge Marshes were designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) primarily due to the presence of a diverse range of plant and animal species, including several rare and scarce species, and the significance of the site for overwintering birds. Specifically, the **lizard orchid (*Himantoglossum hircinum*)** has the UK's largest population at this site. The site also features a diverse range of other plant, bird and animal life, including several rare and scarce species like **fragrant evening-primrose (*Oenothera stricta*)**, **bedstraw broomrape (*Orobanche caryophyllacea*)**, and **sand catchfly (*Silene conica*)**. The area also supports an internationally important wintering population of the **ruddy turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*)**.
- 6.9. NG document APP-029 2.9 Habitats of Protected Species and Important Habitats, provides maps of the area. Page 16 shows the old Hoverport Site as "Hardstanding", completely failing to address the fact that this is recovering mosaic habitat where lizard, man and beeorchids are found and appear to be spreading naturally. Thanet District Council have refused NG the use of this land and so they are side-stepping this by starting a consultation on Compulsory Purchase for permanent occupation of the site as a compound
- 6.10. The maps provided by NG overlap, have confusing draft order limit outlines and fail to show these designations in context. For example See page 15 [Ibid] in particular, which simply shows some of the SSSI as "Broad-leaved woodland" with some internal areas unclassified and fails to show that is connected to an important hedgerow (also broad-leaved woodland), which they have classified as "poor semi improved grassland" and is a hedgerow they intend to remove for the site of the Converter station. The farmers planted this habitat to provide a functional land link between the SSSI land, the Minster Stream and Weatherlees Hill. As far as I can tell from the confusing and badly referenced documentation provided by NG these important aspects of the SSSI have been completely ignored.
- 6.11. It appears also that a substantial section of the SSSI is to be claimed within the Draft Order Limits and is not correctly shown as Broad Leaf Woodland, see page 15 of APP – 036 2.12. Trees and Important Hedgerows to be Removed or Managed. This is only apparent on this map, is not discussed and is not shown in relation to the SSSI. This is totally unacceptable. See further discussion in the Trees and Hedgerows section.
- 6.12. One of the better documents for maps is APP-365 7.11.2 – Design Approach Kent. This clearly shows from page 18 that the impact on wildlife as a 'receptor' is to be ignored. On this page the focus is entirely on the built environment and humans. The SSSI is not shown.

- 6.13. However, delving further into this document it clearly shows the SSSI in relation to the build on page 27 [Ibid] and it is clear that NG intends to build right up against the SSSI. Do they think that this amount of construction will have no adverse on the SSSI. It is not a park for humans. It is a home for birds, mammals, reptiles – all of whom will be so disturbed that they will not return. What a price to pay for green energy.
- 6.14. In addition page 29 [Ibid] clearly shows the pylons that will cut directly across the northern end of the SSSI contributing to the likelihood of bird strikes as they fly along the SSSI and follow the flyway to Stodmarsh. The utter contempt for the wildlife and this protected land is quite frankly astounding.
- 6.15. The map shown on page [Ibid] clearly shows the area as Marsh (ie. not suitable) – the only document in the pack that seems to do this. Have NG read their own documents?



I have highlighted in my section 16.5 the double row hedge that was planted to connect the SSSI to the Minster Stream (I hope that the annotation does not move around as I am not a designer). This 300m hedgerow will be utterly destroyed to accommodate the converter station. This hedgerow appears missing from the following maps in the document and becomes a mere line. This is the area where the landowner has been ringing birds for the last 5 years or so in order to provide a properly informed baseline for the ecology that will be impacted and where the Dawn chorus birdsong you listened to in the OFH at Discovery Park was recorded.

- 6.16. Acoustic sensitivity [Ibid] Page 27 is once again focussed entirely on human kind. It is distressing to read that the wildlife within the SSSI is ignored in this respect. Never again will the critically endangered turtle doves or nightingales be heard here.
- 6.17. I do not feel qualified to talk about all the problems with the construction method, nor do I have the time to research and respond to this since I am simply a member of the public doing my best to understand these documents. But I do note also that in this same document, page 30 [Ibid], the designers show ‘attenuation ponds’. On a marsh. Even I can see that is a ludicrous suggestion.
- 6.18. APP-319 became APP-030 became AS-057 7.1.C Planning Statement Clean. Difficult for members of the public to keep track of the changes. In the original planning statement I read at para 7.4.21 “To
- Page 7 of 29

support the SoS with its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and in accordance with planning policy, Application Document 6.6 Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Report has been prepared. The HRA concludes that the Proposed Project will not result in any adverse effect on site integrity (AEoSI) of the following sites: [] Thanet Coast to Sandwich Bay SPA/Ramsar and Stodmarsh SPA/Ramsar.” No significant effect to site integrity?? This is not possible. They intend to build immediately within and adjacent to these and the SSSI. The document has been superseded twice. The latest version ASO-57 7.1.C Planning Statement Clean appears to have lost this section entirely and instead focuses on 5.3.8 and the proposed pathetic mitigation. NOTHING will make up for the loss the habitat on the marsh and the disruption across the saltmarsh at Pegwell.

7. There is no local benefit

- 7.1. Buried in APP-070 6.2.3.10 Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism and par 4.10.1, table 5, NG are clear that for the people of Thanet, “ the scale of operational employment generated is likely to be very limited. The Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be **scoped out of the assessment for the operational stage on this basis**. The ES description of development should, however, explain the level of employment generation in operation. NG have settled on a predicted 20 FTE jobs coming from the area in a peak workforce of 24. Why have you scoped this out? This is truly shocking.
- 7.2. NG have said [Ibid]“Employment generation during the construction phase, including multiplier effects (i.e. indirect benefits for the local area and the region resulting from supply chain activity including contribution of the Kent Onshore Scheme to low carbon industries as well as induced employment created through increased spending across the Study Area), potential training benefits and apprenticeship opportunities; **is insignificant**.” They have certainly spelled it out that there is ZERO benefit for the people of Thanet and Sandwich.
- 7.3. APP-319 became APP-030 became AS-057 7.1.C Planning Statement Clean. Difficult for members of the public to keep track of the changes. At Para 5.3.2 [Ibid] they seem to have settle on a peak benefit of 15 FTE workers from within a 60 minute drive. So these 15 may not even come from Thanet.
- 7.4. How insulting that we are to become a Zone of Sacrifice for other areas and do not even benefit from temporary economic benefits. The Procurement Act 2023 mandates that public spending must generate additional economic social and environmental benefits to local communities.
- 7.5. (As a side issue I wonder why this reference is redacted on page 61 and who exactly Diver Distruct area? “Dover District Council. (2015). Adopted Policies Map. Retrieved from Diver Distruct Council:)”
- 7.6. If NG statement at 10.9.7 referenced above in 7.1 is to be believed they cannot justify their statement at 10.9.24 that construction will generate £1.1million GVA within the Economic Study area.
- 7.7. At 10.9.6 they are clear that there is a temporary minor beneficial effect – but this is contra to the Government’s requirement in the Procurement Act 23 (made law in 2025) that changed the model for the way that the public sector procures goods and services from a Most Economically Advantageous Tender to Most Advantageous Tender. National Grid have a duty to provide the Most Advantageous project – not simply the cheapest. The current project landfall at Richborough does not benefit anyone in the Economic Study Zone – we are to be a Zone of Sacrifice and this is not acceptable.
- 7.8. Route SL1 is the least damaging albeit more expensive option (but even this is questionable – see my comments on Cost).

8. Local house price blight

- 8.1. I know from conversations with Cliffsend residents that houses overlooking Pegwell Bay cannot now be sold and have dropped in price. Local Estate Agents and Conveyancers are duty bound to tell residents about the plans or they might become subject to legal challenge. As far as I can see this has not been addressed anywhere in the document pack.
- 8.2. A speaker at the OFH hearing 2, 11th November, highlighted that he had moved to house directly opposite the bay in Pegwell and the estate agents had not advised him of the project. Whilst this may be a failing of his individual agent and something he should take up legally with them, it appears he was not alone. And NG had failed to let them know of the consultations for the project. The first they knew

of it was when Save Minster Marshes volunteers pounded round every single house in Pegwell and Cliffsend to let everyone know. If NG tell you that they have carried out their duty to let householders with the Zone of impact know about the project they are being 'economical with the truth'.

9. Damage to Tourism & Local Economy

- 9.1. They have only considered the impact on tourism within a 500m radius of the draft order limits and on communities within 1 kilometre. In reality all communities and businesses across the Isle of Thanet will be impacted by the construction and vast numbers of vehicle movements.
- 9.2. Even the impact of the wider business community within the draft order limits is dismissed. For example, much of the agricultural land that will be damaged and trees removed are within the boundaries of Abbey Farm. But they are not mentioned in the table 10.16 of APP-07 Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism. Why is Little Cliffsend Farm mentioned when Abbey Farm and others are not?
- 9.3. Para 10.9.64 (Ibid) says "St Augustine's and Stonelees Golf Clubs, both of which *could experience land use impacts*". But these are not further explained.
- 9.4. Para 10.9.64 (Ibid) Says they will be creating permanent access roads "Two permanent access routes will be required for the monitoring throughout the drilling process and maintaining the HVDC cable alignment [] during construction and operation". But the detail and planned disruption is not explained in this document.
- 9.5. They continue at 10.9.5. (Ibid) "The sensitivity of the two golf courses is assessed to be **medium**, due to their local importance **but alternatives are available in the local area.**" My bold and italics. What alternatives? Is it simply assumed that players can just go and play elsewhere? Where are the discussions of this with members? Anecdotally – members of the club are blissfully unaware still that anything is even proposed – because the members have not been consulted. Where were these discussed in the documentation?
- 9.6. The continue [Ibid] "Overall, the magnitude of impact is assessed to be small, given the Proposed Project requires permanent access across the two golf courses, however this is anticipated on an infrequent monthly basis. This results in a permanent minor adverse effect, which is not considered to be significant." This is written as statement of fact, when not enough detail is provided for Interested Parties or the Inspectorate to make a decision.
- 9.7. It is noted at para 10.9.6 (Ibid) "There are no further local businesses located within the Kent Onshore Scheme Order Limits and therefore no additional land use impacts on local businesses are expected". What about all the farms? What about Great Oaks Small School, Salty Seal, Cappucinos, Salty Seal, Njord and Viking cafes and the Jet Garage? It is insulting not to include them in the Economic Assessment because they will be impacted in many ways.
- 9.8. They continue with para 10.9.6.7 (Ibid) "Chai Stop Takeaway and Kent Waterjet Cutting do not fall within the Kent Onshore Scheme Order Limits, however will experience **induced severance effects** from the trenching of the existing UKPN OHL along Jutes Lane. Access to the two businesses would be agreed and enabled through the trenching works which are expected to take approximately one week to complete. *If there are constraints over phasing of the works to suit accesses then this could take longer.*" My bold and italics. Induced Severance Effects does not appear in the Glossary that they have supplied in the pack. Do they want to cover up the fact that they are closing these businesses while the work goes on? Are they providing compensation for this enforced closure? Indeed, the proposed change to the use of the Hoverport (although not currently under consideration cannot be ignored as this will be the death knell for the Viking Café business.

They continue with para 10.9.68 (Ibid) “The sensitivity of Chai Stop Takeaway is assessed to be low due to its low importance and alternatives available in the local area.” Do the owners of this business know that their livelihood is dismissed as of low importance?

- 9.9. And (Ibid) “alternatives in the area” is presumably supposed to mean that customers can go elsewhere to buy curries. This is a truly cavalier way to write about someone’s livelihood and is quite shocking to read.
- 9.10. At 10.9.69 [Ibid] they state that Kent Waterjet Cutting is assessed to have High Importance because of it’s rarity in the area yet they bizarrely then state that effects would be negligible. This is misleading and once again a cavalier way to write about an important livelihood.
- 9.11. The Great Oaks Small School will be heavily impacted not by the construction (which they say be accommodated out of term time) but the ongoing change to their environment. The school caters for neuro-diverse children between the age of 11 and 19. The students require a calming and secure environment away from the noise of urban lifestyle amid a green and pleasant environment in order to progress with their special education. This is what NG says about this business para 10.9.63. Ibid] “The sensitivity of Great Oaks Small School is assessed to be **very high, due to its high level of local importance, the absence of alternatives available in the local area and daily usage by families and children with special needs**. The proposed works would be undertaken during the school holidays and/or at a time agreed with the school, avoiding any effects on vulnerable users. As a result, ***no likely significant effect is anticipated***”. But the ongoing result to the change of outlook, noise, vibration and light is not addressed for these vulnerable children. The only impact truly considered is the change to the cycle path.
- 9.12. I understand that the school’s requests for dialogue have been met with silence.
- 9.13. There are two (2) byways, and eleven (11) footpaths that will be impacted either temporarily or permanently including the King Charles Coast Path. No maps are provided for Interested Parties or the Inspectors in the same document to truly understand the impacts of these temporary or permanent closures – making it almost impossible for Interested Parties to take an informed view. I will have to search through 412 documents to find the relevant plans and add to this submission later.
- 9.14. The Way of St Augustine footpath doesn’t appear to get a mention at all – although it is part of an internationally important footpath network from Canterbury to Rome.
- 9.15. Little Cliffsend Farm was mentioned as a business (albeit completely missing the business in the small business units there) but none of the other farms including Abbey Farm, who will have to absorb much of the damage, are considered as businesses. How insulting.

10. Cost of the project lack of detail

- 10.1. I am surprised that it is so difficult to find detailed costings for a project of this magnitude – even were they to be only at a high level. I reference APP-011 4.1 Funding Statement para 3.2.9 to 3.2.12 which outlines the role of OFGEM, RIIO arrangements and the new ASTI framework for building network infrastructure for Net Zero by 2030. It makes it clear that the taxpayer will be paying back the cost of this development to NG over 45 years.
- 10.2. This document has not been superseded with updated figures. Bearing in mind that this project began earlier than 2022 and since then tax payers have been shouldering CPI increase of between

- 10% and 3.5%⁵ - surely the funding documents should be re-released so that everyone can understand the full cost of the proposal with updated financial projections?
- 10.3. Is this project going to be another HS2 Fiasco? HS2 Ltd, the government-owned company building the railway, estimated in June last year that the project would cost between £54 billion and £66 billion. However MPs warned costs could reach £80 billion. The Lord Berkley review in 2019 suggested that the cost could reach £110b⁶. The Government doesn't have a great track record on big projects and SeaLink is underwritten by the Government.
- 10.4. At para 3.2.11. [Ibid] NG states "The Proposed Project has confirmed Pre-Construction Funding allowances and as part of the RIIO-T2 price control set by Ofgem, the Proposed Project was given an allowance of £34.02m (2018/19 Price Base) in order to deliver pre-construction activities required to secure development consent." I understand that a project of this magnitude requires funding for the surveys and the consultation and the very glitzy documents they produce etc., but NG need to understand that this was for a *consultation process*. It does not mean that they choose what happens and then tell us stupid residents what we are going to get. But perhaps the final sentence of this paragraph is illuminating "activities required to secure development consent" ie., do whatever you need to get this project through. That would seem to me therefore that your role as Inspectors is without power to refuse. I hope this is not the case.
- 10.5. The SL1 route to Sellindge was not properly surveyed before being ruled out on cost alone because of the longer undersea cabling. They chose Richborough before they had really started eating into the allowance. If they had chosen SL1 – they would not have had to conduct so many additional ground surveys and had extra rounds of expensive consultation because of the sensitivity and unsuitability of the location in Kent.
- 10.6. Additionally, it is not fair to rule out another option on the basis of the cost of undersea cabling, if the follow on project is to bring another cable through Pegwell from Scotland!
- 10.7. It is not until para 3.2.17 (Ibid) that NG state the cost "The estimated cost of implementing the Proposed Project is approximately £1.1bn (18/19 price)." And that's it – no breakdown. Just one sentence. Is that truly sufficient for a spend that the tax payers will pay back over 45 years and is already out of date?
- 10.8. AS-091 4.2 C Statement of Reasons contains no cost information. Isn't cost the deciding factor for them in their choice of Richborough? Statement of Reasons has already been through 3 iterations since the first document load. Don't they have their reasons clear by now?
- 10.9. We heard at the Issue Specific Hearing that one of their fundamental reasons for the project is to secure consistent supply in the event of a fault across the SC1.5 boundary and that re-inforcing the network to the east of Canterbury sub-station is vital for this purpose. I would contend that the option to bring the cable through Dover (as suggested by KCC) or through Dungeness onto the Brownfield land there – would be a more sensible option. Either would still be within the SC1.5 boundary for resilience and proximity to the 2 Interconnectors already built.
- 10.10. In addition the Dungeness site already has super pylons that are designed to take additional current from the Nuclear Power Station there and would require limited, if any upgrading.
- 10.11. In APP-320 7.2 Strategic Options Back Check Report para Ex1.6.5. NG states "Taking all environmental and socio-economic factors into account, Richborough (SL2) is preferred over Canterbury (SL3). Sellindge (SL1) and the onshore option (LL1) would offer no benefit in environmental or socio-economic terms to justify the greater distance, and associated costs, required." These statements appear on the face of it to be sensible – *if they had provided any detail whatsoever to show how they have arrived at their figures*.

1.1.4. ⁵ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/datasets/consumerpriceinflation>

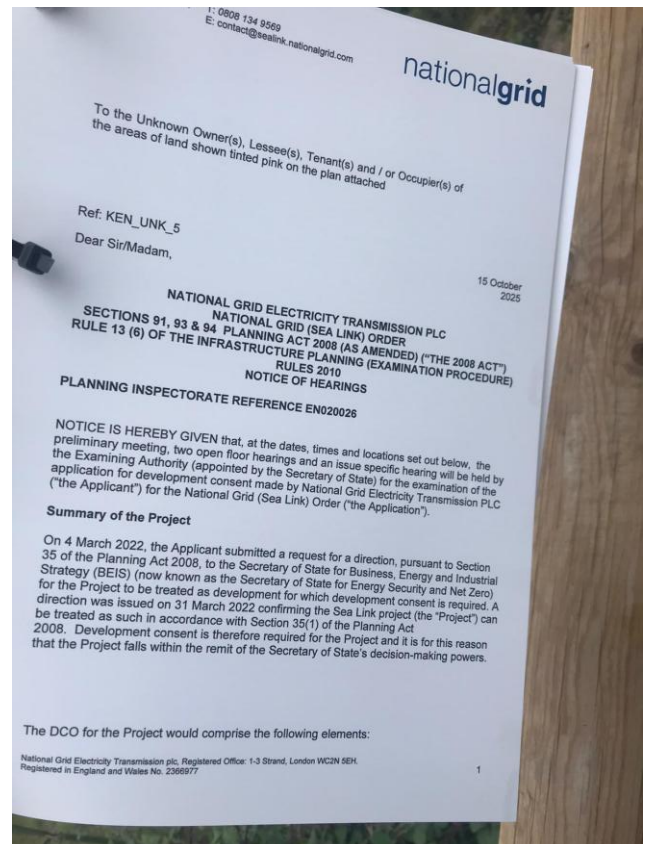
1.1.5. ⁶ <https://metro.co.uk/2025/06/18/hs2-delayed-much-budget-23444520/>

- 10.12. Plus, it is ludicrous and insulting in the same para to state “there is no benefit in environment [] terms to justify the greater distance and costs required”. **The environmental benefit in leaving pristine an area that is an SSSI, SPA, MCZ, RAMSAR and NNR is immeasurable.** (An area that NGET already damaged by the previous NEMO project and is recovering slowly from this).

It was also disingenuous for the gentleman at the ISH on 11th November to say that the NEMO project was run under a different company and they haven’t consulted them. NGET has the same parent company and the same Board of Directors. They should not be allowed to hide behind this obfuscation.

- 10.13. At table EX 1.1. (Ibid) NG state the cost of the project now updated to £1,154.2m (which doesn’t entirely align with the figures in 4.1 Funding Statement). It is another summarised view of the project costs to prove that the Richborough option is the cheapest choice for landfall in Kent although they do not explain why SL2 Richborough was the preferred option over SL3 when they appear to cost the same. The justification they use at Ex1.6.5. is “Taking *all environmental and socio-economic factors into account*, Richborough (SL2) is preferred over Canterbury (SL3). Sellindge (SL1) and the onshore option (LL1) *would offer no benefit in environmental or socio-economic terms* to justify the greater distance, and associated costs, required”. No further detail is supplied to support any of that. And, as I have stated in my criticism of the consultation process (see section 20.1) no other options for landfall in Kent have been truly discussed from the start.
- 10.14. I hoped for more data in Table 11.1 (Ibid) – but no, they have simply used the same broad brush stroke figure of their preferred £1,154,2m
- 10.15. At Appendix D (Ibid) I was hoping to see a decent project cost breakdown as per PRINCE Project Management Principles, number 1 of which is “Continued business justification: A project must make good business sense. There needs to be a clear return on investment, and the use of time and resources should be justified.” A single estimate and one sentence describing the cost of the project should surely cause the Government concern.
- 10.16. NG state at para D.7.7 9 (Ibid) “The capacity of HVDC circuits assessed for this Report is not always exactly equivalent to capacity of AC circuits assessed”. Why not? Does this not feed directly into the cost modelling?
- 10.17. Appendix Table D8 (Ibid) NG appear to show comparisons between the costs of CSC and VSC HVDC converter builds under Lo and Med conditions but states in this table that HDVC matches AC ratings – but they’ve already said in the preceding paragraph that they don’t. And additionally they do not settle on a final cost for the build – which condition is it?
- 10.18. Para D 7.v Notes third bullet point (Ibid) NG states “Capital Costs for HVDC cable installations are based upon subsea or rural/arable land installation **with no major obstacles** (examples of major obstacles would be Subsea Pipelines, Roads, **Rivers**, Railways etc...)”. Surely they are ignoring that building on a marsh is a major obstacle? Where are the cost adjustments for this and would it therefore not make the Sellindge Route SL1 or suggested alternatives via Dover or Dungeness preferable in comparison?
- 10.19. **The NEMO project found unexploded ordnance during their construction. Do NG think that this will not be a major obstacle?**
- 10.20. It appears from the second consultation that NG realised that they would be building on a marsh and carried out further surveys of the land. The construction method was changed to require 20m concrete piling to hold a 2m deep concrete raft covering 9 hectares on which to build the converter. I cannot see where these additional costs have been taken into consideration and then compared once again to the costs of the other site options to ensure this project still makes good business sense. It takes a brave project/programme manager to say that a project is already

going off the rails – but even I, as a project manager (retired), can see that this cost case has serious flaws.



11. Land use issues:

- 11.1. NG plan to take over 9 hectares of Best Most Versatile (BMV) land permanently out of production. It is not adequately described in the documentation nor is the fact that this is mostly Higher Level Stewardship land, which is not mentioned throughout the documentation. It is inconceivable that the Government should be paying farmers to manage their land with the environment in mind and then allow National Grid to remove it entirely. I refer back to the nascent NESO SESP
- 11.2. Compensation for damage to farmland from the surface works on clay soil has not been clarified as far as I can see.
- 11.3. Damage from NEMO project and existing surveys has not been paid for or mitigated (please reference to KWT and TDC submissions).
- 11.4. The change to the use of the Hoverport (although not yet accepted by the ExA) has uncovered that ownership of a tract of land directly underneath the drilling route has not been found by TerraQuest. And this is after 4 years of work! And it is not specifically in relation to the use of the Hoverport – since this has always been the location for the drill route since the beginning. See my photograph of the notice attached to a nearby fence asking for further details of the ownership. Is this acceptable to you?

- 11.5. We heard from residents during the OFHs at Discovery Park who had not been notified, although they are directly impacted with land issues. This is just not acceptable at this late stage in the project. Please question the land agents Dalcour McLaren and TerrQuest about their due diligence and please do not take what they say at face value – but cross refer to impacted land owners and residents. An example of this is the Great Oaks Small School who have asked for further meetings and have been ignored and residents of Ebbsfleet lane and Sandwich Road and even the Garage Owner directly behind the lagoon.

12. Inadequate surveys

Many of their surveys are either incomplete or seem designed to give them the answer they want rather than present a true picture for the Planning Inspectorate.

They plan to install a temporary bridge in a wetland location and drive heavy machinery on unsuitable land.. Their current working method – shows utter contempt for the land and the environment. They have been driving heavy vehicles directly across crops, have churned up unsuitable tracks without using mats, have broken the banks for the Minster Stream causing run-off and have left heavy machinery unattended blocking access tracks. This cavalier attitude is shocking. The local population including me have no confidence that the surveys are to find the best solution. It appears that they are simply trying to justify the previously chosen location at any expense. The Environment Agency and Natural England should have told NG that they will not be able to drive heavy plant along the edge of the river without collapsing the river banks, however this is in their plans. Previous work by NG for the Nemo project damaged the banks of the River Stour and it has still not been repaired.

- 12.4. Geology Surveys were inadequate - they have said it themselves. In para 3.3 of APP-171 6.3.3.5.C Part 3 Kent Chapter 5 Appendix 3.5.C Ground Investigation Report – Kent they state “Only one of the four previous investigations reviewed included exploratory holes located on site with the others being located close to the site.” So you would hope therefore that their own surveys would fill the gap.
- 12.5. At 2.12.2 (Ibid) they state “The existing boreholes indicate the anticipated ground profile to comprise a thin layer of Topsoil (up to 0.4m thick) overlying Tidal Flat Deposits. The Thanet Formation underlies the superficial deposits from a depth of between approximately 6 and 9m bgl. The White Chalk Subgroup is expected to be encountered around 28m bgl, however; none of the existing holes reviewed extended to the Chalk therefore this depth is based on boreholes located further from the site.” Do they just hope that they can float the Converter station? They failed to find stable ground 28 m.
- 12.3. The diagram, at 4.3 [Ibid] shows clearly that they did not hit bedrock chalk in their tests. It is simply the wrong location. Please please tell NG this is the wrong site and to review alternative sites suggested by KCC, Sir Roger Gale, MP, and others.

13. Cumulative Impact Assessment

- 13.1. Document APP- 171 ES Figures Kent Onshore Scheme Inter-Project Cumulative is provided at such macro level that it is impossible to understand the effects on the SSSI, which is functionally linked land for Pegwell Bay SAC, which is why I have provided our own map to show the impact more clearly.
14. As you can see, the areas already consented for Solar Panels and Infrastructure completely crowds out the existing SSSI strip next to where NG plan to build their converter station (dark orange and blue polygons).

- 15.4. I attach a picture of recently inundated fields in the area (NEMO link building shown in the background). This is a typical site in the winter and why the area is so important for overwintering birds who thrive in this type of wetland.



- 14.3. In para 2.7.2 of APP-065 Chapter 5 Appendix 3.5.C Ground Investigation Report – Kent the consultant states “The majority of the Converter Station/ Substation area is identified to be at risk of surface water flooding with the highest risk on site and within 50m of the site being 1 in 30 year return period, depth 0.3 to 1.0m (maximum modelled flood depth)” Have NG just ignored this risk?
- 14.4. Refer also to 2.2 of APP-365 7.11.2 Design Approach Document – Kent that has some of the best maps of the watercourses in the whole pack and shows just how wet the site is now without the need for expensive test boring.
- 14.5. The maps I have taken [Ibid] page 24 show the historic evolution from a wide sea channel. It’s simply the wrong location and goes against their own guidelines and mitigation hierarchy. It will also probably be cheaper if they were to Avoid and choose another site.

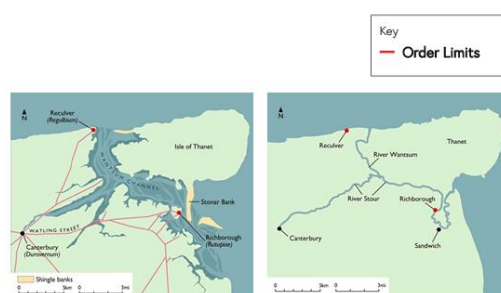
2.2 Baseline Analysis

Historic Map

During the Roman Period Kent was split into different islands, with Richborough separated from the mainland. During this time Watling Street, the main Roman road was the main connection between Richborough and London and beyond.

The massive coastal change was due to several factors, firstly the gradual rise of sea level and the second was the slow infilling of the Wantsum, eventually using drains to exclude water around precious land to reclaim it for agriculture. Leaving us with the Land boundaries we see today. Thanet joined the mainland and Richborough was no longer an island.

Today the Wantsum Channel remains as a River leading towards a pump in Reculver pushing water into the North Sea and River Stour connects the Pegwell Bay through to Richborough through to Canterbury.

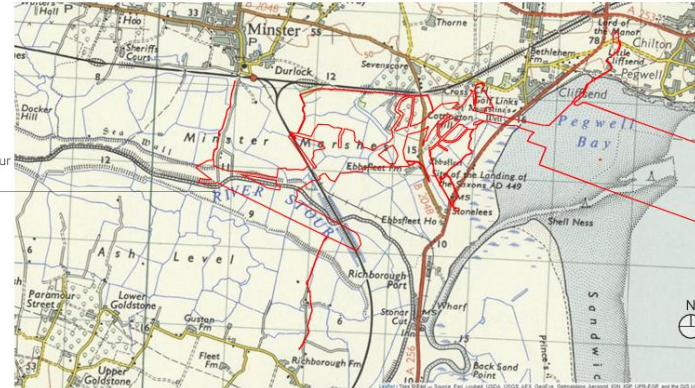


14.6.

1888-1913



1955-1961



- 14.7. I would query their flood risk data also if their employed specialists have found a problem. Please compare the area maps to the data that can be obtained from the Government's own site that shows the extent of regular flood risk in the area.
- NG's solution appears to be somehow draining the marsh.(see Construction section). Is this factored into their cost calculations? It is not apparent if it is so.

15. Carbon/Climate justification

- 15.1. The whole project is surely premised on carbon impact as it is a key part of the government's drive to Net Zero we are told.
- 15.2. APP-085 6.2.5.1 Part 5 Combined Chapter 1 Climate Change baseline conditions para 1.7.3 fails to mention that the soil is marshy and the whole area acts as a carbon sink.
- 15.3. It further fails to mention that farming methods here are predominantly direct drilling in order to preserve the soil structure, which needs careful handling because of the type of soil.
- 15.4. It fails to mention the salt marsh of Pegwell Bay at all and the importance of the area as a carbon sink.
- 15.5. Para 1.8.1.[Ibid] states "The Proposed Project has been designed, as far as possible, following the mitigation hierarchy in order to, in the first instance, avoid or reduce climate change impacts and effects through the process of design development, and by embedding measures into the design of the Proposed Project." But I can see no sign of avoidance in any section of this project.
- 15.6. The following paragraph 1.8.3 [Ibid] states "Sensitive routing and siting of infrastructure and temporary works, to avoid or reduce climate change effects" I cannot truly see that sensitivity has been used in this design, let alone learning from history. The cost of bringing in 1000s of tons of aggregate and concrete to build up the marsh over 9 hectares with a concrete raft 2 metres thick seems to be ignored in the calculation
- 15.7. At APP-358 7.5.13 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy para 5.4 NG shows raw materials are the hot spot. 180,000 tonnes of CO₂ (tCO₂e) would be produced over the lifetime of the project in raw materials, representing 62% of the total project lifecycle GHG. Is this really acceptable as a 'Green' project? There is not mention of innovative ways to build to reduce this figure and they appear not to include the cost of the 2m raft of concrete, which is one of the worst CO₂ offenders.

- 15.8. At 5.4.3. [Ibid]construction alone accounts for 50% of the lifecycle GHG
- 15.9. Where are the calculations for disassembly and recycle at the end of the lifecycle?
- 15.10. The document itself appears to be the result of a focus group session with a consultant and there is hopeful noise that they will be taking actions to reduce the GHG of the project – but some of the targets are talking about NG as a whole and seem to be ‘stretch targets’ hopeful outcomes rather than specific actions to reduce the impact of this project.
- 15.11. It does not appear to take into account the updated construction method (if only they could tell us exactly how it will work) that is needed for a marsh site. I assume it will require bringing in 1000s of tonnes of aggregate and concrete in order to stabilise the build on the marsh. Where are the calculations to show how this project does not simply add to climate change through the use of so much concrete on an existing carbon sink? Surely sites to support cabling into Sellindge SL1 would not require such remediation? But we will not know, because the choice of SL2 was made in 2022 and NG have no intention of turning away from this.
- 15.12. Redactions to references at the end of this document do not give us confidence that baseline data is reliable.
- 15.13. The Carbon Tracker spreadsheet the consultants have provided at the end is interesting but does not feed into any commitments to do anything as far as I can see, remaining as vague targets. None of this is good enough for a project that is premised on Green Energy and a drive to net zero.

16. Environmental surveys for the following are inadequate,

- 16.1. The environmental surveys are inconsistent, not referenced, undated, are anonymous, baseline datasets are often not referenced and there is a failure to address the importance of protected and catastrophically in decline species that rely on these important habitats, both marine and on land for the following species birds, beavers, otters, water voles, dormice and eels
- 16.2. **Firstly Birds:** It appears that counts for Golden Plover that appeared in the PEIR are now not the same figures. Surely this is not allowed?
- 16.3. As a key species of concern NG have noted in APP-073 .2.3.13 Part 3 Kent Chapter 13 Kent Onshore Scheme Inter-Project Cumulative Effects “The Kent Onshore Scheme will result in the permanent loss of functionally linked land (within 5 km from the SPAs) for golden plover associated with Thanet Coast & Sandwich Bay SPA/Ramsar site due to the Minster Converter Station and Substation. Wintering bird surveys undertaken for the Proposed Project have identified that **the area supports more than 1% of the SPA population of golden plover**. Mitigation for the contribution of the Kent Onshore Scheme for loss of functionally linked land associated with the SPA/Ramsar will take the form of managing approximately 10ha of off-site arable land in a way that is favourable to wintering golden plovers.” Mitigation for a bird species that requires functionally linked land cannot be provided by signposting an unsuitable field down the road that is NOT functionally linked. It seems that NG consider this to be acceptable collateral damage. It is environmental vandalism.
- 16.4. DEFRA notes species of concern from many sources including the IUCN that advises the JNC. The SSSI achieved its status for its importance for Ruddy Turnstone among others listed below. Each of the bird species listed here is noted by DEFRA as important to protect through management of habitat. Each of these species demands special consideration as their habitat diminishes throughout the UK. It should be noted that the land around the converter location is functionally linked land and supports large numbers of overwintering birds. When the tide is high at Pegwell Bay they travel inland to the marshes to rest and feed. The land is also linked along the River Stour to Stodmarsh, which is also a RAMSAR site. All these birds are found in numbers at Pegwell Bay and Minster Marshes showing that sensitive farming and management of the land is allowing these birds to make a comeback. National Trends however, are outlined below, for reference since none of this information is provided for you to inform your judgement.
 - 16.4.1. These trends are based on data collected by volunteers participating in surveys that are organised and funded by BTO, JNCC, RSPB and other partners and can be found in **BTO**,

2024. BirdTrends 2023: trends in numbers, breeding success and survival for UK breeding birds for reference.

- 16.4.2. Redshank (*tringa totanus*) **down 48%** in England since 1970 to 2024 (population trend 1970s along linear waterways)
- 16.4.3. Lapwing (*vanellus vanellus*) **down 49%** in England since (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.4. Corn Bunting (*emberiza calandra*) down 81% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.5. Snipe (*gallinago gallinago*) down 50% in England (long term trend 1970s along linear waterways United Kingdom)
- 16.4.6. Yellow Wagtail (*motacilla flava*) down 75% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.7. Tree Sparrows (*motacilla flava*) down 97% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024). We have a healthy population on the marsh.
- 16.4.8. Turtle Doves (*streptopelia turtur*) down 99% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024). And indeed the farms within the Draft Order Limits are part of the RSPB's Operation Turtle Dove and there was a breeding pair of turtle doves here in this last summer season. What a mockery that this location choice will undo all this good work and probably contribute to the extinction of Turtle Doves as a migrant species in the UK. You really must not allow this.
- 16.4.9. Grey Partridge (*perdix perdix*) down 92% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024). Regularly seen on the marsh.
- 16.4.10. The following birds are not noted of concern by DEFRA according to Magic Map data and no specific management of farmland or otherwise therefore appears recommended for them. However, the absence of a specific management strategy for these species by DEFRA, all of which are in serious decline, *does not suggest that these bird species do not merit protection*; Protection that should be afforded to them through the international and national site designation they enjoy.. All the following species are found in recovering numbers in Pegwell Bay and Minster Marshes. An area that is allowing their dwindling populations to hang on. It is inconceivable that you should allow this important area to be disturbed, let alone completely removed.
- 16.4.11. Cuckoo (*cuculus canorus*) down 78% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.12. Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*) down 90% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024). You heard the beautiful song during the OFH at Discovery Park. Please do not allow this to become a recording of an extinct species.
- 16.4.13. Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) down 42% in England (long term population trend 1994 to 2024)⁷
- 16.4.14. The remaining sections all relate to data from BTO, 2024. BirdTrends 2023: trends in numbers, breeding success and survival for UK breeding birds. All these birds are found in numbers on the

⁷ Heywood, J.J.N., Massimino, D., Balmer, D.E., Kelly, L., Marion, S., Noble, D.G., Pearce-Higgins, J.W., White, D.M., Woodcock, P., Wotton, S. Gillings, S. (2024) The Breeding Bird Survey 2023. BTO Research Report 765. British Trust for Ornithology, Thetford.

marsh and Sandwoch Bay Bird Observatory and official ringing data directly on the Converter site proves all of these.

- 16.4.15. Dunnock (*prunella modularis*) down 44% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.16. Greenfinch (*carduelis chloris*) down 64% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.17. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*dryobates minor*) down 91% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.18. Lesser Whitethroat (*curruca curruca*) is apparently “not of concern” but has still seen a population decline of 16% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
I wonder if the human population was declining this rapidly it would be classed as not of concern.
- 16.4.19. Linnet (*carduelis cannabina*) down 73% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.20. Little owl (*athene Noctua*) down 80% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.21. Meadow Pippit (*anthus pratensis*) down 52% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.22. Mistle Thrush (*turdus viscivorus*) down 69% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.23. Sedge Warbler (*acrocephalus schoenaenus*) down 44% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.24. Snipe (*gallinago gallinago*) down 70% in United Kingdom (population trend 1970 to 2024 along linear waterways)
- 16.4.25. Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) down 51% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.26. Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) down 90% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024) the *vulgaris* “common” moniker is no longer appropriate.
- 16.4.27. Willow Warbler (*phylloscopus trochilus*) down 69% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.28. Woodcock (*scolopax rusticola*) down 61% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.29. Yellow Hammer (*emberiza citronella*) down 67% in England (population trend 1966 to 2024)
- 16.4.30. All these species are recorded over the last 5 years at least by members of the local RSPB group, by members of the Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory and other qualified bird ringers.
- 16.4.31. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, also known as the IUCN Red List or Red Data Book, founded in 1964, is an inventory of the global conservation status and extinction risk of biological species. A series of Regional Red Lists, which assess the risk of extinction to species within a political management unit, are also produced by countries and organizations. The goals of the Red List are to provide scientifically based information on the status of species and subspecies at a global level, to draw attention to the magnitude and importance of threatened biodiversity, to influence national and international policy and decision-making, and to provide information to guide actions to conserve biological diversity.
- 16.4.32. I understand there are, 32 Red Listed species and 46 Amber Listed species in a total of 171 that have been recorded on Minster Marshes and Pegwell Bay by RSPB, SBBOT and members of SMM.

- 16.4.33. A Golden Oriole was recorded during the summer and Dartford Warbler during the last couple of weeks..
- 16.4.34. In Reference to NG document APP-150 6.4.3.2.D Part 3 Kent Chapter 2 Appendix 3.2.D Breeding Bird Survey Report 2023 – Figures and APP-151 6.4.3.2.E Part 3 Kent Chapter 2 Appendix 3.2.E Breeding Bird Survey Report 2024 – Figures shows the preponderance of red and amber listed species found in the Draft Order Limits land, with a particular concentration in the area that is to be built on for the Converter and SubStation. These documents refer in the legend to Annex D, Table 9. I may be wrong but this appears to be missing from the submitted documents and the importance of these birds to the UK and internationally is therefore minimised?
- 16.4.35. The map layouts in the documents relating to surveys in 2023 and 2024 are difficult to compare because the transects have been chosen differently.
- 16.4.36. Industry guidelines and best practice require the names of the ecologists, their qualifications, licences and years of relevant experience in any documentation provided for developments applications. These appear to be entirely missing from all the reports relating to Birds as shown below. This is contrary to guidance and cannot give Interested Parties confidence in the baseline data, methodology or results.
- 16.4.37. Para 1.1.3. of the Wintering Bird Survey Report 2022-2023 states “Details of avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures relating to wintering birds are not included in this report and are instead reported within Application Document 6.2.2.2 Part 3 Kent Chapter 2 Ecology and Biodiversity”. It appears that this has not been supplied – but perhaps they meant 6.2.3.2.? They have had nearly 2 years to get this right. Should we have to guess at their documentation when we are struggling to deal with 412 documents?
- 16.5. **Secondly I turn to Trees & Hedges:** in para 6.3.32 of APP-294 6.10 Arboricultural Impact Assessment Part 1 of 2 “The Proposed Project will require the diversion of an existing utility line within the RPA of W526K” if diversions can take place why is the site placed so close to the SSSI in the first place and why then is it proposed to remove 300 metres of important hedgerow? The character of the whole SSSI will become less favourable for wildlife, especially Turtle Dove, where the habitat and farming go hand in hand to support them
- 16.6. It may not be clear from NG supplied maps which hedgerow I am describing, as they are so difficult to make sense of, so please refer to the following aerial shot taken from Google maps that I have annotated to make it easier for you. The red outline is what is left of the SSSI in this location and the green outlined section is the important hedgerow that is marked for removal. This hedgerow was planted to ensure a link between the SSSI and the Minster Stream and to mitigate for some of the damaging agricultural policies of the 70’s where we lost so many hedgerows.



- 16.6.1. I understand from talking to the owner of the house at the end of Marsh Farm Road, that he was totally unaware that NG plan to 'manage' his hedges and trees for access. They have not consulted with him at all. This is totally unacceptable.
- 16.6.2. **Thirdly I turn to Dormice.** Referencing between documents and names of reports is challenging. The Dormice survey seems to suggest there are none present – but the methodology is flawed and we can provide evidence of dormouse tracking boxes being left damaged – so in this location it would not have been possible to track for dormice.
- 16.6.3. From their own document APP-259, 6.4.3.2.M ES Figures Kent Dormouse Survey Report, zone B3 appears to show only 5 boxes left for study in the whole of the 300m hedge and no tubes. Why is this? It would have had the highest likelihood of dormouse occupation – since it is the wildlife corridor that was planted to connect the SSSI to the Minster Stream. Their own data shows that of the 5 boxes in this huge stretch 3 of them showed evidence of occupation. 3 out of 5 in an area that could have been more comprehensively surveyed over a more meaningful period of time.
- 16.6.4. Indeed in APP-159 – 6.3.3.2.M Appendix 3.2.M Hazel Dormouse Survey report page 5 it seems that they stopped bothering to check zone B after July 2024. Where is the rigour for examining for hibernating dormice in the boxes that they erected to look for evidence on the hedgerow that NG plan to entirely remove. Is that just convenience that the data is missing?
- 16.6.5. [Ibid] para 1.3.3 does not appear to make note in relation to Zone B3 that it is adjacent to an SSSI – this is not just any old section of “semi-natural broad leaved woodland”. This is an important recovering landscape that has SSSI status.
- 16.6.6. **Fourth, I turn to the mammals that live in these watercourse that criss cross the Draft Order Limits.** The Riparian Mammal Survey Report APP-154 para 1.3.15 states “Due to the size of the Kent Onshore Scheme Order Limits, surveys were conducted over multiple days; Survey one was undertaken on 5, 6, 10 and 11 June 2024, and Survey two was undertaken on 2, 3 and 4 September 2024. However, these days were used to survey for, Otter, Beaver and Water Vole at the same time across the whole of the order limits.
- 16.6.7. AECOM continue [Ibid] “After this date, updated surveys may be required, and advice should be sought from an appropriately qualified ecologist to determine the survey scope and methods.” Were they not qualified? I understand that all reports for planning by ecologists should clearly document their expertise. Expertise of the ecologists seems to be questioned by the writer of the report.
- 16.6.8. They continue [Ibid] “Some watercourses within the Order Limits had limited visibility and access due to steep banks and dense vegetation. It is therefore generally difficult to survey these watercourses both in terms of physical penetration (even with a boat) and in terms of avoiding damaging habitat. While this limited some of the survey particularly for water voles, which has been taken into account in the impact assessment, **it is believed** that the

watercourses were adequately accessed for the results of these surveys to be valid". Is that sufficient? It sounds like they do not believe it themselves.

- 16.6.9. Please review the images below from APP-365 7.11.2 Design Approach Kent that clearly show all the watercourses within the order limits. Are the ecologists seriously suggesting that these few days to survey for Beaver, Otter and Water Vole (all at the same time) were adequate? Surely this baseline data is worthless.



22

17. Environmental mitigation plans are grossly inadequate

- 18.1. It is impossible to mitigate in this area as it is so unique. The soils and the water catchment area have taken 100s of years to develop. Once this marshy habitat has gone it cannot simply be recreated somewhere else.
- 18.2. The image below shows the area where the converter station is to be built. It shows its importance as functionally linked land in the winter with large flocks of birds feeding and resting. Image courtesy of George Cooper.



- 18.3. The birds cannot be told where to go instead and the land chosen for the mitigation scheme is nothing like this land. It is unsuitable because it is to be cut off by yet another solar scheme and so will lose its functional linkage (see map at 13.3). You can also see from the map in 13.3 that the mitigation area is then completely cut off from the SSSI surrounded by a busy road opposite a boating yard on the river, and opposite Discovery Park which creates light pollution. It is totally unsuitable as mitigation.
- 18.4. It is impossible to mitigate for the loss of 80 year old hedgerows connected to an SSSI especially important for breeding migrants (see section on Trees and Hedges above).
- 18.5. They also intend to 'manage' hedgerows in the land they have chosen for the mitigation, which in our experience means clearing and then replacing. I have seen the standard of their mitigation work following the NEMO link see my own images below showing tree plastic not removed badly planted and unattended trees, many dead.
- 17.1. Bringing the mitigation land into management for wildlife is not sufficiently detailed.
- 17.2. In APP-365 7.11.2 Design Approach Document - Kent they stated "National Grid is committed to playing its part in halting and reversing the decline of biodiversity in the UK and to achieving 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) on major projects. National Grid has made this commitment on a voluntary basis in advance of the requirement being mandatory for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. The initial approach taken to BNG on the Proposed Project is explored in 6.12 Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Report submitted with the application." This document is mis-referenced and has added to the difficulty I have had in reviewing the documents as a whole. From first reading it appears there are many inconsistencies in their own data in order to arrive at 10% net gain. APP-297 is also now superseded with AS-055, but at least the Policy Context is clearly set out in para 1.5 – allowing them to write the words and then ignore plans to observe them.
- 17.3. In the same paragraph they continue " National Grid will explore how this can be delivered through a combination of onsite measures, off-site measures and credits will be determined when the detailed design of design is complete and the final effects and potential for delivering BNG on site is clear. Discussions and engagement have been held with stakeholders and the wildlife trusts throughout the project. National Grid will continue to engage with Kent Wildlife Trust for opportunities to progress any potential collaborative off-site projects." If the document is not supplied in the first place how are interested parties supposed to engage in dialogue about mitigation? Nothing in this project so far points to any interest in committing to 10% BNG voluntary basis or not.



18. Construction methods have not been clarified

- 18.1. Construction methods are not included in sufficient detail and where they are included, are inconsistent and contradictory or simply missing important information on which an informed decision can be made.
- 18.2. APP-171 Chapter 5 Appendix 3.5.C Ground Investigation Report – Kent in para 8.3.1 the consultant's state "Larger raft foundations, gantry foundations and/ or foundations with a settlement tolerance **will require piles**" (their own bold). They go on to explain there are alternative options for stabilising the ground. Which option is to be considered preferable? When is the cost for each method to be compared? Where are the documents that explain the piling methodology? Does this mean that more concrete will be needed than shown in the carbon/climate change justification? What does this do to the traffic volumes if heavy machinery is required for pile driving? What does this do to the noise profile for construction? All these issues are scattered around different documents and there is no clear sense of the construction design relating clearly to other documents.
- 18.3. It does not appear that any work was done to investigate tunnelling through Pegwell Bay, other than desk studies – Is this considered adequate?
- 18.4. It is noted at para 2.11 [Ibid] that Unexploded Ordnance may be a problem for the whole site. Pegwell Bay was used extensively to test weapons in WWII.
- 18.5. I have struggled to find the detail of the construction to be used through Pegwell Bay in this pack, so I would like to return to this at a later stage in the process if I may, since interested parties, such as myself, have only been given limited time to look at the documentation and the Examination Library document was not provided from the start, making the 60 days even shorter. I can however point to the damage that was done to the marsh for the NEMO link that is being investigated by yourselves already (reference ISH questions). Damage that the salt marsh has not recovered from. This important habitat RAMSAR, SPA, SAC, NNR, must not be further damaged.

19. Impacts on health & wellbeing downplayed

- 19.1. Access to green space, the NNR, and PROWs are all important for residents of one of the most deprived areas of Kent. In the majority of the Indexes of Deprivation, Thanet comes out top in Kent. Nothing that we are proud of. But it does therefore seem even more sad that a deprived area such as ours should then suffer more damage to our precious space.
- 19.2. The impacts to PROWs are dismissed as 'negligible or small' in their documentation. We would argue that eg closure of the King Charles III footpath up to 8 times an hour for HGV crossing at two different points is not 'negligible'.
- 19.3. They have also completely ignored the Way of St Augustine trail which is an important Christian pilgrimage route. Their plans include permanently rerouting part of it.
- 19.4. The Great Oaks Small School (specialist SEN school for children who cannot cope in mainstream education) will be surrounded by building and traffic movements and NG completely failed to engage with them when asked.
- 19.5. Pegwell Bay is a Nationally important Nature Reserve – opened by David Attenborough no less. Access to the site will be restricted during construction and if the results of NEMO are to be repeated will be damaged beyond repair.
- 19.6. The out pouring of grief and outrage at National Grid's plans for our precious environment is evidenced by the over 9500k people who signed a petition delivered to NG on 31 December 2023 (we did not even receive the courtesy of a reply) and the rising membership of the Save Minster Marshes campaign group now number over 16k in total. Indeed although we have evidence of the delivery of the petition, with tracked mail, National Grid appear to have lost this and asked us to resend it in February 2024. Utter contempt for the strength of feeling. Residents of Thanet are already feeling beleaguered by vast housing developments that have been foisted onto us by central government. This will only make anxiety and depression increase further.

20. Traffic movements are underestimated

- 20.1. Traffic surveys were carried out in January when the seasonal businesses are shut and tourism visits are low. This is therefore generally misleading. KCC pointed this out to NG – but no further surveys were undertaken. The traffic plans therefore have a misleading baseline.
- 20.2. Page 53 of APP-365 7.11.2 Design Approach Kent, shows a very small picture of a very large wide load. It is an articulated structure carrying a Transformer. There are no real plans anywhere in the document to show the route that this would be delivered to site. Is this to be down the small dead-end track at Sevenscore and then along the unmade tracks to the site? Or perhaps this is down Marsh Farm Road through Minster and then across the fields near Marsh Farm? Have National Rail been consulted about the plans for such heavy machinery across the tracks?



Image of a transformer being delivered to site on the abnormal indivisible load (AIL) vehicle.

nationalgrid.com/new-electricity-transformer-worcestershire-substation

The roundabout at the Lord of the Manor is already a particularly poor design and difficult for people to navigate safely. There have been many near misses. If HGVs are intended to access the

Hoverport from this junction it will be dangerous to say the least and will exacerbate the potential for accidents throughout the 4 years of construction.

21. Inadequacy of consultation

- 21.1. The Richborough location was chosen before first meeting with Inspector. At the Inception meeting 29 November 2021 Notes the Inspector wrote "Construction of a new converter station within 5km of the existing 400kv Richborough substation with HVAC underground cables between the substation 1 and a converter station located north of the substation. It is proposed there will then be HVDC underground cables between the converter station and Pegwell Bay."⁸ There was zero discussion of any other location. So the 'consultation' here has been meaningless.
- 21.2. Some of the best maps and visuals are provide in 7.11.2. It is a shame that the rest of the pack could not rely on a similar level of rigour. And I note that all the images are caveated in this document with "Rochdale Envope", which I take to mean that it is based on cautious worst case. But I could not see that these images showed anything of the 2m additional concrete raft on which the converter station would sit and surrounded by displaced flood water in the winter. That would surely be a "cautious worst case" since the marshes are pretty flooded already as I type this, having had one of the wettest Octobers for many years?
- 21.3. A few years ago the marsh was inundated. I believe that Nik Mitchell will be submitting drone footage he took at this time. To suggest that NG only need to plan for a 1 in 100 years event seems to be underplaying the event when we have had two or three events like this in the last 10 years. Had NG consulted with the farmers and listened at the earliest stage, they would have found out that this location in Kent is the wrong one.
- 21.4. The visuals on page 17 [Ibid] give no indication of height and are shown next to the wind turbine which has been removed. Is this intentional? It makes the construction (if it is drawn to scale) appear part of an industrial landscape. It is disingenuous and should be updated if you choose to allow this project to press on.
- 21.5. What is meant by consultation seems to be about the paint coating of the building (for which they appear to have engaged design consultants to create wonderful colour palettes to choose from) See 7.11.2 from page 37. How insulting that we are asked for paint treatments and roof design yet were not given a full justification for the site chosen, how they intended to stabilise the build and how much it would cost, let alone an alternative site.
- 21.6. The consultation has been very poor. Many people believed that by responding to the consultation, their views would be taken into account by National Grid. Unfortunately there was little to show that any views were taken into account.
- 21.7. Repeated requests for meetings by the SMM group have been ignored and even householders within the order limits have had their requests for meetings ignored. You have heard from many of these people directly.
- 21.8. In addition, there are many other flaws in their consultation as follows: Statutory consultees were asked for their views on the consultation but they were only asked whether NG had completed the bare minimum. Thanet District Council and Kent County Council expressed residual concerns that have been downplayed in the summary documents but not addressed.
- 21.9. Thanet District Council refused permission to the use of the Hoverport. Although the plans were amended to show the compound is to be built elsewhere, the Hoverport is shown with what appears to be a permanent access track and hedges and shrubs are planned to be removed. They were not given permission for this.

⁸ [https://nsip-documents.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/published-documents/EN020026-M-46936546-211129%20Inception%20Meeting%20Note%20-%20South%20East%20Anglia%20Link.docx%20\(FINAL\).pdf](https://nsip-documents.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/published-documents/EN020026-M-46936546-211129%20Inception%20Meeting%20Note%20-%20South%20East%20Anglia%20Link.docx%20(FINAL).pdf)
Page 27 of 29

- 21.10. And subsequently they have introduced a separate consultation to turn the Hoverport site into a permanent compound – probably to bring in the ScotLink Scottish Power cable when they have finished vandalising the site for SeaLink.
- 21.11. Many residents in Cliffsend and Pegwell were completely unaware of NG’s proposals until the SMM group spoke to them. They had not received any postal communication.
- 21.12. A Minster resident whose hedges are marked for ‘management’ has not been informed by NG and was not aware of this until a local farmer pointed it out to them (it is only marked on a single map and not referred to in writing in the documentation).
- 21.13. A landowner whose land is being compulsorily purchased asked to be sent hard copies of the documentation. This was refused.
- 21.14. While documentation is available online in two libraries and IPs can respond by post and by telephone, NG did not share this information until 12 June, over a month after the pre-examination period opened. This is unfair.
- 21.15. My own communication with [REDACTED], the caravan owner at Ebbsfleet Lane, highlighted the lack of consideration for those without access to technology. She does not have internet access in her caravan and does not have a postbox. She has intermittent phone coverage when she can charge her phone. She will not have been aware that she could speak at the OFH if I had not told her. This is repeated countless times with countless residents across the immediate zone of impact - let alone further afield for residents of Thanet who are among the most deprived in the UK.
- 21.16. It was clear from the start of the process that the people of Thanet were not being given any choice at all in the siting of the Kent end of Sea Link. From the initial meeting with the Inspector it was clear that only Richborough SL2 location was on offer. This was, therefore, never a consultation at all and all the way through has only ever been a ‘box ticking exercise’.

22. Final Comments

There are so many documents for an Interested Party to read through in such a short time, (the Library document was only uploaded on 12/06 making the 6 weeks for review a miasma. Subsequent document drops have taken the load to over 500. I consider it unfair in the extreme for members of the public to be given such a short time to interpret these documents without expert assistance. As well as the points I have already raised, I have concerns about the following, -

- a) The confidential files were problematic. It is not clear why some documents are confidential. Subsequent investigation tells me that they relate to the location of badger sets. But I am sure you can see that redactions and confidential files, with no explanation, encourages people to think of conspiracy and reduces trust.
- b) I note from the Inspector’s pre-submission advice/discussion notes that a confidential folder was to be set up. This is not an ‘open and transparent’ process. If this was for badger set information, that is understandable. But if for anything else it breeds mistrust. Clear explanation could avoid this.
- c) The bird collision data may not be reliable since we have evidence of 3 swan strikes this year already and those are the ones that have not been found by foxes first. Similarly small birds are not accounted for in the data, as they are seldom found and the true cost will never be known. I could find nothing in the documents that discussed mitigation for pylon lines.
- d) 2024. “ AECOM surveyed on the same day for Beavers, Otters and WaterVole. All very secretive animals and in the case of beavers mostly active at night.
- e) The Noise disturbance documentation is difficult to interpret – but seems to ignore that the SSSI should be treated as a sensitive receptor (and the connecting hedgerow also). Birds, once disturbed from here will have nowhere similar to go. The mitigation area is not designed for these birds – focussed on

Golden Plover alone and, as I have said before is not suitable. I have not had time within 10 days to review this.

- f) The Light pollution issue is of supreme importance for the bats that nightly forage across the Converter site. Also Woodcock and Snipe (local records show this).
- g) Critically endangered European Eels are a feature of the marsh – I have not had time within 10 days to review whether they are considered.
- h) Similarly with Newts, I have not had time within 10 days to review whether they are considered.
- i) Anecdotaly the area is home to the Fen Raft Spider – I have not had time to review whether they are considered.

I would like to conclude by saying that the whole process seems designed to ensure that members of the public are not really given a voice in this DCO examination. I hope that you will take my comments into consideration and prove me wrong.