

Sarah Holmes
Lead Member of the Examining Authority
Sea Link DCO
The Planning Inspectorate
National infrastructure Planning
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6PN

BY EMAIL ONLY

9th December 2025

The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 – rule 17

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

Applicant response to Examining Authority letter dated 28 November 2025 [EN020026]

Dear Ms Holmes,

Many thanks for your letter dated 28 November 2025 regarding the ongoing examination of the Sea Link project.

Your letter raises three areas of discussion which relate to how the examination is being conducted. We share your view that all parties, including ourselves, have a role in ensuring the efficient and effective examination of the proposals, and we recognise and appreciate the value of our ongoing dialogue in achieving this.

In the interests of contributing to this shared purpose, and for the benefit of the Examining Authority (ExA) and other Interested Parties, I would like to take the opportunity to provide further context and reassurances below.

Timeliness and quality of examination submissions

It is acknowledged that 97 of the 137 Deadline 1 documents were uploaded into the Planning inspectorate (PINS) submission portal after the 23:59 deadline on 18 November

2025, meaning that these have been presented as late submissions on the Project Information section of the PINS website. The Applicant regrets this and appreciates the ExA taking the decision to accept these late submissions. Measures will be taken to minimise the risk of any similar issues going forward.

It is important to note that the process of uploading the Deadline 1 documents, which commenced on the deadline day, concluded shortly after the deadline with the final documents uploaded within 4 hours of the deadline. The submission was with PINS well before the start of the next working day. It is important to clarify this, to reassure any Interested Parties that these documents being marked as late, pertains to issues with the logistics and timing of the document upload on submission day (which we acknowledge) and does not represent a delay to when documents were available for the PINS' case team or for public review. The upload by PINS' officers onto the website occurred in accordance with PINS' own timeframe, commencing on the first day following the deadline. Hence no parties were prejudiced by those documents being uploaded within a few hours of the deadline, in the early hours of 19 November.

It is also acknowledged that the ExA made an oral request during the Open Floor Hearings that the Applicant provide a detailed written response to matters raised by Interested Parties, and indeed (as set out in our letter of 26 November 2025) it is our intention to do so. Rather than having failed to submit these at Deadline 1A however, it was the intention of the Applicant to prepare these specifically for Deadline 2 (discussed elsewhere in this letter).

Finally, I recognise that there were certain errata and omissions amongst the suite of submission documents. The Applicant worked with the PINS' case team in the days following the deadline to identify and rectify any such issues, as is normal during this period (particularly for submissions with the volume and complexity of Sea Link), and is confident in the robustness of the submission. Nonetheless, when assembling and authoring submissions for upcoming deadlines, the Applicant will take measures to keep errata to a minimum.

Where a different approach may need to be taken to certain documents, the approach to these documents is being discussed with the PINS' case team in an ongoing way. However, the Applicant will ensure that any such discussions are held suitably in advance of deadlines and with sufficient clarity to avoid any ambiguity over what the scope of each submission should be.

The Applicant's request for amendments to deadline submission requirements

The Applicant notes and appreciates the agreement of Deadline 2 for the receipt of the written responses to the matters raised by Interested Parties during the Open Floor Hearings.

The Applicant considers that written responses that take account of the written summaries as well as the oral submissions will be most beneficial for the ExA and Interested Parties, particularly given that a number of speakers at the Open Floor Hearings did not complete their oral submissions and were directed to submit their points in writing subsequently. This recognises that the Examination Timetable (Annex A of the Rule 8 letter, dated 10 November 2025) requests that all Interested Parties submit their written summaries of oral submissions at Deadline 1A (and noting that the Applicant followed PINS' officers' instructions as to its role and location in those hearings, and made no oral submissions).

Satellite venues for January hearings

The Applicant notes the procedural decision of the ExA. In light of that direction, it is recognised that there have been various discussions between the Applicant and PINS' officers regarding the appropriateness and logistics of the use of satellite venues for the January 2026 hearings. The Applicant agrees with the ExA that there should be reasonable accommodation for all Interested Parties. The Applicant wishes to reassure the ExA and PINS that all discussion on the approach to satellite venues is offered in good faith and in the interests of ensuring that the hearings run as smoothly as possible, with equal opportunities for Interested Parties to attend and participate in each physical location.

It is further acknowledged that it is normal and expected for the Applicant to be responsible for the costs and practical arrangements of all hearings, and the Applicant is in agreement with the ExA on this and entirely willing to fulfil those responsibilities.

The matter which warrants further discussion is how the role of PINS' case team will be replicated at the satellite venues. This role cannot be undertaken by the Applicant, noting amongst other matters that the ExA must preside at any hearing, and further that the ExA holds the sole discretion as to who makes oral representations at hearings. We are continuing to liaise with PINS case team to discuss and agree a satisfactory means of accommodating the logistical and procedural objectives of both the ExA and the Applicant, and the Applicant will continue discussions with the PINS' case team in this regard.

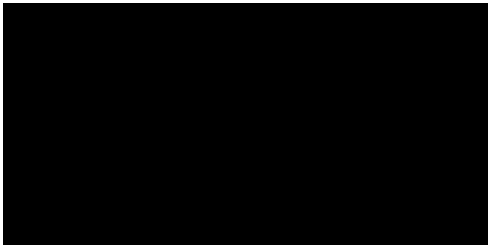
Summary

I hope that the above provides reassurance regarding how the examination is being conducted, and in particular our commitment to adhering to the Examination Timetable and other procedural decisions by yourselves.

We will ensure that our communication with yourselves regarding the scope of written submissions going forward is unambiguous and clear, that the logistics of document upload does not put deadlines at risk, and that errata are kept to a minimum. Furthermore, we are confident that our discussions with the PINS' case team regarding the most appropriate approach to the satellite venues can be concluded imminently.

I would like to reiterate that we fully recognise the points raised in your letter and that the Applicant regrets the delay to the deadline 1 submission. I appreciate the open dialogue that we share and the value of this in ensuring the efficient and effective examination of the proposals.

Yours sincerely,



Senior Project Manager

For and on behalf of National Grid Electricity Transmission plc