The Great Grid Upgrade

Sea Link

Sea Link

Volume 7: Other Documents

Document 7.4.15: Draft Statement of Common Ground Between National Grid Electricity Transmission and the Port of Ramsgate.

Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN020026

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January 2026

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 Regulation 5(2)(q)

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Date	**Version**	**Status**	**Description / Changes**
March 2025	A	DRAFT	Issued with DCO application
January 2026	B	DRAFT	Issued to PINS for Deadline 3

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared to support the application ("The Application") for the Sea Link Project ("Proposed Project") made by National Grid Electricity Transmission Ltd ("the Applicant"). The Application was submitted to the Secretary of State for a Development Consent Order (DCO) and accepted for examination on the 23 April 2025.

1.1.2 A SoCG is an established means in the planning process of allowing all parties to identify and focus on specific issues that may need to be addressed during the Examination. It is prepared jointly between the applicant and another party(s) and 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.

1.1.3 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.

1.2 This Statement of Common Ground

1.2.1 This SoCG has been prepared between the Applicant and the Port of Ramsgate (PoR). 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).

1.2.2 An early draft SoCG was prepared by the Applicant to submit with the DCO application, based on engagement with PoR throughout development of the Proposed Project. Since the submission of the Application, the Applicant has continued to work with PoR to resolve issues as the project progresses through the Pre-Examination and Examination phases.

1.2.3 This SoCG will be progressed during the pre-examination and examination periods to reach a final position between the Applicant and PoR and to clarify if any issues remain unresolved. This SoCG will be revised and updated as appropriate and/or required by the Examining Authority at relevant examination deadlines.

1.2.4 For the purpose of this SoCG, the Applicant and the PoR will jointly be referred to as the "Parties". When referencing the PoR alone, they will be referred to as "the Consultee".

1.3 Role of the Port of Ramsgate in the DCO Process

1.3.1 The Consultee is a municipal port owned and operated by Thanet District Council. The Consultee is responsible for the management of freight and other users along the Kent coast to ensure safe usage and protect and enhance the coast.

1.3.2 The Consultee operates as part of the wider Royal Ramsgate Marina. The Consultee works under regulations set out in Section 7 of the Pilotage Act 1987.

1.3.3 The Consultee is a consultee as the Consultee operates in an area that would be impacted by elements of the Proposed Project. As such, engagement with the Consultee is important to ensure that the Project can be safely developed with a little detriment to the Consultee and the users and services of the Consultee as possible.

1.4 Description of the Proposed Project

1.4.1 The Proposed Project is a proposal by the Applicant to reinforce the transmission network in the South East 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.

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

1.4.3 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 400kV overhead line close to Richborough in Kent.

1.4.4 The Applicant 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:

1.4.5 *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*

1.4.6 *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'.*

1.4.7 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.

1.4.8 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.

1.5 Format of Document and Terminology

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

1.5.2 Section 3 of this SoCG summarises the issues that are ‘agreed’, ‘not agreed’ 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.

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

Table 1.1 Abbreviations

Abbreviation/Term	Definition
DCO	Development Consent Order
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ES	Environmental Statement
FLO	Fisheries Liaison Officer
HVAC	High Voltage Alternating Current
HVDC	High Voltage Direct Current
MCZ	Marine Conservation Zone
NIP	Navigation Installation Plan
NRA	Navigation Risk Assessment
PoR	Port of Ramsgate
PRoW	Public Right of Way
SoCG	Statement of Common Ground
Thanet OWF	Thanet Offshore Wind Farm
TJB	Transition Joint Bay

2. Record of Engagement

2.1 Summary of pre-application discussions

2.1.1 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	Discussion points
12 May 2021	*The Applicant, PoR, Arup, AECOM, Copper - Sea Link Introductory Meeting*	*Introduction and objectives, Project background, approach to Developing Proposals, Sea link – Project overview, Indicative Programme, progress to date, Study areas, Indicative marine routeing and marine survey scope, next steps, questions/AOB,* *Actions: The Applicant to speak to Thanet Offshore Wind Farm (OWF) regarding cabling and crossing.*
28 May 2023	*Shipping and navigation consultation meeting and Hazard workshop*	*Shipping and navigation consultation, data sources, assessment methodology, hazard log. Presented initial results from Navigational Risk Assessment (NRA) and conducted Hazard workshop to identify potential shipping and navigation impacts.*
N/A	*Shipping and navigation*	*Response to statutory consultation*
26 July 2024	*Draft Liaison Tracker*	*A Draft Liaison tracker was sent to PoR for review on 26 July 2024 and was returned on 10 October 2024, with no comments or questions raised.*
2 January 2026	*Comments on SoCG*	*Feedback received on SoCG via email, request to see NRA, further query about water depth*

3. Areas of Discussion Between the Parties

3.1 Assessment Methodologies

Table 3.1 Assessment Methodologies

Ref	Relevant Application Document	Summary of Description of Matter	PoR Current Position	The Applicant's Current Position	Status
3.1.1	**Application Document 6.14 Environmental Scoping Report 2022 [APP-299]**	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Report	The Consultee agrees that the methodology and scoping set out in the EIA report is adequate.	The scope of the EIA that is set out in the Applicant's scoping report (see **Application Document 6.14 Environmental Scoping Report 2022 [APP-299]**), and presented at the consultation workshop, is adequate.	Agreed

3.2 Shipping and Navigation

Table 3.2 Shipping and Navigation

Ref	Relevant Application Document	Summary of Description of Matter	PoR Current Position	The Applicant's Current Position	Status
3.2.1	**Application Document 6.2.4.7 (B) Part 4: Marine Chapter 7 Shipping and Navigation [REP1-059].** **Application Document 6.3.4.7.A (B) ES Appendix 4.7.A Navigational Risk Assessment [REP1-063]**	Other cables projects in the region	The Consultee confirmed the Port of Ramsgate is used to dealing with offshore cable projects and there have been several export cables e.g. Thanet OWF and Nemo Link in the area. The Consultee noted Pegwell Bay as a sensitive area; two export cables for Thanet OWF when they were first installed, they were damaged (2008). There were then issues with the repairs and the anchor spread damaged the good cable. Potential appetite by Vatenfall to replace cables with a proposed route to potentially go back into Pegwell Bay further south of the existing. The Consultee confirmed damage to other cables when laying should be avoided. The Consultee noted there has been a reduction of cable burial depth, depths are always changing with shifting sands with scouring and changing conditions. The Consultee confirmed that London Array and Thanet OWFs have had issues with inter-array cables as a result of scouring. Providing appropriate trenching and survey methods etc. Be careful of large anchor spreads, which the contractor should be aware of. The Consultee confirmed awareness of London Array and have been evaluating this in relation to another project. The Consultee noted Nemo link have had to lay mattressing in the Goodwin Sands Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) and recommended speaking to Nemo. The Consultee explained there is not a huge amount of traffic using the area around Goodwin Sands and there is light traffic up the River Stour. There is only local traffic around gulf stream, so this is not hugely contentious. There is high density of traffic for the windfarms, but this traffic tends to stay in shore. There is no roll on roll off ferry service at the moment, but this would come along the dredge	The Applicant acknowledges the key stakeholders identified and will continue to engage with all relevant parties, including other cable and wind farm projects. The Applicant is committed to preparing a Navigation Installation Plan (NIP) following the submission of the DCO application. This plan will provide detailed project information to stakeholders during the construction phase, as outlined in **Application Document 6.2.4.7 (B) Part 4 Marine Chapter 7 Shipping and Navigation [REP1-059].** The Applicant notes that the Consultee is used to dealing with offshore cables projects. Mitigations including notification of Port and Harbour Authorities is discussed in **Application Document 6.3.4.7.A ES Appendix 4.7.A Navigational Risk Assessment [REP1-063]**.	Agreed

			channel and dog leg up north as per image below:  The Consultee said harbour notice boards can be used to inform vessels of the planned project operations. The Consultee noted that existing wind farm providers, pilots and fisherman's associations as key stakeholders to use these notice boards.		
3.2.2	**N/A**	Fisheries	The Consultee also noted the area at Ramsgate is popular with fisherman for shellfish and referenced the Thanet Fishermen's association, who represent local fishermen in the area.	The Applicant confirmed a Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO) is on board to speak to the fishermen.	Agreed
3.2.3	**N/A**	Overall proposals	The Consultee agrees that they support the principle of reinforcing the network in this location. The Consultee agrees that the changes made to the Proposed Project and the evolution have been broadly positive but have stated that they still require some refinement.	The Applicant notes that the PoR sees the proposals as broadly positive.	Agreed
3.2.4	**Application Document 6.2.4.7 (B) Part 4 Marine Chapter 7 Shipping and Navigation [REP1-059]** **Application Document 6.3.4.7A (B) ES Appendix 4.7.A Navigational Risk Assessment [REP1-063]**	Cable route through pilotage.	The Consultee questions if the proposed cable will pass to the east of 'RA' buoy in the Ramsgate pilotage area. .	The Marine Scheme is planned to route to the east and south of the 'RA' buoy. The planned route crosses through the southern section of the Ramsgate pilotage area (as described in **Application Document 6.2.4.7 (B) Part 4 Marine Chapter 7 Shipping and Navigation [REP1-059]**, and **Application Document 6.3.4.7A (B) ES Appendix 4.7.A Navigational Risk Assessment [REP1-063])**.	Agreed
3.2.5	**Application Document Environmental Statement 6.2.1.4 (D)**	Rock protection	The Consultee raised a question with National Grid if mats will be used when the proposed	Cable protection will be required at the crossing point. Methods of cable protection including matressing are being	Agreed

	Part 1 Introduction Chapter 4 Description of the Proposed Project [REP1A-003] **Application Document 6.3.4.7A (B) ES Appendix 4.7.A Navigational Risk Assessment [REP1-063]** **Application Document 9.84 Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC)** submitted at Deadline 3 **Application Document 9.74 Shipping and Navigation Under-Keel Clearance Marine Engineering Technical Note [REP1A-038]**		cable crosses the Thanet Offshore windfarm. If this were the case, the Consultee further questioned if this would lessen the depth of water there as it is current about 5.7m to 7.2 m above Datum. The Consultee has reviewed the NRA and questions how the depth reduction via the mats will be mitigated?	evaluated depending on the receiving environment. The Project Description should be referred to for detail on cable protection: **Application Document Environmental Statement 6.2.1.4 (D) Part 1 Introduction Chapter 4 Description of the Proposed Project [REP1A-003]**. Recommendations regarding cable protections where necessary, and matters of under keel clearance, are considered in **Application Document 6.3.4.7A (B) ES Appendix 4.7.A Navigational Risk Assessment [REP1-063]** with proposed mitigations listed in **Application Document 9.84 Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC)** submitted at Deadline 3**.** In terms of shipping and navigation mitigations, the main mitigation is that crossing design will be co-engineered to minimise crossing height, as well as making the locations known to UKHO and KIS-ORCA, discussion with relevant ports, and notification to mariners and marine authorities. Further detail on cable crossings and potential impacts on under-keel clearance is provided in **Application Document 9.74 Shipping and Navigation Under-Keel Clearance Marine Engineering Technical Note [REP1A-038]**. This Tech Note clarifies that the expected crossing with the Thanet Offshore Windfarm Export cables (at Sea Link KP 107.594 – 107.647) is in water depths of between 9.5 and 10.1 m LAT.	
3.2.6	**Application Document 6.3.4.7A (B) ES Appendix 4.7.A Navigational Risk Assessment [REP1-063]**	Ferries	The Consultee confirms that there is no commercial ferry operation at Ramsgate at present, but have advised that this may change, so National Grid would need to be aware of this. The Consultee questioned if the cable laying would affect the passage of ferries in and out of Ramsgate.	Any potential risk of disruption to passenger vessels including ferries is considered in the **Application Document 6.3.4.7A (B) ES Appendix 4.7.A Navigational Risk Assessment [REP1-063]**.	Agreed

4. Approvals

Signed	

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

Signed	

On Behalf of	Port of Ramsgate
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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National Grid plc
National Grid House,
Warwick Technology Park,
Gallows Hill, Warwick.
CV34 6DA United Kingdom

Registered in England and Wales
No. 4031152
nationalgrid.com