

The Great Grid Upgrade

Sea Link

Sea Link

Volume 9: Examination Submissions

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Executive Summary

Ex1.1 Purpose

- Ex1.1.1 This Skills, Supply Chain and Employment Plan (SSCEP) has been prepared to accompany the Application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Sea Link project (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Project'). Its purpose is to maximise and proactively expand the economic benefits of the Proposed Project for the local community. The scope of the Plan covers opportunities related to the Proposed Project scheme elements in Kent, Suffolk and offshore, with the outcomes of the SSCEP targeted at both Kent and Suffolk based study areas.
- Ex1.1.2 The SSCEP sets out the likely economic benefits of the Proposed Project, and the context and characteristics of the local community and economy in which it is located. Alongside this, key skills, supply chain and employment challenges and opportunities are considered. It then identifies activities relating to the themes of Skills, Supply Chain and Employment which National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (hereafter referred to as National Grid) proposes to take forward post-consent. These activities will help local individuals and businesses access benefits associated with the Proposed Project.

Ex1.2 Economic Benefits

- Ex1.2.1 The Proposed Project comprises an offshore HVDC cable with onshore elements in Suffolk and Kent, with construction anticipated between 2026/27 and 2032. It is forecast to support around 35 net jobs per year within a 60-minute drive time, 20 in Suffolk and 15 in Kent, including 23 net direct roles (13 in Suffolk and 10 in Kent) and 12 indirect roles (7 in Suffolk and 6 in Kent).
- Ex1.2.2 The Proposed Project is also expected to contribute approximately £2.4 million (m) per year in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the local economy across the Suffolk and Kent study areas. These findings are evidenced in **Application Document 6.2.10 (B) Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 10 Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [REP1A-005]** and **Application Document 6.2.3.10 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-Economics Recreation and Tourism [REP1A-007]**. Delivery will require a wide mix of roles and skills, particularly construction and civil engineering personnel, supported by electrical and landscaping equipment requirements.

Ex1.3 Local Community Profile

- Ex1.3.1 An assessment of the workforce and economy within the defined onshore Study Areas provides important context for the SSCEP. The Suffolk Study Area is characterised by lower unemployment and higher economic activity than regional and national averages, while the Kent Study Area exhibits higher unemployment and lower economic activity. Both areas have below-average qualification levels, and deprivation levels vary considerably. The construction sector is proportionally stronger in Suffolk, while both areas have relatively high employment in the mining, quarrying and utilities sector.

Ex1.4 Key Skills, Supply Chain and Employment Challenges and Opportunities

- Ex1.4.1 Employment data indicates strengths in several sectors linked to the transmission network supply chain, however, employers in these sectors also report persistent skills shortages. Forecasts highlight strong future demand for skilled construction, electrical, engineering and mobile-plant roles. Additionally, there is a cumulative demand on skills of multiple Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) being advanced across Suffolk and Kent.
- Ex1.4.2 Both counties benefit from significant skills assets, including established training providers, colleges, and sector-focused skills networks.

Ex1.5 Planning and Economic Policy and Strategy Context

- Ex1.5.1 Planning policies and economic development strategies relevant to the Proposed Project were identified at the national, regional, and local levels.
- Ex1.5.2 The Overarching National Policy Statement (NPS) for Energy (EN-1) (Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, 2025), in its paragraph 5.13.4, requires applicants to consider job creation, the provision of additional local infrastructure (including the provision of educational and visitor facilities), as well as any indirect beneficial impacts for the region hosting the infrastructure. Paragraph 5.13.12 of the same document states that an employment and skills plan promoting local employment and skills development opportunities may be required.
- Ex1.5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024) also emphasises that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity in decision-making (paragraph 85).
- Ex1.5.4 The relevant Local Plans for the area identify energy infrastructure as an important sector and aim to promote opportunities for the local workforce and supply chain, with the aim of providing high quality and diverse job opportunities. Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) provide regional level information which enables the local skills systems to become better equipped with information, and more responsive and employer-led.
- Ex1.5.5 Promoting skills development is a common theme across all relevant national and local plans and strategy. The SSCEP is therefore in accordance with national and local planning policy and strategy and supports the aims which the relevant plans and strategy identify relating to Skills, Supply Chain and Employment.

Ex1.6 Themes & Activities

- Ex1.6.1 A set of activities has been identified across Skills, Employment, and Supply Chain that National Grid will take forward through the delivery of the SSCEP. These activities draw on National Grid's existing national and regional programmes and are designed to enable local people and businesses to access opportunities associated with the Proposed Project.

Skills

- Ex1.6.2 Activities related to skills focus on raising awareness of existing pathways into the energy and infrastructure sectors, strengthening local understanding of opportunities, and helping contractors navigate the established training ecosystem in Suffolk and Kent. These include:
- Signposting local authorities, colleges and schools to National Grid's Pathways to Progress programme and STEM outreach conducted by National Grid.
 - Providing Tier 1 contractors with information on local apprenticeship and vocational training providers.
 - Sharing details of National Grid's existing apprenticeship programmes.
 - Supporting suppliers in identifying suitable apprenticeship opportunities.
 - Making use of local platforms in Kent and Suffolk to promote apprenticeships to local people and local employers.
 - Where relevant and beneficial, engagement with local providers will take place in advance of construction (during 2026–2027).
- Ex1.6.3 These activities aim to enhance visibility of training pathways, promote accessible opportunities for young people and adults, and help ensure that the future workforce reflects the diverse communities the Proposed Project will serve.

Employment

- Ex1.6.4 Employment-related activities encourage contractors to adopt fair, inclusive and locally responsive recruitment approaches, drawing on existing local training and employability infrastructure. Activities include:
- Implementing a regional hiring strategy (FY27) to attract specialist skills in Suffolk and Kent, supported by early supply chain engagement.
 - Promoting awareness of project-related roles through established local channels such as councils, job-brokerage services and Further Education (FE) networks.
 - Encouraging contractors to adopt inclusive recruitment practices, consistent with National Grid's equality, diversity and inclusion policies.
 - Requesting that contractors use open and accessible recruitment methods to reduce barriers for underrepresented groups, including the use of local projects and programmes designed to support inclusive employment.
 - Signposting contractors to local employment and training support services (e.g., Apprenticeships Suffolk, Kent Training & Apprenticeships, FE colleges).
 - Coordinating employee-volunteering activities through National Grid's Volunteering Works programme.
- Ex1.6.5 The Proposed Project's Skills, Employment and Supply Chain activities are focused on maximising local socio-economic benefits by strengthening STEM pathways, supporting inclusive and fair employment, and increasing regional business participation in Suffolk and Kent. Actions prioritise early engagement with education providers, employability services, local authorities and supply chains to improve workforce readiness, promote equal access to opportunities, and support responsible procurement. This approach

aligns with National Grid's core social value, skills, inclusion and responsible business policies, while supporting national, regional and local objectives for skills development, local employment, inclusive growth and resilient supply chains.

Ex1.6.6 National Grid will, in collaboration with its main works contractors, develop and implement a Social Value strategy. As the Proposed Project develops, the detail of the approach will be shared with the relevant local authorities when available.

Supply Chain

Ex1.6.7 Supply Chain activities seek to maximise opportunities for local businesses by improving visibility, supporting early engagement and ensuring alignment with National Grid's existing procurement frameworks. These include:

- Signposting local suppliers to opportunities using existing regional partners, including Kent and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce.
- Holding Meet the Buyer style engagement, including engagement with Chambers of Commerce, where proportionate and aligned with Proposed Project procurement timelines.
- Directing contractors to National Grid's Supplier Code of Conduct, sustainable procurement standards, and other existing framework requirements.
- Encouraging contractors to consider local and diverse suppliers when procuring goods and services, consistent with contractual and social value expectations.

Ex1.6.8 These activities will support local supply chain participation while remaining proportionate to the scale of the project and aligned with existing procurement practice.

Ex1.7 Delivery

Ex1.7.1 Delivery of the SSCEP will be coordinated through existing National Grid processes, with responsibilities shared across the Project Team, commercial, community engagement and supporting functions to ensure Skills, Employment and Supply Chain considerations are integrated into project planning and implementation.

Ex1.7.2 National Grid has engaged with local authorities in Kent and Suffolk during preparation of the SSCEP and will continue to work with local partners, including skills bodies, Chambers of Commerce and employability organisations, through existing forums and networks. Ongoing engagement will support workforce planning, skills development and local supply chain access, including Meet the Buyer activity and early discussions with training providers where appropriate. Regular internal coordination including the Socioeconomic and Community Benefits team, will support consistent messaging and complementary activity.

Ex1.7.3 An indicative timeline will guide SSCEP implementation post-consent. Progress will be reviewed periodically using information already generated through routine project management and supplier reporting.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Report

- 1.1.1 The Proposed Project will generate economic benefits including new jobs and expenditure, as established in **Application Document 6.2.10 (B) Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 10 Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [REP1A-005]** and **Application Document 6.2.3.10 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-Economics Recreation and Tourism [REP1A-007]**. National Grid aims to maximise and proactively expand these economic benefits for the local community.
- 1.1.2 This final SSCEP sets out the likely economic benefits of Proposed Project, and the context and characteristics of the local community and economy in which they are located. It describes the initial work which has been undertaken by National Grid to identify the potential employment, skills, plant, equipment and services required to deliver the Proposed Project, and to engage with relevant stakeholders. The SSCEP goes on to identify potential opportunities for activities relating to Skills, Supply Chain and Employment which National Grid could take forward post-consent of the Proposed Project. These activities will help local individuals and businesses access the economic benefits associated with the Proposed Project.
- 1.1.3 All works forming part of the authorised development, including pre-commencement operations, will be carried out in accordance with the approved SSCEP unless otherwise agreed with the relevant planning authority pursuant to Requirement 5 of **Application Document: 3.1 Draft Development Consent Order [REP5-005]**¹. **Application Document 6.2.10 (B) Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 10 Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [REP1A-005]** and **Application Document 6.2.3.10 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-Economics Recreation and Tourism [REP1A-007]** identify no relevant adverse effects of the Scheme on socio-economic, recreation and tourism receptors. Therefore, this SSCEP does not represent mitigation of any such effects, but rather a plan to help maximise the positive gain for the local community.

1.2 The Proposed Project

- 1.2.1 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.

¹ Requirement 5 requires all works, including pre-commencement operations, to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and strategies listed under Requirement 5(2), unless otherwise agreed with the relevant planning authority.

- 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 2026 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.

1.2.2 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.

1.3 Relationship to the Proposal for a Sea Link Community Benefits Scheme

- 1.3.1 The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's (DESNZ) guidance, Electricity transmission network infrastructure: Community funds (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2025) clearly states that community benefit funds "are separate from and not a material consideration for planning authorities in England, Wales and Scotland." In addition, community benefit funding cannot be used to mitigate or offset the environmental or social impacts of infrastructure projects, which must instead be addressed through the planning and consenting regime.
- 1.3.2 National Grid is committed to engaging with local communities and stakeholders to understand the range of local priorities. Should employment and skills be identified by local communities as priority areas for community benefit funding, National Grid will ensure that any projects funded by community benefit do not overlap with the commitments made in this plan, in order to adhere to Government guidance on Community Benefit.

1.4 Structure of this Document

- 1.4.1 The remainder of this document is structured as follows:
- Section 2 summarises the scale and nature of the likely economic effects of the Proposed Project, which the SSCEP aims to maximise. The key impacts comprise jobs generated during the construction, demolition and decommissioning phase, and spending on goods and services.
 - Section 3 presents a profile of the local population, workforce and economy, in order to understand how a SSCEP will best meet local needs and maximise economic benefits of the Proposed Project for the local community
 - Section 4 presents the key skills, supply chain and employment challenges and opportunities which are of most relevance to the SSCEP.
 - Section 5 summarises the aims of national, regional and local planning policy and economic development strategy with regard to jobs, skills and economic development.
 - Section 6 presents a list of activities for the Proposed Project relating to the SSCEP. Within each opportunity or area of work, a number of activities are described which will be implemented post-consent.
 - Section 7 sets out the approach to developing and delivering the SSCEP post-consent, including organisational structure and partnerships. The approach to monitoring and a timeline for development and implementation is also set out.

2. Summary of Economic Benefits

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This section summarises the scale of employment and GVA benefits that are expected to arise from delivery of the Suffolk Onshore Scheme and the Kent Onshore Scheme. It also summarises the types of jobs, skills, plant, equipment, and materials required for the delivery of the Proposed Project, which will deliver these benefits.
- 2.1.2 The employment and GVA benefits associated with the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Project are summarised in the sections below. More details are available in **Application Document 6.2.10 (B) Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 10 Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [REP1A-005]** and **Application Document 6.2.3.10 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-Economics Recreation and Tourism [REP1A-007]**.
- 2.1.3 The SSCEP will not consider the economic benefits on employment and GVA creation during the operational phase as this has been scoped out of the ES, on the basis that the scale of operational employment generated is likely to be very limited and therefore any effect on GVA will be small. The focus of the SSCEP is, therefore, on the more immediate opportunities associated with the construction phase.

2.2 Study Area

- 2.2.1 The Study Area for assessment of economic impacts has been defined in accordance with Homes England's 'Additionality Guide, A Standard Approach to Assessing the Additional Impact of Projects, 4th Edition.' (HCA Additionality Guide) (Homes and Communities Agency, 2014).
- 2.2.2 The potential employment and GVA impacts arising from both the Suffolk and Kent Onshore Schemes are considered relative to a 60-minute drive time from the respective Onshore Scheme construction compounds. This is estimated using GIS data as can be seen in **Application Document 6.4.2.10 ES Figures Suffolk Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [APP-237]** and **Application Document 6.4.3.10 ES Figures Kent Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [APP-269]**. This area was chosen because it represents the principal labour market catchment area for each element of the Onshore Scheme. The rationale for this Study Area is based on research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) in the 2017 Employee outlook 'Employee views on working life' which found that 90% of national employees commuted for 60 minutes or less each way.
- 2.2.3 The scope of the SSCEP also takes into account marine elements of the Proposed Project where relevant to supply chain opportunities. This relates to offshore construction and installation activities associated with the Offshore Scheme (including subsea HVDC cable installation, marine logistics and vessel support), and does not extend the employment or GVA Study Area beyond the defined onshore catchments.

2.3 Construction

- 2.3.1 It is currently anticipated that (subject to the necessary consents being granted) construction work will commence, at the earliest, in 2027 and will be functionally completed by the end of 2031, with reinstatement potentially continuing into 2032. This start date for construction differs from that presented in the Indicative Construction Programme presented in Table 4.10 of **Application Document 6.2.1.4 Part 1 Introduction: Description of the Proposed Project [REP1A-003]** because a decision on the Application is due in November 2026, rather than June/ July 2026 as presented in the Indicative Construction Programme. The construction period is expected to be a maximum of 72 months.

Employment

- 2.3.2 As set out in **Application Document 6.2.10 (B) Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 10 Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [REP1A-005]**, National Grid estimates that the Suffolk Onshore Scheme will require an average of 86 gross Full-time Equivalent (FTE) construction jobs on-site. As set out within **Application Document 6.2.1.4 Part 1 Introduction: Description of the Proposed Project [REP1A-003]** the peak employment demand across the Suffolk Onshore Scheme is forecast to occur in 2028 with a peak requirement of 327 FTEs per day.
- 2.3.3 Likewise, as set out in **Application Document 6.2.3.10 (B) Part 3 Kent Chapter 10 Socio-Economics Recreation and Tourism [REP1A-007]**, National Grid estimates the Kent Onshore Scheme will require an average of 67 gross FTE construction jobs on-site during this construction period. As set out within **Application Document 6.2.1.4 Part 1 Introduction: Description of the Proposed Project [REP1A-003]** the peak number of staff across the Kent Onshore Scheme is forecast to occur in 2030, a peak requirement of 241 FTEs per day.
- 2.3.4 As set out in **Application Document 6.14 Environmental Scoping Report 2022 [APP-299]**, socio-economic effects associated with the Offshore Scheme were not included within the scope of socio-economic effects assessed in the ES. However, as stated within **Application Document 6.2.1.4 Part 1 Introduction: Description of the Proposed Project [REP1A-003]**, the peak workforce for the Offshore Scheme is anticipated to be approximately 275 in 2028, with this level of employment continuing into 2029.
- 2.3.5 To estimate net effects, leakage, displacement and employment multipliers have been considered within the economic assessments:
- Based on professional experience and benchmarking against other comparable renewable energy projects, a 70% leakage adjustment has been applied. This is to account for the jobs filled by individuals outside of the Study Area.
 - Based on the Homes and Communities Agency (now Homes England) Additionality Guide, a displacement factor of 25% is also applied. This is to account for construction workers moving between projects when faced with delays or deadlines.
 - Based on the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (now Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government) Appraisal Guide (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities 2023), a multiplier effect of 1.5 has also been applied. This is to account for indirect and induced effects of the construction activity on local employment.

2.3.6 The Proposed Project is forecast to support around 35 net jobs per year within a 60-minute drive time of the construction compounds, 20 in Suffolk and 15 in Kent, including 23 net direct roles (13 in Suffolk and 10 in Kent) and 12 indirect roles (7 in Suffolk and 6 in Kent). Net additional construction employment is summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Net additional construction employment per annum from the Onshore Scheme

	Suffolk 60-minute Drive time Study Area	Suffolk Total	Kent 60-minute Drive time Study Area	Kent Total
Gross Direct Employment	26	86	20	67
Displacement	13	43	10	34
Net Direct Employment	13	43	10	34
Indirect and Induced Employment	7	22	5	17
Average Net Additional Employment*	20	65	15	50

Source: AECOM Calculations (2024). Please note that figures may not sum as they have been rounded to the nearest whole number. * Sum of Net Direct Employment and Indirect and Induced Employment. Displacement figures represent the number of jobs assumed to be displaced and are deducted from gross employment to derive net additional employment.

2.3.7 The impact of construction employment generation on the local economy has been assessed within the Environmental Statement Chapters for both the Suffolk and Kent Onshore Schemes as a small magnitude, which results in a short-term temporary **minor beneficial** effect.

Gross Value Added (GVA)

2.3.8 In 2022 the average GVA per worker in the construction sector was £62,895 in the East of England and £72,671 in the South East (Office for National Statistics, 2024). By applying these values to the total net construction phase workers generated by the Suffolk and Kent Onshore Schemes, it is estimated the construction phase will contribute £4.1 m and £3.6 m to the national economy respectively. Of this, £1.3 m would likely be within the 60 minute drive time catchment area of the Suffolk Onshore Scheme and £1.1 m would likely be within the 60 minute drive time catchment area of the Kent Onshore Scheme; as shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Gross Direct Value added per annum from the Onshore Scheme during the Construction phase

	Suffolk 60 Minute Drive Time Catchment Area	Suffolk Total	Kent 60 Minute Drive Time Catchment Area	Kent Total
GVA during the construction phase (£)	1.3	4.1	1.1	3.6

Source: ONS, (2024); Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: all ITL regions (Office for National Statistics, 2024); ONS, (2024); JOBS05: Workforce jobs by region and industry (Office for National Statistics, 2024).

2.3.9 The impact of GVA generation from the construction phase on the local economy has been assessed in the relevant Environmental Statement Chapters for both the Suffolk and Kent Onshore Schemes as of small beneficial magnitude, which results in a temporary **minor beneficial** effect.

2.4 Decommissioning

2.4.1 It is estimated that there will be fewer workers needed during the decommissioning phase than during construction, with an estimated peak of 210 staff per day for the Suffolk Onshore Scheme and 150 staff per day for the Kent Onshore Scheme. As described in **Application Document 6.2.1.4 Part 1 Introduction: Description of the Proposed Project [REP1A-003]** there are currently no plans to decommission the Proposed Project. Most elements have lifespans of approximately 40 years (with the exception of pylons which have a typical lifespan of up to 80 years), and these lifespans could be extended, with regular maintenance and refurbishment of each component, given the anticipated increase in electricity demand in the future.

2.4.2 It is anticipated that there would be similar methods, plant, equipment, compounds and working hours to those used during construction. For the Offshore Scheme, it is assumed the redundant cables could either be recovered for recycling (in their entirety, or in parts), or left in-situ, if that has less environmental impact.

2.4.3 The total estimated duration of decommissioning is two years compared to a significantly longer period for construction.

2.4.4 Considering the assumptions above, the economic impacts of the decommissioning phase are assumed to be equal to, or (more realistically) less than, the construction phase. Given that the exact timing of decommissioning is unknown, the assessment of the construction phase has been adopted to determine the maximum anticipated impacts of the Suffolk Onshore Scheme and the Kent Onshore Scheme during their decommissioning phase.

2.4.5 The effect on net employment and GVA during construction has been assessed as a temporary minor beneficial effect which is not considered significant. These residual effects and conclusions are applicable for the decommissioning phase.

2.5 Summary of Jobs and Skills Requirement

- 2.5.1 The following are the indicative local services and supply chain opportunities for the Proposed Project;
- Civil and land management contractors supporting construction activities;
 - Temporary works and site infrastructure providers;
 - Traffic management service providers;
 - Logistics, storage, and transport services associated with materials delivery;
 - Plant and equipment hire providers;
 - Waste management and recycling services;
 - Site welfare and utilities providers; and
 - Local accommodation and catering providers.
- 2.5.2 The final employment opportunities and supply chain participation will be refined by National Grid and their contractors as subcontractors and their associated supply chains are confirmed and mobilised.
- 2.5.3 Based on the indicative local services and supply chain opportunities, Table 2.3 sets out the indicative local employment opportunities associated with the Proposed Project and the skills related to those roles.

Table 2.3 Types of employment opportunities during construction of the Proposed Project

Employment Opportunities	Job Descriptions	Skills
Construction and civil engineering site personnel	Supporting onshore works on site	Relevant construction qualifications required or the use of machinery, such as dump trucks, diggers and compactors
Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) installation support personnel	Supports the setup of HDD equipment associated with landfall works, ensuring safety and efficiency during underground utility installations	Drilling, equipment setup, and safety
Environmental and survey support personnel	Supporting environmental assessments and land surveys	Environmental monitoring and compliance, land and topographic surveying, data recording
Site management and construction supervision support	Oversee and manage daily site operations	Knowledge of construction planning and safety
Site welfare and facilities support staff	Provide welfare facilities and services to other construction staff	Health and safety, catering, welfare facilities management and administration skills
Security personnel	Protecting the site during the construction process	Ability to protect the security of the site during construction
Landscaping and fencing support personnel	Creating and maintaining environments related to landscaping and fencing	Knowledge of fencing, landscaping and gardening equipment, methods and planning

Source: National Grid.

2.6 Summary of Equipment Requirements

- 2.6.1 National Grid has identified the likely equipment and material requirements for each element of the Scheme. Whilst it is possible that some equipment and materials may be sourced from Suffolk and Kent, other equipment and materials will be sourced further afield, for example the HVDC underground cable, which will be manufactured in Scotland.

Table 2.4 Summary of Equipment and Material Requirements

Cabling/Overhead Lines	Converter Stations	Substations
HVAC underground cable	Lightning protection	Fencing
HVDC underground cable	Safety rails	Cable sealing ends
Transition joint bay	Ventilation equipment	Gas-Insulated Busbars
Distributed Temperature Sensing tubes	Aerials	Surge Arrestors
Soil and cement bound sand	Converter transformers	Earthwires
A Monitoring kiosk	Alternating Current switchyard	Bellmouths
HVAC overhead line	Low Voltage electricity supply	Riparian planting
Steel lattice Pylons	Alternating Current switchyard	Gas insulated switchgear bays
Aluminium Conductor Composite Reinforced	Landscaping	Additional switch gear
Guyed masts	Fall arrest equipment	Lightning rods
Cable ducts	Permanent water supply	Handrails
Loading equipment	Trickle feed water tank	Roof mounted plant
Storing equipment	Road lanterns and floodlights	Circuit breakers
	Galvanised steel, base-hinged columns	Disconnectors
	Light-Emitting Diodes	Earth switches
	Road lanterns and floodlights.	Busbars
	Fire deluge pump	Cable interface
	Loading equipment	Electric vehicle parking bays
	Storing equipment	Substation earth mat
		Standby diesel generator and bulk fuel storage tank
		Storage and workshop units
		Landing gantries
		Capacitive Voltage Transformer
		Loading equipment

Source: National Grid.

3. Local Community Profile

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 This section identifies characteristics of the local population, workforce and economy which are relevant to developing an SSCEP which effectively meets local needs and maximises the benefits of the Proposed Project.
- 3.1.2 This Local Community Profile uses the Study Areas defined in Section 2.2. The data presented in this section is primarily based on Office for National Statistics (ONS) data available at Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs)² and Middle-layer Super Output Areas. While the ONS Census data is now several years old, it provides the most robust evidence base for local level data as it is the most recent data source to provide the required level of geographic breakdown. Alternative and more recent datasets are presented where available and appropriate.

3.2 Population

- 3.2.1 ONS Census data reveals that the population of East Suffolk increased from 239,552 in 2011 to 246,058 in 2021, representing a 2.7% increase over ten years (Office for National Statistics, 2012) (Office for National Statistics, 2022). This population growth rate is lower than the overall rates recorded for the East of England and England during the same time period (8.3% and 6.6%, respectively). The population of Dover increased from 111,674 in 2011 to 116,410 in 2021, representing a 4.2% increase over ten years. The population of Thanet also increased over this period from 134,186 to 140,587, representing a 4.8% increase. These population growth rates are lower than the overall rates recorded for the South East and England during the same time period (7.5% and 6.6% respectively).
- 3.2.2 According to ONS Census data, in 2021, 635,926 (59.6%) and 1,039,875 (61.3%) of residents within the respective Suffolk and Kent Onshore Scheme Study Areas were of working age³. These are lower rates when compared to the rates recorded for the East of England (61.6%), the South East (62.0%) and England as a whole (63.0%) (Office for National Statistics, 2022).
- 3.2.3 According to the Annual Population Survey (APS) (Office for National Statistics, 2023), from July 2022 to June 2023 the unemployment rate among working age residents in East Suffolk was 0.8%, lower than for the East of England (3.6%), and England (3.9%). This is also lower than the unemployment rate among working age residents in Thanet (10.0%) and Dover (4.3%), which is higher than the South East (3.5%) and England (3.9%).
- 3.2.4 Economic activity rates of residents of working age, as recorded by the Annual Population Survey (APS) (October 2024 to September 2025) were 85.1% in East

²Lower Layer Super Output Areas are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. Lower Layer Super Output Areas are built from groups of contiguous Output Areas and have been automatically generated to be as consistent in population size as possible and typically contain from four to six 'Output Areas'.

³ Defined by the ONS as men and women aged 16 to 64.

Suffolk, 74.7% in Dover, and 73.5% in Thanet. These rates are compared to those recorded for England (79.3%), the East of England (81.1%) and the South East (81.6%). The economic activity and unemployment rates are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Economic Activity and Unemployment Rates

	East Suffolk	East of England	Dover	Thanet	South East	England
Economic activity rate (for residents aged 16-64)	85.1%	81.1%	74.7%	73.5%	81.6%	79.3%
Unemployment rate (for residents aged 16-64)	0.8%	3.6%	4.3%	10.0%	3.5%	3.9%

Source: ONS, (2025/2023); APS, October 2024 to September 2025 (Office for National Statistics, 2025); APS, July 2022 to June 2023 (Office for National Statistics, 2023)

- 3.2.5 Data from the APS (January 2024 to December 2024) shows that in East Suffolk, 36.1% of working age residents have a degree level qualification or higher (The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) Level 4+) (Office for National Statistics, 2025) compared to the rate for Dover (30.7%) and Thanet (34.6%). These rates are below the national average (46.8%), and the averages for the East of England (43.7%) and the South East (48.2%).
- 3.2.6 The proportion of residents in East Suffolk with no qualifications is 5.9%, which is higher than the proportion recorded for the East of England (5.2%), but lower than England (6.6%). In contrast the proportion of residents in Dover with no qualifications is 8.5% and is 11.9% in Thanet. These proportions are both higher than those recorded for all of the other comparator geographies including the South East (5.5%).
- 3.2.7 The proportion of residents in Suffolk engaged in level 3 and 4 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC1-3) occupations between October 2024 and September 2025 (34.5%) is lower than that recorded the East of England (38.4%), Kent (37.4%), the South East (40.9%) and England (38.2%). The proportion of residents in Suffolk in elementary occupations (6.1%) is also notably higher than the proportions recorded for East of England (5.3%), Kent (4.4%), the South East (4.8%) and England (5.4%).
- 3.2.8 Based on the 2025 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2025), East Suffolk is the 138th most deprived borough out of 296 districts in England (where 1 is the most deprived), and the 16th most deprived out of 45 districts in the East of England. Dover and Thanet are more deprived in comparison with a rank of 78th and 32nd most deprived boroughs out of 296 districts and the 9th and 2nd most deprived out of 64 districts in the South East. 7.6% of LSOAs in East Suffolk, 11.6% of LSOAs in Dover and 18.6% in Thanet are ranked in the top 10% most deprived LSOAs of the country. However, in the area of the Suffolk Coast in which the Suffolk Onshore Scheme is located there are several pockets of rural poverty and areas of deprivation particularly in education. For example, for the education and skills domain, of the 11 LSOA's which lie closest to the Proposed Project in Suffolk, 3 (27.7%) are within the top 20% most deprived LSOA's across England and none are within the least 30% deprived LSOA's across England.

3.3 Workforce

- 3.3.1 In the 2024 Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) (Office for National Statistics, 2025), the workforce of the Suffolk Onshore Scheme Study Area comprised around 481,000 employees and the workforce of the Kent Onshore Scheme Study Area comprised around 675,250 employees.
- 3.3.2 Table 3.2 presents a breakdown of employment by broad industry group for the Study Area of each Onshore Schemes, the East of England, the South East and England. Based on the most recently available data from the 2024 Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) (Office for National Statistics, 2025) on employment by group within the Study Areas' economies, the highest levels of employment are recorded in the health sector (14.6% and 14.4% of employment for Suffolk and Kent respectively) followed by business administration and support service for the Suffolk Onshore Scheme Study Area (10.4%) and Retail for the Kent Onshore Scheme Study Area (9.9%).
- 3.3.3 The construction sector contributes 6.0% of employment within the Suffolk Onshore Scheme Study Area, less than the proportion recorded for the East of England regionally (6.5%), whereas the construction sector contributes 8.0% of employment within the Kent Onshore Scheme Study Area, greater than the proportion recorded for the South East (5.4%). The construction sector also contributes a greater proportion of employment in all other geographies compared to England as a whole (4.9%). There are around 29,000 construction jobs within the Suffolk Onshore Scheme Study Area and 55,000 construction jobs within the Kent Onshore Scheme Study Area.
- 3.3.4 In addition, the mining, quarrying and utilities broad industrial group (which includes employment from the generation of energy) is more prominent in the Study Areas compared to regional and national levels. This group represents 1.7% and 1.5% in the Suffolk and Kent Onshore Scheme Study Areas respectively, greater than regional and national levels (1.1% in East of England, 1.3% in the South East, and 1.1% in England).

Table 3.2 Employee Jobs by Broad Industrial Group in 2024

Sector	Suffolk 60 Minute Drive Time Catchment Area (%)	East of England (%)	Kent 60 Minute Drive Time Catchment Area (%)	South East (%)	England (%)
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0.4	0.8	0.2	0.8	0.5
Mining, quarrying and utilities	1.7	1.1	1.5	1.3	1.1
Manufacturing	7.5	7.1	6.1	5.7	7.1
Construction	6.0	6.5	8.1	5.4	4.9
Motor trades	2.5	2.3	2.2	2.0	1.8

Sector	Suffolk 60 Minute Drive Time Catchment Area (%)	East of England (%)	Kent 60 Minute Drive Time Catchment Area (%)	South East (%)	England (%)
Wholesale	3.5	4.2	4.1	4.4	3.8
Retail	8.9	8.3	9.9	8.7	8.2
Transport and storage (including postal)	5.8	5.6	7.1	4.8	5.1
Accommodation	7.7	6.9	7.7	7.8	7.7
Information and communication	2.3	3.2	2.4	5.6	4.8
Financial and insurance	2.1	1.8	1.5	2.5	3.4
Property	2.3	2.3	1.6	1.8	1.9
Professional, scientific and technical	6.0	8.6	5.6	9.3	9.6
Business administration and support services	10.4	11.7	9.3	8.3	8.8
Public administration and defence	5.0	3.7	4.9	3.6	4.5
Education	8.9	9.0	9.3	9.8	8.6
Health	14.6	12.6	14.4	13.6	13.8
Arts, entertainment, recreation and other services	4.4	4.3	4.0	4.7	4.4

Source: ONS, BRES (2025)

3.3.5 GVA is a measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area of the economy. In 2023, Suffolk generated around £6.4 billion GVA at current basic prices within its economy and East Kent (which includes both Dover and Thanet and is the smallest area at which data is available) generated around £13.0 billion GVA (Office for National Statistics, 2025).

3.3.6 East Suffolk's GVA per head in 2023 was £26,053, which is similar to East Kent with £24,566 GVA per head. Both areas recorded lower rates than the regional average for the East of England (£31,739), the South East (£37,385) and for England (£36,632).

4. Key Skills, Supply Chain and Employment Challenges and Strengths

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section builds on the local community profile to present the key skills, supply chain, and employment challenges and opportunities most relevant to the SSCEP. It also considers the additional skills demand from other development within the study areas.

4.2 Existing Skills Assets

4.2.1 Suffolk and Kent's skills infrastructure have a number of assets which can help to respond to the challenges and opportunities identified in this report. These assets include skills networks, education institutions and training providers.

4.2.2 The skills networks currently in operation in Suffolk include:

- The Regional Skills Coordination Function (RSCF): A county-level coordination role within Suffolk County Council responsible for managing how skills demand created by major infrastructure projects is planned for, funded, and delivered in a joined-up way across Suffolk and the wider region. The RSCF exists to align major infrastructure workforce demand with local skills supply, avoid duplication and fragmentation across education, training, and employment initiatives and ensure large-scale infrastructure investment leaves a lasting skills legacy for Suffolk communities rather than short-term labour displacement.
- Building Growth Skills Network (BGSN): A regional construction sector skills network that aligns industry workforce needs with education and training provision across Norfolk and Suffolk.
- Norfolk and Suffolk Careers Hub and Enterprise Adviser Network (EAN): Careers & Enterprise Company-funded hub that partners with employers and volunteer Enterprise Advisers to strengthen careers education and connect over 145 schools and colleges with the world of work across Norfolk and Suffolk.

4.2.3 Skills networks currently in operation in Kent include:

- Kent and Medway Employment Task Force, part of the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership, supports the skills agenda at a regional strategic level with an interest in supporting major projects and sectors. The group is focused on addressing workforce skills challenges. Membership includes higher and further education, industry sector representatives, local government, Members of Parliament, the Department for Work and Pensions, employers and employer representative bodies.
- Kent and Medway Careers Hub: A regional Careers & Enterprise Company hub that brings schools, colleges, and employers together to inspire and prepare young people for the world of work.

- Skills 26: A Kent & Medway skills summit that serves as a platform for exploring regional skills challenges and opportunities, fostering collaboration between industry and education.
- Kent and Medway Skills Commission: A series of sector based employer Guilds set up by Kent County Council's Skills and Employability team to build and enhance connections between education and training providers and employers.
- Connect to Work: A voluntary employment support programme launched by the UK Government as part of the Get Britain Working Strategy. It's designed to help people who face barriers to employment such as health conditions, disabilities, or specific disadvantages find and stay in meaningful work. Alongside Medway Council, Kent County Council have funding to support more than 9,000 individuals across Kent and Medway. The scheme also offers free support to businesses to help employ people to their organisation.
- KentChoices: A digital platform run by The Education People on behalf of Kent County Council. The Employer Apprenticeship Search is an online tool that helps people find apprenticeship opportunities with employers across Kent. Users can search for live apprenticeship vacancies by entering a postcode or preferred location, enabling them to identify opportunities close to where they live or want to work.

4.2.4 There is also the South East Institute of Technology which is led by the South Essex College, with partners that are present in Kent including:

- Canterbury Christ Church University;
- MidKent College; and
- Morgan Sindall Construction.

4.2.5 An array of training providers in Suffolk help pupils develop the specific skills required in the construction industry including:

- Suffolk New College;
- West Suffolk College (a national Construction Technical Excellence College) ;
- East Coast College Lowestoft Campus;
- Learn Suffolk;
- Construction Training Services;
- Ipswich Skills Centre; and
- University of Suffolk.

4.2.6 West Suffolk College has been selected as one of ten Construction Technical Excellence Colleges (TECs) across England. Colchester Institute is also leading a bid with Suffolk New College and East Coast College to become one of five clean energy TECs nationally.

4.2.7 Notably, Suffolk New College and Sizewell C are delivering College on the Coast, a new FE campus in Leiston around 3 km from the Suffolk Onshore Scheme site. This will provide technical, vocational and academic pathways aligned to regional energy and engineering needs including an Apprenticeship & Trainee Hub and Centre of Excellence.

- 4.2.8 Kent also benefits from an array of training providers including:
- North Kent College, (a national Construction Technical Excellence College); East Kent Colleges Group (EKC) (Broadstairs College, Canterbury College, Dover and Construction Training Centre);
 - Nelson College London Broadstairs Campus;
 - University of Kent;
 - Lower Thames Crossing Skills Hub;
 - MidKent College Decarbonisation Hub; and
 - O'Halloran & O'Brien (OHOB) Group's accredited Training Academy.
- 4.2.9 In addition, Skills Bootcamps help adults gain confidence, experience and industry-focused training to move into new careers or progress in their current roles. Kent Adult Education are currently running a range of courses in the Construction sector. The cost of the Skills Bootcamps are partially funded by the Department for Education.
- 4.2.10 The EKC Group provides a comprehensive construction apprenticeship offer across East Kent, delivered through EKC Training and its network of six colleges. The Group works closely with employers to align training with local construction labour market needs and skills shortages. Notably, the EKC, in collaboration with Morgan Sindall Construction, has established, locally to the project, a Construction Academy at EKC Canterbury College to address industry skills gaps as identified in the Kent & Medway LSIP progress report (Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, 2023). The academy offers practical training, work placements, and direct industry engagement.
- 4.2.11 National Grid is an active member of the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce and Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce. The Suffolk Chamber of Commerce has a specialist supply chain team which has built a network of qualified and relevant businesses which can supply the growing energy sector in the East. Through these relationships Sea Link will be able to access the local business community and link Tier 1 supply chain with local companies.

4.3 Labour Market and Skills Projections

- 4.3.1 Labour market and skills projections produced by the Department for Education (DfE) (Department for Education, 2023) distinguish between two types of demand: i) expansion demand, which relates to the net change in the number of workers in certain occupations and ii) replacement demand, which relates to the number of workers required to replace those who have left that occupation (for example through retirement).
- 4.3.2 The projections for Kent and Medway for the period 2015-2035 show that the construction sector is forecast to require 11,000 workers to meet expansion demand and 45,000 workers to meet replacement demand. The projections for Suffolk are only available for the combined area of Suffolk and Norfolk. These show a requirement for 10,000 workers to meet expansion demand and 38,000 workers to meet replacement demand.
- 4.3.3 The forecasts show a particularly large requirement for certain roles which will also be in demand for the Proposed Project, including skilled construction and building trades, skilled metal, electrical and electronic trades, and transport and mobile machine

operatives. The LSIPs set out actions and progress on meeting key skills gaps at a regional level.

4.4 Recruitment Challenges

Regional Context

- 4.4.1 Although both Suffolk and Kent have strengths in sectors which are relatively closely tied to the transmission network supply chain, there is evidence that employers in these sectors still struggle to recruit the labour and skills they need. For instance, 2022 data from the Employers' Skills Survey shows employers in the construction sector in the East of England and South East LEP (SELEP) areas were more likely to report skills shortage vacancies (50% and 49% respectively) than the all-sector average (41% and 37% respectively). Similarly, employers in this sector were more likely to report hard to fill vacancies (Department for Education, 2025).
- 4.4.2 Further information on skills sought by employers is outlined in the LSIPs. The Kent and Medway LSIP (Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, 2023) identifies focus sectors based on analysis and conversations with sector groups. These include relevant skills in construction, manufacturing and engineering.
- 4.4.3 ONS UK vacancies data for relevant occupations shows that in the construction industry there were 28,000 vacancies between November 2025 and January 2026, which accounts for 3.9% of the total occupations in the UK (762,000) (Office for National Statistics, 2026). This number of vacancies is 13,000 lower than the same quarter of 2024/2025 and is the equivalent to a vacancy rate (vacancies per 100 employee jobs) of 1.8 compared to an average of 2.3 across all sectors.
- 4.4.4 District level data shows the labour demand volumes by industry (Office for National Statistics, 2023). East Suffolk saw an average of approximately 3.3% of online job adverts in the construction and mining sector compared to 6.2% in Dover, 4.9% in Thanet and 3.1% nationally for the same period (2017 to 2022).

Project-Specific Challenges

- 4.4.5 In addition to wider sector-level shortages, there are several project-specific recruitment pressures that could be applicable to the Proposed Project. The project requires a range of highly specialised roles, including HVDC engineers, converter station engineers, protection and control specialists, civil and structural engineers, site managers and a variety of technical trades such as high-voltage and commissioning specialists. National Grid also anticipates significant demand for offshore cable specialists to support the subsea HVDC route. Many of these capabilities are already in short supply nationally, and in several cases, especially subsea and offshore engineering, the skills base is not strongly embedded in the local labour markets of Suffolk or Kent. As a result, local availability of personnel with skills to meet some of these requirements is expected to be limited, requiring a combination of regional, national, and international procurement. The actions, detailed within Section 6.5, set out where measures, such as upskilling, can be used to maximise local benefits.
- 4.4.6 Furthermore, the wider Great Grid Upgrade programme is increasing competition for core project roles, including project managers at all levels, commercial specialists, and environment and consents professionals. Competition for local talent is expected to intensify, particularly given National Grid's desire to maximise local employment

opportunities and community benefit. It should also be noted that National Grid has historically been able to attract strong candidates, reflecting the organisation's long-standing sector presence and the scale and stability of its infrastructure programmes, which together help to support effective recruitment.

4.5 Supply Chain Strengths

- 4.5.1 Employment data from the 2024 BRES (Office for National Statistics, 2025) for Suffolk and Kent shows these areas have a number of strengths in sectors which are relatively closely tied to the transmission network supply chain.
- 4.5.2 Employment in construction, land-based transport, manufacturing, civil engineering and electric power generation, transmission and distribution sectors is more concentrated in Suffolk than the national average. In Kent construction, land-based transport, and civil engineering all have a location quotient (LQ) above 1, indicating the local economy has supply chain strengths in key sectors which could benefit from the development.
- 4.5.3 Construction is a particularly important sector to consider in the SSCEP, given that most of the local employment opportunities will be in this sector. 6.2% of Suffolk's employment is in the construction sector and 7.8% of Kent's (LQ of 1.3 and 1.6 respectively), indicating a relative strength in this sector in both counties.
- 4.5.4 There is an existing supply chain network in East Suffolk catering to the energy sector. There are well-established organisations such as: Orbis Energy (situated in Lowestoft), the East of England Energy Group (EEEGR), the New Anglia Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering group, and the East Coast Manufacturing Group.
- 4.5.5 There is also an existing supply chain in Dover and Thanet within the energy sector which includes established organisations such as East Kent Engineering Partnership, Dover Engineering Limited, and Megger Group Limited with headquarters in Dover.

4.6 Construction Sector Context

- 4.6.1 The LSIP for Norfolk and Suffolk (Norfolk and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce, 2023) identifies a number of factors that need to be addressed in order to respond to skills challenges. These include:
- Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET): A lower proportion of the population attaining degree-level qualifications; and a higher number of young people classified as NEET.
 - Specific skills shortages: Identified in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields, and the construction industry faces difficulties in recruiting skilled workers.
 - Skills gaps for digital literacy: Soft and green skills across multiple sectors, with a high concentration of low-skilled jobs and an urgent need to upskill and reskill to meet higher-value industry demand.
 - Businesses not engaging with training: The LSIP employer surveys explore possible reasons why businesses do not engage with training including: Teams being too small, with no growth plans; apprenticeships not fitting the business or being at the wrong level; and bad experiences with having apprentices.

- 4.6.2 The LSIP for Kent and Medway (Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, 2023) also identifies a number of factors that need to be addressed in order to respond to these skills challenges. These include:
- Perceptions of the industry: Employers consider that perceptions and understanding of the construction sector should be improved. Frequently, young people, parents and careers advisers tend to have an outdated idea of construction and do not understand the wide range of potential careers on offer, and the increasingly important role technology plays.
 - Volume of the offer: Overall, employers felt that the volume and availability of college-based construction courses should be increased, in subjects including trades, construction, civil engineering and construction management.
 - Transferable skills and progression: Employers highlighted more general ‘transferable’ skills, in relation to the skills, attitudes and behaviours which will enable them to progress and change role during their career and be open to change and embrace new opportunities.
 - Modernising the training offer: Employers considered that within the FE offer, there should be greater emphasis on modern methods of construction; digital skills; offering more engineering skills programmes; future built environment; and retrofitting.

4.7 Other Relevant Development

- 4.7.1 The forecasts above are derived from national projections and do not take into account local investments and developments which would also drive demand for workers.
- 4.7.2 The Proposed Project is just one of several NSIPs progressing across Suffolk and Kent, which will have broadly similar skills requirements.
- 4.7.3 NSIPs and other development within the Suffolk 60-minute Drive time Study Area and scoped into the socio-economics cumulative effects assessment (see **Application Document 6.2.2.13 Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 13 Suffolk Onshore Scheme Inter-Project Cumulative Effects [APP-060]**) include:
- The Sizewell C Project - main development site;
 - East Anglia ONE North Offshore Windfarm;
 - East Anglia TWO Offshore Windfarm;
 - Norwich to Tilbury;
 - LionLink Interconnector; and
 - South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood.
- 4.7.4 The Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP (Norfolk and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce, 2023) notes that skills required for these projects are wide ranging but include higher concentrations of engineering, project management, environmental, legal, construction and technology skills.
- 4.7.5 NSIP projects and other development within the Kent 60-minute Drive time Study Area and scoped into the socio-economics cumulative effects assessment (see **Application Document 6.2.3.13 Part 3 Suffolk Chapter 13 Kent Onshore Scheme Inter-Project Cumulative Effects [APP-073]**) include:

- Manston Airport;
- Stonelees Golf Course Expansion;
- Richborough Energy Park;
- Land Adjacent to Southern Water Waste Water Treatment Site; and
- Weatherlees Hill Wastewater Treatment Works.

4.7.6 There are a number of other developments of note that may result in overlapping regional demand for labour and skills. These range in scale from NSIP projects such as North Falls, Five Estuaries, Bramford to Twinstead, and the A12 widening scheme, to smaller-scale developments that also require construction workers.

4.7.7 Another consideration impacting construction-related skills demand in Suffolk and Kent is housebuilding. The Kent and Medway Housing Strategy 2025-2030 states that current adopted Local Plan housing requirements collectively equate to 9,528 dwellings per annum across Kent and Medway (Kent Housing Group, 2025). Similarly, Suffolk also has a policy focus on increasing the supply of housing to meet a range of needs. For example, the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (East Suffolk Council, 2020) sets a target of 542 new homes per year to 2036.

4.7.8 Development of ports in both Suffolk and Kent is expected to generate significant new employment opportunities. In Suffolk, the Freeport East programme, centred on the Port of Felixstowe and incorporating sites in and around Felixstowe, Ipswich, Stowmarket and Sudbury, is projected to create up to 13,500 new jobs, supporting wider economic growth across the region. In Kent, the £250 m Dover Western Docks Revival is designed to act as a major catalyst for regeneration, providing new employment opportunities during construction and upon completion of the new cargo facilities.

4.7.9 Although the scale of these projects presents a challenge, in terms of meeting skills demands, it also presents an opportunity as it means there is a strong pipeline of projects for people to develop their careers, attract young people to the construction industry and commit workers to the sector on a longer-term basis. Communication with other NSIPs will be made where necessary to minimise any potential issues that may arise from competition for workers from other projects in the area at the same time.

5. Economic Policy and Strategy Review

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 It is important to understand the economic development aims and aspirations of local stakeholders, as these set the context for, and are also key drivers of, the SSCEP.
- 5.1.2 For this reason, a review has been undertaken of the planning policy and economic development strategies of the administrative bodies local to the Suffolk Onshore Scheme. Documents which are relevant for the Suffolk Onshore Scheme's SSCEP are listed below, followed by the key relevant policies and messages from these documents.

5.2 National Policy

Overarching National Policy Statement (NPS) for Energy (EN-1)⁴ (Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, 2025)

- 5.2.1 Paragraph 5.13.4 of the NPS EN-1 states that all relevant socio-economic impacts should be assessed, including the following, which is of most relevance to this SSCEP:
- The creation of jobs and training opportunities. Applicants may wish to provide information on the sustainability of the jobs created, including where they will help to develop the skills needed for the UK's transition to Net Zero;
 - The provision of additional local services and improvements to local infrastructure, including the provision of educational and visitor facilities; and
 - Any indirect beneficial impacts for the region hosting the infrastructure, in particular in relation to use of local support services and supply chains.
- 5.2.2 Paragraph 5.13.12 states that the Secretary of State may wish to include a requirement that specifies the approval by the local authority of an employment and skills plan. This will detail arrangements to promote local employment and skills development opportunities, including apprenticeships, education, engagement with local schools and colleges and training programmes to be enacted.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024)

- 5.2.3 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. Section 6 of the NPPF focuses on building a strong, competitive economy and paragraph 85 introduces this by stating that, *"Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths,*

⁴ National Policy Statement for electricity networks infrastructure (EN-5) (2025) applies to electricity networks specifically but provides no further guidance on to the SSCEP additional to NPS EN-1 and therefore has not been considered further within this chapter

counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.

5.3 Regional and Local Policy and Strategy

Suffolk Coastal Local Plan 2020

- 5.3.1 **Policy SCLP3.1: Strategy for Growth:** States that the Council will promote economic growth in the area by providing a minimum of 11.7 ha of land for employment purposes, with the aim to generate 6,500 new jobs.
- 5.3.2 **Policy SCLP 3.4: Proposals for Major Energy Infrastructure Projects:** Notes that any proposals for major energy infrastructure projects must maximise economic and community benefits where feasible, through agreement of strategies in relation to employment, education and training opportunities for the local community.
- 5.3.3 **Policy SCLP4.5 Economic Development in Rural Areas:** Aims to grow and diversify the rural economy, particularly where this will secure employment locally, enable agricultural growth and diversification, and support other land based rural businesses.

Dover District Local Plan 2024

- 5.3.4 **Strategic Policy 6 Economic Growth (SP6):** Aims to support proposals which deliver economic prosperity and jobs growth, with the aim of making Dover an attractive and competitive place to start, grow and invest in a broad range of businesses.
- 5.3.5 **Policy E1 New Employment Development:** Aims to support the delivery of new employment development in Dover, in suitable and sustainable locations.

Thanet Local Plan, 2020

- 5.3.6 **Policy SP04 Economic Growth:** Aims to accommodate inward investment in job creating development, the establishment of new businesses and expansion and diversification of existing firms to achieve the goal of a minimum of 5,000 additional jobs planned for in Thanet to 2031.

Suffolk Economic Strategy and Growth Plan, 2024

- 5.3.7 The Suffolk Economic Strategy and Growth Plan provides a blueprint for economic decision-making, investments and funding priorities, focused on driving productive, inclusive and clean growth. The strategy places a strong emphasis on workforce development and infrastructure, and the clean energy sector is identified as one of Suffolks three high growth sectors.

Kent and Medway Economic Framework, 2024

- 5.3.8 **Ambition 2 Widening opportunities and unlocking talent** focuses on the skills and talent of the workforce – supporting greater employer engagement and leadership in the skills system, joining up the offer and ensuring continued investment in the skills that are needed to respond to long-term structural change.

- 5.3.9 **Ambition 3 Securing resilient infrastructure for planned, sustainable growth** focuses on securing the infrastructure that Kent and Medway needs to support long-term sustainable growth. This will include action at national as well as local level, recognising the county's stock of nationally-important infrastructure assets.

Get Suffolk Working, 2025

- 5.3.10 The Get Suffolk Working plan sets out the first steps to build a shared understanding of demand and better join up local work, health and skills support in a way that will meet the needs of Suffolk's people, businesses and communities. It focuses on the first of the 'Get Britain Working' challenges identified. Namely to reduce the amount of people excluded from the labour market by addressing economic inactivity.

Regional Skills Need Assessment Model and Analysis, 2024

- 5.3.11 The Regional Skills Need Assessment Model and Analysis provides an evidence-based framework for identifying, prioritising, and responding to current and future skills needs arising from major infrastructure and growth projects in Suffolk, including nationally significant energy / energy infrastructure developments. The assessment is led by Suffolk County Council and coordinated through the RSCF.

Annual Skills Implementation Plan, 2025

- 5.3.12 The Annual Skills Implementation Plan 2025-2026 sets out how skills and workforce development activity in Suffolk will respond to the labour demands of Sizewell C and other major infrastructure projects, while maximising long-term socio-economic benefits for the county and wider East of England. The Plan is jointly developed by Suffolk County Council, East Suffolk Council, and Sizewell C Ltd, and is coordinated through the RSCF.

Get Kent and Medway Working Plan, 2025

- 5.3.13 **Theme 3 Influence training and work supply** focuses on addressing the lack of high-level skills, especially in the Estuary Coast and Coastal Periphery areas and how this needs to connect closely to action under the Kent and Medway Economic Framework. There are also several levers identified as being available to local partners within this theme.

Suffolk Economic Strategy Evidence Base, 2025

- 5.3.14 The Suffolk Economic Strategy Evidence Base underpins the Suffolk Economic Strategy and will support the case for investment and guide delivery. The evidence base also highlights clean energy as one of Suffolk's three high growth sectors and a standout driver of growth.

Kent & Medway Local Growth Plan Evidence Base, 2026

- 5.3.15 The Kent & Medway Local Growth Plan Evidence Base sets out a summary of the detailed analysis and research findings across four key focus sectors, which includes energy. Energy is selected as one of the four deep-dive sectors due to its high value and opportunities for future growth.

Norfolk and Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan, 2023

- 5.3.16 The Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP sets out the key priorities needed to make technical education and skills provision more responsive to the changing needs of employers and the local economy. The plan outlines the key skills required across the region's vital sectors and offers a strategic roadmap to tackle skill shortages. The RSCF operates alongside the LSIP to ensure major infrastructure demand is aligned with regional skills provision.

Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan, 2023

- 5.3.17 The Kent & Medway LSIP sets out a clear, strategic roadmap to address regional skills gaps and workforce shortages, fostering greater collaboration and joint initiatives across the area. The plan provides an endorsed framework for aligning education and training provision with employer needs. An update to the Kent & Medway LSIP is currently being developed, with submission to government expected by 31 March 2026 and publication anticipated in May or June 2026. Construction is one of five priority sectors identified in the LSIP and will remain a priority sector for Kent and Medway in the 2026 LSIP refresh.

Common themes

- 5.3.18 Common themes that emerge from the Suffolk policy and strategy review include the need to:
- Provide high-quality education and training;
 - Attract inward investment in East Suffolk, focused around existing and emerging sectors and supply chains;
 - Develop education, training and skills related opportunities which ensure that residents have the appropriate skills to meet the specific needs of the Suffolk economy;
 - Ensure that apprenticeships and other work placement related initiatives are actively promoted and fully supported; and
 - Make connections between young people and local employers, particularly in the key sectors.
- 5.3.19 Common themes that emerge from the Kent policy and strategy review include the need to:
- Develop the skills of the workforce and residents to retain and build a labour market needed in a post-pandemic and post-EU economy;
 - Develop a highly skilled workforce that can meet the demands of industry;
 - Support people to transition between and across sectors;
 - Help to increase access to learning, at all levels, for coastal and rural communities; and
 - Work with businesses, schools and further / higher education providers to improve workforce skills.

5.4 Conclusion

- 5.4.1 Planning policies and economic development strategies relevant to the Suffolk Onshore Scheme and Kent Onshore Scheme exist at the national, regional, and local levels.
- 5.4.2 The relevant Local Plans for the areas identify energy infrastructure as an important sector and aim to promote opportunities for the local workforce and supply chain, attempting to set conditions for advancement in high quality education and training, and provide diverse job opportunities for the local community. LSIPs provide regional level information which enables the local skills systems to become better equipped with information, more responsive and employer-led.
- 5.4.3 The SSCEP aligns with, and is in accordance with, relevant local and national planning policies and strategies relating to skills, employment and the supply chain. It supports the delivery of the aims set out in regional and local planning policy and strategy that are relevant to the SSCEP.

6. Themes & Actions

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 This section sets out the actions National Grid will implement as part of the SSCEP, drawing on National Grid's wider national and regional programmes relevant to the themes of Skills, Supply Chain and Employment.
- 6.1.2 The Proposed Project will integrate with existing programmes rather than create new standalone initiatives. The actions have been developed to reflect the likely economic impacts of the Proposed Project and the context outlined in Sections 2, 4 and 5. They are proportionate to the scale of employment anticipated to be created and aligned with wider regional activity. It is worth noting that National Grid's existing activities across skills, employment and the supply chain demonstrate the organisation's strong social value initiatives and impacts. There are opportunities to deploy these existing activities locally, for the benefit of local businesses, employees, communities and residents.

6.2 Skills

- 6.2.1 Skills activities are an important element of the SSCEP because they enable local people to access project opportunities whilst also helping meet workforce needs. Delivery of the Proposed Project will require a broad range of skills and disciplines (see Table 2.3), creating opportunities for targeted training and education initiatives that can benefit local residents and strengthen the future workforce pipeline. This section outlines the existing skills strategies, frameworks and programmes that the Proposed Project will align with.

National Skills Strategy

- 6.2.2 The Proposed Project will be aligned with National Grid's national skills strategy. National Grid's skills strategy is focused on "Building the skills for our energy future: Delivering opportunities for all" (National Grid, 2025c). The National Grid skills report highlights the urgent need to address a growing skills shortage as the UK undertakes its largest overhaul of the electricity grid in decades. With unprecedented investment planned to meet clean-power and economic growth targets, the sector faces significant gaps in experienced workers and critical technical competencies. The report stresses that this challenge cannot be solved by industry alone and calls for coordinated action from government, industry, and Ofgem to create a cohesive national skills strategy aligned with broader economic and industrial policy.
- 6.2.3 As established in the strategy there is currently poor take-up of STEM subjects within schools and colleges, and the UK's workforce of engineers is aging. This implies a potential shortage of the technical and professional skills required to deliver the Proposed Project and other large infrastructure projects in the future. National Grid are focused on unlocking opportunities for future generations through an ambitious curriculum which focuses on applied STEM learning in schools. This includes a commitment to develop long-term Strategic Workforce Plans (National Grid, 2025c).

- 6.2.4 To close the skills gap, the skills strategy identifies three priority areas: understanding future workforce requirements, strengthening investment in training and talent development, and expanding applied STEM learning to equip future generations for clean-energy careers. The report also emphasises the importance of inclusive opportunities, ensuring the future energy workforce reflects the diverse communities it serves, and creating secure, well-paid jobs across all regions of the UK.
- 6.2.5 In addition, National Grid partners with the Supply Chain Sustainability School and the Sustainable Supply Chain Alliance to support upskilling and promote sustainability best practice across its priority suppliers. Further detail on skills development in the supply chain is set out in Section 6.4.
- 6.2.6 National level strategies and programmes can be utilised to deliver meaningful local benefits. Through alignment with National Grid’s national skills initiatives, the Proposed Project can support local skills pipelines, enhance access to training and employment opportunities. This approach helps ensure that National Grid’s investment in skills and workforce planning contributes to local economic resilience, supports community outcomes, and strengthens the availability of skilled labour required to deliver the Proposed Project and future infrastructure development.

Regional Skills Strategy

- 6.2.7 National Grid will seek to influence skills policy at a regional level. National Grid is a member of the East of England Energy Group (EEEGR), which represents more than 235 organisations across the regional energy sector and provides access to its established Skills for Energy programme (East of England Energy Group, 2026b). National Grid intends to continue to engage with EEEGR on Skills, Supply Chain and Employment matters related to the Proposed Project, as well as wider project activity and regional engagement, ensuring alignment with industry initiatives and local workforce development priorities.

Social Contract and Approach to Social Mobility

- 6.2.8 The Proposed Project will align with both National Grid’s Social Contract and approach to social mobility.
- 6.2.9 National Grid’s Social Contract sets out the organisation’s commitment to being a responsible corporate citizen. Key recent achievements include: £1 m awarded through the Community Matters Fund benefiting 40,000 people; 85,000 students reached with electrical safety education; 11 interns hired through partnerships with the 10,000 Interns Foundation and Change 100; and over 10,000 hours of employee volunteering completed (National Grid, 2025a). The Social Contract is updated annually with a progress report and action plan.
- 6.2.10 National Grid is committed to improving social mobility and was ranked 42nd in the 2024 UK Social Mobility Index (National Grid, 2025b). Alongside this, the organisation continues to invest in developing future talent, including welcoming 161 UK graduates through its three-pathway graduate scheme focused on capability and leadership development (National Grid, 2025b).

Pathways to Progress

- 6.2.11 National Grid's Pathways to Progress programme provides career and employability support for all ages; early careers support is already accessible to young people in both Suffolk and Kent through delivery partners Young Enterprise and Catch22.
- 6.2.12 Young Enterprise delivers in-person masterclasses in schools and colleges, offering industry insight, employability skills and exposure to National Grid volunteers. Catch22 provides online and outreach-based activities, enabling young people across both counties to join insight events, taster sessions and early-career support.
- 6.2.13 A local example of a partnership between a NSIP and Catch22 is the National Grid Ventures LionLink project. In 2025, National Grid Ventures and Catch22 launched a Social Mobility Initiative in Suffolk aimed at opening up opportunities for young people by addressing key barriers to employment. The initiative provides targeted support for:
- Transportation costs: funding for theory test and driving lessons of specific groups of young people facing significant challenges.
 - Digital access: assistance with internet and phone costs for job searching.
 - Professional clothing: funding for interview clothing to ensure a confident first impression.
 - Skills development: support for training courses to enhance employability.
- 6.2.14 For those aged 25 and over National Grid has partnered with STEM Returners, an organisation which, among other initiatives, aims to help professionals return to work after a career break, through training and employment opportunities in the energy sector. National Grid's Returner programme provides practical routes to re-skill or upskill on the job, allowing individuals to be reintegrated into an inclusive environment on their return to roles including those focused on STEM skills. The structured placement programme provides additional support which includes access to coaching, mentoring, and a wider support network. In all 43% of the individuals who joined National Grid's programme were female, which compares to 25.2% of the total UK workforce of core-STEM employees. Since it was piloted, 23 returners have joined National Grid's programme, with 21 of those individuals being made permanent after its completion. In addition, through partnership with Generating Genius, National Grid provides tailored opportunities for high performing undergraduates from low or no-income backgrounds to support progression into meaningful roles. For example, the Bramford to Twinstead project has hosted five Generating Genius students on paid work placements, resulting in four progressing into careers within National Grid and the other into a career in the wider energy sector.
- 6.2.15 For the Proposed Project, National Grid will signpost local authorities and education partners to National Grid's existing Pathways to Progress programme, delivered in Suffolk and Kent through Young Enterprise and Catch22, as well as share information where relevant related to opportunities in the wider National Grid Pathways to Progress programme (STEM Returners and Generating Genius). National Grid expects to draw on these established national initiatives, rather than creating new programmes, to support awareness of energy-sector careers and provide accessible pathways for young people in the region.

Apprenticeships

- 6.2.16 Apprenticeships provide a structured route for developing skilled labour for major infrastructure projects, combining paid employment with accredited training, and offering a cost-effective approach for employers while supporting local workforce development.

- 6.2.17 In Suffolk, apprenticeship provision is supported by Apprenticeships Suffolk, the County Council's impartial service that helps employers and residents access opportunities across the region. Key providers include Suffolk New College, offering apprenticeships from its Ipswich, rural and coastal campuses, and West Suffolk College, which delivers programmes across East Anglia. Additional specialist providers, such as WS Training, Swarm Training, Realise, Steadfast Training, Outstanding Futures, MPCT, The British Racing School, and TACS Training, offer programmes across sectors relevant to the Proposed Project's supply chain, including business services, engineering support, logistics, property, and care.
- 6.2.18 In Kent, apprenticeship training is delivered through a similarly broad network. This includes Kent Training & Apprenticeships, a long-established work-based training service operated by Kent County Council. Specialist providers such as ABM Training and TACS Training also operate locally, offering apprenticeships across business administration, leadership, property, manufacturing and other sectors relevant to Proposed Project's contractor and supply chain needs.
- 6.2.19 East Kent Colleges Group are a potential primary provider of apprenticeships in the local area of the Kent Onshore Scheme, given its location and focus on construction based apprenticeships. Discussion directly with providers such as East Kent Colleges Group may be made in advance of construction (2026/2027) allowing for the college to assess and action any courses or opportunities.
- 6.2.20 Together, the training infrastructure across Suffolk and Kent provides wide sector coverage and flexible delivery models, enabling contractors and supply chain partners to access apprenticeship pathways aligned with the skills required during construction and operation. This established ecosystem provides a robust foundation for supporting local participation without requiring new training provision.
- 6.2.21 In addition, National Grid also operates well-established apprenticeship programmes across engineering, technical and commercial areas. Ofsted's most recent inspection (Ofsted, 2025) rated National Grid as an Outstanding Provider, with over 160 apprentices enrolled in transmission programmes at Eakring at the time of inspection, demonstrating strong organisational capability in delivering high-quality technical training. These existing programmes provide structured pathways that may support workforce needs relevant to the Proposed Project. National Grid will share information on existing Ofsted-recognised apprenticeship programmes for roles that may align with the Proposed Project.
- 6.2.22 Where aligned with project requirements and training capacity, National Grid apprentices may undertake tasks associated with the Proposed Project and wider Great Grid Upgrade through National Grid or its contractors.
- 6.2.23 Suppliers may also play a key role in providing apprentices with experience and training in the industry. A key supplier to the Proposed Project, Siemens, welcomed 140 new apprentices in autumn across the UK, bringing the total in entry-level programmes to 450. National Grid will encourage suppliers to make use of apprenticeships on the Proposed Project wherever appropriate, helping to broaden participation across the supply chain and support local skills development, consistent with wider NSIP principles that emphasise collaboration with local providers. Related to this, National Grid will provide key Tier 1 contractors with a list of existing apprenticeship and vocational training providers in Suffolk and Kent (e.g., Suffolk New College, West Suffolk College, Kent Training & Apprenticeships).

6.3 Employment

- 6.3.1 National Grid, on the Proposed Project, will require contractors and supply chain partners to adopt fair, open and locally responsive recruitment practices, supporting local employment and workforce diversity. These expectations are secured through National Grid's procurement processes and existing contractual requirements, and will be supported by engagement with local training and employability infrastructure in Suffolk and Kent.
- 6.3.2 The expected employment benefits of the Proposed Project are shown in Section 2.2. This section discusses the actions/activities that will be undertaken to maximise employment benefits for local people and disadvantaged groups.

Local Recruitment

- 6.3.3 Recruiting locally boosts economic resilience by keeping wages circulating within the community, through the economic multiplier effects, while strengthening community investment. It also supports higher workforce retention since shorter commutes improve job satisfaction and contributes to inclusive growth by reducing barriers for residents who might otherwise struggle to access employment.
- 6.3.4 National Grid roles are advertised nationally. In some instances, vacancies are advertised by geographic area and/or within an approximate one hour travel time of the Proposed Project. This approach varies depending on the nature of the role and the level of experience required. National Grid or its contractors are:
- Developing a strengthened regional hiring strategy for FY27, focused on attracting and securing this talent locally. This will be supported by early engagement with supply chain partners and proactive attraction and workforce planning measures across both regions. These activities are intended to mitigate recruitment risks and improve access to niche engineering, construction, and offshore skills as project demand increases.
 - Promoting awareness of employment opportunities associated with the Proposed Project through established local channels (e.g. local authorities, job-brokerage services, colleges, Apprenticeships Suffolk and Kent Training & Apprenticeships), enabling residents to access suitable roles where available.
 - Encouraging contractors and supply chain partners to adopt recruitment approaches that consider local labour markets in Suffolk and Kent, including engaging with existing job-matching and employment support services in both counties.

Diversity of the Workforce

- 6.3.5 Large, complex infrastructure schemes benefit from teams that reflect the varied communities they serve, bringing a wider range of perspectives, problem-solving approaches and lived experience to project decision-making. Ensuring that opportunities are accessible to people from different backgrounds also strengthens local trust, supports fair access to employment, and helps National Grid build a resilient, skilled and representative workforce capable of meeting the future demands of the energy transition. National Grid and its contractors will:

- Encourage fair and inclusive recruitment practices across the supply chain, consistent with National Grid’s organisational approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Request that contractors use open and accessible recruitment methods, reducing barriers faced by underrepresented groups, without placing additional resource obligations on National Grid.
- Promote the use of existing local partners who support disadvantaged or underrepresented jobseekers (e.g. job-brokerage organisations, employability providers), as part of supply chain engagement actions.
- Encourage suppliers to offer equal access to apprenticeships, building on National Grid’s existing Ofsted-recognised apprenticeship model (Outstanding Provider status) without committing new internal programmes.
- Support supply chain partners in signposting applicants to appropriate local training or support provision (e.g. Apprenticeships Suffolk; KT&A), ensuring diverse candidates are not excluded from opportunities.
- Recruit people with experience in other areas of infrastructure, including the gas, water, telecoms and logistics sectors, and then upskill them for work on electricity transmission projects. The Sea Link Project Team has employees formerly in the logistics, motor trade, gas power, steel work, water and scaffold industries, two of which are within travelling distance of the Suffolk Onshore Scheme site.

Employee Volunteering

- 6.3.6 Volunteering Works supports National Grid’s Responsible Business Charter aim of reaching 200,000 volunteering hours by 2030. Volunteering activity aims to engage teams from across National Grid in different types of volunteering activities; with charities, local community groups, schools and colleges, and sharing a variety of personal and/or professional skills aligned to National Grid’s Skills & Employment, Environmental Justice, Positive Action of Climate Change, and Energy Affordability aims.
- 6.3.7 Subject to availability and operational constraints, the Sea Link Project Team will undertake volunteering activity annually through National Grid’s Volunteering Works programme, delivering volunteering in local communities across Suffolk and Kent.

6.4 Supply Chain

- 6.4.1 National Grid will take the measures set out below to maximise benefits to local businesses from spending on goods and services, associated with the Proposed Project, during each phase.

Meet the Buyer Events

- 6.4.2 ‘Meet the Buyer’ events, which National Grid hold regularly with their supply chain across England and Wales, provide an effective mechanism for maximising local economic benefits by creating early, direct connections between major project contractors and the local supply chain. These events help ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are aware of upcoming contract opportunities, understand project requirements, and can position themselves to compete for work. By

improving visibility and reducing barriers to entry, Meet the Buyer events support greater local procurement, stimulate business growth, and help retain economic value within host communities. They also enable contractors to better understand regional capabilities, identify suitable local partners, and strengthen the resilience and diversity of the supply chain, ultimately supporting local employment, skills development, and wider social value outcomes.

- 6.4.3 A recent National Grid example of effective local supply-chain engagement is the Eastern Green Link 2 project's Meet the Buyer events held in Peterhead and Goole, which attracted over 250 representatives from businesses across Aberdeenshire and North Yorkshire (National Grid, 2025d). The events enabled local suppliers to meet the project's principal contractors and explore opportunities to support delivery of the converter stations, with interest spanning a wide range of sectors from civil engineering and haulage to catering, IT, and specialist services such as archaeology and first-aid training. Feedback from the Peterhead event highlighted strong local appetite to participate, with contractors noting the breadth of capability within the region and the value of early engagement in supporting jobs, strengthening local supply chains, and increasing community involvement in major infrastructure delivery. This provides a best practice example for conducting future Meet the Buyer based engagement that National Grid would undertake.
- 6.4.4 National Grid are active members of Suffolk Chamber of Commerce and Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce. Suffolk Chamber of Commerce has a specialist supply chain team partly funded by Sizewell C. It has built a network of qualified and relevant businesses which can supply the growing energy sector in the East. Through these relationships the Proposed Project will be able to access the local business community and link Tier 1 supply chain with local companies. To support local economic participation for the Proposed Project, National Grid would work with partners, including the Kent and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce, to hold 'Meet the Buyer' style engagement at suitable points in the procurement process, where proportionate and aligned with established project procedures.
- 6.4.5 National Grid have met with Kent and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce to discuss matters such as local supply chain opportunities for businesses, including maximising the use of SMEs. Both organisations are keen to continue to work with each other to maximise the benefits for both communities and businesses in the local area (National Grid, 2025d).
- 6.4.6 These events will provide a structured mechanism for enabling contractors to engage with local suppliers and for evidencing how they are meeting commitments to utilise local subcontractors where practicable, in accordance with their broader social value obligations. Delivery of these events in partnership with regional Chambers of Commerce will help ensure visibility of opportunities and effective engagement with the local business base.
- 6.4.7 National Grid's collaboration with Chambers of Commerce across Kent, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk will also support wider objectives to strengthen regional supply chains and increase access to skills and employment opportunities associated with the Proposed Project.
- 6.4.8 These initiatives align with National Grid's broader approach to enhancing UK supply chain capability, supporting domestic manufacturing, and contributing to the development of the skilled workforce required to deliver a cleaner and more secure energy system.

Key Sea Link Suppliers - Supplier Obligations Already in National Grid Frameworks

- 6.4.9 National Grid has selected Siemens Energy as the contractor for the Proposed Project's HVDC converter stations in Suffolk and Kent and Minster substation. Sumitomo Electric has been selected as the contractor for the HVDC and HVAC Cables. These key suppliers operate within National Grid's established supplier frameworks, which set out clear expectations for responsible delivery, including standards relating to supply chain management, skills and ethical labour.
- 6.4.10 The commitments described below do not create new obligations. They reflect existing supplier commitments that will support the Project's social, environmental and economic outcomes.

Collaborative Working and Local Responsiveness

- 6.4.11 The key suppliers have committed to working collaboratively with National Grid and relevant stakeholders to support positive outcomes for communities and the environment. Their approach is informed by recognised best practice and local evidence, ensuring activity is responsive to priorities in Kent and Suffolk.

Supply Chain Standards and Responsible Delivery

- 6.4.12 The key suppliers have committed to delivering the Project in line with National Grid's Supplier Code of Conduct and recognised standards for safe, considerate and sustainable construction and procurement. These commitments are promoted across their supply chains to support consistent standards at all levels of delivery.

Ethical Labour and Fair Treatment

- 6.4.13 Both key suppliers have committed to continuous improvement in ethical labour and fair treatment practices across their supply chains. Progress in this area will be monitored to ensure commitments remain effective and aligned with recognised best practice.

Skills Development and Early Careers

- 6.4.14 Skills development and early careers progression form part of the suppliers' wider organisational commitments, including support for apprenticeships, internships and graduate pathways within their UK operations.
- 6.4.15 The key suppliers also undertake engagement activity to promote careers in the energy sector and support pathways into employment and training aligned with the Project and the transition to a low-carbon energy system.
- 6.4.16 Setting out specific commitments to achieve year-on-year improvements in ethical labour practices across the project. Delivery against this plan will be monitored through mandatory quarterly reporting to ensure ongoing compliance and continuous progress.

6.5 Summary of SSCEP Key Actions and Activities

- 6.5.1 Based on the overview of themes and activities, National Grid has identified key actions for each of the three themes of the SSCEP.

6.5.2 This section consolidates all key actions set out previously within Section 6 into a single list, presented within Table 6.1, providing a clear summary of the commitments that will guide delivery of the SSCEP. The purpose of each action and alignment with National Grid policy and relevant national, regional and local policy and strategy is also set out for each action.

Table 6.1 Summary of SSCEP Key Actions and Activities

Theme	Actions and Activities	Purpose	Summary Policy Alignment
Skills	1. National Grid will actively support skills outreach through its Pathways to Progress programme, working with education partners such as STEM Returners, Young Enterprise, Catch22 and Accelerating Genius to promote STEM skills and energy sector career pathways linked to the Project.	Increase awareness of STEM careers and improve access to skills pathways relevant to the Proposed Project and the wider energy sector.	Aligns with National Grid’s Social Value and Skills commitments, supports national policy objectives on skills, education and workforce development, and aligns with regional and local priorities to promote STEM engagement and access to high-value careers.
	2. Provide key Tier 1 contractors with a list of existing apprenticeship and vocational training providers in Suffolk and Kent (e.g., Suffolk New College, West Suffolk College, Kent Training & Apprenticeships).	Support contractor engagement with established local training provision.	Aligns with National Grid’s skills and supply chain principles, supports national policy objectives on apprenticeships and technical education, and supports local skills and employment strategies.
	3. Share information on National Grid’s existing Ofsted-recognised apprenticeship programmes for roles that may align with the Proposed Project.	Encourage take up of recognised training routes aligned with the Proposed Project’s skills needs.	Aligns with National Grid’s early careers and workforce development policies and supports national policy on high quality apprenticeships and skills pathways.
	4. Refer contractors to established employability and job-matching services (e.g., Apprenticeships Suffolk, Kent Training & Apprenticeships) as part of mobilisation discussions. This may include opportunities to run Skills Bootcamps.	Support connections between contractors and local labour market services.	Aligns with National Grid’s responsible procurement approach, supports national and local policy objectives on employability and job brokerage and local labour market access.

Theme	Actions and Activities	Purpose	Summary Policy Alignment
	5. Making use of local platforms in Kent and Suffolk to promote apprenticeships to local people and local employers.	Increase awareness of apprenticeship opportunities linked to the Proposed Project and encourage uptake by local residents and businesses.	Aligns with National Grid’s skills, early careers and engagement policies. Supports national apprenticeship and workforce development policy and aligns with regional and local priorities to promote local employment, skills progression and inclusive access to training opportunities.
	6. Where relevant and beneficial, engagement with local providers and job matching services will take place in advance of construction (during 2026–2027).	Enable early engagement to support provider planning, identify relevant training and employment pathways, and ensure local capacity is in place to respond to construction-phase skills and recruitment demand.	Aligns with National Grid’s forward-planning and workforce development approach, supports national policy objectives on skills planning and capacity building, and aligns with regional and local skills strategies that promote proactive engagement between employers and education providers to meet future labour market needs.
Employment	7. Develop and implement a strengthened regional hiring strategy (FY27) to proactively attract and secure specialist engineering, construction, and offshore skills in Suffolk and Kent, supported by early supply chain engagement and coordinated workforce planning.	Support the Proposed Project’s delivery by improving access to the skills required at regional level.	Aligns with National Grid workforce planning policies, supports national planning policy objectives on employment and economic growth and responds to regional skills and labour market strategies.
	8. Promote awareness of employment opportunities using existing local channels (e.g., councils, job-brokerage services, FE networks) in Suffolk and Kent.	Increase visibility of the Proposed Project related to employment opportunities locally.	Aligns with National Grid’s inclusive employment commitments, supports national policy on local employment and economic participation, and aligns

Theme	Actions and Activities	Purpose	Summary Policy Alignment
			with local authority employment objectives.
	9. Encourage contractors to follow fair, inclusive and locally responsive recruitment practices aligned with National Grid’s existing diversity and inclusion policies.	Support fair access to employment and inclusive recruitment outcomes.	Aligns with National Grid diversity and inclusion policies, supports national policy on equal opportunities and inclusive growth, and aligns with local inclusion strategies.
	10. Request contractors to use open and accessible recruitment methods to reduce barriers for underrepresented groups, including the use of local projects and programmes designed to support inclusive employment.	Support equality of opportunity in Proposed Project’s recruitment.	Aligns with National Grid inclusion policies and social value framework, and supports national policy objectives on inclusive employment.
	11. Signpost contractors to local training and employability services (e.g., FE colleges, Apprenticeships Suffolk, Kent Training & Apprenticeships) to support inclusive and local recruitment pathways.	Support inclusive recruitment pathways and local workforce participation.	Aligns with National Grid’s skills and social value commitments, and supports national and local employability and skills strategies.
	12. Inform local authorities annually of major project milestones using existing engagement routes to support their employment planning.	Support local workforce and employment planning.	Aligns with National Grid stakeholder engagement policy, and supports national planning policy emphasis on collaboration with local authorities.
	13. Coordinate dedicated employee-volunteering days through National Grid’s Volunteering Works programme, enabling Sea Link project staff to support local schools, colleges, charities and community groups in Suffolk and Kent through	Enable skills based volunteering and positive community contribution related to the Proposed Project.	Aligns with National Grid social value strategy, and supports national planning policy objectives on community benefit and social wellbeing.

Theme	Actions and Activities	Purpose	Summary Policy Alignment
	skills-based volunteering and community improvement activities.		
Supply Chain	14. Signpost local suppliers to opportunities using existing regional partners (e.g., Kent and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce), where proportionate and aligned with procurement timelines.	Support awareness of supply chain opportunities among local businesses.	Aligns with National Grid responsible procurement policy, supports national planning policy on supporting local economies and SMEs, and aligns with regional economic strategies.
	15. Hold Meet the Buyer style engagement through existing partner networks, without committing to National Grid-led events. This will involve sharing of information on requirements and timings so that local firms will have ample opportunity to bid. National Grid will coordinate with the Kent and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce regarding the Meet the Buyer engagement.	Facilitate early visibility of supply chain opportunities.	Aligns with National Grid supplier engagement principles, and supports national and regional objectives on supply chain capability and SME access.
	16. Direct contractors to existing National Grid supplier standards (e.g., Supplier Code of Conduct) as part of normal procurement processes.	Promote consistent standards of responsible supply chain behaviour.	Aligns with National Grid Supplier Code of Conduct and sustainability policies, and supports national policy on responsible business practice.
	17. Encourage contractors to consider local and diverse suppliers during procurement, consistent with their existing contractual and social value obligations.	Support inclusive and regionally responsive supply chain participation.	Aligns with National Grid social value and procurement policies, and supports national planning policy on inclusive growth and local economic benefit.

7. Delivery

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 This section outlines how the SSCEP will be delivered, including high-level roles, responsibilities and timelines, ensuring a coordinated and proportionate approach appropriate to the scale of the Proposed Project.

7.2 Organisational Framework and Internal Joint Working

- 7.2.1 The SSCEP will be delivered through an internal framework that enables coordinated planning, delivery and review across relevant National Grid functions. Activities will be grouped into appropriate work areas, with collaboration between internal teams and engagement with external partners, including local authorities, training providers and employability organisations, where this supports effective and proportionate delivery.
- 7.2.2 Successful delivery of the SSCEP will involve joint working between the Proposed Project Team and wider National Grid functions, including commercial, community engagement, HR/personnel and project management teams. This coordination will ensure that employment, skills and supply chain considerations are integrated into project planning and delivery.
- 7.2.3 Internal coordination will also take place between teams responsible for the Community Benefits Scheme and those implementing SSCEP actions, to support consistent messaging and ensure complementary activities. Regular touchpoints will be used to share workforce forecasts, engagement plans and local intelligence, helping ensure that information provided to councils, providers and community partners is coherent and aligned. This approach will streamline delivery, avoid duplication, and help ensure that activities collectively maximise positive outcomes for local communities.

7.3 Engagement with External Stakeholders

- 7.3.1 Engagement with external stakeholders during SSCEP delivery will follow a proportionate and targeted approach, reflecting the Proposed Project's scale.
- 7.3.2 Consultation meetings were held on 20 March 2026 with Kent County Council, Thanet District Council and Dover District Council, and on 23 March 2026 with Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council. Comments raised during these meetings, together with written feedback received subsequently, have been taken into account in the preparation of the SSCEP, and the document has been updated accordingly.
- 7.3.3 Continued regular engagement with key local partners and stakeholders will be important to ensure the project remains informed about the evolving skills, employment, and supply chain landscape. These ongoing touch points will also enable local organisations to provide effective support. National Grid will participate in existing stakeholder groups across Kent and Suffolk to keep partners informed of progress and to identify opportunities for support relating to skills development and training. For example, National Grid will engage with the RSCF within Suffolk.

- 7.3.4 National Grid will also regularly coordinate with the Kent Invicta and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce prior to and during construction regarding the Meet the Buyer engagement to help create early, direct connections between major project contractors and the local supply chain.
- 7.3.5 Where appropriate and beneficial, discussions directly with training and education providers and established job matching services will be made in advance of construction, allowing for providers to assess and action any courses or opportunities.
- 7.3.6 Ongoing engagement with local authorities will include annual strategic meetings and shorter operational check-ins to discuss workforce updates, recruitment timelines and training needs. Engagement will also involve selective participation in relevant skills events and collaboration with priority colleges, training providers and employability organisations.
- 7.3.7 National Grid will internally review SSCEP activity, drawing primarily on information already generated through normal project management, supplier reporting and engagement processes. This will involve annually reviewing progress against the actions outlined in Section 5, using existing internal updates, contractor feedback and discussions with local authorities.
- 7.3.8 National Grid will also focus on identifying whether activities remain aligned with project needs and local priorities. Insights gathered through ongoing engagement and routine project oversight will be used to inform proportional adjustments to delivery where appropriate.
- 7.3.9 Where relevant and practical, National Grid may share high-level qualitative updates with local authorities through existing engagement channels. These updates will be descriptive rather than quantitative.
- 7.3.10 Communication with other NSIPs will be made where necessary to minimise any potential issues that may arise from the competition for workers, equipment and materials from other projects in the area at the same time.
- 7.3.11 Where, during delivery of the Proposed Project, it becomes necessary to deviate temporarily from the provisions of this SSCEP, any such derogation will be discussed and agreed with the relevant local planning authority, where required, and recorded through existing project governance arrangements. Where an amendment to this Plan is required, this will be subject to agreement with the relevant local planning authority in accordance with the provisions in DCO requirement 5. Any approved amendment will be implemented in place of the previously approved version of the SSCEP.

7.4 Timelines

7.4.1 Table 7.1 sets out the high-level timeline for developing and delivering the SSCEP. These milestones may be refined as the project progresses and in response to statutory requirements and construction sequencing.

Table 7.1 Timelines for Developing and Delivering the Plan

Key Milestones	Actions
2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to engage with local stakeholders• Work with contractor(s) to plan how any requirements in contracts will be delivered during the construction period
2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early SSCEP activities in progress• Continue to engage with local stakeholders
2028-2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue delivery of early SSCEP activities• Once construction has started, the SSCEP activities and outputs will be fully in delivery• Continue to engage with local stakeholders.

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