

The Great Grid Upgrade

Sea Link

Sea Link

Volume 7: Other Documents

Document 7.4.14: Statement of Common Ground Between National Grid Electricity Transmission and the Sandwich Port and Haven Commissioners.

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Version

Date	Version	Status	Description / Changes
March 2025	A	DRAFT	Application Submission
March 2026	B	DRAFT	Issued to PINS at Deadline 5
April 2026	C	FINAL	Issued to PINS at Deadline 7

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared to support the application (“The Application”) for the Sea Link Project (“Proposed Project”) made by National Grid Electricity Transmission Ltd (“the Applicant”). The Application was submitted to the Secretary of State for a Development Consent Order (DCO) and accepted for examination on the 23 April 2025.
- 1.1.2 A Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) is an established means in the planning process of allowing all parties to identify and focus on specific issues that may need to be addressed during the Examination. It is prepared jointly between the applicant and another party(s) and sets out matters of agreement between both parties, as well as matters where there is not an agreement. It also details matters that are under discussion.
- 1.1.3 The aim of a SoCG is to help the Examining Authority manage the Examination Phase of a DCO application. Understanding the status of the matters at hand will allow the Examining Authority to focus their questioning and provide greater predictability for all participants in examination. A SoCG may be submitted prior to the start of or during Examination and then updated as necessary or as requested during the Examination Phase.

1.2 This Statement of Common Ground

- 1.2.1 This SoCG has been prepared between the Applicant and Sandwich Port and Haven Commissioners (SPHC). It has been prepared in accordance with the guidance published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024).
- 1.2.2 An early draft SoCG was prepared by the Applicant to submit with the DCO application, based on engagement with SPHC throughout development of the Proposed Project. Since the submission of the Application, the Applicant has continued to work with SPHC to resolve issues as the project progresses through the Pre-Examination and Examination phases.
- 1.2.3 This SoCG will be progressed during the pre-examination and examination periods to reach a final position between the Applicant and SPHC and to clarify if any issues remain unresolved. This SoCG will be revised and updated as appropriate and/or required by the Examining Authority at relevant examination deadlines.
- 1.2.4 For the purpose of this SoCG, the Applicant and the SPHC will jointly be referred to as the “Parties”. When referencing the SPHC alone, they will be referred to as “the Consultee”.

1.3 Role of the Sandwich Port and Haven Commissioners in the DCO Process

- 1.3.1 The Consultee is a Trust Port, which is an independent statutory body, governed by a local independent board. The Consultee is managed by the Sandwich Port and Haven Commissioners for the benefit of all stakeholders/users. The Consultee works to manage,

maintain and improve the Port of Sandwich for the benefit of both users today and future users.

1.3.2 The Consultee was established under the 1925 Sandwich Port and Haven Act of Parliament that set up the Sandwich Port and Haven Commission, which covers an area from North Poulders Sluice and out into Pegwell Bay.

1.3.3 The Proposed Project would involve cables that could impact the operations of the Consultee. As such, it is important to consider the opinions and questions raised by the Consultee in order to ensure the Proposed Project can be developed safely and with as little detriment to the users of the Consultee and the environment as possible.

1.4 Description of the Proposed Project

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.4.7 The Proposed Project would comprise the following elements:

The Suffolk Onshore Scheme

- A connection from the existing transmission network via Friston Substation, including the substation itself. Friston Substation already has development consent as part of other third-party projects. If Friston Substation has already been constructed under another consent, only a connection into the substation would be constructed as part of the Proposed Project.
- A high voltage alternating current (HVAC) underground cable of approximately 1.9 km in length between the proposed Friston Substation and a proposed converter station (below).

- A 2 GW high voltage direct current (HVDC) converter station (including permanent access from the B1121 and a new bridge over the River Fromus) up to 26 m high plus external equipment (such as lightning protection, safety rails for maintenance works, ventilation equipment, aerials, similar small scale operational plant, or other roof treatment) near Saxmundham.
- A HVDC underground cable connection of approximately 10 km in length between the proposed converter station near Saxmundham, and a transition joint bay (TJB) approximately 900 m inshore from a landfall point (below) where the cable transitions from onshore to offshore technology.
- A landfall on the Suffolk coast (between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness).

The Offshore Scheme

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

The Kent Onshore Scheme

- A landfall point on the Kent coast at Pegwell Bay.
- A TJB approximately 800 m inshore to transition from offshore HVDC cable to onshore HVDC cable, before continuing underground for approximately 1.7 km to a new converter station (below).
- A 2 GW HVDC converter station (including a new permanent access off the A256), up to 28 m high plus external equipment such as lightning protection, safety rails for maintenance works, ventilation equipment, aerials, and similar small scale operational plant near Minster. A new substation would be located immediately adjacent.
- Removal of approximately 2.2 km of existing HVAC overhead line, and installation of two sections of new HVAC overhead line, together totalling approximately 3.5 km, each connecting from the substation near Minster and the existing Richborough to Canterbury overhead line.

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

1.5 Format of Document and Terminology

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

1.5.2 Section 3 of this SoCG summarises the issues that are ‘agreed’, ‘not agreed’ or are ‘under discussion’. ‘Not agreed’ indicates a final position where the Parties have agreed to disagree, whilst ‘Agreed’ indicates where the issue has been resolved.

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

Table 1.1 Abbreviations

Abbreviation/Term	Definition
DCO	Development Consent Order
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
HVAC	High Voltage Alternating Current
HVDC	High Voltage Direct Current
MCZ	Marine Conservation Zone
NIP	Navigation Installation Plan
NMRL	Non-Mobile Reference Layer
NRA	Navigational Risk Assessment
PROW	Public Right of Way
SoCG	Statement of Common Ground
SPHC	Sandwich Port and Haven Commissioners
TJB	Transition Joint Bay
VHF	Very High Frequency (Radio)

2. Record of Engagement

2.1 Summary of discussions

2.1.1 Table 2.1 summarises the consultation and engagement that has taken place between the Parties

Table 2.1 Pre-application discussions

Date	Topic	Discussion points
<i>30 June 2023</i>	<i>The Applicant, Xodus and SPHC – Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Workshop (Shipping and navigation) Meeting</i>	<i>Project update and timeline, additional marine surveys- 5 additional surveys: Suffolk landfall, approach to Aldeburgh, East of Shipwash, Harwich Haven Authority (HHA) requested to move cable route north of the W1 buoy and out of existing pilotage area, Grid Link crossing, Looking to rote outside of Goodwin Sands Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ); shipping and navigation approach, baseline summary, River Stour migration, points for discussion, AOB/questions. Actions: Meeting to be arranged with SPHC to discuss River Stour migration.</i>
<i>12 September 2024</i>	<i>Shipping and navigation</i>	<i>The draft liaison tracker was sent for SPHC review on 12 September 2024. The reviewed draft was returned on 10 October 2024, with no comments or questions.</i>

2.2 Summary of post-application discussions

2.2.1 Table 2.2 summarises the consultation and engagement that has taken place between the Parties after the submission of the DCO application.

Table 2.2 Post-application discussions

Date	Topic	Discussion points
<i>06 January 2026</i>	<i>Harbour consent requirements</i>	<i>Clarification of harbour consent requirements for survey vessels via email.</i>
<i>19 February 2026</i>	<i>SoCG</i>	<i>Clarification of outstanding points within the SoCG via email</i>
<i>10 April 2026</i>	<i>River Stour bridge crossing</i>	<i>Email communication between parties clarifying details about the planned River Stour temporary bridge</i>

3. Areas of Discussion Between the Parties

3.1 Assessment Methodologies

Table 3.1 Assessment Methodologies

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

3.2 Shipping and Navigation

Table 3.2 Shipping and Navigation

Ref	Relevant Application Document	Summary of Description of Matter	SPHC Current Position	The Applicant's Current Position	Status
3.2.1	<p>Application Document 6.14 Environmental Scoping Report 2022</p> <p>Application Document 6.15 Scoping Opinion 2022</p>	River Stour bridge crossing proposal	<p>The Consultee fed back that the methodology used for the construction and removal of the bridge for Richborough was really good - there was a guard boat to manage river users and good communication.</p> <p>There were temporary bridges put in place last time, with guard boats either side managing river traffic. This allowed smaller boats without much air draft to still have full access to the river. This would be a better solution than a pontoon and the commission would have no objections.</p> <p>The Sandwich Port and Haven Commission has been contacted to say that in one of your documents it says that a temporary bridge may need to be in place until 2032 to carry out your works.</p> <p>I have not seen the document to confirm this yet, but please note this would be completely unacceptable from the commissions point of view. The temporary bridge is (as we said) better than a pontoon as it would not block the entire river. However, all river users and stake holders would need to be involved in discussions about time scales and bridge height. Last time the bridge was high enough that almost all river traffic could pass under it.</p> <p>Please can you confirm the above detail so that it can be put to the commission (and other river users) for consideration.</p>	<p>Where feasible, the Applicant (National Grid) will seek to replicate the methodology used for the construction and removal of the temporary bridge over the River Stour at Richborough. This includes the use of a guard boat to manage river users.</p> <p>Details of the temporary bridge over the River Stour can be found in Application Document 2.13 Design and Layout Plans [APP-037] 2.13 Design and Layout Plans. The drawings are in section 2.13.2 Design and Layout Plans - Kent DCO/K/DE/PS/1266 and DCO/K/DE/PS/1267 (pg 44 and 45). The Richborough Connection project required a similar bridge near to the temporary bridge crossing proposed for Sea Link.</p> <p>We do not have a construction programme from the contractor yet, so programme and duration are subject to change. Our draft construction programme assumes an installation of the bridge in Q1/Q2 2028 and removal in Q2/Q3 2030 so approximately 2 years.</p>	Agreed
3.2.2		Cable burial navigation concerns	<p>The Consultee enquired how deep under the seabed the cable is proposed to be buried.</p> <p>The Consultee is concerned that 1.5m is not very deep, as the River Stour channel moves north by dozens of meters a year. It is expected to indefinitely migrate northwards until it meets the Ramsgate cliffs. Therefore, the Consultee has requested further discussion.</p>	<p>The Applicant confirmed that as a minimum the target depth of lowering will be 1.5m below the depth at which the seabed is not expected to move or change significantly. This reference depth is defined as the Non-Mobile Reference Layer (NMRL).</p> <p>In areas subject to significant sediment mobility, the NMRL will be lower than the Original Seabed Level resulting in an overall burial depth greater than 1.5m.</p> <p>Additional lowering at this location is on the upper limit of typical techniques. Additionally, further lowering may create a thermal constraint on the cable system and its performance.</p>	Agreed

Ref	Relevant Application Document	Summary of Description of Matter	SPHC Current Position	The Applicant's Current Position	Status
				<p>The implications for the current Environmental and Habitats Regulations assessments if an increased depth of lowering were to be undertaken within Pegwell Bay would be that the magnitude of disturbance activities at this location would likely increase through increased installation durations and spread of equipment.</p> <p>For these reasons and considering the predictions of likely future morphological changes in the bay (Application Document 9.20.2 (A) Landfall Sediment Modelling Report – Pegwell Bay [PDA-038]), the Applicant considers a 1.5m cable depth of lowering below seabed reasonable and proportionate.</p> <p>The Applicant is also committed to regular monitoring of the cable burial once installed so if there are indications of Depth of Lowering 'hotspots' over time these would be addressed. This is currently secured within the Deemed Marine Licence through Application Document 9.92 (C) Outline Cable Specification and Installation Plan [REP6-136] submitted at Deadline 4, and Application Document 7.5.2 (D) Outline Offshore Construction Environmental Management Plan [REP6-072].</p>	
3.2.3	Application Document 6.3.4.7(E) ES Appendix 4.7.A Navigational Risk Assessment [REP6-042]	Vessels without Very High Frequency (VHF)	The Consultee commented that there are quite a few boats without VHF, so National Grid will need to liaise with the harbour masters to update their customers in the boat yards.	<p>The Applicant acknowledges the importance of liaising with harbour masters to ensure that vessels without VHF radio are adequately informed. A Navigation Installation Plan (NIP) will be developed to communicate with relevant stakeholders, including the Sandwich Port and Haven Commissioners, throughout the construction phase. This requirement is set out in Application Document 6.3.4.7 (E) ES Appendix 4.7.A Navigational Risk Assessment [REP6-042].</p> <p>The Applicant submitted a draft Outline NIP to PINS on 1 September 2025, as part of the Applicant's response to the ExA's s89(3) letter dated 5 August 2025.</p>	Agreed
3.2.4		Licensing	<p>The Consultee will raise a small daily charge for working in its jurisdiction.</p> <p>There are provisions for small work boats to be based in Sandwich, but they will be very tidally restricted (4 hours on each tide).</p> <p>The Consultee was asked if there were any further licencing requirements under the SPHC harbour authority regulations. The Consultee confirmed that a daily charge is required for the licence, and notification to the Consultee is required for this.</p>	<p>The Applicant notes that a daily charge for the licence to work in the Sandwich Port and Haven jurisdiction is required.</p> <p>Noted that small working boats based at Sandwich would be very tidally restricted.</p> <p>Noted that notifying Sandwich Port and Haven Authority is required to work in their jurisdiction.</p>	Agreed

Ref	Relevant Application Document	Summary of Description of Matter	SPHC Current Position	The Applicant's Current Position	Status
3.2.5	Application Document 6.3.4.7 (E) ES Appendix 4.7.A Navigational Risk Assessment [REP6-042]	Incidents between previous cables projects and amateur boaters	The Consultee noted that last time (Nemo), there were some minor incidents during construction due to amateur boaters.	In mitigation of such risks, the Applicant intends to issue Notice to Mariners, and navigation warnings will be sent to a distribution list which will include Port and Harbour Authorities. This is noted in Application Document 6.3.4.7 (E) ES Appendix 4.7.A Navigational Risk Assessment [REP6-042] .	Agreed

4. Approvals

Signed



On Behalf of

National Grid

Name



Position

Senior Consent Officer

Date

24/04/26

Signed



On Behalf of

Sandwich Port and Haven Commissioners

Name



Position

Chair

Date

24.04.26

5. References

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

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