

Sea Link

Volume 9: Examination Documents

Document 9.156.: Statement of Common Ground Between National Grid Electricity Transmission and the Network Rail (Kent).

Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN020026

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Sea Link Document Control

Version			
Date	Version	Status	Description / Changes
26/06/2025	0.1	Draft	WIP
24/12/2025	0.2	Draft	For Consultee Review and comment
29/04/2026	A	Final	For Submission to the ExA
	0.4		
	0.5		

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

- 1.1.4 This SoCG is between the Applicant and Network Rail. 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).
- 1.2.1 This SoCG will be progressed during the examination periods to reach a final position between the Applicant and Network Rail 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.
- 1.2.2 For the purpose of this SoCG, National Grid and National Grid will jointly be referred to as the “Parties”. When referencing National Grid alone, they will be referred to as “the Consultee”.

1.3 Description of the Proposed Project

- 1.3.1 The Sea Link Project (hereafter referred to as the ‘Proposed Project’) is a proposal by National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (hereafter referred to as National Grid) to reinforce the transmission network in the South East and East Anglia. The Proposed Project is required to accommodate additional power flows generated from renewable and low carbon generation, as well as an addition to new interconnection with mainland Europe.
- 1.3.2 National Grid owns, builds and maintains the electricity transmission network in England and Wales. Under the Electricity Act 1989, National Grid holds a transmission licence under which it is required to develop and maintain an efficient, coordinated, and economic electricity transmission system.

- 1.3.3 National Grid 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:
- 1.3.4 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
- 1.3.5 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*'.
- 1.3.6 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 by the Sea Link 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 approximately 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 Transition Joint Bay (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, approximately 28m high plus external equipment (such as lightning protection, safety rails for maintenance works, ventilation equipment, aerials, and similar small scale operational plant, or other roof treatment), near Minster. A new substation would be located immediately adjacent.

- Removal of approximately 2.2 km of existing HVAC overhead line, and installation of approximately 3.5 km of new HVAC overhead line from the substation near Minster and the existing Richborough to Canterbury overhead line.

1.3.7 The Proposed Project also includes modifications to sections of existing overhead lines in Suffolk (only if Friston Substation is not built by SPR) and Kent, diversions of third-party assets, and land drainage from the construction and operational footprint. It also includes opportunities for environmental mitigation, compensation and enhancement (which could include hedgerow creation, native tree planting, or habitat creation). 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).

1.4 Format of Document and Terminology.

1.4.1 Section 2 of this SoCG summarises the engagement the Parties have had with regard to the proposed project.

1.4.2 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. The Parties have also indicated the likelihood that agreement will be reached on each item.

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

Table 1.1. Abbreviations.

Abbreviation/Term	Definition
ACE	Asset Protection Customer Experience
BAPA	Basic Asset Protection Agreement
DCO	Development Consent Order
HVAC	High Voltage Direct Current
HVDC	High Voltage Alternating Current
PRoW	Public Right of Way
SoCG	Statement of Common Ground
SPR	Scottish Power Renewables
TJB	Transition Joint Bay

2. Record of Engagement

2.1 Role of Network Rail in the DCO process

- 2.1.1 The Consultee is a Statutory Consultee under the planning act 2008. Network Rail is the owner, operator and infrastructure manager of Britain's main railway network. It runs, maintains and develops the core physical infrastructure of the network and has to ensure efficient management of the assets over the short, medium and long-term.
- 2.1.2 The consultee should provide guidance and comments on the Sea Link proposal and co-own the Statement of Common Ground between Network Rail and National Grid.
- 2.1.3 Network Rail has been encouraged to discuss and work with the Applicant at the pre-application stage of the application process for the proposed project and Network Rail has a level crossing asset which is to be used as an access to site for the proposed project.

2.2 Summary of pre-application discussions

- 2.2.1 Table 2.1 summarises the consultation and engagement that has taken place between the Parties prior to submission of the DCO application.
- 2.2.2 The Applicant sent this to Network Rail but didn't receive any comments in time to update the document and come to an agreement, The applicant continues to work with the Consultee and is also discussing Protective Provisions with them.

Table 2.1 Pre-application discussions

Date	Topic	Discussion points
03/08/2022	<i>Initial consultation email</i>	<i>Initial consultation email sent to Network Rail. The email included a summary document which comprised indicative scheme drawings, to help provide some context for the scheme, details of the proposal, and impact on Network Rail's assets within Kent.</i>
30/09/2022	<i>ACE application</i>	<i>An application enquiry was submitted through Network Rail's ACE portal - enquiry reference number 0000242268.</i>
Oct – Dec 2022	<i>Non-statutory Consultation</i>	<i>A period of non-statutory consultation was held for between, the 24th of October 2022 to 18 December 2022. The consultation introduced the proposed project and its background through documentation including a corridor and preliminary routing and siting study.</i>
18/11/2022 – 22/11/2022	<i>E-mail chain following ACE application</i>	<i>Network Rail confirmed they had the had received and reviewed the information supplied in the AEC enquiry and would like a meeting to be briefed on the proposals. A stakeholder engagement meeting was organised for 25/11/2022.</i>
25/11/2022	<i>Proposed project briefing meeting</i>	<i>MS teams meeting between Network Rail representatives and the proposed project's engineering team. The initial</i>

		<i>proposals were discussed along with the interfaces between the proposed project and the Network Rail's assets.</i>
20/07/2023	<i>Updated proposal shared with Network Rail</i>	<i>Updated summary document (SEAL-MMD-SEAL-ENG-TCN-0621) sent to Network Rail for review. Note that no comments were returned.</i>
27/09/2023	<i>Proposed project update meeting</i>	<i>MS teams meeting between Network Rail representatives and the proposed project's engineering team. The meeting provided an overview of the proposed project and a review of each interface.</i>
26/10/2023	<i>Basic Asset Protection Agreement</i>	<i>Basic Asset Protection Agreement signed between Network Rail and National Grid. Network Rail Project Number: 178984 Network Rail Reference Number: ACE242268</i>
Oct – Dec 2023	<i>Statutory Consultation</i>	<i>Statutory public consultation occurred from 24 October to Monday 18 December 2023. The statutory public consultation provided details of the proposed project, along with supporting environmental information, and an update on how the proposals have developed since the last consultation in 2022.</i>
01/03/2024	<i>Follow on meeting</i>	<i>MS teams meeting between Network Rail representatives and the proposed project's engineering team. The meeting further reviewed the interfaces with the proposed project.</i>
17/04/2024	<i>Residual meeting action</i>	<i>Information on anticipated worst-case loading, vehicle type and works programme sent to Network Rail for review.</i>
July 2024	<i>Targeted Consultation</i>	<i>Proposed project update since the close of statutory consultation in December 2023, and further technical and environmental assessments. As a result of this work, changes to the plans were shared.</i>
12/11/2024	<i>Follow up email</i>	<i>Follow up email to Network Rail regarding the level crossing interaction. Steps requested to undertake a site survey to understand necessary protection and design to the level crossing.</i>
14/11/2024	<i>Memorandum of Understanding issue</i>	<i>Memorandum of Understanding (SEAL-MMD-SEAL-ENG-REP-0732) issued to Network Rail.</i>
06/12/2024	<i>Email Response from Network Rail</i>	<i>Email Response from Network Rail regarding procedure for survey of the level crossing. Differing scenarios were given based on type of survey required.</i>
03/01/2025	<i>Protective provision request email chain</i>	<i>Email sent to Network Rail asking if they have any proposed Protective Provisions which you would like us to include as part of the Draft DCO. Network Rail responded stating that a representative from the proposed project had notified them that the proposed project was no longer involved in Anglia Region. It is understood that this was a miscommunication.</i>
08/01/2025	<i>Legal response email chain</i>	<i>Email from Networks Rail's legal representative asking for the proposed project's legal representatives and details of any of Network Rail affected assets. The proposed project's engineering team provided a contact to the legal representatives and details of the proposed projects interfaces with Network Rail's assets.</i>

21/02/2025	Level crossing further engagement	Following the response from Network Rail on the 6/12/2024 a follow on email was sent by the proposed project's engineering team to ascertain next steps required to progress the design proposal for level crossing amendments.
11/03/2025	Additional level crossing meeting	<p data-bbox="624 304 1331 461">Meeting held to understand the steps required to complete the works to ensure level crossing can withstand the proposed project construction movements. Possessions, loading capacity, construction movements, and post survey works were discussed.</p> <p data-bbox="624 483 1331 546">There was an action for Network Rail to provide the loading capacity details of the level crossing.</p> <p data-bbox="624 568 1350 631">Additionally, Network Rail shared a number of forms required for undertaking work to the level crossing, including;</p> <ul data-bbox="671 654 1350 945" style="list-style-type: none"> • NR_L2_CIV_003_FORMB - Certificate of Design and Check for Permanent Works • NR_L2_CIV_003_FORMC - Certificate of Design and Check for Temporary Works • NR_L2_CIV_003_FORMA - Certificate of Approval in Principle (AiP) • L2RSE02009_F0039 • L2RSE02009_F0040 (1) • Engineering Management of Projects 02009

3. Areas of Discussion Between the Parties

3.1 Topic 1 – The proposed project and Network Rail assets

Table 3.1 – Crossing Over or Under Network Rail Assets

Ref	Relevant Application Document	Summary of Description of Matter	Network Rail Current Position	NGET Current Position	Status
3.1.1		<p>The proposed projects Main interface with Network Rails existing network in the Kent area. This is a level crossing that is to be used by construction traffic.</p> <p>Level Crossing – 900m southeast of Minster</p>	<p>Provided comment within meeting held on the 11/03/2025 regarding upgrades to the level crossing and details on the process to get design approved.</p>	<p>Undertaking appropriate survey and design work to apply for approved in principal and a detailed design review following this.</p>	Not Agreed
3.1.2		<p>The secondary interfaces with the Network Rail existing network is the use of the Level Crossing on Marsh Farm Road Minster, the use of the Level Crossing on Ebbsfleet Lane North and the possible use of</p>		<p>Undertaking appropriate survey and design work to apply for approved in principal and a detailed design review following this.</p>	Not Agreed

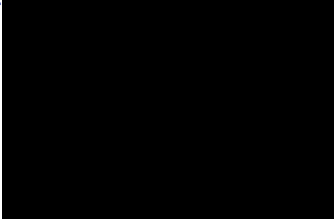
Ref	Relevant Application Document	Summary of Description of Matter	Network Rail Current Position	NGET Current Position	Status
		the Goss Hall Underline Bridge (BME2)			
3.1.3		Possession of the Rail Network	A possession would generally be required for anything inside the gate at a level crossing. Anything inside 3m of the live track would need a possession.	Agree with Network Rail position	Agreed
3.1.5		Construction movements	Updated construction movement and programme to be shared when available.	Agree with Network Rail position	Agreed

3.2 Topic 2 – New OHL Crossing of the NR Asset

Table 3.2 – New OHL Crossings of the NR Asset

Ref	Relevant Application Document	Summary of Description of Matter	Network Rail Current Position	NGET Current Position	Status
3.2.1		The installation of permanent operation of four sets of Over head lines over the Network Rail Assets		NGET will provide the design information and clearances required for the OHL crossings in accordance Network Rail requirements.	Not Agreed
3.2.2		Possession of the Rail Network	A possession would generally be required for anything inside 3m of the live track.	Agree with Network Rail position	Agreed
3.2.3		Installation of Protection Scaffold over the Network Rail Asset		National Grid would be required to install scaffolding and netting over the NR Asset to protect the track during the installation of the conductor. NGET will carry this out as previously agreed on other OHL projects	Not Agreed

4. Approvals

Signed	
On Behalf of	NGET
Name	James Buckley
Position	Senior Project Manager
Date	29/04/2026

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

5. References

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

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