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 Lead Member of the Examining Authority
 Sea Link DCO
 The Planning Inspectorate
 National infrastructure Planning
 Temple Quay House
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05 May 2026

By email to southeastanglialink@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Dear Ms Holmes,

Planning Act 2008 (as amended)

Application by National Grid Electricity Transmission Plc (National Grid) for an Order granting Development Consent for Sea Link

Examination Close Cover Letter

This cover letter has been prepared by National Grid (the Applicant) to accompany submission of documents on 5 May 2026 before the close of Examination. Table 1 below lists the documents submitted by the Applicant on 5 May 2026.

Table 1: Documents Submitted at Examination Close

Doc Ref	Document Title	Rev	Reason for Submission
Volume 3			
3.3 (C)	Validation Report	C	Validation report for final draft DCO submitted at Deadline 7.
Volume 9			
9.84	Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (tracked and clean)	F	Update to commitments to reflect agreements with EA and SCC in the final weeks of Examination
9.23	Statement of Common Ground Suffolk County Council (tracked and clean)	B	Final positions of the Applicant and Suffolk County Council at end of Examination
9.38.9	Examination Close Cover Letter	A	This document.

Environment Agency

The Applicant held a call with the Environment Agency (EA) on Friday 1 May 2026 in an effort to resolve remaining issues before the close of Examination. This was then followed by a submission by the EA on Monday 4 May 2026 at 18:08 setting out the steps envisaged to resolve remaining issues. This was accepted by the Examining Authority on Tuesday 5 May 2026. The Applicant welcomes the updated version, which shows how many issues have been resolved between the parties.

The majority of the remaining issues detailed in the submission from the EA on 4 May 2026 had been discussed for some time and had a clear resolution as discussed with the EA on 1 May. A version of the EA's 'Appendix B: Position of the EA' table has been provided in Appendix A to this cover letter, with cross references added to the relevant commitments in the Register of Environmental Commitments and Actions (REAC) where the issue has been addressed. Where the issue cannot be addressed in this manner, commentary is provided below.

EA070: Temporary drainage near Saxmundham Converter Station

There has been extensive discussion over the final few weeks of Examination regarding the drainage basin TC-40-ATPN as shown in **Application Document 9.17.1 Suffolk Drainage Strategy**. The basin under discussion is a temporary drainage feature proposed to drain a 320m section of the temporary haul road used to install the cables that are part of Work No. 2 and Work No. 5 east of Saxmundham Converter Station. This drainage feature would be small, temporary feature, that would be removed when the haul road is removed, following the installation of the cable system.

At the time when the DCO application was submitted, this basin was mapped as being located in Flood Zone 1, as shown in Figure 1A of **Application Document 6.8 (B) Flood Risk Assessment [REP6-052]**. However, in March 2025, the flood maps were updated and now show the area of the basin as being located in Flood Zone 3.

During Examination, the change to the flood maps was highlighted by Suffolk County Council (SCC) and the EA as being a potential issue for the location of the basin. The flood water at this location in a 1 in 100 year flood event would be shallow (up to 200mm deep) so a solution could have been to size the basin to accommodate run off from temporary construction works and design it, using a raised perimeter bund, to exclude fluvial floodwater, should a large flood event occur. However, as SCC was uncomfortable with this solution, the Applicant instead proposed an alternative linear filter drain feature that would run along the haul road, in Flood Zone 1, and discharge into the ditch at the location of the previous attenuation basin. This solution was shown in **Application Document 9.17.1 (C) Suffolk Drainage Strategy** submitted at Deadline 7, where it is shown in Appendix B Drainage Layouts and described the solution further in Appendix A: Drainage Design Summary. The Applicant is of the view that this solution should resolve the issue as the only point at which this feature would be outside Flood Zone 1 would be where it outfalls to the ditch. Drainage outfalls are water compatible by design and to function, must to located in a bankside location.

However, given that there has not been sufficient time for the EA and SCC to review the solution and confirm that it resolves the issue, on 1 May 2026 the Applicant agreed to the principle of adding a commitment to the REAC to ensure that details of this drainage feature are provided in advance of installation. In the EA's submission of 4 May 2026, the EA suggested that this should happen prior to pre-commencement works. This element of the timing was not discussed on 1 May 2026, but the Applicant is happy to agree to this principle provided it relates only to pre-commencement works associated with the location of the pond and works that would increase surface water run-off. This is important because most pre-commencement operations as defined in Article 2 of the draft DCO would not increase surface water run-off and could therefore be completed prior to details of the temporary drainage feature being approved.

The Applicant would note that whilst the text on EA070 refers to the commitment on temporary drainage as being secured by 'requirement', in the table in Appendix B the EA text states '*Include in CEMP*' [sic]. The Applicant discussed the securing mechanism for details on construction drainage on 1 May 2026 and explained that any measures in Section 1 of the REAC are secured by Requirement 5 and apply to pre-commencement works (where applicable). Given that the REAC is not an outline document, this is considered to be a more appropriate securing document than the CEMP. Whilst the Applicant has no objection in principle to this instead being included as a draft DCO requirement, given the late agreement on the solution, this could not be updated in the draft DCO and validation report before close of Examination, meaning the REAC was the easiest way to secure the commitment. Commitment W39 has been added to the REAC to address the issue.

In the submission dated 4 May 2026, the EA referred to drainage that is part of Work No. 3A and drainage pond TC-45-ATPN in the Suffolk Drainage Strategy. Drainage feature TC-45-ATPN referenced in the EA response is a feature adjacent to the Fromus bridge, rather than the feature that has always been discussed under this item along the cable corridor. While drainage at the Fromus bridge has been discussed previously, this related to the EA's request to raise the height of the western approach road over the River Fromus by 100mm to provide additional flood resilience. The Applicant considers that this issue was resolved by commitment W38 added to the REAC at Deadline 7. The pond referred to in the EA submission of the 4 May 2026 is also a permanent pond rather than the temporary pond previously under discussion.

The access road to the Suffolk Converter Station and associated works are very early in the construction programme, so approvals in advance of pre-commencement works for drainage in this area is a more significant risk to the project programme than in the cable corridor and the Applicant has no reason to think that this is necessary. Details of all construction and operational drainage would be provided in the Drainage Management Plan for that stage of works submitted under Requirement 6 of the draft DCO and must be discharged prior to commencement of development of that stage. It is not considered necessary or proportionate for there to be approval of drainage prior to pre-commencement works.

Given the above, and also that it does not reflect discussions with the EA on this item to-date, it is presumed that the reference to the Access Road in the EA's submission of 4 May 2026 and reference to pond TC-45-ATPN was therefore an error and the correct works to reference are those associated with the haul road drainage feature, which was a pond and is now proposed as a filterdrain.

Therefore, the Applicant has added a commitment to the REAC that reflects the pond previously under discussion and not the pond adjacent to the Fromus Bridge.

Limits of Deviation

In the submission dated 4 May 2026, the EA refer to a new matter, which the Applicant cannot recall being previously discussed. This matter was not discussed as an outstanding issue on 1 May 2026 for example. The EA submission of the 4 May 2026 addresses the lack of a specified Limit of Deviation (LoD) for the “downwards extent of construction” and requested that this is updated to include no lower than levels that are stipulated in Flood Risk Assessment.

The Applicant wishes to clarify that no lowest below ground vertical LoD has been specified, because to place a limit may unnecessarily restrict below ground works where there is little or no chance of likely significant effects resulting. A standard below ground LoD depth was not therefore proposed; however, the Proposed Project would never go deeper than necessary for technical or environmental reasons as this would add engineering operational complexity and cost.

It is also clarified that the Flood Risk Assessment does not stipulate any lower limit or level of below ground construction. This parameter does not have any potential to impact on the assessment of flood risk to the Project or arising from the Project with regard to fluvial flooding, flooding from the sea, nor surface water flooding.

In terms of groundwater flood risk, the assessment is based on the potential for the Suffolk and Kent Onshore Schemes to encounter groundwater during construction, informed by preliminary site specific ground investigation data and using the parameters set out in the Project Description in terms of typical excavation depths for different elements of the Project. For the Suffolk Onshore Scheme, it was concluded that the groundwater table would not be intercepted along most of the cable trenches nor at the deeper launch/reception pits at landfall, or by the foundations of the proposed Saxmundham Converter Station and Friston Substation. Reasonable changes to the assumed excavation depths would not change this conclusion.

For the Kent Onshore Scheme, preliminary site specific ground investigation data indicates that groundwater is unlikely to be intercepted in the launch/reception pit necessary for the drilling at the landfall location. Elsewhere, including at the site of the Minster converter station and substation where there is some shallow groundwater within the superficial geology, a robust suite of water management controls are set out and secured in **Application Document 7.5.3 (D) Outline Onshore Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [REP6-074]**. Further details on water management at the Minster Converter and Substation site specifically are detailed in

Application Document 9.32 Minster Converter Station Ground Conditions and Water Management – Technical Note [REP6-127].

In summary, the Flood Risk Assessment concluded that the risk of groundwater flooding to the Project in both Suffolk and Kent was low and changes in groundwater levels or flow pathways are not anticipated. Reasonable changes to the assumed excavation or foundation depths would not impact on these conclusions and therefore a vertical LoD for the downwards extent of construction does not need to be stipulated beyond the provisions in Article 5 of the draft DCO.

Procedure for Discharge of Requirements

In the EA's submission of 4 May 2026, the EA requested that the draft DCO be amended to state that requirement consultees will have 21 days to respond where consulted. The Applicant notes that Schedule 4 paragraphs 1-3 address the discharge of requirements, including timescales for determination. Where a requirement consultee is listed in a Schedule 3 Requirement, then that consultation must occur within the overall timescales for determination in the made DCO, which is a well-precedented approach. In particular, paragraph 2(3) addresses the timescales for notification by the discharging authority to a Requirement Consultee (within 5 days of the receipt of the application) and then addresses any requests for further information by the discharging authority to the undertaker (within 21 days of receipt of the application). The overall determination timescale then applies, pursuant to paragraph 1(1), being 35 days, albeit where there has been a request for further information of the undertaker, then the 35 days runs from the day after when the undertaker provides that information. Hence there are in-built protections and a discretion which resides with the discharging authority. The Applicant is therefore of the view that there is sufficient time for the EA to respond to any such consultation and the draft DCO does not need to be amended to specify the timescales for consultation.

Validation Report

The Applicant notes the requirement to include a report validating that the draft DCO is in the Statutory Instrument template at Deadline 7. The SI formatting tool is an automated process obtained from the publishing section of the legislation.gov.uk website and the Applicant has regularly been validating the formatting of the draft DCO throughout the examination process.

The Applicant submitted another updated copy of the draft DCO for Deadline 7 (accommodating various newly agreed text) to the SI formatting tool, but at the time of finalising the documents for submission at Deadline 7, the report has not been returned. Emails with the SI support team confirmed that validation is an automated process and could not be expedited. The validation report provided with this cover letter is an updated version reflecting the final draft DCO submitted at Deadline 7.

National Trust

The Applicant submitted **Application Document 9.65 (C) Statement of Common Ground National Trust** at Deadline 7. This document sets out the matters the National Trust have raised during the Examination in relation to the impacts of the Proposed Project on their land at Pegwell Bay in Kent. This agreed Statement of Common Ground has been signed by the National Trust and sets out the matters as Agreed, or Agreed in Principle. Both parties are committed to working collaboratively to ensure the impacts on the land owned by The National Trust are mitigated in line with the principles set out in this document.

The Applicant can also confirm the Heads of Terms document for the Option and Deed of Grant for Easement is now in agreement, subject to contract. The Applicant has had confirmation from The National Trust that it will remove its objection to the scheme and thus Special Parliamentary Procedure will not be invoked. It is understood that National Trust will be issuing a letter to the ExA confirming the same position.

Conclusion

Should the ExA have any queries in relation to this letter, they are invited to contact me, Seb Stevens (Sebastian.Stevens@nationalgrid.com) in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,



Senior Project Manager
For and on behalf of National Grid Electricity Transmission

Appendix A: Copy of Table Provided in Appendix B to the Submission from the Environment Agency on 04/05/26

The table below includes only those items marked as 'recommendations to provide resolution have been provided'. All other items were marked as 'issue resolved'.

Subject	RR Reference	Area	Notes	Docs submitted under Deadline 6	Docs submitted by NG for Deadline 7	Commitment in REAC where issue addressed
Flood Risk	EA068	Both	Clarify no open cut crossings of main rivers and ensure stock piles outside flood zone 3b and 1% AEP.			W07 and W02.
Flood Risk	EA070	Both	Details of attenuation ponds and construction methods, ground levels changes and reviewed. Include in CEMP.			New commitment proposed – commitment W39.
Flood Risk	EA079	Suffolk	Coastal erosion assessment should be provided. Commitment to remove cabling and ducts at decommissioning, include in FRA.			MPE08 / MPE06