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Norwich to Tilbury

Volume 5: Reports and Statements

Document: 5.9.19 Signed Statement of Common Ground -
Essex Wildlife Trust - Clean Version

Final Issue D

July 2026

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Revision History

Version	Date	Submitted at
A	29 August 2025	DCO Application
B	26 February 2026	Deadline 1
C	12 May 2026	Deadline 4
D	21 July 2026	Deadline 7

Essex Wildlife Trust

Statement of Common Ground

1. Purpose of the Statement of Common Ground

This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared to outline the areas of agreement between National Grid and Essex Wildlife Trust regarding potential ecological impacts in relation to the proposed Norwich to Tilbury Project (the Project). All matters are agreed; there are no matters that remain under discussion.

The aim is to clarify the shared understanding of any issues and facilitate an efficient resolution process.

2. Parties to the SoCG

This SoCG is agreed between National Grid and the Essex Wildlife Trust (the Stakeholder).

3. Background

3.1 Description of the Project/Development

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.

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).

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.

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.

The Project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and as such will require the grant of development consent by the making of a Development Consent Order (DCO) under the Planning Act 2008. The Act places duties on National Grid as the DCO applicant to consult with prescribed or affected persons as well as to take account of responses to consultation and publicity. In accordance with these statutory requirements, National Grid has undertaken two non-statutory consultations and one statutory consultation to inform its proposals, with further recent targeted consultations.

4. Stakeholder Interests

Essex Wildlife Trust supports the transition to renewable energy to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change. There is an understanding that additional electricity transmission infrastructure is needed to facilitate the shift towards a decarbonised energy sector; however, it is essential that this shift is not at the expense of wildlife and biodiversity, which faces an intrinsically linked and equally serious crisis. Essex Wildlife Trust therefore support a coordinated strategic approach to the planning, design and construction of new energy infrastructure to reduce the overall negative impacts from schemes on nature and maximise potential for habitat creation and restoration to deliver environment, social and economic benefits.

Essex Wildlife Trust would like more detail from National Grid regarding how impacts will be mitigated through design and during the construction and operational phases, as well as information about potential limitations the scheme might place on habitat restoration and management activities in the vicinity of the overhead lines and pylons. Given the nature of the impacts, Essex Wildlife Trust also expect to see evidence that the mitigation hierarchy has been followed and measures to avoid ecological impacts have been considered.

Potential for significant impacts to important species within Dedham Vale National Landscape (notably hazel dormice and bats) must be adequately assessed and likely impacts avoided, mitigated, and compensated for in line with the mitigation hierarchy and following best practice to ensure no residual adverse impact and ideally provide significant net benefits to the species locally.

Essex Wildlife Trust's interests also include:

- Wider impacts as a result of hedgerow/ scrub/ woodland loss which could affect hazel dormice, bats (especially barbastelle), and farmland birds even if considered temporary
- Impacts to Local Wildlife Sites
- Bird collision risk modelling
- Potentially significant impacts at a population level on hazel dormice in Dedham Vale National Landscape (echoing the concerns of Suffolk Wildlife Trust on this matter).
- Concerns include significant habitat loss, including the removal of a considerable number of trees, at Springfield Farm, north of Black Brook in Section C
- Habitat losses impacting a number of non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS) in Essex including areas of ancient woodland
- Impacts on hazel dormice, bats and birds

Essex Wildlife Trust have raised concerns or comments on additional matters pertaining to biodiversity conservation within the development consent application following sight of the Environmental Statement and other documents. National Grid has reviewed and worked with Essex Wildlife Trust throughout the process of the development of this document.

The chronology of National Grid's engagement with Essex Wildlife Trust to date, and the evolution of the Project's design is summarised as follows:

- 2022
 - National Grid presented information on how the Project was evolving from the evaluation of strategic options to a preliminary preferred graduated swathe within which new infrastructure (pylons and underground cables) could be located as well as a proposed new substation site on the Tendring Peninsula, as described within the [Corridor and Preliminary Routeing and Siting Study Report \(April 2022\) \[APP-356\]](#)
 - 21 April - 16 June non-statutory consultation

- 2023
 - Development of the 2023 Preferred Draft Alignment, responding to feedback and other studies, as described within the [Design Development Report \(June 2023\)](#)
 - 27 June - 21 August non-statutory consultation on the 2023 Preferred Draft Alignment
 - 9 August 2023 - Meeting to discuss BNG opportunities
- 2024
 - Development of the 2024 Preferred Draft Alignment, responding to feedback and other studies as described within the [Design Development Report \(April 2024\)](#) and [Preliminary Environmental Information Report \(PEIR\) \(April 2024\)](#)
 - 10 April - 26 July Statutory Consultation on the 2024 Preferred Draft Alignment
 - 26 July 2024 - Received statutory consultation response from Essex Wildlife Trust
 - 10 October 2024 - Meeting to discuss BNG opportunities
- 2025
 - Development of the proposed Project Alignment prior to DCO submission, considering feedback and further engineering and environmental studies
 - 30 January - 17 April Targeted Consultations on proposed changes to the 2024 Preferred Draft Alignment
 - 24 April 2025 - Meeting to discuss BNG and tree planting opportunities
 - 19 June 2025 - Meeting to discuss BNG and tree planting opportunities
 - 14 July 2025- Meeting to discuss the SoCG with Essex Wildlife Trust, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Norfolk Wildlife Trust.
 - 15 September 2025 - National Grid provided the relevant Environmental Statement documents for consideration including the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan and Outline Code of Construction Practice.
 - 24 September 2025 - Meeting to discuss comments and queries on the Environmental Statement with Essex Wildlife Trust, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Norfolk Wildlife Trust
 - 3 December 2025 - Meeting to discuss BNG and offsite opportunities
 - 9 December 2025 - Meeting to discuss the Statement of Common Ground with Essex Wildlife Trust, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Norfolk Wildlife Trust.
- 2026
 - 6 January 2026 - Meeting with Essex Wildlife Trust and Environment Agency to discuss the WaLOR project.
 - 23 April 2026 - Updated draft of SOCG shared with Essex Wildlife Trust for review and feedback

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- 19 May 2026 - Updated draft of SOCG and associated presentation slides shared with Essex Wildlife Trust for review and feedback
- 29 June 2026 - Email correspondence with Essex Wildlife Trust on Statement of Common Ground outstanding matters.
- 8 July 2026 - Final draft sent to Essex Wildlife Trust for sign off.

5. Matters Agreed

ID	Issue	Agreement reached	Date agreed	Relevant documentation
5.1	General	Through the consideration of consultation feedback such as that provided by Essex Wildlife Trust and ongoing environmental and engineering studies, the Project has minimised impacts on wildlife sites where possible and have detailed appropriate mitigation to ensure no long-term residual effects. Impacts to trees has been considered by the design team and a full impact assessment for biodiversity receptors is included within the Environmental Statement. Impacts on wildlife sites have been mitigated for in Section 9 Landscape and Ecological Reinstatement and Mitigation of 7.4 Outline Landscape Ecological Management Plan [REP3-030]. Impacts to protected species have been mitigated for within Section 6.1 Protected Species Mitigation of 7.4 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [REP3-030]. Suitable mitigation for protected species has been developed in consultation with Natural England to ensure legal compliance and best practice guidelines are adhered to. Where necessary, draft licence applications have been issued to Natural England. Letters of No Impediment have been obtained for water vole, hazel dormouse and badger, alongside a signed Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment Certificate for great crested newt. No impacted bat roosts have been identified; however, National Grid is progressing a project-wide bat licence with Natural England, who has indicated support for the proposed approach.	29 th June 2026	7.4 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan Appendix B - Ancient Woodland and Veteran Tree Strategy [REP3-032] 6.13.A6 Environmental Statement Appendix 13.6 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) Figure A13.6.1 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment [REP1-065] 6.17 Environment Statement Chapter 17 Cumulative Effects [APP-281] 7.2 Outline Code of Construction Practice [REP3-025]

ID	Issue	Agreement reached	Date agreed	Relevant documentation
		Impacts from other developments and cumulative net loss as been assessed in 6.17 Environmental Statement Chapter 17 - Cumulative Effects [APP-281]. Essex Wildlife Trust confirmed on the 29th June 2026 that this matter has been agreed between both parties.		
5.2	Ancient Woodlands and irreplaceable habitats	Essex Wildlife Trust raised concerns regarding the impacts to ancient woodlands and veteran trees in Essex. National Grid confirmed that impacts to ancient woodland have been avoided as far as possible. Impacts to the ancient woodlands within Essex are minimal and appropriate mitigation has been provided to ensure no long-term impacts. A full breakdown of the impacts to each ancient woodland and a site-specific mitigation/ compensation solution has been provided within 7.4 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan Appendix B - Ancient Woodland and Veteran Tree Strategy [REP3-032]. 6.13.A6 Environmental Statement Appendix 13.6 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) Figure A13.6.1 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment [REP1-065] provides a reasonable worst-case assessment of tree impacts. During and following detailed design, the Main Works Contractor(s) would seek to reduce impacts and avoid trees where practicable. Compensation for any loss of irreplaceable habitat would be agreed with stakeholders as outlined in 7.4 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan Appendix B - Ancient Woodland and Veteran Tree Strategy [REP3-032] and commitments will be secured through 7.2 Outline Code of Construction Practice (Revision F).	29 th June 2026	7.4 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan Appendix B - Ancient Woodland and Veteran Tree Strategy [REP3-032] 6.13.A6 Environmental Statement Appendix 13.6 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) Figure A13.6.1 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment [REP1-065] 7.2 Outline Code of Construction Practice (Revision F)

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		The application of a 15 m buffer from ancient woodland is currently the standing advice available and is considered appropriate for the temporary works associated with this Project. Right of access routes would only be used during the maintenance period and any use would be generally limited to a small vehicle with limited movements. This potential impact is identified, where relevant to individual ancient woodlands, within 7.4 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan Appendix B - Ancient Woodland and Veteran Tree Strategy [REP3-032] and appropriate mitigation measures are set out within the document. These measures will ensure no significant residual effect on ancient woodlands are encountered as a result of right of access routes. Essex Wildlife Trust confirmed on the 29th June 2026 that matters relating to ancient woodland and irreplaceable habitats have been agreed between both parties.		
5.3	Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS) in Essex	Essex Wildlife Trust raised concerns regarding the appropriateness of mitigation for impacts to Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) in Essex. National Grid confirms Impacts to LWS have been minimised where possible and where/if required appropriate mitigation measures are detailed within 7.4 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Revision F). Essex Wildlife Trust confirmed on the 29th June 2026 that matters relating to LWSs in Essex have been agreed between both parties.	29 th June 2026	7.4 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Revision F)
5.4	Licensable Species and	Impacts to ecological features including protected species and designated sites are adequately assessed within 6.8 Environmental Statement Chapter 8 - Ecology and Biodiversity [AS-026] and where/if	29 th June 2026	7.4 Outline Landscape and Ecological

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ID	Issue	Agreement reached	Date agreed	Relevant documentation
	Designated Sites	required appropriate mitigation measures are detailed within 7.4 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Revision F) and secured through commitments within 7.2 Outline Code of Construction Practice (Revision F). Suitable mitigation for protected species has been developed in consultation with Natural England to ensure legal compliance and best practice guidelines are adhered to. Where necessary, draft licence applications have been issued to Natural England. Letters of No Impediment have been obtained for water vole, hazel dormouse and badger, alongside a signed Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment Certificate for great crested newt. No impacted bat roosts have been identified; however, National Grid is progressing a project-wide bat licence with Natural England, who has indicated support for the proposed approach. 5.3 Habitats Regulations Assessment Report [APP-082] provides a comprehensive evaluation of all potential impact pathways between the Project and internationally designated sites. The HRA concludes that the Project will result in no adverse effect on the integrity of any European Site, with mitigation secured through embedded design measures and construction controls. Natural England has confirmed agreement with the HRA approach and conclusions. Essex Wildlife Trust confirmed on the 29th June 2026 that matters relating to licensable species and designated sites have been agreed between both parties.		Management Plan (Revision F).] 6.8 Environmental Statement Chapter 8 - Ecology and Biodiversity [AS-026] 5.3 Habitats Regulations Assessment Report [APP-082] 72 Outline Code of Construction Practice (Revision F).]
5.5	BNG Offsite Solutions	National Grid has been engaging in productive discussions with Essex Wildlife Trust regarding the provision of offsite Biodiversity Net Gain units	29 th June 2026	7.1 Biodiversity Net Gain Report [APP-299]

ID	Issue	Agreement reached	Date agreed	Relevant documentation
		for the Project. National Grid are continuing these discussions with Essex Wildlife Trust regarding securing the offsite units. As set out in 7.1 Biodiversity Net Gain Report [APP-299], the Project will aim to deliver offsite BNG legacy projects within Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. The Local Nature Recovery Strategies will be a key consideration when determining offsite BNG locations. Essex Wildlife Trust confirmed 29th June 2026 that this matter has now been agreed between both parties.		
5.6	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	National Grid has committed to delivering a minimum of 10 % BNG for the Project on a voluntary basis, aligned with its corporate sustainability objectives and forming the basis of the assessment. In the absence of specific NSIP guidance, the BNG approach and assessment methodology have been agreed in principle with Natural England and relevant local authorities, applying the statutory metric and best practice principles as set out in 7.1 Biodiversity Net Gain Report [APP-299]. Essex Wildlife Trust has expressed an aspiration for higher levels of BNG; however, this relates to the level of ambition rather than the acceptability of the approach, which is secured through the DCO. The BNG rules around additionality have been applied to the Project. Full details are presented within 7.1 Biodiversity Net Gain Report [APP-299]. As set out in 7.1 Biodiversity Net Gain Report [APP-299], the Project will aim to deliver offsite BNG legacy projects within Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. The Local Nature Recovery Strategies will be a key consideration when determining offsite BNG locations. Essex Wildlife Trust confirmed 29th June 2026 that this matter has now been agreed between both parties.	29 th June 2026	7.1 Biodiversity Net Gain Report [APP-299]

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ID	Issue	Agreement reached	Date agreed	Relevant documentation
5.7	Nature Recovery Network	Essex Wildlife Trust raised that any habitat creation or restoration should align with the Nature Recovery Network Objectives. National Grid confirms that the Project will consider provision of BNG within areas identified in Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) areas where sites are available and are appropriate to project circumstances. Essex Wildlife Trust raised that opportunities should be explored for mitigation to include river restoration or enhancements to reprofile/naturalise riverbanks, improve fish passage for migratory species such as European eel and brown trout, and contribute to natural flood risk management through creation of new wetland areas. National Grid notes that opportunities for such improvement are detailed within the 7.10 Water Framework Directive Assessment [APP-332] and factored in the BNG calculations. Details of species mitigation in relation to aquatic species is covered in the Aquatic species (including fish and aquatic invertebrates) of Section 6.1 in 7.4 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [REP3-030]. Essex Wildlife Trust confirmed 29th June 2026 that this matter has now been agreed between both parties.	29 th June 2026	7.4 Outline Landscape Ecological Management Plan (Revision F).] 7.10 Water Framework Directive Assessment [APP-332] 7.1 Biodiversity Net Gain Report [APP-299]
5.8	Abbotts Hall	Essex Wildlife Trust have expressed interest in Abbotts Hall as a potential to collaborate with the Project. National Grid confirms that they will continue to meet and work with Essex Wildlife Trust to understand the opportunities for both parties in relation to wider BNG and Abbotts Hall. Essex Wildlife Trust confirmed 29th June 2026 that this matter has now been agreed between both parties.	29 th June 2026	7.1 Biodiversity Net Gain Report [APP-299]

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ID	Issue	Agreement reached	Date agreed	Relevant documentation
5.9	Cumulative Effects	Essex Wildlife Trust agrees that 6.17 Environmental Statement Chapter 17 - Cumulative Effects [APP-281] has been undertaken in accordance with the Scoping Report and Scoping Opinion. No significant cumulative biodiversity effects have been identified on biodiversity within Essex. This is also concluded within 5.3 Habitats Regulations Assessment Report [APP-082] . Essex Wildlife Trust confirmed 29 th June 2026 that this matter has now been agreed between both parties.	29 th June 2026	5.3 Habitats Regulations Assessment Report [APP-082] 6.17 Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects of the ES [APP-281]
5.10	Survey Deficiencies	Survey results from 2025 (including otter, water vole and bat roost inspections) are presented within the updated 6.8 Environmental Statement Chapter 8 - Ecology and Biodiversity [AS-026] which was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in November 2025. Essex Wildlife Trust agrees that conclusions in the assessment have not changed as a result of the 2025 surveys undertaken. Essex Wildlife Trust confirmed 29 th June 2026 that this matter has now been agreed between both parties.	29 th June 2026	6.8 Environmental Statement Chapter 8 - Ecology and Biodiversity [AS-026]
5.11	Legislation and Policy Compliance	Essex Wildlife Trust agrees that the environmental assessment is compliant with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations), the NERC Act 2006 Section 40, the Environment Act 2021, the NPPF (December 2024) paragraphs 185, 186, and 187, and National Policy Statement EN-1. Essex Wildlife Trust confirmed 29 th June 2026 that this matter has now been agreed between both parties.	29 th June 2026	

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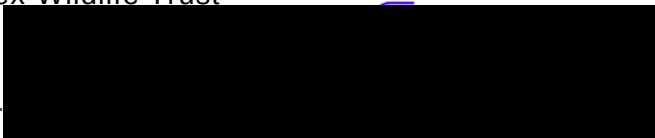
7. Signatures

This Statement of Common Ground is agreed upon by the undersigned parties:

For Nat  X----- DocuSigned by:
Name: _____

Position: Project Director _____

Date: 4/07/2026 _____

For Essex Wildlife Trust 
Name- _____

Position: Director of Conservation _____

Date- 14th July 2026 _____

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