



Planning Inspectorate

Sea Link Case Team
Planning Inspectorate
c/o QUADIENT
69 Buckingham Avenue
Slough
SL1 4PN

Customer
Services: 0303 444 5000
e-mail: Southeastanglialink@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

The applicant, all Interested Parties and
Statutory Parties

Your Ref:

Our Ref: EN020026

Date: 5 December 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

Planning Act 2008 and The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 – rule 8(3), rule 9 and rule 17

Application by National Grid Electricity Transmission Limited (the applicant) for an order granting development consent for the Sea Link project

Applicant's request for proposed changes to the development consent order application and notice of variation to the examination timetable

The proposed change – Change Request 1

On 16 September 2025, the applicant gave notice [[AS-138](#)] to the Examining Authority (ExA) of its intention to submit a request for up to five proposed changes to the Sea Link development consent order (DCO) application. On 25 September 2025, the ExA used its discretion to accept [[PD-011](#)] the notification letter and responded with advice about the procedural implications of the proposed changes. The ExA subsequently accepted a further letter from the applicant dated 26 November 2025 [[CR1a-001](#)] requesting to make changes to the DCO application (Change Request 1 (CR1)).

The applicant's CR1 (comprising documents [[CR1-001](#)] to [[CR1-068](#)]), submitted on 26 November 2025, contains five proposed changes to the application. The changes relate to the following elements of the proposed development:

- Change 1: Change to access at the hoverport, Kent
- Change 2: Change to the limits of deviation for Friston (Kiln Lane) substation, Suffolk
- Change 3: Change to the order limits east of Friston to provide flexibility in relation to heritage feature, Suffolk
- Change 4: Change to the order limits at Benhall railway bridge, Suffolk
- Change 5: Increase in area for maintenance of a new hedge to south of B1119

The ExA's procedural decision about whether or not to accept and examine the changes

The ExA has considered the change application documents in light of its duties under the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 (as amended) (the EPR) and the Planning Inspectorate's [advice](#). The proposed changes are considered in turn below.

Change 1: Change to access at the hoverport, Kent

This change proposes to extend the order limits to provide the applicant with flexibility in the access route that vehicles will use across the hoverport to access the intertidal area at Pegwell Bay. The change will increase the area of the order limits at the hoverport to ensure that encroaching saltmarsh can be avoided. The applicant states that this change would not increase the area used for construction of the proposed development as the vehicles would only use one route across the hoverport (and likely one of the existing ramps); nor would it change the number or types of vehicles accessing the intertidal area. The change would also not introduce any new development or works to the hoverport.

Change 2: Change to the limits of deviation for Friston (Kiln Lane) substation, Suffolk

This change proposes to extend the area for Work 1B as set out in Schedule 1 the DCO application (Friston (Kiln Lane) substation) to align with those consented through two Scottish Power Renewables (SPR) projects. The applicant presents this as a proposed change to the limits of deviation currently presented on the proposed development's works plans to align with the approach taken in the SPR works plans. No additional land would be required for this change; all alterations would fall within the order limits.

Change 3: Change to the order limits east of Friston to provide flexibility in relation to heritage feature, Suffolk

In the applicant's change notification [\[AS-138\]](#) this change was proposed to amend the order limits to remove a potential neolithic hengiform monument feature from the order limits and to introduce additional land to enable the underground cable to be routed around the feature. The proposed revision to the order limits allowed for a 30 m buffer between the amended order limits and the henge.

Further geophysical survey of the landscape around the possible henge feature was completed by the applicant in October 2025, which indicated that the feature did not appear to be a henge but was instead some kind of stock enclosure. As a result of this further survey and subsequent discussions with heritage stakeholders, and to ensure the additional rights sought are necessary and proportional, the applicant has reduced the proposed extension to the order limits in the area of change 3 for CR1. This removes the option of routing the cable and haul road to the west of the feature in response to the geophysical survey results showing potential archaeological features of interest in this area. The applicant states that this approach is supported by Historic England and the County Archaeologist.

CR1 change 3 retains two options:

1. Route the cable route and haul road through the enclosure. The applicant states that given the reduced level of significance this option is considered acceptable by heritage stakeholders albeit that if this route was taken the whole asset should be

- excavated to record information about the asset. Therefore, the order limits in this area have been widened to enable this full excavation if this option is taken forward.
2. Route the cable route and haul road around the feature to the east. This option would avoid the feature entirely, avoiding the need for excavations. The applicant states that this option is also understood to be acceptable from a heritage perspective.

Change 3 retains both options at present given that further investigation is planned to establish the value of the area to the east of the site and look in more detail at both options to determine the best outcome. The eastern extent of the amended order limits is the same as those proposed in the applicant's 16 September 2025 change notification [AS-138], but the area of the enclosure has been added back in, including the full area of the feature. The western extent of the amended order limits as proposed in change notification [AS-138] is removed from the proposed order limits in response to new geophysical survey results, which indicate that potential archaeological features of interest may be present in this area. The applicant confirms that it would only exercise CA powers over land required for the final alignment, as confirmed during detailed design after trial trenching is complete.

Change 4: Change to the order limits at Benhall railway bridge, Suffolk

In the applicant's change notification [AS-138] this change proposed to introduce land into the order limits along the B1121, including Benhall railway bridge and associated land along the highway to the east and west of the bridge between the A12 and Grays Lane/ Forge Close. The proposed change also included additional land to the east of the B1121 and a small stretch along the railway line.

Since the submission of the change notification [AS-138], based on discussions with landowners and East Suffolk Council, and concerns raised by local residents, the applicant has amended the proposed order limits for this change. The proposed order limits for change 4 now comprise only land within the highway boundary and Network Rail ownership boundary.

This proposed change provides two options to enable abnormal indivisible load vehicles to cross the bridge and greater clarity over the consenting route:

1. Installation of a 'mini-bridge' within the highway boundary only.
2. Minor works to repair the bridge.

The applicant has confirmed that only temporary use powers are now sought for change 4, rather than any powers of compulsory acquisition.

Change 5: Increase in area for maintenance of a new hedge to south of B1119

This change proposes to extend the order limits, broadening a strip of land south of the B1119 in Suffolk, to accommodate the proposed new hedgerow, existing drainage, and the water main. The applicant states that this proposed change is to respond to landowner feedback around the maintenance approach to the drain and discussions over who would maintain the planting.

The ExA's procedural decision

All the proposed changes, except for change 2, would require revision of the order limits. The applicant seeks additional compulsory acquisition powers for changes 1, 3 and 5, therefore regulations 5 to 19 of the Compulsory Acquisition (CA) Regulations are engaged.

The applicant's change request cover letter [\[CR1-001\]](#) summarises the consultation undertaken to date on the change request, while the Consultation Report [\[CR1-053\]](#) provides a fuller description of the process and the responses received. The ExA considers that the specific targeted nature of the consultation accords with the advice it issued on 25 September 2025 [\[PD-011\]](#), but notes that the consent of all those parties with an interest in the land has so far not been obtained. Nevertheless, the ExA is content that there remains sufficient time within the examination for the proposed changes to be properly and fairly examined including the opportunity for written submissions and any oral representations to be made at any hearings that are required, along with the procedural requirements of the CA Regulations.

Having regard to the above considerations, the ExA is satisfied that the proposed changes, whether considered individually or taken together, would not be so substantial as to amount to a materially different project from that which was applied for. The changes are capable of being examined within the remaining statutory timescale and there is sufficient time available for interested parties to digest, understand and comment upon them and for compliance with the CA Regulations.

For these reasons, the ExA has decided to accept all five of the proposed changes for examination. Consequently, the examination proceeds in consideration of the changed application.

Implications of CR1 for the examination timetable

All of the materials pertaining to the change application (CR1) have been published on the [Sea Link project page](#) of the National Infrastructure planning website and added to the [Examination Library](#).

In line with the principles of fairness and reasonableness, all interested parties are now invited to make representations on the changed application.

Further to the EPR Rule 8(3), the ExA has decided to amend the examination timetable to make express provision for procedures that are required to examine change requests CR1 under the CA Regulations. The examination timetable has been amended to make provision for the submission of relevant representations on proposed changes (CR1) and for oral examination if required, as a consequence of the CA Regulations, Regulation 12, should any requests to be heard be received. The same procedures and deadlines apply to each change request. The relevant representation period and the written representation period for each request will run concurrently, commencing on 9 December 2025 and ending on 19 January 2026. If they are required, any hearings to address matters arising under the CA Regulations will be held week commencing 23 March 2026. The revised timetable can be found in annex A to this letter.

The ExA will set out a new initial assessment of issues for the change requests (CR1) pursuant to the CA Regulations, Regulation 11, following the receipt of representations, as soon as practicable after 19 January 2026. The ExA does not consider that a separate

preliminary meeting to discuss these timetable changes is necessary, as the timetable changes are limited in scope and have largely been implemented within the framework provided by the existing examination process. The revised examination timetable supersedes the examination timetable set out at annex A of our Rule 8 letter dated 10 November 2025 [[PD-013](#)].

We would like to take this opportunity to remind all parties of the importance of timely submissions in accordance with the revised examination timetable in order to enable a full and fair examination of the changed application.

General procedural advice on the change CR1

The amended timetable (annex A) provides for the submission of relevant representations and written representations in relation to CR1 over a concurrent time-period, ending in the same deadline on 5 May 2026. Persons wishing to make relevant representations on CR1 should note that Regulation 10 of the CA Regulations provides that relevant representations must relate only to the change (only to the additional land or rights sought and to the effects of the proposed development on or to the taking of the proposed additional land or rights). The same principle applies to written representations. Representations that relate to the proposed development more broadly or to other subject matters than CR1 will not be accepted or considered by the ExA, as the existing examination already provides a full process for the receipt and consideration of such information.

The ExA requests that the applicant updates and consolidates the following documents into the examination by **deadline 3, Friday 9 January 2026**:

- Book of Reference
- Statement of Reasons
- draft Development Consent Order
- land plans
- works plans
- land rights tracker

Other examination documents can be updated and consolidated as and when they are resubmitted during the examination.

The ExA also requests that the applicant submit '*2.4 Special Category and Crown Land Plans Part 2 of 2 Summary of Changes*' by **deadline 2, Tuesday 9 December 2025** which the applicant's change request cover letter [[CR1-001](#)] states was included in the change request but was missing from the submission.

Variation to the examination timetable in relation to comments on the report on the implications for European sites:

The ExA has also made a procedural decision to vary the examination timetable relating to the submission of any comments on the Report on the Implications for European Sites (RIES) and any associated questions from deadline (DL) 7 to DL6. The variation is set out in **annex A**. The variation is made in order to allow time for parties to comment on any responses which are submitted within the examination.

If you have any questions about the content of this letter, please contact the case team using the details above.

Yours faithfully

Sarah Holmes

Lead Member of the Examining Authority

Annex A Revised examination timetable

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Annex A Revised examination timetable

The Examining Authority (ExA) is under a duty to **complete** the Examination of the application by the end of the period of six months beginning with the day after the close of the Preliminary Meeting.

The time for submission of documents at any deadline in the timetable is **23:59** on the relevant date, unless instructed otherwise by the ExA.

*Please note: the revised Examination Timetable applies from the date of this letter.
Revisions are shown in **red text**.*

Item	Matters	Date
11	Deadline 2 For receipt by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comments on Written Representations (WRs).• Comments on the Local Impact Reports.• Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010.• Comments on any further information/submissions received by deadline 1 and deadline 1A.	Tuesday 9 December 2025
11a	Notices in publications in relation to change request 1 (CR1) Opening of relevant representations (RRs) and submission of written representations (WR) in relation to CR1	w/c 8 and 15 December 2025
12	Publication by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ExA's First Written Questions (ExQ1).	Wednesday 17 December 2025
13	Deadline 3 For receipt by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responses to ExQ1.• The applicant's updates – refer to annex E of the Rule 6 Letter• Updated versions of principal areas of disagreement summary statements (PADSS).• Requests by interested parties (who were not heard at OFH1 or OFH2) to be heard at	Friday 9 January 2026

Item	Matters	Date
	<p>any further open floor hearing (OFH).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. Comments on any further information/submissions received by deadline 2. 	
13a	<p>Closing of RRs in relation to CR1</p> <p>Deadline 3A Change request (CR1 DL3A)</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WRs relating to CR1. Summaries of any WRs over 1500 words. 	Monday 19 January 2026
14	<p>Dates reserved for hearings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue specific hearings (ISH) Compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH) 	w/c 26 January 2026
15	<p>Deadline 4</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written post hearing submissions including written summaries of oral cases made at hearings the w/c 26 January 2026. Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. Comments on any further information/submissions received by deadline 3. Comments on RRs and WRs relating to the effect CR1. 	Tuesday 10 February 2026
15a	<p>Deadline 4A Change request (CR1 DL4A)</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requests by interested parties (in relation to CR1) to be heard at an OFH. Requests by interested parties (in relation to CR1) to be heard at a CAH. Suggested locations for site inspections (Accompanied (ASI) or Unaccompanied (USI)), including justification (in relation to 	Tuesday 17 February 2026

Item	Matters	Date
	CR1) for consideration by the ExA	
16	Dates reserved for hearings and/or ExA's second written questions (ExQ2) (if required): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further ISH (if required). • Further CAH (if required). • Further OFH (if required). • ExQ2 (if required). 	w/c 23 February 2026
17	Deadline 4B Change request (CR1 DL4B) For receipt by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant's draft itinerary for accompanied site inspection (ASI) (if required) 	Tuesday 24 February 2026
18	Deadline 5 For receipt by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written post hearing submissions including written summaries of oral cases made at hearings the w/c 23 February 2026 (if held). • Responses to ExQ2 (if required). • The applicant's updates – refer to annex E of the Rule 6 Letter • PADSS. • Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. • Comments on any further information/submissions received by deadline 4. • Comments on the applicant's draft itinerary for the ASI (if required). • Notification of a wish to attend the ASI (if required) on the w/c 23 or 30 March 2026 	Tuesday 10 March 2026
19	Publication by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on the Implications for European Sites (RIES) and any associated questions (if required). 	Wednesday 18 March 2026
20	Dates reserved for hearings and/or ExA's third written questions (ExQ3) and ASI (if required): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further ISH (if required). 	w/c 23 March 2026 and w/c 30 March 2026

Item	Matters	Date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further CAH (if required). • Further OFH (if required) • ExQ3 (if required). 	
21	<p>Deadline 6</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written post hearing submissions including written summaries of oral cases made at hearings the w/c 23 March 2026 (if held). • Responses to ExQ3 (if required). • Comments on the RIES (if issued) and responses to any associated questions. • Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. • Comments on any further information/ submissions received by deadline 5. 	Monday 13 April 2026
22	<p>Publication by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ExA's commentary on, or schedule of changes to, the draft development consent order (dDCO) (if required). 	Friday 17 April 2026
23	<p>Deadline 7</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary statements from parties regarding matters that they have previously raised during the Examination and that have not been resolved to their satisfaction. • Final versions of PADSS. • Comments on the ExA's commentary on, or schedule of changes to, the dDCO (if issued) • The applicant's closing summary statement. • The applicant's final updates – refer to annex E of the Rule 6 Letter. • Comments on the deadline 6 submissions and any other information requested by the ExA for deadline 7. • Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. 	Wednesday 29 April 2026

Item	Matters	Date
24	<p>The ExA must complete the examination of the application within six months.</p> <p>Please note that the ExA may close the examination before the end of the six-month period if it is satisfied that all relevant matters have been addressed and discussed.</p>	Tuesday 5 May 2026