The Great Grid Upgrade

Sea Link

Sea Link

Volume 9: Examination Submissions

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nationalgrid

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 A Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) is a written statement produced as part of the application process for a Development Consent Order (DCO) and is prepared jointly between the applicant and another party. It sets out matters of agreement between both parties, as well as matters where there is not an agreement. It also details matters that are under discussion.

1.1.2 The aim of a SoCG is to help the Examining Authority manage the Examination Phase of a DCO application. Understanding the status of the matters at hand will allow the Examining Authority to focus their questioning and provide greater predictability for all participants in examination. A SoCG may be submitted prior to the start of or during Examination, and then updated as necessary or as requested during the Examination Phase.

1.1.3 This SoCG is between National Grid Electricity Transmission Ltd ("NGET") and the National Grid Ventures ('NGV') relating to the DCO application for the Sea Link Project (the 'Proposed Project'). It has been prepared in accordance with the guidance published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024).

1.1.4 This SoCG has been sent to NGV on the 1st November 2025 for review and we are currently awaiting comments, commitments have been discussed at meetings and will continue to be discussed.

1.2 This Statement of Common Ground

1.2.1 This SoCG has been prepared to identify matters agreed and matters currently outstanding between National Grid and NGV. The SoCG will evolve as the DCO application progresses to submission and through examination.

1.2.2 For the purpose of this SoCG, National Grid and NGV will jointly be referred to as the "Parties". When referencing NGV alone, they will be referred to as "the Consultee".

1.3 Description of the Proposed Project

1.3.1 The Proposed Project is a proposal by National Grid to reinforce the transmission network in the Southeast and East Anglia. The Proposed Project is required to accommodate additional power flows generated from renewable and low carbon generation, as well as accommodating additional new interconnection with mainland Europe.

1.3.2 National Grid owns, builds and maintains the electricity transmission network in England and Wales. Under the Electricity Act 1989, National Grid holds a transmission licence under which it is required to develop and maintain an efficient, coordinated, and economic electricity transmission system.

1.3.3 This would be achieved by reinforcing the network with a High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Link between the proposed Friston substation in the Sizewell area of Suffolk and the existing Richborough to Canterbury 400 kV overhead line close to Richborough in Kent.

1.3.4 National Grid is also required, under Section 38 of the Electricity Act 1989, to comply with the provisions of Schedule 9 of the Act. Schedule 9 requires licence holders, in the formulation of proposals to transmit electricity, to:

1.3.5 Schedule 9(1)(a) '…*have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest*;' and

1.3.6 Schedule 9(1)(b) *'…do what [it] reasonably can to mitigate any effect which the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects'*.

1.3.7 The Proposed Project would comprise the following elements:

The Suffolk Onshore Scheme

- A connection from the existing transmission network via Friston Substation, including the substation itself. Friston Substation already has development consent as part of other third-party projects. If Friston Substation has already been constructed under another consent, only a connection into the substation would be constructed as part of the Proposed Project.
- A high voltage alternating current (HVAC) underground cable of approximately 1.9 km in length between the proposed Friston Substation and a proposed converter station (below).
- A 2 GW high voltage direct current (HVDC) converter station (including permanent access from the B1121 and a new bridge over the River Fromus) up to 26 m high plus external equipment (such as lightning protection, safety rails for maintenance works, ventilation equipment, aerials, similar small scale operational plant, or other roof treatment) near Saxmundham.
- A HVDC underground cable connection of approximately 10 km in length between the proposed converter station near Saxmundham, and a transition joint bay (TJB) approximately 900 m inshore from a landfall point (below) where the cable transitions from onshore to offshore technology.
- A landfall on the Suffolk coast (between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness).

The Offshore Scheme:

- Approximately 122 km of subsea HVDC cable, running between the Suffolk landfall location (between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness), and the Kent landfall location at Pegwell Bay.

The Kent Onshore Scheme:

- A landfall point on the Kent coast at Pegwell Bay.
- A TJB approximately 800 m inshore to transition from offshore HVDC cable to onshore HVDC cable, before continuing underground for approximately 1.7 km to a new converter station (below).
- A 2 GW HVDC converter station (including a new permanent access off the A256), up to 28 m high plus external equipment such as lightning protection, safety rails for

maintenance works, ventilation equipment, aerials, and similar small scale operational plant near Minster. A new substation would be located immediately adjacent.

- Removal of approximately 2.2 km of existing HVAC overhead line, and installation of two sections of new HVAC overhead line, together totalling approximately 3.5 km, each connecting from the substation near Minster and the existing Richborough to Canterbury overhead line.

1.3.8 The Proposed Project also includes modifications to sections of existing overhead lines in Suffolk (only if Friston Substation is not built pursuant to another consent) and Kent, diversions of third-party assets, and land drainage from the construction and operational footprint. It also includes opportunities for environmental mitigation and compensation. The construction phase will involve various temporary construction activities including overhead line diversions, use of temporary towers or masts, working areas for construction equipment and machinery, site offices, parking spaces, storage, accesses, bellmouths, and haul roads, as well as watercourse crossings and the diversion of public rights of way (PROWs) and other ancillary operations.

1.4 Format of Document and Terminology used.

1.4.1 Section 2 of this SoCG summarises the engagement the Parties have had with regard to the Proposed Project.

1.4.2 Section 3 of this SoCG summarises the issues that are 'agreed', 'not agreed', 'not agreed but not material', or are 'under discussion'. 'Not agreed' indicates a final position where the Parties have agreed to disagree, whilst 'Agreed' indicates where the issue has been resolved. 'Not agreed but not material' indicates that although the parties have not agreed a position on an issue, both parties agree that the issue is not material to determination of the DCO and the matter is considered closed.

1.4.3 Abbreviations used within the SoCG are provided in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1 - Abbreviations.

Abbreviation/Term	Definition
DCO	Development Consent Order
HVAC	High Voltage Alternating Current
HVDC	High Voltage Direct Current
MPI	Multi-Purpose Interconnector
NGV	National Grid Ventures
PRoW	Public Right of Way
TJB	Transition Joint Bay

2. Record of Engagement

2.1 Role of NGV in the DCO process

2.1.1 National Grid Ventures (NGV) is part of the National Grid Group of companies operating in the UK. LionLink is a Multi-Purpose Interconnector (MPI) between the UK, and Offshore Platform and the Netherlands. This project is being progressed along the DCO process in the same geographical region as the Proposed Project. LionLink is proposing the construction of an HVDC Converter Station adjacent to the Sea Link Converter Station along with an HVAC Cable route in the same area as the Proposed Project's HVAC Cable Route.

2.1.2 The Proposed Project interacts with the development proposals of NGV's project and is also looking to utilise the substation location that NGV are looking to connect to. Therefore, the consultee should provide guidance and comments on the Proposed Project and co-own the Statement of Common Ground between NGV and National Grid.

2.1.3 NGV has been encouraged to discuss and work with the Applicant at the pre-application stage of the application process for the Proposed Project and NGV's proposed assets within the Proposed Project's Order Limits.

2.2 Summary of pre-application discussions

2.2.1 Table 2.1 summarises the consultation and engagement that has taken place between the Parties prior to submission of the DCO application.

Table 2.1 Pre-application discussions

Date	Topic/Format	Discussion points
06/08/2021	*Introduction Meeting*	*Early discussion around a joint landfall and cable route with Nautilus and Eurolink (now LionLink)*
July – Dec 2022	*Consents Meetings*	*Monthly meeting discussing progress of the projects and potential areas of coordination.*
08/04/2022	*PINS meeting*	*Joint meeting with PINS presenting both projects*
28/04/2022	*Meeting with ESC & SCC*	*Meeting with the Local Authorities to present and discuss possible coordination.*
22/06/2022	*PINS meeting*	*Joint meeting with PINS discussing coordination*
Jan - Dec 2023	*Consents, Lands and H&S Meetings*	*Regular meetings continuing discussions with various disciplines.*
31/03/2023	*Suffolk Coast Electricity Cable Ecology Group*	*Joint meeting held with RSPB and SWT*
24/08/2023	*Technical Catch up*	*Converter Station Locations within the converter site, along with Cable Routes and access*
19/09/2023	*Technical Catch up*	*Further discussions on the status of the projects, locations of Converter Stations and Cable routes and access*
17/10/2023	*Consents Design Workshop*	*Meeting to discuss the consenting strategy and design considerations for the proposed Friston substation, AC cables and Converter station.*

13/12/2023	*Consents Design Workshop 2*	*Meeting to discuss the consenting strategy and design considerations for the proposed Friston substation, AC cables and Converter station.*
19/01/2024	*Coordination Meeting*	*Meeting to discuss the co-ordination of the two projects, where we can co-ordinate physical infrastructure, where we can avoid each project and the overall Co-ordination strategy between NGV and NGET*
23/01/2024	*SHEQ Meeting*	*Initial meeting to discuss working on site, communication, training and various other areas.*
14/02/2004	*NG/NGV Coop Agreement Meeting*	*Consents teams discussing the Coop Agreement*
15/02/2024	*Fortnightly Progress / Coordination Meeting*	*Ongoing meeting to discuss coordination and project updates*
19/02/2024	*NG/NGV Coop Agreement Meeting*	*Consents and Lands teams discussing the Coop Agreement*
11/03/2024	*Consents Meeting*	*Consents teams discussing progress*
23/04/2024	*Meeting with ESC & SCC*	*Meeting with the Local Authorities to present the masterplan.*
24/04/2024	*NGV/NGET Master Plan Meeting*	*Meeting to discuss the Masterplanning of the layout for the coordinated converter site including LionLink and Nautilus*
30/04/2024	*Suffolk Coast Electricity Cable Ecology Group*	*Joint meeting held with RSPB and SWT*
08/05/2024	*NGV/NGET Master Plan Meeting*	*Follow up meeting to discuss further details and review initial layouts from the Architects.*
21/05/2024	*SPR/NGV/NGET Coordination Meeting*	*In Person meeting to discuss all projects in the area and the coordination of works and programs where possible.*
29/05/2024	*Archaeology Meeting*	*Meeting to discuss Trial Trenching locations and possible geophysics data sharing.*
05/06/2024	*Meeting with ESC & SCC*	*Meeting with the Local Authorities to present the masterplan.*
20/06/2024	*Suffolk Coast Electricity Cable Ecology Group*	*Joint meeting held with RSPB and SWT*
21/08/2024	*Pre meeting on Masterplan*	*Pre meeting ahead of presentation of masterplan to LPAs.*
05/06/2024	*Meeting with ESC & SCC*	*Meeting with the Local Authorities to present the masterplan.*
06/06/2024	*Archaeology Meeting*	*Aim is to produce a combined trial trenching plan to issue to Land agents / landowners to begin dialogue.*
21/08/2024	*NGV/NGET Master Plan Meeting*	*Follow up meeting to discuss further details*
April -Oct 2025	*Consents Meeting*	*Monthly meeting until October 2025. All then attend coordination meeting (*).*
June 2025 onwards	*Coordination meeting (*)*	*Monthly meeting still on going (first meeting 05/06/25 face to face in London)*

3. Areas of Discussion Between the Parties

3.1 Topic 1: Converter station site co-location and master planning

Table 3.1 – Converter station site co-location and master planning

Ref	Relevant Application Documents	Description of Matter	Consultee's Current Position	Applicant's Current Position	Status
3.1.1		Site identification	The Parties have undertaken a joint review to assess the feasibility of co-locating up to three converter stations on a single site and exploring further co-location opportunities. This exercise has culminated in the selection of a single co-located site at Saxmundham, identified as being suitable for Sea Link as a standalone project and up to two further converter stations that NGV may deliver	Agree with NGV position	Agreed
3.1.2		Reduced cumulative impacts	A co-located site provides opportunities for three converter projects to explore a coordinated approach to overall site design. mitigation, construction phasing, and access, in ways that deliver good design and reduce potential cumulative effects.	Agree with NGV position	Agreed
3.1.3		Developing a converter station site master plan	Awaiting Comments from NGV	Following the converter station site selection process, NGET commenced a design process which considers the Sea Link converter station comprehensively as part of a wider master-planned site for up to three converter stations. The masterplan is illustrative, to explore and demonstrate how up to three converter stations could be developed, and to inform ongoing design work by NGET and NGV on their respective projects.	Under Discussion
3.1.4		Phased approach	Awaiting Comments from NGV	The masterplan takes account of the likely phasing of works and the location of construction compounds, the strategy for mitigation planting, access roads, retention of public rights of way that exist within and surrounding the site, and drainage.	Under Discussion
3.1.5		Construction Compounds	Awaiting Comments from NGV	The converter station site masterplan (reflected in the powers sought via the Order) includes three possible locations for the Sea Link converter station	Under Discussion

Ref	Relevant Application Documents	Description of Matter	Consultee's Current Position	Applicant's Current Position	Status
				construction compound, providing flexibility for future design and siting of the NGV projects' converter stations.	
3.1.6		Site access	Awaiting Comments from NGV	A site access road from the B1121 including the crossing of the River Fromus is proposed as part of the Converter Station works. This access could be adapted for use by LionLink subject to the access strategies and design requirements identified by those projects. This would therefore provide a shared access rather than the creation of additional accesses for these other projects which would reduce land take and potentially reduce other environmental impacts from having separate accesses.	Under Discussion

3.2 Topic 2: Cable routes

Table 3.2 – Topic 2 – Cable routes

Ref	Relevant Application Documents	Description of Matter	Consultee's Current Position	Applicant's Current Position	Status
3.2.1		AC Cable Corridor	Awaiting Comments from NGV	It is currently assumed that the LionLink AC cable corridor (connecting from the converter station to the substation) will either be parallel to that of Sea Link's route to the north, or that it will take a separate non-parallel route. Should LionLink identify the parallel route, the Sea Link AC cable route has been designed in a way that leaves sufficient space for LionLink to be constructed to the north, broadly along the same corridor (based on reasonable engineering assumptions and discussions with NGV's LionLink team).	Under Discussion

3.3 Topic 3: Kiln Lane (Friston) Substation

Table 3.3 – Topic 3 – Kiln Lane (Friston)

Ref	Relevant Application Documents	Description of Matter	Consultee's Current Position	Applicant's Current Position	Status
3.3.1		The Design Of Friston Substation to accommodate Lionlink	Under Discussion	NGET is working with Lionlink to understand its requirements and design Friston substation to accommodate- This is outside of the Sea Link project team.	Under Discussion

4. Approvals

Signed	

On Behalf of	Consultee
Name	
Position	[senior consents officer/lead project manager/ lead project director]
Date	

Signed	

On Behalf of	NGET
Name	
Position	[senior consents officer/lead project manager/ lead project director]
Date	

5. References

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. (2024). *Planning Act 2008: Examination stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-act-2008-examination-stage-for-nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects

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