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Executive summary

Purpose of this report

This Outline Employment and Skills Plan (OESP) has been prepared to accompany the Application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Norwich to Tilbury electricity transmission project (hereafter referred to as the 'Project'). Its purpose is to maximise and proactively expand the employment, skills and supply chain benefits of the Project for the local community. The scope of the Plan covers opportunities associated with the construction of the Project across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, including Thurrock, with outcomes targeted at the defined Study Area.

The OESP sets out the likely economic benefits of the Project, alongside the context and characteristics of the local workforce, labour market and supply chain. It identifies key skills, supply-chain and employment challenges and opportunities and establishes the overarching commitments that National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (hereafter referred to as National Grid), working with its Great Grid Partnership contractors, will take forward post-consent. These commitments are intended to ensure that local individuals and businesses can access opportunities associated with the Project and that benefits contribute to longer-term skills development and economic resilience within the Study Area.

Economic Benefits

The Project comprises a new 400 kilovolt electricity transmission connection between Norwich and Tilbury, including overhead lines, underground cabling, a new East Anglia Connection Node (EACN) Substation and a new Tilbury North Substation. Subject to the grant of development consent, construction is anticipated to commence in 2027 and continue for approximately four years through to 2031. It is estimated that around 4,800 construction jobs will be supported over the construction period, with a peak daily workforce of approximately 1,720 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. Drawing on National Grid's experience of similar projects, it is anticipated that a minimum of 10% of the construction workforce could be drawn from the local labour market. Based upon the assumptions contained within **6.15 ES Chapter Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [APP-265]** the level of local employment, based on an approximate total number of 4,800 construction jobs could result in a total job demand of approximately 480 jobs locally, with potential to increase this through the actions set out in this Plan.

The Project is expected to deliver substantial economic benefits through construction expenditure and workforce spending. The capital cost of the Project is estimated at approximately £894 million, with around £581 million of net spend within the UK economy. In addition, expenditure by the construction workforce on accommodation, food and local services is expected to generate approximately £104.6 million of additional spend within the Study Area over the construction period. These effects are evidenced in **6.15 ES Chapter Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [APP-265]**. Delivery of the Project will require a wide range of roles and skills, particularly within construction, civil engineering, electrical installation and environmental management, supported by demand for plant, equipment, materials and local support services, creating opportunities for local businesses and supply-chain organisations.

Employment and Skills Profile

An assessment of the workforce and economy within the defined Study Area provides important context for the OESP. The Study Area, comprising Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex (including Thurrock), displays varied labour-market characteristics. Suffolk and Essex generally exhibit lower unemployment and relatively strong levels of economic activity compared with regional and national averages, while parts of Norfolk display higher unemployment despite above-average participation rates. Qualification levels vary across the Study Area. Attainment at higher qualification levels (RQF Level 4 and above) is strongest in parts of Norfolk and Essex, exceeding regional and national averages in some authorities, while Suffolk displays lower overall rates of degree-level attainment and a greater concentration of residents qualified at lower qualification levels (RQF Levels 1 and 2). Despite this variation, all parts of the Study Area have a substantial supply of people with vocational and technical qualifications that are relevant to construction, utilities and infrastructure-related employment.

Key Skills, Supply Chain and Employment Challenges and Strengths

Employment data across the Study Area indicates strengths in several sectors that are closely linked to the electricity transmission and infrastructure supply chain, including construction, engineering, utilities and transport. However, despite these strengths, employers continue to report persistent skills shortages, particularly in skilled construction trades, electrical and engineering occupations, and mobile-plant and specialist technical roles. Forecasts highlight strong future demand for these skills, which may be compounded by cumulative pressures arising from multiple Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) being advanced across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex (including Thurrock) over overlapping time periods.

The Study Area benefits from a wide range of established skills assets, including further and higher education institutions, specialist construction and utilities training providers, Skills Bootcamps and employer-led skills initiatives. These are supported by county- and sub-regional skills networks and coordination bodies, including Local Skills Improvement Plans and sector-focused partnerships linked to energy and infrastructure. Collectively, these assets provide a strong foundation for supporting workforce development, addressing skills gaps and maximising local employment and supply-chain opportunities associated with the Project.

Economic Policy and Strategy Review

Planning policies and economic development strategies relevant to the Project have been identified at the national, regional and local levels and provide the policy context for this OESP.

The Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2024) requires applicants to consider relevant socio-economic impacts, including job creation, skills development, the use of local services and supply chains, and wider indirect benefits for host areas. Paragraph 5.13.12 of EN-1 confirms that the Secretary of State may wish to include a requirement for an employment and skills plan setting out arrangements to promote local employment and skills development opportunities associated with nationally significant energy infrastructure.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024) emphasises that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity in planning decision-making, having regard to local business needs and opportunities for development, including those arising from major infrastructure investment (paragraph 85).

At the regional and local level, relevant plans across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex (including Thurrock) identify energy and infrastructure-related development and associated supply chains as important contributors to economic growth. These plans seek to maximise opportunities for the local workforce and businesses, supporting the delivery of high-quality and diverse employment opportunities. Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) provide employer-led, regional frameworks to ensure skills provision is better informed by labour-market demand and responsive to the requirements of key growth sectors, including construction, engineering and energy.

Promoting skills development, workforce readiness and local supply-chain participation is therefore a consistent theme across national policy, regional strategies and local plans. The OESP is in accordance with this policy framework and supports the objectives identified in relevant plans and strategies relating to skills, employment and supply-chain development.

Existing Programmes and Future Actions

A set of actions have been identified across Skills and Employment and Supply Chain that National Grid will take forward through delivery of the OESP. These activities draw on National Grid's existing national and regional programmes and established delivery mechanisms and are intended to enable local people and businesses across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex (including Thurrock) to access opportunities associated with the Project.

Skills and Employment

Skills and employment activities are intended to support fair, inclusive and locally responsive recruitment and workforce development for the Project, drawing on existing education, training and employability infrastructure across the Study Area. National Grid, working with its Great Grid Partnership (GGP) contractors, will seek to strengthen pathways into construction, engineering, energy and related roles by raising awareness of opportunities, supporting access to relevant training, and promoting inclusive employment practices.

Activities to support skills and employment will include:

- preparing a project-specific approach to workforce planning and recruitment in advance of construction (from 2027), informed by engagement with local authorities, employability services and training providers across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex (including Thurrock);
- promoting awareness of project-related jobs, apprenticeships and training opportunities through established local channels, including local authorities, job-brokerage services, further education colleges, Skills Bootcamps and apprenticeship services;
- signposting GGP contractors and supply-chain partners to relevant local apprenticeship, vocational and adult-learning provision to support recruitment and upskilling aligned with project roles;
- encouraging contractors to adopt inclusive and accessible recruitment practices consistent with National Grid's equality, diversity and inclusion commitments, including the use of open recruitment approaches to reduce barriers for under-represented groups;
- supporting engagement with local employability and training programmes that assist people facing barriers to work, where relevant and appropriate; and
- coordinating employee-volunteering activity, including schools, careers and employability engagement, through National Grid's existing Volunteering Works programme and equivalent contractor initiatives.

Collectively, these skills and employment activities are focused on maximising local socio-economic benefits by improving workforce readiness, supporting inclusive access to employment, and strengthening pathways into STEM-related careers associated with the Project. This approach supports National Grid's social value and responsible business commitments and aligns with national, regional and local objectives for skills development, local employment and inclusive growth. National Grid will work with its GGP contractors to develop and implement a proportionate approach, with further detail shared with relevant local authorities and partners as the Project progresses.

Supply Chain

Supply-chain activities are intended to maximise opportunities for local and regional businesses by improving visibility of forthcoming opportunities, supporting early and proportionate engagement, and ensuring alignment with National Grid's established procurement frameworks and requirements. National Grid will work with its GGP contractors to encourage effective engagement with local supply-chain organisations and networks across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex (including Thurrock). Activities will include:

- signposting local businesses to project-related supply-chain opportunities through existing regional partners and networks, including Chambers of Commerce and established supply-chain organisations operating across the Study Area;
- facilitating Meet the Buyer-style engagement and other early market-engagement activity, where proportionate and aligned with Project procurement programmes and timescales;
- directing contractors and suppliers to National Grid's Supplier Code of Conduct, sustainable procurement standards and existing framework and assurance requirements; and
- encouraging contractors to consider local, SME and diverse suppliers when procuring goods and services, consistent with contractual obligations, social value expectations and value-for-money requirements.

These supply-chain activities are intended to support local business participation and capacity-building while remaining proportionate to the scale and nature of the Project and fully aligned with National Grid's existing procurement practices and governance arrangements.

Delivery

This OESP establishes the framework for maximising employment, skills and supply-chain benefits arising from the Project. It identifies actions to be taken forward prior to and during construction, to be delivered by National Grid and its GGP contractors. Following the grant of development consent, National Grid will prepare a Final Employment and Skills Plan (ESP), in substantial accordance with the OESP, informed by further engagement with relevant stakeholders. The Final ESP will provide additional detail on workforce planning, skills demand and delivery activities and will guide implementation of employment and skills commitments during construction.

The Final ESP will provide additional detail to inform workforce planning, including profiling anticipated skills demand and confirming the specific activities to support skills development, employment and supply chain participation. Engagement will continue during the Examination and into the post-Examination period, with the Final ESP prepared in consultation with stakeholders as part of the discharge of requirements.

An indicative timeline for the preparation and implementation of the Final ESP, following the grant of development consent, is set out in Section 7.4. 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 National Grid Electricity Transmission (the Applicant) made a commitment in **8.8.2 Applicant's Comments on Local Impact Reports [REP2-030]** to prepare and submit an Outline Employment and Skills Plan (OESP) into the Examination at Deadline 5. The preparation of this OESP also responds to paragraph 5.13.12 of the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (DESNZ, 2024) which states:

'The Secretary of State may wish to include a requirement that specifies the approval by the local authority of an employment and skills plan detailing arrangements to promote local employment and skills development opportunities, including apprenticeships, education, engagement with local schools and colleges and training programmes to be enacted.'

1.1.2 The Applicant aims to maximise and pro-actively expand these economic benefits for the local community via the community fund and via the actions set out within this document.

1.1.3 This OESP presents the likely economic benefits of the Project, and summarises the relevant context and characteristics of the local communities and economies in which the Project will be located. This document identifies the relevant third-party organisations with responsibility for employment and skills development and the plans and strategies within which they operate. The Plan describes the work which has been undertaken by National Grid to understand the potential employment, skills, plant, equipment and services required to deliver the Project and which includes engagement with the Main Works Contractor(s). The Plan identifies opportunities for activities relating to Skills, Supply Chain and Employment which will be finalised and confirmed post-consent of the Project and in accordance with a final Employment and Skills Plan (ESP).

1.1.4 All works forming part of the authorised development, with the exception of pre-commencement operations, will be carried out in general accordance with the final ESP unless otherwise agreed with the relevant planning authorities pursuant to Requirement 15 of Schedule 3 (Requirements) of **3.1 Draft Development Consent Order [Revision E]**.

1.1.5 It should be noted that **6.15 ES Chapter 15 - Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [APP-265]** does not identify any relevant significant adverse effects of the Project arising from its construction, operation or decommissioning on socio-economic, recreation and tourism receptors. As such, the purpose of this Plan is not one of mitigation but of project benefit.

1.2 Project Summary

1.2.1 The Project is a proposal by National Grid to upgrade the electricity transmission system in East Anglia between Norwich and Tilbury, comprising:

- A new 400 kilovolt (kV) electricity transmission connection of approximately 180 km overall length from Norwich Main Substation to Tilbury Substation via Bramford Substation, a new East Anglia Connection Node (EACN) Substation and a new Tilbury North Substation, including:
 - Approximately 159 km of new overhead line supported on approximately 509 pylons, either standard steel lattice pylons (approximately 50 m in height) or low height steel lattice pylons (approximately 40 m in height) and some of which would be gantries (typically up to 15 m in height) within proposed Cable Sealing End (CSE) compounds or existing or proposed substations
 - Approximately 21 km of 400 kV underground cabling, some of which would be located through the Dedham Vale National Landscape (an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB))
- Up to seven new CSE compounds (with permanent access) to connect the overhead lines to the underground cables
- Modification works to connect into the existing Norwich Main Substation and a substation extension at the existing Bramford Substation
- A new 400 kV substation on the Tendring Peninsula, referred to as the EACN Substation (with a new permanent access). This is proposed to be an Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) substation
- A new 400 kV substation to the south of Orsett Golf Course in Essex, referred to as the Tilbury North Substation (with a new permanent access). This is proposed to be a Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) substation
- Modifications to the existing National Grid Electricity Transmission overhead lines to facilitate the connection of the existing network into the new Tilbury North Substation to provide connection to the Tilbury Substation
- Ancillary and/or temporary works associated with the construction of the Project.

1.2.2 In addition, third party utilities diversions and/or modifications would be required to facilitate the construction of the Project. There would also be land required for environmental mitigation and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

1.2.3 As well as the permanent infrastructure, land would also be required temporarily for construction activities including, for example, working areas for construction equipment and machinery, site offices, welfare, storage and temporary construction access.

1.2.4 The Project would be designed, constructed and operated in accordance with applicable health and safety legislation. The Project will need to comply with design safety standards including the Security and Quality of Supply Standard (SQSS), which sets out the criteria and methodology for planning and operating the National Electricity Transmission System (NETS). This informs a suite of National Grid policies and processes, which contain details on design standards required to be met when designing, constructing and operating assets such as those proposed for the Project.

- 1.2.5 Further details of the Project are included within **6.4 ES Chapter 4: Project Description [APP-130]**.
- 1.2.6 The Project has been sub-divided into eight geographical sections for reader accessibility, based largely on LPA boundaries. These comprise:
- Section A – South Norfolk Council
 - Section B – Mid-Suffolk District Council
 - Section C – Babergh District Council, Colchester City Council and Tendring District Council
 - Section D – Colchester City Council
 - Section E – Braintree District Council
 - Section F – Chelmsford City Council and Brentwood Borough Council
 - Section G – Basildon Borough Council and Brentwood Borough Council (and part of Chelmsford City Council)
 - Section H – Thurrock Council.

1.3 The Norwich to Tilbury Community Benefits Scheme

- 1.3.1 The government has published guidance on community funds for transmission infrastructure (DESNZ, 2025). In line with this guidance, the Applicant is committed to working with industry partners, local communities, and their representatives to ensure community benefits are delivered fairly and effectively, driving lasting, positive change for the people and places integral to our developing electricity network. The Applicant is committed to providing a coordinated local and regional approach to community benefits.
- 1.3.2 In late spring 2026, the Applicant will begin consulting on how the community benefit funding should be used. This will be an opportunity for the Applicant to engage with local communities and elected representatives on local priorities and where community benefit funds could deliver long-lasting benefits. The feedback received will help shape and inform the Applicant's community benefit strategy which will be delivered outside the development consent process, since this is not a material consideration in the decision on the proposed Project or a matter to be secured as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO).

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 Project, based upon the information contained within the Environmental Statement. Positive economic effects will include the jobs generated during the construction phase, and spending on goods and services.
 - Section 3 presents a profile of the local population with reference to its workforce and economy. This enables attention to be directed both to areas of strengths, providing confidence that the opportunities made available by the Project will be attained, but also the challenges.

- Section 4 presents the key skills, supply chain and employment challenges and opportunities which are of most relevance to Project.
- Section 5 summarises the aims and objectives 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 consistent with National Grid Social and Environmental Action Plan (2026-2031) with details on these activities to be provided within the Final ESP.
- Section 7 sets out the approach to developing and delivering the ESP post-consent, including the internal organisational structure and proposals for external engagement. A timeline for development and implementation is also set out.

2. Summary of likely Economic Effects

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This section summarises the scale of employment and economic benefits that are expected to arise from the construction of the Project. It includes indicative profiles on the types of jobs, skills, plant, equipment, and materials required for the delivery of the Project. The complete range, number and duration of jobs, skills etc can only be confirmed at detailed design and will be presented within the ESP.
- 2.1.2 There will be employment and economic benefits associated with the construction of the Project. These have been identified within **6.15 ES Chapter Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [APP-265]** and are summarised in this section.
- 2.1.3 This OESP does not consider the economic benefits arising during operation. This approach is consistent with **6.15 ES Chapter Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [APP-265]** which did not assess the operational effects arising from the Project upon the local economy including local employment given the low numbers of employees that would be responsible for its maintenance and repair. Similarly, it is expected that the transmission of electricity would continue for as long as there is a business case for doing so and that any decommissioning activity would occur decades into the future and at a time when the economic challenges and opportunities are likely to be different than today. Employment and skills opportunities associated with decommissioning also sit outside the remit of this document.

2.2 Study Area

- 2.2.1 **6.15 ES Chapter Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [APP-265]** defines three study areas comprising a local study area (the Order Limits), a 3km Study Area, where there may be a potential for significant visual effects and finally a Wider Study Area comprising the spatial extent of the LPA areas through which the Order Limits pass together with Norwich City Council and Ipswich Borough Council (adjacent to the Project) and West Suffolk Council (where the Project office is located). The Study Area therefore comprises the following:
- Norwich City Council
 - South Norfolk District Council
 - Mid Suffolk District Council
 - West Suffolk Council
 - Ipswich Borough Council
 - Babergh District Council
 - Tendring District Council
 - Colchester City Council
 - Braintree District Council

- Chelmsford City Council
- Basildon Borough Council
- Brentwood Borough Council
- Thurrock Council.

2.2.2 The Wider Study Area is used to assess the potential for effects upon the local economy and employment and as such is referred to as the Study Area for the purposes of this document.

2.2.3 The Study Area covers a large geography within which there are different economic and employment characteristics. Furthermore, organisations with responsibility for employment, education and skills often operate at the county scale. Where it is appropriate to do so, the Study Area is therefore sub-divided into the Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex (including Thurrock) sub-Study Areas.

2.3 Construction

2.3.1 Should consent be granted, it is anticipated that construction of the Project would commence in 2027 and continue for four years through to 2031 (including demobilisation). Certain pre-construction activities could take place following the grant of consent and in advance of construction with appropriate permissions in place.

Construction Employment

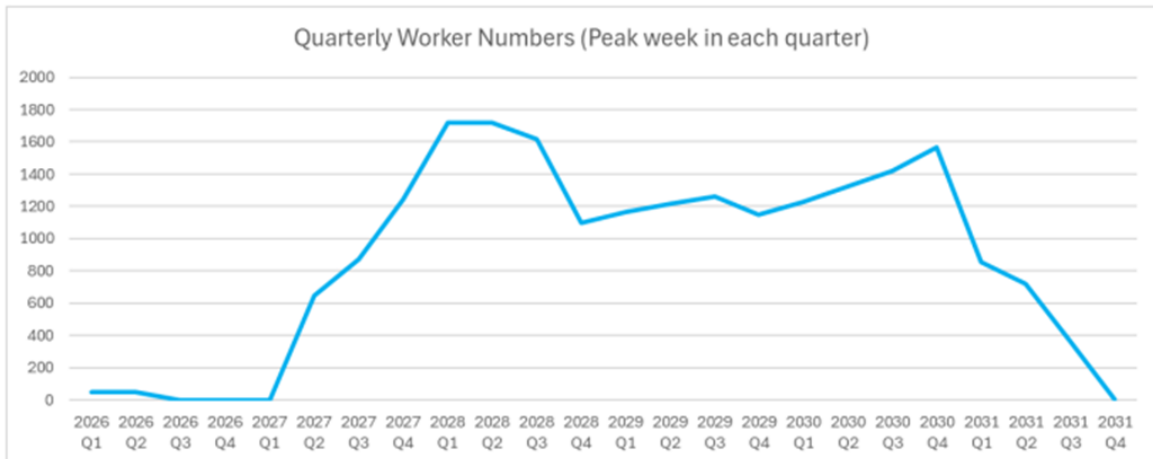
2.3.2 **6.4 ES Chapter 4: Project Description [APP-130]** provides the estimated number of construction workers that it is assumed will be employed on the Project. It is estimated that throughout the four-year construction period there would be approximately 4,800 construction jobs with a maximum peak day where approximately 1,720 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees would be working. The majority of construction activities would require trained specialists who are qualified to work on high voltage electricity lines and which are typically sourced from National Grid's existing pool of approved contractors.

2.3.3 However, from experience with other National Grid projects, it is likely that a minimum of 10% of the workforce would be sourced from the local labour market. These could, for example, have less specialist roles such as security workers and delivery drivers, although one purpose of this Plan is to extend the size of the local workforce and encourage uptake in the more specialist roles that this Project and others promoted by National Grid require. By doing so, broadening capability, employability and access to skilled jobs beyond this project. Based upon the assumptions contained within **6.15 ES Chapter Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [APP-265]** the level of local employment, based on an approximate total number of 4,800 construction jobs could result in a total job demand of approximately 480 jobs locally. A key objective of this OESP is to increase this number.

2.3.4 Figure 2.1 below, taken from **6.4 ES Chapter 4: Project Description [APP-130]** outlines the estimated peak daily workforce within the busiest week within each quarter across the construction of the Project.

Figure 2.1 Estimated maximum daily workforce through construction of the Project

Image 4.2 Estimated maximum daily workforce throughout the construction of the Project (quarterly work numbers – peak week within quarter)



2.3.5 The presence of the construction workforce within the Study Area is likely to give rise to an increase in spending within the local economy, this could be in the form of spending on accommodation, services and food for example, National Grid’s previous experience is that workers travelling into the area are likely to spend on average £65 per day on accommodation, food and other local services, generating approximately £100,620 per day to the local economy or £104.6 million over the construction period. In theory this spend could support existing and potentially new jobs in support services such as catering however the linear and rolling nature of the Project is such that the construction workforce would not be concentrated in one particular area for a significant amount of time.

2.4 Economic Benefits

2.4.1 **6.15 ES Chapter Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [APP-265]** records that the capital cost of the Project is estimated to be in the region of £894 million (based on 2020/21 prices) averaging at approximately £178.8 million per annum. National Grid’s previous experience suggests that around 65% of the Project cost would be spent on civil engineering works with 35% on plant and equipment. It is assumed that all civil engineering works will be undertaken by UK based contractors with a proportion of plant and materials also sourced from UK suppliers. In total **6.15 ES Chapter Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [APP-265]** estimates that around £581.1 million of net spend would be in the UK economy.

2.4.2 In addition to the Project’s direct spend into the economy there will be the indirect spend in the form of materials and services sourced from the local area. This could include services such as skip hire, fencing and planting and will increase the Project’s contribution to the local economy.

2.5 Norwich to Tilbury Jobs and Skills Requirement

2.5.1 The following are the types of service and supply chain opportunities commonly required on similar National Grid projects:

- 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 Informed by the above, the following local employment opportunities are likely to be available.

Table 2.1 Types of employment opportunities during construction of the Project

Employment Opportunities	Job Descriptions	Skills
Construction and civil engineering site personnel	Supporting works on site	Relevant construction qualifications required for example in 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 cabling, 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 Additional jobs and skills

2.6.1 Section 2.5 identifies opportunities for the local jobs market and refers less to the specialist services coming from outside the local workforce. However, National Grid is committed to expanding the number and range of specialist skills needed to construct transmission lines given the challenges that it faces in delivering the wider, national programme of grid upgrades in support of the UK's transition to Net Zero. Therefore, opportunities to educate and upskill the Study Area workforce to respond to the need for specialist skills both in relation to this Project and the wider portfolio of National Grid projects will be sought.

2.7 Summary of Equipment and Material Requirements

2.7.1 The following table sets out the anticipated equipment and material requirements for the Project with those shaded having the highest potential for sourcing amongst the Study Area and local supply chain.

Table 2.2 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
	Storing equipment	Busbars

Cabling/Overhead Lines	Converter Stations	Substations
	Fire deluge pump	Cable interface
	Loading equipment	Electric vehicle parking bays
		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. Employment and Skills Profile

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 This section identifies the characteristics of the local workforce and economy which are relevant to developing both this OESP and the final Employment and Skills Plan to ensure that it effectively meets local needs and maximises the benefits of the Project.
- 3.1.2 This Employment and Skills 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)¹ 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.
- 3.1.3 Data was collected for each local planning authority (LPA) and has been totalled together and averaged to create figures for each county area presented in 'sub-Study Areas' (sub-SAs), namely Norfolk sub-SA, Suffolk sub-SA, and Essex sub-SA.

3.2 Employment

- 3.2.1 According to ONS Census data, in 2021, 181,962 (63.7%) of residents in the Norfolk sub-Study Area (Norfolk sub-SA), 312,758 (60.8%) in the Suffolk sub-Study Area (Suffolk sub-SA), and 687,058 (61.4%) within Essex Study Areas (sub-Essex SA) were of working age (aged 16-64). The Suffolk and Essex sub-Study Areas have lower rates when compared to the rates recorded for the East of England (61.6%), and England as a whole (63.0%), while the Norfolk Study Area sees a higher rate. (Office for National Statistics, 2022).
- 3.2.2 According to the Annual Population Survey (APS) (Office for National Statistics, 2025), from October 2024 to September 2025 the unemployment rate among working age residents in the Norfolk SA was 6.4%, around 2% higher than for the East of England (4.0%), and England (4.4%). The Suffolk and Essex sub-SAs saw much better rates than Norfolk at 2.5% and 4.3% respectively. The individual authority with the highest rate of unemployment was Colchester with 8.5%, while the LPA with the lowest rate was Basildon at 2.7%.
- 3.2.3 Economic activity rates of residents of working age, as recorded by the Annual Population Survey (APS) (October 2024 to September 2025) were 84.3% in Norfolk sub-SA, 79.9% in Suffolk sub-SA, and 80.3% in Essex sub-SA. Norfolk is significantly higher than the rates for England (79.3%), and the East of England (81.8%) with Suffolk and Essex more comparable. The economic activity and unemployment rates are shown in Table 3.1 below.

¹ Lower 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'.

Table 3.1 Economic Activity and Unemployment Rates

	Norfolk SA	Suffolk SA	Essex SA	East of England	England
Economic activity rate (for residents aged 16-64)	84.3%	79.9%	80.3%	81.8%	79.3%
Unemployment rate (for residents aged 16-64)	6.4%	2.5%	4.3%	4.0%	4.4%

Source: ONS, (2025); APS, October 2024 to September 2025 (Office for National Statistics, 2025). Sub-areas an average of individual authority rates.

3.2.4 Data from the APS (January 2024 to December 2024) shows that in the Norfolk sub-SA, 51.9% 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 Suffolk SA (40.0%) and Essex SA (39.9%). Only the Norfolk SA possesses a rate above the national average (46.8%), and the averages for the East of England (43.7%).

3.2.5 The proportion of residents in the Norfolk sub-SA with no qualifications is 3.7%, which is lower than the proportion recorded for the East of England (5.2%), and England (6.6%). This is also the case for the proportion of residents in the Essex SA with a figure of 4.9%, however, the proportion in the Suffolk SA (5.5%), despite being lower than the national figure, is above the average for the region.

3.2.6 The local authority with the lowest proportion of workers with qualifications of RQF4 and above was Mid Suffolk with 29.7%, while the highest proportion is South Norfolk with a figure of 53.5%. The LPA with the highest proportion of workers with no qualifications is Brentwood with 14.1%, while the lowest proportion is in Colchester with only 1.4%.

3.2.7 The proportion of qualifications across the working age populations of the sub-Study Areas alongside those for East of England and England are shown in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 Qualifications of Working Population (16-64) Jan 2024 – Dec 2024

Qualification	Norfolk SA (%)	Suffolk SA (%)	Essex SA (%)	East of England (%)	England (%)
RQF4+	51.9	40.0	39.9	43.7	46.8
RQF3+	72.3	60.9	62.4	65.2	67.3
RQF2+	89.9	86.8	90.7	88.4	86.5
RQF1+	91.9	90.5	91.6	90.9	89.0
Other Qualifications	3.3	2.7	2.9	4.0	4.4
No Qualifications	3.7	5.5	4.9	5.2	6.6

Source: ONS, (2025); APS, January 2024 to December 2024 (Office for National Statistics, 2025).

- 3.2.8 The proportion of residents in the Norfolk SA engaged in Standard Occupational Classification (SOC1-3) occupations between October 2024 and September 2025 (57.3%) is greater than that recorded the East of England (53.1%), and England (53.9%). The proportion of those engaged in SOC1-3 occupations in the Essex SA (53.4%) is greater than the regional proportion, however slightly below the national average, whilst the proportion for the Suffolk SA (43.8%) is below both the national and regional figures. The proportion of residents in each of the Study Areas in elementary occupations is higher than the proportions recorded for East of England (8.4%), and England (8.8%), with the Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex sub-SAs recording figures of 9.5%, 9.9% and 9.2% respectively.
- 3.2.9 'Professional occupations' (SOC2) was the largest occupation across all of the sub-Study Areas which is in keeping with national and regional trends, and was largest in the Norfolk SA with a proportion of 34.1%. Both the Norfolk and Essex sub-SAs saw the lowest proportions in 'Process plant & machine operatives' (SOC8), while the Suffolk SA had the lowest proportion of those in 'Sales and customer service occupations' (SOC7). Both of these are also in keeping with national trends, with England having lowest proportion for each with a figure of 5.6%.
- 3.2.10 Figures showing the employment by occupation of the sub-Study Areas, alongside those for East of England and England are shown in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3 Employment by Occupation (Oct 2024 – Sep 2025)

Occupation	Norfolk SA (%)	Suffolk SA (%)	Essex SA (%)	East of England (%)	England (%)
Soc 2020 major group 1-3	57.3	43.8	53.4	53.1	53.9
1 Managers, directors and senior officials	10.2	10.2	12.9	12.0	11.7
2 Professional occupations	34.1	20.3	25.2	26.7	27.2
3 Associate professional occupations	13.0	13.3	15.4	14.4	15.0
Soc 2020 major group 4-5	15.1	21.0	18.3	18.7	17.5
4 Administrative & secretarial occupations	7.5	10.7	9.7	10.2	9.2
5 Skilled trades occupations	7.6	10.2	8.6	8.5	8.3
Soc 2020 major group 6-7	12.9	17.9	13.6	13.4	14.1

Occupation	Norfolk SA (%)	Suffolk SA (%)	Essex SA (%)	East of England (%)	England (%)
6 Caring, leisure and Other Service occupations	4.2	12.0	7.7	8.0	8.5
7 Sales and customer service occupations	8.7	5.9	5.9	5.4	5.6
Soc 2020 major group 8-9	13.6	16.9	14.3	14.3	14.4
8 Process plant & machine operatives	4.1	7.0	5.1	5.9	5.6
9 Elementary occupations	9.5	9.9	9.2	8.4	8.8

Source: ONS, (2025); APS, October 2024 to September 2025 (Office for National Statistics, 2025).

3.3 Workforce

- 3.3.1 In 2024, ONS shows (Office for National Statistics, 2025) the workforce of the Norfolk sub-Study Area comprised around 145,000 employees while the Suffolk and Essex sub-sub-Study Areas comprised of 242,000 and 477,00 employees respectively, a total of 864,000 employees across all three areas.
- 3.3.2 Table 3.4 presents a breakdown of employment by broad industry group for the Study Areas, the East of England, and England. The data shows that the industry with the highest levels of employment in both the Suffolk and Essex sub-SAs, as of 2024, was 'Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles' with respective figures of 14.5% and 16.4% compared to 12.7% for England. Despite it not being the biggest industry in the Norfolk sub-SA, the sub-study area still possesses a higher-than-average proportion, with a figure of 15.2%. The largest industry in the Norfolk sub-SA was 'human health and social work activities' with a figure of 17.2% compared to the East of England's figure of 12.7% and England's figure of 13.4%. The other sub-study areas also had equal or higher-than-average proportions of those employed in the health and social work industry 13.4% and 13.6% being employed in the Suffolk SA and Essex sub-SAs respectively.
- 3.3.3 The construction sector contributes 6.4% of employment within the Suffolk sub-SA, less than the proportion recorded for the East of England regionally (6.5%), however slightly above the proportion for England (6.3%). The construction sector contributes 7.9% of employment within the Essex sub-SA, greater than both the regional and national figures, however the Norfolk sub-SA sees lower-than-average figures with 4.1%. There are around 59,000 construction jobs across the three study areas.
- 3.3.4 Lastly, the 'mining and quarrying' is the smallest across the study areas, as is the case in the region and the country as a whole with a proportion of 0.1% across all areas besides the Norfolk sub-SA which presents a proportion of 0.2%, equal to its proportion of those in the 'electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply' industry.

Table 3.4 Employee Jobs by Broad Industrial Group in 2024

Industry	Norfolk SA (%)	Suffolk SA (%)	Essex SA (%)	East of England (%)	England (%)*
B: Mining and quarrying	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
C: Manufacturing	6.2	8.7	5.7	7.2	6.7
D: Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	0.2	1.0	0.2	0.3	0.4
E: Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	0.7	0.4	0.9	0.7	0.6
F: Construction	4.1	6.4	7.9	6.5	6.3
G: Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	15.2	14.5	16.4	14.9	12.7
H: Transportation and storage	3.1	5.3	7.3	5.7	5.4
I: Accommodation and food service activities	7.2	7.0	6.6	7.0	7.1
J: Information and communication	2.3	1.9	2.5	3.2	4.7
K: Financial and insurance activities	2.1	2.3	2.4	1.8	3.1
L: Real estate activities	3.1	1.9	2.3	2.3	2.0
M: Professional, scientific and technical activities	7.2	5.6	6.8	8.7	9.9
N: Administrative and support service activities	6.9	14.3	8.9	11.7	8.5
O: Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	7.8	4.2	4.6	3.8	4.5
P: Education	10.7	8.1	8.8	9.1	8.4

Industry	Norfolk SA (%)	Suffolk SA (%)	Essex SA (%)	East of England (%)	England (%)*
Q: Human health and social work activities	17.2	13.4	13.6	12.7	13.4
R: Arts, entertainment and recreation	2.8	2.9	2.1	2.5	2.9
S: Other service activities	2.0	1.5	1.8	1.9	2.6

* Data for England is from December 2025

Source: ONS, Nomis – Local Authority Profile (2025), and ONS, Nomis – Region/nation Profile (2025)

3.4 Conclusion

- 3.4.1 Employment data from ONS (Office for National Statistics, 2025) show that the sub-SAs have a number of strengths in sectors which are potentially aligned to the transmission network supply chain.
- 3.4.2 Construction employment across the Study Area is broadly consistent with the national average but with a higher than Study Area averages in the southern section of the Project, notably the Essex sub-Study Area.
- 3.4.3 Workforce involved in ‘Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply’ industry is fairly consistent with national levels, however Suffolk sub-SA has over twice the proportion for England (1.0% compared to 0.4%).
- 3.4.4 The Study Area generally has higher-than average levels of economic activity when compared to the England average with the Norfolk sub-SA higher than the East of England average also. Conversely the average unemployment level across the two local authorities comprising the Norfolk sub-SA is higher than the other sub-Sas, the regional and national averages also.
- 3.4.5 The Study Area population has mixed educational performance. Attainment within the two authorities comprising the Norfolk sub-SA exceeds the regional and England averages in the higher level qualifications. This pattern is not repeated in the Suffolk and Essex sub-SAs with a greater concentration at RQF1+ and RQF2+ levels.
- 3.4.6 In conclusion the Study Area has the potential to support the construction of the Project. Opportunities exist to engage with those in employment and looking to gain employment, both within the construction industry and in the wider supply chain and in service delivery to maximise the size of the local workforce.

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

4.1 Introduction

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

4.2 Existing Skills Assets

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

4.2.2 The skills networks currently in operation in Norfolk and Suffolk include:

- The Regional Skills Coordination Function (RSCF): This is 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. While the RSCF is led by Suffolk County Council, Essex County Council and Norfolk County Council are actively engaged alongside it and Skills England to support coordination of skills development and workforce planning across the wider Eastern region.
- Norfolk County Council Skills Team / Norfolk & Suffolk Skills Hub: A county level coordination role, working with employers, training providers and partners to shape and influence the Norfolk skills system. The team facilitates sector-based skills groups (including digital, green, health and social care), supports district-level skills and employment forums, and operates as part of the Norfolk & Suffolk Skills Hub, enabling shared intelligence, joint resourcing and coordinated delivery across both counties. This function plays a key role in aligning skills provision with workforce demand arising from major infrastructure and energy projects, including nationally significant electricity transmission and grid-reinforcement schemes.
- The Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP provides strategic direction and coordination in skills development across both counties. It works alongside plans such as the Clean Energy Growth Plan supporting Net Zero workforce development. National Grid is a Gold Patron/Chamber member of the Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP.

- 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 The skills networks currently in operation in Essex and Thurrock include:

- Essex County Council Skills and Employment Function / Essex Employment and Skills Board (ESB): Provides a county-wide strategic role in coordinating skills, employment and workforce development activity through its Skills in Essex programme and the delivery of the Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for Essex, Southend and Thurrock. The LSIP is employer-led and supported by Essex County Council, further education colleges and training providers, and is overseen through the Essex Employment and Skills Board, which provides strategic direction and coordination across the county. This framework is intended to align skills provision with employer demand arising from housing growth, regeneration and nationally significant infrastructure projects, including major transport, energy and utilities schemes.
- Greater Essex Careers Hub and Enterprise Adviser Network (EAN): A Careers & Enterprise Company-funded partnership, supported by Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea City Council and Thurrock Council. The Hub works with schools, colleges, employers and volunteer Enterprise Advisers to strengthen careers education, improve employer engagement and support young people to access education, training and employment pathways aligned with local labour-market demand. The Hub supports careers provision across Essex and forms a key component of the long-term workforce pipeline into priority sectors, including construction, engineering, energy and infrastructure-related industries.
- Connect to Work: A Department for Work and Pensions funded employment programme delivered in partnership with local authorities and providers across Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock, offering personalised support, training and job-matching services to help individuals facing barriers to employment access and sustain work.
- Essex Growth Agency's Apprenticeship Hub (ECC): Supported by Essex County Council through the Essex Growth Agency, the Apprenticeship Hub provides targeted support to residents and employers across Essex to promote, access and deliver apprenticeship opportunities.
- Other Essex and Thurrock skills initiatives and support include the Sustainable Skills Innovation Centre at Gateway 14, and local employment and opportunity platforms such as the Essex Opportunities Portal and Thurrock Opportunities Portal, alongside emerging Skills Hub initiatives linked to major infrastructure delivery in Thurrock.

4.2.4 Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Thurrock benefit from a range of training providers that support the development of skills relevant to the construction and infrastructure sectors including:

- Norfolk:
 - City College Norwich;
 - East Coast College – Great Yarmouth Campus;
 - College of West Anglia (King’s Lynn and Wisbech campuses);
 - Norfolk Construction Training Group / CITB-linked providers; and
 - University of East Anglia (UEA)
- Suffolk:
 - Suffolk New College;
 - West Suffolk College;
 - East Coast College Lowestoft Campus;
 - Learn Suffolk;
 - Construction Training Services;
 - Ipswich Skills Centre; and
 - University of Suffolk.
- Essex (including Thurrock):
 - Chelmsford College;
 - Colchester Sixth Form College;
 - South Essex College (including campuses at Basildon, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock);
 - Colchester Institute;
 - Harlow College;
 - USP College (Palmer’s and Seevic Campuses);
 - Essex Adult Community Learning (ACL Essex);
 - Thurrock Adult Community College; and
 - University of Essex and Anglia Ruskin University (Chelmsford Campus).

4.2.5 Colchester Institute has been designated as a Clean Energy Technical Excellence College (CETEC) as part of the Government’s national programme of Technical Excellence Colleges. The CETEC will support the delivery of high-quality training aligned to key growth sectors including clean energy, working with regional education providers and industry partners to coordinate skills provision, support employers and create clear pathways into skilled employment.

4.2.6 In addition to education providers, Skills Bootcamps support adults to gain industry-focused training and progress into new or existing roles within the construction sector. Across Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Thurrock, Skills Bootcamps in construction and related disciplines are delivered through a range of further education colleges, independent training providers and adult learning services, with course provision varying over time in response to employer demand. These programmes are part-funded by the Department for Education and are designed to address skills shortages by providing short, intensive training aligned with local labour market needs.

- 4.2.7 National Grid engages with regional Chambers of Commerce and business networks across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, including the Chambers of Commerce, to support supply chain development for the energy sector. The Suffolk, Essex and Norfolk Chambers of Commerce provide established networks of businesses and play an important role in supporting supply chain engagement with energy and infrastructure projects across the East of England, with Suffolk Chamber also delivering targeted supply chain initiatives linked to major projects. Through engagement with these organisations, the Project will be able to access the local business community and help link Tier 1 suppliers 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 Projections are provided for Norfolk and Suffolk combined for the period 2015-2035. These show a requirement for 10,000 workers to meet expansion demand and 38,000 workers to meet replacement demand. Essex and Thurrock projections are provided for the Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock LSIP area. Here, the construction sector is expected to experience net employment growth of approximately 24,800 jobs, with a further 44,200 jobs required to replace workers leaving the industry. This gives a total indicative employment requirement of around 69,100 construction job openings over the projection period.
- 4.3.3 The forecasts show a particularly large requirement for certain roles which will also be in demand for the 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 Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Thurrock have strengths in sectors which are 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) 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 ONS UK vacancies data for relevant occupations shows that in the construction industry there were 26,000 vacancies between January and March 2026, which accounts for 3.7% of the total occupations in the UK (711,000) (Office for National Statistics, 2026). This number of vacancies is 17,000 lower than the same quarter of

2025 and is the equivalent to a vacancy rate (vacancies per 100 employee jobs) of 1.6 compared to an average of 2.2 across all sectors.

- 4.4.3 District-level labour demand data shows variation in the relative demand for construction and mining occupations across south Norfolk and Essex authorities (Office for National Statistics, 2023). South Norfolk, Mid Suffolk and Babergh consistently recorded around 3-4% of online job adverts in construction and mining sector occupations between 2017 and 2022, which broadly aligned with the national average of approximately 3.1% for the same period. In Tendring, Colchester and Braintree, the share of construction-related adverts was marginally higher, typically in the range of 4–5%, reflecting stronger demand associated with growth locations and employment-led development. Chelmsford, Basildon, Brentwood and Thurrock recorded the highest relative demand among the identified districts, with construction and mining accounting for approximately 4.5-6% of all online job adverts, comparable with higher-demand areas nationally (Office for National Statistics, 2023).

Project-Specific Challenges

- 4.4.4 In addition to wider sector-level shortages, there are several project-specific recruitment pressures that could be applicable to the Project. Delivery of the Project will require a range of specialised roles associated with overhead line, underground cable and substation construction, including transmission and power systems engineers, overhead line specialists, civil and structural engineers, protection and control specialists, site managers and skilled technical trades such as high-voltage cable installation and commissioning personnel. Construction of new overhead lines, underground cabling, Cable Sealing End (CSE) compounds and new AIS and GIS substations will rely on skills that are already in short supply nationally and are not strongly embedded within local labour markets across parts of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. As a result, local availability of personnel with the skills required to deliver some elements of the Project is expected to be limited, necessitating a combination of local, regional and national labour. The actions set out in Section 6.2 identify measures, including upskilling, that can be used to maximise local benefits.
- 4.4.5 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.

4.5 Supply Chain Strengths

- 4.5.1 Employment data from the 2024 Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) (Office for National Statistics, 2025) for Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Thurrock shows that these areas have a number of strengths in sectors which are relatively closely tied to the transmission network supply chain.
- 4.5.2 In Norfolk, employment in the construction, land-based transport, manufacturing and civil engineering sectors is more concentrated than the national average. With the exception of manufacturing, Essex and Thurrock also demonstrate above-average concentrations of employment in these sectors. Suffolk exhibits higher-than-average concentrations in construction-related, transport and manufacturing activities, and additionally shows a stronger concentration of employment in the electric power generation, transmission and distribution sector than the national average. Collectively, this indicates that the local economy across Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and

Thurrock has established supply-chain strengths in key sectors that are relevant to, and could benefit from, the proposed development.

- 4.5.3 Construction is a particularly important sector to consider in the OESP, given that most of the local employment opportunities will be in this sector. Based on BRSE data, all of the counties and Thurrock have a higher proportion of employment in the construction sector than the national average: Norfolk - 5.9%; Suffolk – 6.2%; Essex – 8.7%; Thurrock – 8.8% (these percentages being county-wide based on BRES data as opposed to the county sub-SAs referred to in paragraph 3.3.3 above). The Location Quotient (LQ) of 1.1, 1.2, 1.7 and 1.7 respectively, indicates a relative strength in this sector in the three counties, particularly so for Essex and Thurrock.
- 4.5.4 There is an established energy-focused supply chain across Norfolk and Suffolk, supported by a number of well-recognised organisations. These include OrbisEnergy (situated in Lowestoft), the East of England Energy Group (EEEEGR), the New Anglia Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Group, and the East Coast Manufacturing Group, all of which play a role in supporting skills development, supply chain coordination and inward investment within the regional energy sector.
- 4.5.5 Essex also benefits from a strong and well-developed supply chain that supports energy and infrastructure activity, underpinned by its strategic location and major port and logistics assets along the Thames Estuary. The presence of large-scale logistics and engineering activity associated with facilities such as London Gateway in Thurrock and the Port of Tilbury supports supply chain capacity relevant to electricity transmission, construction and associated infrastructure development.

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 Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock (Essex Chambers of Commerce, 2023) identifies a number of key factors that need to be addressed in order to respond to skills challenges across the LSIP area. These include:

- NEET: Pockets of higher youth inactivity in parts of Essex, alongside lower attainment at degree-level qualifications in comparison with national averages.
- Specific skills shortages: Ongoing difficulties in recruiting skilled workers, particularly within construction, engineering and related technical sectors, reflecting an ageing workforce and sustained demand associated with housing growth and infrastructure delivery.
- Skills gaps for digital, soft and green skills: Identified across multiple sectors, with a relatively high proportion of lower-skilled employment and a clear need to upskill and reskill the existing workforce to meet higher-value and low-carbon industry demand.
- Businesses not engaging with training: Employer feedback highlights barriers to engagement with training provision, including small business size and limited capacity, apprenticeship frameworks not aligning with business needs or skill levels, and previous negative experiences with apprentices or training providers.

4.6.3 The LSIP provides a qualitative, employer led assessment of prevailing skills challenges and does not seek to quantify future labour market demand or workforce requirements arising from major infrastructure projects. It is noted that an updated LSIP and accompanying data dashboard are due for publication in July 2026, which will provide the most up-to-date skills and labour market intelligence for Greater Essex and will be considered in future alignment of the Plan.

4.7 Other Relevant Development

4.7.1 The Project is just one of several NSIPs with and surrounding the Study Area, which will have broadly similar skills requirements. NSIPs and other development scoped into the socio-economics cumulative effects assessment (see **6.17.A3 ES Appendix 17.3 - Inter-Project Cumulative Effects [APP-284]**) include:

- Hornsea Project Three Offshore Windfarm - Orsted Hornsea Project Three;
- Bramford to Twinstead – NGET;
- Longfield Solar Farm – Longfield Solar Energy Farm Limited;
- Lower Thames Crossing – National Highways The Lower Thames Crossing;
- North Falls Offshore Wind Farm – North Falls;
- Tilbury 2 – Port of Tilbury London Limited;
- Thurrock Flexible Generation Plant – Thurrock Power Ltd;
- Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm – Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm Ltd; and
- The East Anglia Three Offshore Windfarm.

4.7.2 The Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP (Norfolk and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce, 2023) notes that skills required for NSIPs are wide ranging but include higher concentrations of engineering, project management, environmental, legal, construction and technology skills. The Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock LSIP (Essex Chambers of Commerce, 2023) highlights that many of these skillsets are already subject to strong demand across the sub-region.

- 4.7.3 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 Sizewell C, Longfield Solar Farm and Rivenhall Integrated Waste Management Facility (IWMF) and Energy Centre, to smaller-scale developments that also require construction workers. Another consideration impacting construction-related skills demand in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex is housebuilding. Changes to the standard method for assessing housing need are expected to inform higher housing requirements in emerging local plans, with implications for future construction labour demand.
- 4.7.4 Development of ports and associated infrastructure across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex is expected to generate significant new employment opportunities, with implications for construction-related labour and skills demand. 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 Essex, port-related investment at locations including Tilbury is expected to support regeneration and employment growth, generating demand for construction labour both during delivery and following completion of new port and logistics facilities.
- 4.7.5 Although the scale of these projects presents a challenge in terms of meeting skills demand, it also represents an opportunity by providing a strong pipeline of development that can support career progression, attract new entrants into the construction industry and encourage longer-term commitment to the sector. Where necessary, communication with other NSIPs and major developments will be undertaken to minimise potential issues arising from competition for workers during overlapping construction periods.

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 OESP.

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 Project. Documents which are relevant for this OESP 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) (Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, DESNZ, 2024)

5.2.1 Paragraph 5.13.4 of the NPS EN-1² (DESNZ, 2024), states that all relevant socio-economic impacts should be assessed, including the following, which is of most relevance to this Employment and Skills Plan:

- 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 (amended with minor changes, 2025))

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*

² National Policy Statement for electricity networks infrastructure (EN-5) (2024) applies to electricity networks specifically but provides no further guidance on to the Employment and Skills Plan additional to NPS EN-1 and therefore has not been considered further within this chapter.

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, 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

Regional and County Level Strategies

Local Growth Plan: Norfolk Economic Strategy 2024-2029, 2025

- 5.3.1 The Norfolk Economic Strategy sets out the county’s approach to delivering inclusive, sustainable and productivity-led economic growth, focusing on local business, people and skills, infrastructure, and place-making. It prioritises clean energy, agri-food and agri-tech, advanced manufacturing, digital and life sciences as key growth sectors, while addressing long-standing infrastructure and skills constraints, and provides the main framework for guiding investment, skills development and infrastructure delivery across Norfolk.

Local Growth Plan: Action Plan Norfolk Economic Strategy 2024-2029, 2025

- 5.3.2 The Local Growth Plan – Action Plan (2025) translates the ambitions of the Norfolk Economic Strategy into a practical, delivery-focused programme, setting out specific actions, priorities, lead partners and timescales for implementation. Overseen by the Norfolk Business Board, the Action Plan focuses on delivering tangible outcomes across key growth sectors, skills and workforce development, infrastructure investment, business support and decarbonisation, while addressing barriers to inclusive growth. It provides a clear framework for coordinating partners, attracting investment and demonstrating how strategic economic priorities will be delivered on the ground across Norfolk.

Norfolk Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan, 2023

- 5.3.3 The Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SIDP) identifies and prioritises the infrastructure investment required to support planned housing and employment growth, ensuring that economic development is deliverable and sustainable. Prepared and updated by Norfolk County Council in partnership with district councils and key stakeholders, the SIDP covers transport, utilities, energy, digital connectivity, flood risk and green infrastructure, and aligns directly with the Norfolk Economic Strategy and adopted Local Plans. It plays a key role in coordinating funding bids, guiding public and private investment, and demonstrating how infrastructure provision will unlock growth locations and support productivity, including clean-energy-led growth and net-zero objectives.

Norfolk and Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan, 2023

- 5.3.4 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.

Suffolk Economic Strategy and Growth Plan, 2024

- 5.3.5 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 Suffolk's three high growth sectors.

Get Suffolk Working, 2025

- 5.3.6 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

- 5.3.7 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

- 5.3.8 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.

Suffolk Economic Strategy Evidence Base, 2025

- 5.3.9 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.

Everyone's Essex – Our Plan for Levelling Up the County 2021–2026, 2021

- 5.3.10 Everyone's Essex provides the top-level strategic framework for Essex County Council, setting out 20 commitments across four priority themes: the economy, the environment, children and families, and health and wellbeing. Economic growth is framed around good jobs, green growth, skills development, infrastructure delivery and reducing inequalities, and the plan underpins all subsequent economy-, skills- and infrastructure-focused strategies.

Essex Sector Development Strategy (and Sector Development Report – Autumn 2023)

- 5.3.11 This strategy identifies five priority growth sectors for Essex: clean energy, advanced manufacturing and engineering, construction and retrofit, digital technology (including creative industries), and life sciences. It sets out how partners will work together to deliver a greener, more productive and inclusive economy. It provides a strong evidence base for employment growth, skills investment and inward investment, and is widely relied on in planning and funding context.

North Essex Economic Strategy and Delivery Plan via the North Essex Economic Board, 2023

- 5.3.12 Prepared collaboratively by Essex County Council and partner authorities, this strategy sets a shared vision for inclusive, productivity-led growth across North Essex, supported by a delivery plan focused on business growth, skills, infrastructure and innovation. It aligns closely with strategic Section 1 Local Plan employment policies (e.g. SP5) contained in the Tendring District Council, Colchester Borough Council and Braintree District Council jointly prepared local plan and provides an important cross-boundary economic framework.

Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) – Essex, Southend and Thurrock

- 5.3.13 The Essex LSIP provides the principal framework for aligning skills provision with employer demand, focusing on sectors such as construction, engineering, digital, health and care, and responding to growth arising from housing and nationally significant infrastructure projects. It is supported by annual progress reports and skills action plans.

Thurrock Corporate and Improvement Plan (formerly Corporate Plan), 2024–2029

- 5.3.14 The Thurrock Corporate and Improvement Plan sets out the Council's overarching priorities under the themes of People, Place and Prosperity, providing the principal borough-level framework for economic growth, regeneration and skills development. The Plan places emphasis on supporting local businesses, improving access to employment and training, and ensuring that growth associated with development and infrastructure investment delivers tangible economic and skills benefits for Thurrock residents.

Thames Freeport – Strategic Delivery Framework / Freeport Programme (2021–ongoing)

- 5.3.15 Thames Freeport operates under a single, integrated Freeport delivery framework, established following its designation by HM Government in 2021, which sets out the strategic approach to investment-led economic growth, skills and employment, innovation and regeneration across its core sites at London Gateway (Thurrock), the Port of Tilbury, and Ford Dagenham. The Freeport programme is focused on positioning the area as a national hub for advanced logistics, low-carbon industry, manufacturing and clean energy, while ensuring that growth translates into local jobs, skills development and inclusive economic benefits. Delivery is supported through a suite of formal mechanisms, including the Thames Freeport Community Skills Fund and Skills Programme, targeted business support and infrastructure investment,

which are designed to align workforce development with employer demand and to complement established county-wide frameworks such as the Essex LSIP.

Local Plans

South Norfolk Council - Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP), 2024³

- 5.3.16 **Policy 1 – The Sustainable Growth Strategy:** The Sustainable Growth Strategy sets the overarching spatial framework for Greater Norwich, directing housing, employment and infrastructure growth to the most sustainable and accessible locations in order to support balanced economic growth, reduce the need to travel, and deliver inclusive, low-carbon development to 2038.
- 5.3.17 **Policy 6 – The Economy:** Supports significant, sustainable employment and economic growth to 2038, safeguarding and intensifying strategic employment areas and promoting a diverse, low-carbon economy by directing new employment and retail development to sustainable, accessible locations, with particular support for key growth sectors including life sciences, agri-tech, advanced manufacturing and digital industries.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan - Part 1, 2023

- 5.3.18 **Policy SP05 – Employment Land:** Safeguards existing employment land and buildings for B Use Classes and other employment-generating uses. Supports delivery of sufficient, flexible employment land to meet forecast needs over the plan period. Seeks to protect strategically important employment sites from loss unless clearly justified. Encourages provision of employment land in accessible, sustainable locations.
- 5.3.19 **Policy LP09 – Supporting a Prosperous Economy:** Provides the overarching development management policy for economic development. This supports: new employment development, expansion of existing businesses, homeworking and small-scale rural enterprises. This emphasises flexibility and modern business needs, subject to environmental and amenity safeguards.

Tendring, Colchester and Braintree District Local Plan 2013-2033 and Beyond - North Essex Authorities' Shared Strategic Section 1 Plan, 2021⁴

- 5.3.20 **Policy SP5 – Employment:** Provides the overarching strategic framework for economic and employment growth across North Essex, requiring sufficient and flexible employment land in accessible locations, safeguarding key employment sites, supporting a diverse and competitive economy, and ensuring that jobs growth is planned alongside housing and infrastructure delivery. The policy sets out employment land required for office, research & development, industrial, storage and distribution uses as follow:
- North Essex overall – baseline: 54.9 hectares (ha); higher growth: 93.3ha;

³ The GNLP covers the administrative boundaries of Broadland District Council, Norwich City Council and South Norfolk Council

⁴ North Essex Authorities comprise Tendring District Council, Colchester Borough Council and Braintree District Council who jointly prepared. In the case of Braintree District Council, Section 1 was adopted in 2022.

- Braintree - baseline: 20.9ha; higher growth: 43.3ha
- Colchester - baseline: 22ha; higher growth: 30ha
- Tendring - baseline: 12ha; higher growth: 20ha

Tendring District Local Plan 2013-2033 and Beyond Section 2, 2022

- 5.3.21 **Policy PPL5 – Employment:** Safeguards existing employment land, allocates and supports new employment development in appropriate locations, resists the unjustified loss of employment sites, and encourages a diverse Tendring economy, including port-related, tourism, rural and small-scale business uses.
- 5.3.22 **Policy PPL8 – Proposals for Employment Use in the Countryside:** Allows employment development in the countryside where it supports rural economic activity, reuses existing buildings where possible, and avoids harm to landscape character, biodiversity and residential amenity.

Colchester Borough Local Plan 2017-2033 and Beyond Section 2, 2022

- 5.3.23 **Policy SG3: Economic Growth Provision:** Allocates 32 ha of employment land to 2033, with a further 3.5 ha at the Tendring–Colchester Borders Garden Community and 25 ha post-2033, directing primarily B2/B8 (with supporting Class E and employment-generating sui generis uses) to Strategic and Local Economic Areas, mixed-use policy areas and committed sites, safeguarding existing uses and allowing suitable non-B class economic uses where they deliver jobs and comply with the Plan.
- 5.3.24 **Policy SG4: Local Economic Areas:** Safeguards Local Economic Areas primarily for B-class and appropriate Class E office uses, allowing non-employment redevelopment only where ongoing B-class use is demonstrably unviable, sufficient employment land supply is maintained, impacts are acceptable, and proposals maximise economic growth and support existing employment activity.

Braintree District Local Plan 2013-2033, 2022

- 5.3.25 **Policy LPP 2 – Location of Employment Land:** Sets the overarching approach for a prosperous Braintree District by supporting sustainable economic growth, including the delivery of approximately 42.1 hectares of employment land, alongside high-quality design, environmental protection and infrastructure provision to create balanced, successful communities.
- 5.3.26 **Policy LPP 3 – Employment Policy Areas:** Safeguards identified employment policy areas primarily for employment-generating uses, supporting their intensification, regeneration and continued use for business activity, and resisting the loss of employment land to non-employment uses unless it is clearly demonstrated that such uses are no longer viable or that alternative proposals would deliver clear economic benefits without undermining the overall supply of employment land.
- 5.3.27 **Policy LPP7 – Rural Enterprise:** Supports appropriate rural enterprise and business development, including the reuse and diversification of existing buildings, where it strengthens the rural economy, provides local employment opportunities, and is of a scale and type that respects countryside character, amenity and environmental assets.

Chelmsford Local Plan 2013 to 2036, 2020

- 5.3.28 **Strategic Policy S6:** sets Chelmsford's housing and employment requirements with employment growth of around 725 jobs per year through the allocation of a minimum of 55,000 sqm of new B1–B8 business floorspace, plus new convenience retail provision focused in the City Centre, designated centres and South Woodham Ferrers.
- 5.3.29 **Policy DM4 Employment Areas and Rural Employment Areas:** Safeguards these areas for Class B and employment-generating sui generis uses, permitting non-B uses only where there is no reasonable prospect of employment use, the proposal provides on-site employment, is not Class A (other than small-scale ancillary uses), and does not undermine the operation or function of the employment area.

Basildon Local Plan Saved Policies, 2007

- 5.3.30 **Policy BAS E2:** Allocates 3.5ha of land for employment purposes in Terminus Drive, Pitsea.
- 5.3.31 **Policy BAS E3:** Allocates 1.5ha of Land North of Courtauld Road for employment purposes.
- 5.3.32 **Policy BAS E4:** Subject to the criteria set out in Policy BAS E10, supports planning permission for new business and general industrial buildings, extensions to existing buildings and changes of use of existing buildings to business and general industry (Use Classes B1 and B2), within those areas proposed or shown as existing industrial estates as identified on the Proposals Map.
- 5.3.33 **BAS E10 – General Employment Policy:** safeguards employment land in Basildon by supporting new business and industrial development in appropriate locations, encouraging the retention and intensification of existing employment uses, and resisting the loss of employment sites to non-employment uses unless it is clearly demonstrated that continued employment use is no longer viable or suitable.

Brentwood Local Plan 2016-2033, 2022

- 5.3.34 **Strategic Policy PC01 – Safeguarding Employment Land:** Safeguards designated employment land and premises for employment-generating uses, resisting the loss of employment sites unless it is clearly demonstrated that continued employment use is no longer viable or appropriate.
- 5.3.35 **Policy PC02 – Supporting the Rural Economy:** Supports appropriate rural economic development, including farm diversification and the reuse or adaptation of existing buildings for business use, where proposals strengthen the rural economy and respect countryside character and accessibility.
- 5.3.36 **Policies Policy E08 – Land Adjacent to A12 Slip Road, Ingatestone; E10 – Codham Hall Farm; E11 – Brentwood Enterprise Park; Policy E12 – Childerditch Industrial Estate; and Policy E13 – East Horndon Hall:** Allocate and safeguard key employment sites for business, industrial and logistics uses to deliver the Local Plan's employment strategy and meet forecast job growth.

Thurrock Local Plan Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development (as amended), 2015

- 5.3.37 **CSSP2 – Sustainable Employment Growth:** Directs sustainable employment growth to appropriate locations across Thurrock, supporting regeneration, economic diversification and job creation while managing impacts on communities, infrastructure and the environment. Identifies that the Key Strategic Economic Hubs will deliver the East of England Plan’s indicative target of 26,000 new jobs for Thurrock over the period 2001-2026 and beyond and Key Strategic Economic Hubs and other sites will supply approximately 456ha (gross) of employment land, including circa 245 Ha at the London Gateway development.
- 5.3.38 **CSTP6 – Strategic Employment Provision:** Sets the overall employment strategy for Thurrock, making provision for significant job growth by safeguarding existing employment land and delivering new employment development in key regeneration and growth locations, aligned with transport infrastructure and the Thames Gateway role.

Common themes

- 5.3.39 Common themes that emerge from the Norfolk policy and strategy review include the need to:
- Support skills, education and workforce development at scale, responding to the employment demands arising from clean energy investment, infrastructure delivery and wider economic growth;
 - Attract and support investment in priority growth sectors, including clean energy, advanced manufacturing, construction and infrastructure-related supply chains;
 - Develop employer-led education, training and skills provision aligned with priority sectors including clean energy, advanced manufacturing and engineering, construction and retrofit, digital technology and life sciences;
 - Actively promote and support apprenticeships, vocational routes and work-based learning as tools to meet employer demand, support regeneration and maximise the economic benefits of growth and infrastructure delivery; and
 - Use skills, training and employment initiatives to support inclusive growth, reduce economic inactivity and widen access to employment opportunities across the county.
- 5.3.40 Common themes that emerge from the Suffolk policy and strategy review include the need to:
- Provide high-quality education, technical training and lifelong learning, aligned with current and future employer demand;
 - Attract inward investment across Suffolk, particularly within clean energy, energy infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, construction and supporting supply chains;
 - Develop education, training and skills provision that responds directly to the specific needs of the Suffolk economy, including the demands arising from major infrastructure and nationally significant energy projects;

- Ensure that apprenticeships, vocational training and employment-related work placement initiatives are actively promoted, coordinated and fully supported; and
- Strengthen connections between young people, training providers and local employers, particularly within key growth sectors and areas experiencing labour-market shortages, in order to reduce economic inactivity and support inclusive growth.

5.3.41 Common themes that emerge from the Essex policy and strategy review, including those directly relevant to Thurrock, include the need to:

- Support skills, education and workforce development at scale, responding to a large, diverse and growing population and the employment demands arising from significant housing growth, regeneration and investment across the county, including within Thurrock as a key growth and regeneration location;
- Attract inward investment to key growth corridors, urban centres and strategic economic hubs, leveraging Essex's connectivity, proximity to London, ports, logistics assets, with Thurrock identified as a focal point through London Gateway, the Port of Tilbury and Thames Freeport;
- Develop employer-led education, training and skills provision aligned with priority sectors including clean energy, advanced manufacturing and engineering, construction and retrofit, digital technology and life sciences;
- Actively promote and support apprenticeships, vocational routes and work-based learning as tools to meet employer demand, support regeneration and maximise the economic benefits of growth and infrastructure delivery; and
- Use skills, training and employment initiatives to address labour-market inequalities, reduce economic inactivity and support inclusive growth, particularly within areas of regeneration and communities experiencing barriers to accessing employment.

5.4 Conclusion

5.4.1 Planning policy and economic development strategies relevant to the Project are established at the national, regional and local levels across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. These policies and strategies provide a coherent framework for supporting the delivery of nationally significant electricity transmission infrastructure, recognising its role in enabling clean-energy generation, maintaining the security of electricity supply, and supporting employment, skills development and supply-chain opportunities across the East of England.

5.4.2 Across the relevant Local Plans and county-level economic and skills strategies, energy infrastructure and associated supply chains are consistently identified as priority growth sectors. Policies seek to maximise the socio-economic benefits arising from projects such as the Norwich–Tilbury transmission reinforcement through local employment, skills and training opportunities during construction and operation. This is supported by regional and county-wide frameworks, including LSIPs and sector-specific economic strategies, which promote employer-led education and training, support apprenticeships and vocational pathways, and ensure that workforce provision is responsive to the specialist skills demands associated with large-scale electricity transmission infrastructure, substations and related engineering activity.

5.4.3 The Outline Employment and Skills Plan aligns with and is in accordance with the objectives of relevant national, regional and local planning policies and strategies relating to skills, employment and supply-chain development, and reflects the differing strategic emphases across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. In particular it supports the delivery of policy ambitions for inclusive growth, workforce readiness and economic resilience, while enabling the construction, operation and long-term value of the Project as a critical component of the National Electricity Transmission System.

6. Existing Programmes and Future Actions

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 National Grid currently operates a number of national and regional programmes aimed at enhancing its positive impacts in the context of employment and skills. Informed by these programmes and by the existing plans, strategies and delivery agencies operating in the Study Area it is possible to identify a number of actions aimed at enhancing the employment and skills/educational opportunities presented by this Project.

6.1.2 This Section therefore summarises the existing programmes and presents the actions to be taken forward, which are considered to be proportionate to the scale and nature of the Project as well as to the level of relevant regional activity proposed and/or underway. 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.

6.1.3 The Actions set out within this section are in outline only. Section 1.1 confirms that a Final ESP will be prepared post consent and following further engagement with the key employment, education and skills providers operating within the Study Area. The Final ESP (secured by DCO requirement) will expand upon and confirm the final actions to be taken to maximise the Project's economic and educational benefits.

National Grid Electricity Transmission. Social and Environmental Action Plan 2026-2031

6.1.4 National Grid's commitment to maximising its positive impacts within the local economies within which it operates, together with its commitments to employment, skills development and wider social value and sustainability is presented within its Social and Environmental Action Plan 2026-2031 (National Grid, 2026). Of particular reference to this OESP and the Project are its national commitments to skills and jobs and to the promotion of a local and diverse supply chain.

6.1.5 In summary, the Plan presents the following outcomes relevant to this OESP:

Skills and employment

- Increase STEM careers and aspirations;
- Accelerate social mobility within communities by facilitating meaningful employment opportunities; and
- Boost skills and qualification, increase the attainment of skills qualifications and employment opportunities specifically within the energy sector.

Local and diverse supply chain

- Provide better access for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSEs) to contracts;
- Upskill and support SMEs and VCSEs to participate in procurement; and
- Increase benefits for local supply chains and economies.

6.1.6 These outcomes frame the remainder of this section.

The Great Grid Partnership

6.1.7 The Great Grid Partnership (GGP) is a collaborative enterprise model which brings together two design and consenting partners with five construction partners with the aim of accelerating the delivery of electricity infrastructure. The intention is that through collaboration between National Grid, its designers and contractors, the partnership will enable faster and more efficient delivery. This Project is the first to benefit from the GGP and from the direct and indirect employment and skills opportunities that it will create. The construction partners relevant to the Project are listed in paragraph 6.2.25 below.

6.2 Skills and Employment

6.2.1 Whether for those in full time education or undertaking vocational training, the Project and National Grid's wider portfolio of projects presents significant opportunities for skills training and employment. Whilst **6.15 ES Chapter 15 Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism [APP-265]** focuses on non-specialist employment opportunities for the local workforce, Section 4 concludes that there is a high demand for specialist skills which could be supplied by the Study Area workforce, at least in part.

6.2.2 Although often defined as specialist skills, many such roles are better described as specific skills, in terms of the tasks that are undertaken on a project such as this. In other words, improving the transferability of existing skills can be as important as the development of new skills in themselves.

Working to deliver existing skills strategies

National Skills Strategy

6.2.3 The Project will be aligned with National Grid's national skills strategy. The 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.

- 6.2.4 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 is 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).
- 6.2.5 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.
- 6.2.6 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.

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, 2026). National Grid intends to continue to engage with EEEGR on Skills, Supply Chain and Employment matters related to the Project, as well as wider project activity and regional engagement, ensuring alignment with industry initiatives and local workforce development priorities.

Accelerating Social Mobility

- 6.2.8 The 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 million 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 early career and employability support which is already accessible to young people in the region.

- 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. These existing programmes form part of National Grid’s wider UK-wide social impact activities, including its Grid for Good offer.
- 6.2.13 A local example of National Grid’s partnership with Catch22 is the LionLink project. In 2025, National Grid 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: support for travel expenses before obtaining driving licences.
 - 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 STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) roles. 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, 12 returners have joined National Grid’s programme, with 10 of those individuals being made permanent after its completion. In addition, through partnership with Accelerating Genius, National Grid provides tailored opportunities for high performing undergraduates from low or no-income backgrounds to support progression into meaningful roles.
- 6.2.15 For the Project, National Grid will signpost local authorities and education partners to National Grid’s existing Pathways to Progress programme 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 will seek to strengthen workforce diversity working with its GGP contractors to engage underrepresented groups including women, and veterans providing targeted support where necessary. The intention will be to draw on established national and regional initiatives, rather than creating new programmes, to support awareness of energy-sector careers and provide accessible pathways for young people and underrepresented groups in the Study Area.

Increasing diversity and inclusion within the workforce

- 6.2.16 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 GGP contractors will:

- Work with local VCSE and employability partners to create pathways for individuals facing barriers to employment. This may include delivery of employability support activities and pre-employment programmes
- Deploy existing contractor recruitment programmes which are aimed at supporting an inclusive workforce, for example supporting those facing barriers to employment due to poor mental or physical health as well as others also experiencing barriers in different ways, such as prison leavers, NEETs. Support could include the provision of work placements.
- Work with local Skills Bootcamp providers in construction and related disciplines to support local longer-term unemployed people into meaningful employment.
- 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 their job applicants to appropriate local training or support provision (e.g. Apprenticeships Norfolk, Suffolk; Essex Opportunities), ensuring diverse candidates are not excluded from opportunities.

6.2.17 Where there is limited local further or higher education provision, National Grid and its contractors will seek, where appropriate and proportionate, to support accessible skills provision, including through engagement with training providers and facilitating access to existing programmes.

Employee Volunteering

6.2.18 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.

6.2.19 The GGP contractors along with National Grid are committed to employee volunteering and through their existing volunteering programmes will undertake STEM engagement activities for local schools and colleges.

Boosting skills and qualifications

6.2.20 Nationally, National Grid aims to expand apprenticeships, upskilling and on-the-job training to expand its own workforce and the wider supply chain. This objective is shared by its GGP contractor partners.

Apprenticeships

6.2.21 In Norfolk and Suffolk, apprenticeship provision is supported by Apprenticeships Norfolk and Apprenticeships Suffolk, County Council services that help employers and residents access opportunities across the region. Key providers include the College of West Anglia, the Norfolk Construction Training Group (Norfolk campus) Suffolk New College, offering apprenticeships from its Ipswich, rural and coastal campuses, and West Suffolk College, which delivers programmes across East Anglia. These are in addition to a number of additional, specialist providers.

- 6.2.22 In Essex, the South Essex College with six campuses including Thurrock offers apprenticeships which range from engineering and welding to business administration. In Essex, further education providers, including South Essex College with campuses including Thurrock, as well as other providers such as Chelmsford College and Colchester Institute, offer apprenticeship pathways across a range of sectors, including engineering, welding and business administration. This will be supported, where appropriate, through engagement with a range of local further education providers delivering apprenticeship training across Essex, as well as relevant coordination and brokerage mechanisms such as the Essex Apprenticeship Hub operated by the Essex Growth Agency.
- 6.2.23 In addition to the above, National Grid also operates its own 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 Project.
- 6.2.24 Where aligned with project requirements and training capacity, National Grid apprentices may undertake tasks associated with the Project and wider Great Grid Upgrade through National Grid or its contractors.
- 6.2.25 The GGP contractors will also support apprenticeship training as referenced within the following sub-section.

GGP Contractors

- 6.2.26 National Grid's GGP contractors will also support skills attainment through engagement with the above organisations. Furthermore, they will support the attainment of new skills, upskilling and the transfer of existing skills on the Project through the following means:
- Engage with local education providers to promote construction, engineering and green skills pathways including through the use of outreach, delivering STEM/STEAMH sessions in schools and colleges.
 - Work with local education providers to support young people studying T-levels or similar educational qualifications, attending careers fairs and employment advice sessions as appropriate.
 - Employment of apprentices in sectors such as civil engineering, operations, commercial, environmental and business administration function with GGP contractors for example with West Suffolk College which provides apprenticeships in engineering, construction and building services and in business and accounting;
 - Work with organisations to support the training of young people in vocational subjects, for example, Outstanding Futures which supports young people across East Anglia with business management qualifications.

Employment

- 6.2.27 Construction employment will be primarily sourced and delivered by National Grid's GGP contractors on this Project and will consist of four out of the five GGP contractors referred to previously. These are:
- Laing O'Rorke
 - Murphy's
 - Taylor Woodrow
 - Morgan Sindall
- 6.2.28 Both GGP partners and their supply chain are required 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 GGP contractual requirements. To successfully deliver on National Grid's commitment to local employment, engagement will be undertaken with vocational training and employment services across the Study Area.
- 6.2.29 The following actions/activities will be undertaken to maximise local employment.

Local Recruitment

- 6.2.30 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 contribute to inclusive growth by reducing barriers for residents who might otherwise struggle to access employment.
- 6.2.31 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 Project. This approach varies depending on the nature of the role and the level of experience required. National Grid and its GGP contractors are:
- Preparing a hiring strategy for deployment in 2027. This will be focussed on attracting and securing jobs locally. The strategy will be informed by early engagement with local employment and training bodies with the aim of developing a strategy which seeks to maximise job opportunities within the Study Area.
 - Promoting awareness of employment opportunities associated with the Project through established local channels (e.g. local authorities, job-brokerage services, colleges, Apprenticeships Norfolk, Apprenticeships Suffolk and Essex Opportunities) and,
 - GGP contractors are encouraging their supply chain to adopt recruitment approaches that consider local labour markets in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, including engaging with existing job-matching and employment support services including jobcentres, and providing forward visibility of resource plans to allow sufficient lead-in time to prepare suitable candidates.

6.3 Supply Chain

- 6.3.1 National Grid through its Social and Environmental Action Plan seeks to provide better access for local, SMEs and VCSEs to access its contracts. National Grid is working with its GGP Contractors to identify ways in which all within the supply chain can be supported to access the opportunities presented by the Project.
- 6.3.2 The measures set out below are aimed at maximising benefits to local businesses from spending on goods and services, associated with the Project during construction.

Pre-market engagement

- 6.3.3 Pre-market engagement commonly refers to Meet the Buyer style events and these are regularly held by National Grid across England and Wales. These events 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.
- 6.3.4 National Grid is an active member of Suffolk Chamber of Commerce. Suffolk Chamber of Commerce has a specialist supply chain team partly funded by Sizewell C (Suffolk Supply Chain). It has built a network of qualified and relevant businesses which can supply the growing energy sector in the East. Through these relationships the Project will be able to access the local business community and link the GGP contractors with local companies. To support local economic participation for the Project, National Grid would work with its GGP contractor partners, and relevant local business organisations, including the local 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.

Maximising spend within the Local Supply Chain

- 6.3.5 National Grid and its GGP contractors will work with Suffolk Supply Chain, Essex Growth Agency Supply Chain Portal and other supply chain organisations to engage with local supply chain partners with the objective of maximising sub-contract spend within the Study Area. In addition to 'Meet the Buyer' events referred to above actions will include maximising the existing, local supplier bases (many of the GGP contractors are already involved in major construction projects within and surrounding the Study Area).

6.4 Collaborative working with existing employment and skills providers, large-scale infrastructure project promoters

- 6.4.1 Section 4 identified the Regional Skills Coordination Function ("RSCF") operated by SCC which has the aim of undertaking coordinated workforce planning across

Suffolk’s major projects and to manage cumulative pressures on the labour market. The same section also identifies some of the other major infrastructure projects planned or underway in the Study Area.

- 6.4.2 To support RCSF in the planning of workforce requirements both in relation to this Project and in relation to the other major projects currently underway or proposed within Suffolk, National Grid and its GGP contractors will work with the RSCF to profile the number, type and duration of jobs required for construction. This profile will include for a description of the relevant skills and experience required for the different roles and will be provided to RCSF in advance of construction commencing with the aim of aligning the training proposed by National Grid and its GGP contractors with those operated by other project promoters. It must be noted however that construction is due to commence in later 2027 therefore longer-term training courses may be unlikely to deliver certain specialist skills for this Project. However National Grid is developing a wider portfolio of projects such that there will be wider pipeline of opportunities related both to its projects and to those of other major infrastructure project promoters.
- 6.4.3 Although the RSCF is operated by Suffolk CC, Norfolk CC and Essex CC are actively involved alongside Skills England and other partners to support coordination of skills development and workforce planning across the wider Eastern region. National Grid and its GGP contractors will make the same information available to equivalent organisations representing Norfolk and Essex for example the Norfolk CC Skills Team and Essex Employment and Skills Board.

6.5 Actions Summary

- 6.5.1 The employment and skills commitments and actions described above will be confirmed within the Final ESP which will be secured by DCO requirement. The Final ESP will identify responsibilities for delivery (National Grid and/or its GGP contractors), timescales where appropriate and the means and frequency of measures to monitor initial implementation and subsequent delivery. Further information on this is provided in Section 7 whilst Table 6.1 provides a summary of the actions including the appropriate rationale.

Table 6.1 Actions Summary

Theme	Action
Skills and Jobs	<p>Signpost and support STEM outreach through existing NG strategies such as Pathway to Progress, working with its GGP contractor and education partners to promote STEM skills and careers in the energy sector.</p> <hr/> <p>Strengthen workforce diversity by working with VCSEs and employability partners promoting pathways to employment; Requiring GGP contractor recruitment to support an inclusive workforce; work with Skills Bootcamps to support the long-term unemployed; promote equal access to apprenticeships; support Supply Chain partners to signpost and support job opportunities to all sections of the community</p> <hr/> <p>Work with existing Apprenticeship organisations to support apprentice training and employment on the Project.</p>

Theme	Action
	<p>Promote existing employee volunteering (National Grid and GGP contractors), to include school outreach.</p> <hr/> <p>Work with organisations to support and deliver vocational training.</p> <hr/> <p>Prepare a workforce hiring strategy which will include the numbers, skills and duration of the construction workforce.</p> <hr/> <p>Promote employment opportunities through established local channels.</p> <hr/> <p>Engage with job-matching and employment services.</p>
Supply Chain	<p>Pre-market engagement to include partnership with existing Chambers of Commerce to hold 'Meet the Buyer' events.</p> <hr/> <p>Working with Supply Chain partners to maximise opportunities for the existing, local supplier base to include the existing supplier base of the GGP contractors.</p>
Collaboration	<p>Whilst most of the actions listed involve collaboration with existing employment and skills organisations active in the Study Area, engagement with the RCSF and other project promoters for other large infrastructure projects to support workforce planning and collaboration in the delivery of skills and education activities.</p>

7. Delivery

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This Outline ESP describes the Project and the employment and skills opportunities that it presents. It identifies a range of actions that will be taken forward prior to and during the construction phase. These actions will be delivered by National Grid and/or by its GGP contractor partners. The actions will be further developed in consultation with stakeholders with the objective of preparing a Final ESP secured by DCO requirement.

7.2 Preparing the Final ESP

7.2.1 A final ESP will be prepared in substantial accordance with this outline document. In preparing the final plan National Grid will engage with key stakeholders which will include those local authorities with specific remits for education, skills and employment. National Grid's GGP contractors will be key partners in this process.

7.2.2 The Final ESP will include additional detail to inform workforce planning which will be used to profile the anticipated skills demand. It will also confirm the activities that will be taken to support and develop skills together with those on the themes of education, employment and supply chain. The Final ESP will be submitted to the three county councils and Thurrock (as the lead authorities for employment and skills) for their information prior to the commencement of construction.

7.3 Delivery and Oversight

7.3.1 Delivery of the Final ESP will be the responsibility of National Grid. However, many of the outline actions presented within this document are intended to be delivered in partnership with its GGP contractors. Furthermore, whilst the GGP contractors will operate across different geographies within the Study Area there will be local authority locations where their activities will overlap such as in Suffolk. It is therefore critical that National Grid and the GGP contractors co-ordinate their actions. Delivery co-ordination and oversight will therefore be the responsibility of an Employment and Skills co-ordinator. This individual will be responsible for co-ordination with wider National Grid and GGP contractor functions to ensure that employment, skills and supply chain considerations are integrated into the project planning and delivery. Co-ordination will also be necessary between those responsible for the delivery of the Community Benefits Scheme as well as the National Grid and GGP Social Value leads.

7.3.2 Regular engagement with local partners will continue through the development of the Final ESP and its implementation. There are a large number of organisations active in employment and skills initiatives across the Study Area and it is therefore recommended that a proportionate group is established to represent the wider stakeholders. This group should include those representatives from the Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex Councils and Thurrock with the relevant employment and skills responsibilities. It may also include representatives of other stakeholders such as

training providers, employment bodies and business organisations, where appropriate.

7.3.3 The Final ESP will set out the process for engagement with the group.

7.4 Programme for Delivery

7.4.1 Table 7.1 provides the programme for delivery of the actions set out within this ESP. The timescales reflect the consenting and delivery of the Project as currently understood and should they need to be revised then any such revisions will be communicated to the Stakeholders.

Table 7.1 Timelines for Implementation

Key Milestones	Actions
2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to engage with local stakeholders• National Grid and GGP contractors to develop the specific actions and prepare the Final ESP
2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submit the Final ESP and discharge the DCO requirement• Establish Internal co-ordination and external Group(s)• Early construction activities in progress• Wider engagement with local stakeholders if applicable
2028-2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue delivery of early ESP actions• Once construction has started, the ESP actions will be fully in delivery• Continue to engage with external Group(s).

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Reference
AIS	Air Insulated Switchgear
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
BRES	Business Register and Employment Survey
CSE	Cable Sealing End
DCO	Development Consent Order
DESNZ	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
DfE	Department for Education
EACN	East Anglia Connection Node
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EN 1	Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy
ESP	Employment and Skills Plan
ES	Environmental Statement
FE	Further Education
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GGP	Great Grid Partnership
GIS	Gas Insulated Switchgear
GVA	Gross Value Added
HDD	Horizontal Directional Drilling
kV	Kilovolt
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LSIP	Local Skills Improvement Plan
NETS	National Electricity Transmission System
NGET	National Grid Electricity Transmission
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPS	National Policy Statement
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project

Abbreviation	Full Reference
OESP	Outline Employment and Skills Plan
ONS	Office for National Statistics
RQF	Regulated Qualifications Framework
RSCF	Regional Skills Coordination Function
SA	Study Area
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SOC	Standard Occupational Classification
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SSCEP	Skills, Supply Chain and Employment Plan
VCSE	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise

Glossary

Term	Description
Apprenticeship	A paid job that combines practical work with structured training, leading to a recognised qualification.
Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)	An Office for National Statistics survey providing employment estimates by industry and geography.
Community Benefits Scheme	Programme of voluntary community benefits associated with transmission infrastructure, delivered outside the DCO process.
Construction Phase	The period during which the Project infrastructure is built, including mobilisation and demobilisation activities.
Development Consent Order (DCO)	A statutory instrument granting consent for a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project under the Planning Act 2008.
Environmental Statement (ES)	The main output from the EIA process, an ES is the report required to accompany an application for development consent (under the Infrastructure Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017) to inform public and stakeholder consultation and the decision on whether a project should be allowed to proceed. The EIA Regulations set out specific requirements for the contents of an ES for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.
Final Employment and Skills Plan (Final ESP)	The post consent plan prepared in substantial accordance with the Outline Employment and Skills Plan, guiding delivery during construction.
Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	Unit of measurement used to calculate the total full time hours worked by staff.
Great Grid Partnership (GGP)	National Grid's collaborative delivery model bringing together design, consenting and construction partners to accelerate electricity infrastructure delivery.
Gross Value Added (GVA)	A measure of economic output that reflects the value of goods and services produced, less the cost of inputs.
Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)	An employer led plan setting out priority skills needs for a defined area to inform local training provision.
Main Works Contractor(s)	Contractor(s) appointed by National Grid to construct the Project.
Meet the Buyer	Supply chain engagement events designed to connect contractors with potential local suppliers ahead of procurement.

Term	Description
Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP)	Major infrastructure development consented by the Secretary of State under the Planning Act 2008.
Outline Employment and Skills Plan (OESP)	The document submitted with the DCO application establishing the framework for skills, employment and supply chain delivery.
Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)	The framework used in England to classify and compare qualification levels.
Skills Bootcamp	Short, intensive, employer aligned training programmes funded in part by the Department for Education to address skills shortages.
Social Value	Wider economic, social and environmental benefits generated through Project delivery, beyond direct outputs.
Small and Medium Enterprise (SME)	A business with fewer than 250 employees, typically defined by turnover and balance sheet thresholds.
Study Area	The geographic area used for assessing employment, skills and economic effects, comprising Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex (including Thurrock).

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National Grid plc
National Grid House,
Warwick Technology Park,
Gallows Hill, Warwick.
CV34 6DA United Kingdom

Registered in England and Wales
No. 4031152
nationalgrid.com