The Great Grid Upgrade

North Humber to High Marnham

NHHM-NG-CNS-REP-0036

# North Humber to High Marnham

## Volume 5: Reports and Statements

**Document 5.8.18 Statement of Common Ground - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds**

**Final Issue A**

**October 2026**

**Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN020034**

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nationalgrid

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# 1. Purpose of the Statement of Common Ground

1.1.1 This draft Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by National Grid Electricity Transmission (National Grid / 'the Applicant') and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) regarding the proposed North Humber to High Marnham Development Consent Order (DCO) application ('the Application').

1.1.2 Section 4 sets out the matters 'agreed' between the Parties, for which no further issues have been raised. It also identifies matters that remain 'under discussion', where agreement has not yet been reached and further negotiations are required to establish an agreed approach.

1.1.3 This SoCG is structured as follows:

- Section 1: An introduction to this SoCG and a description of its purpose
- Section 2: Gives a description of the project.
- Section 3: Summarises engagement between Parties to date
- Section 4: Summarises the key matters and captures the status of each issue / matter.
- Section 5: Sets out matters not agreed between the Parties.
- Section 6: Sets out the approvals and the signing off sheet between the Parties.

1.1.4 The aim of the SoCG is to clarify the shared understanding of any issues and facilitate an efficient resolution process. Any reference to 'the Parties' means National Grid and RSPB.

1.1.5 This draft SoCG has been prepared at an early phase of the DCO process, ahead of submission. It is intended to be a live and working document which will be updated as the project progresses and shared with RSPB at key points for discussion. A final SoCG will be prepared ahead of the close of the DCO Examination. Unlike a final SoCG, this draft SoCG has not been officially signed by either party.

# 2. Project Description

2.1.1 The North Humber to High Marnham Project (the Project) is a new 400 kilovolt (kV) electricity transmission connection of approximately 90 kilometres (km) in overall length between two proposed new substations: the 400 kV Birkhill Wood Substation and 400 kV High Marnham Substation.

2.1.2 The proposed new substations are subject to separate planning applications. For more information, see **Application Document 5.4 Consents and Licences Required Under Other Legislation**.

2.1.3 The Project comprises:

- Approximately 90 km of new overhead line (Route Code 4AF) between the proposed new 400 kV Birkhill Wood Substation and 400 kV High Marnham Substation;
- Replacement and re-alignment of a section of the existing 400 kV overhead line (Route Code 4ZQ) between Brantingham and east of Broomfleet;
- Replacement and re-alignment of a section of the existing 400 kV overhead line (Route Code ZDA) between Ealand and west of Keadby;
- Line entry connections to a proposed new 400 kV Birkhill Wood Substation;
- Line entry connections to a proposed new 400 kV High Marnham Substation; and
- The Project would include other required works, for example, temporary diversions for works on existing overhead line routes, temporary access roads, highway works, temporary works compounds, work sites and ancillary works. The Project would also include utility diversions and drainage works. There would also be land required for environmental mitigation, offsetting, compensation and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

2.1.4 A full description of the Project is provided in **Application Document 6.4 Environmental Statement Chapter 4 Description of the Project**.

# 3. Record of Engagement

## 3.1 Role of the Consultee in the process

3.1.1 The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a UK-based charitable organisation founded in 1889 that works to conserve birds and the wider natural environment. It is one of the largest wildlife conservation charities in Europe, with over a million members, and plays a key role in protecting threatened species and habitats across the UK. The RSPB carries out its work through scientific research and monitoring, public awareness campaigns, policy advocacy, and the management of an extensive network of nature reserves. For the purposes of the Planning Act 2008, RSPB is a non-statutory consultee.

3.1.2 As part of the project's Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) approach, additional habitats will be created. RSPB will work with National Grid to become a BNG partner to help identify opportunity areas to deliver BNG units.

3.1.3 A period of non-statutory consultation was held for eight weeks, between 1 June 2023 and 27 July 2023. The RSPB did not submit a response to this consultation but they have provided informal feedback through meetings. The RSPB did not submit a response to the Planning Inspectorate following the applicant's request for a scoping opinion in August 2023.

3.1.4 A localised non-statutory consultation was held for four weeks, between 9 July 2024 and 6 August 2024. That consultation introduced a potential alternative corridor for routeing and sought the views of the public and relevant stakeholders. The RSPB did not submit a formal response to this consultation, but they have provided informal feedback through meetings.

3.1.5 Statutory consultation was held for a period of eight weeks from 18 February 2025 to 15 April 2025. That consultation provided an opportunity to see how the proposals had developed, how previous feedback had been considered and sought the views of the public and stakeholders on the updated proposals. The RSPB did not submit a formal response to this consultation but they have provided informal feedback through meetings.

## 3.2 Summary of pre-application discussions

3.2.1 Table 3.1 provides an overview of the engagement that has taken place between National Grid and RSPB.

Table 3.1 – Summary of Engagement between National Grid and RSPB

| Date | Format | Topic | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 18/07/2023 | Phone call | **Initial call and introduction** | Initial introduction and request to meet to discuss the project. |
| 31/05/2023 | Email | **Non-statutory consultation and newsletter** | RSPB was notified about the commencement of non-statutory consultation and encouraged to submit feedback. |

| Date | Format | Topic | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | A project newsletter was also attached to provide an overview of the project.<br>The email also included a letter informing RSPB that land surveys will begin soon and access to their land could be required. |
| 31/05/2023 | Documents | **Ornithological survey methodology** | National Grid shared the project Ornithological Survey Methodology Report with RSPB, which was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate that summer. RSPB's feedback on the document was encouraged. |
| 08/08/2023 | Meeting | **Project update** | Meeting to provide project update. |
| 30/08/2023 | Email | **Ornithological survey support** | Shared meeting minutes and asked if RSPB would contract to National Grid to support surveys within the Blacktoft Reserve. |
| 26/06/2024 | Email | **Ornithological Surveys and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) delivery** | Email from National Grid to RSPB highlighting some key points around the Ornithological Surveys and BNG delivery. |
| 27/06/2024 | Email | **Ornithological Surveys** | RSPB confirmed they can complete the ornithological surveys as requested by National Grid. |
| 28/06/2024 | Meeting | **Project update** | Meeting to provide project update |
| 09/07/2024 | Letter | **Non-statutory consultation** | RSPB was notified about the commencement of a localised non-statutory consultation and encouraged to submit feedback. |
| 11/07/2024 | Email | **Ornithological Surveys** | Details discussing when RSPB can undertake low tide surveys. |
| 11/08/2024 | Meeting | **BNG approach** | Meeting to outline National Grid's BNG approach and potential partnership with RSPB. |
| 11/11/2024 | Meeting | **BNG update** | Project update to RSPB on the BNG approach. |
| 05/06/2025 | Meeting | **Project update** | Ornithological survey update |
| 18/12/2025 | Telephone call | **Project update** | Discussion around provision of land for essential mitigation purposes |
| 05/03/2026 | Meeting | **Project update** | Ornithological survey updates and general Project updates. |

# 4. Matters Agreed or Under Discussion

## 4.1 Overview

4.1.1 This section details the matters relevant to RSPB which have been agreed or are under discussion between the parties.

4.1.2 The red, amber, green status shows, at a glance, the level of agreement with RSPB, as seen in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 – Agreement Status

| Status | Description |
|---|---|
| Not Agreed | Indicates a final position, where it has not been possible to resolve the issue to the agreement of both parties and there remains a difference of opinion. |
| Under Discussion | Indicates where issues are the subject of active on-going discussion. |
| Agreed | Indicates where an issue has been agreed or resolved satisfactorily to the agreement of both parties. |

Table 4.2 – Matters Agreed or Under Discussion in Relation to the Project

| ID | Matter | **Agreed Position** (working towards) | **RSPB Position** (including actions to be taken by National Grid) | **Date** (last discussed / date agreed) | **Status** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| RSPB-01 | Ornithological survey and assessment methodology | The outline methodology for assessing effects on ornithology was agreed through **the EIA Scoping Report and Application Document 6.5.A2 Environmental Statement Appendix 5.2 Scoping Opinion** received from the Planning Inspectorate.<br>The assessment methodology is adequate to assess the impact of the proposed Project on Special Protection Area / RAMSAR birds. | The Ornithological Surveys Methodology was originally shared with RSPB on 31/05/2023 date. RSPB have no further comments on it and helped undertake some of the surveys.<br>RSPB also support agreements made with Natural England, who have advised that the survey methodology is robust. | 27/06/2024 | Agreed |
| RSPB-02 | Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Strategy | As set out in **Application Document 7.1 Biodiversity Net Gain Report,** National Grid will deliver at least 10% BNG with potential for wider environmental and societal benefits. The main mechanism for provision of BNG units for the Project will be through off-site delivery through the purchase of biodiversity units from high-integrity commercially registered providers.<br>Offsite BNG units may also be delivered through collaboration with partners such as RSPB if appropriate opportunities should arise.<br>National Grid will prioritise provision of BNG within areas identified in Local Nature Recovery Strategies where sites are available and are appropriate to Project circumstances. | RSPB support National Grid's commitments to deliver at least 10% BNG and the general BNG approach. | 22/09/2026 | Agreed |

| ID | Matter | **Agreed Position** (working towards) | **RSPB Position** (including actions to be taken by National Grid) | **Date** (last discussed / date agreed) | **Status** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| RSPB-03 | Overhead line routing and alignment | The project has sought to close parallel sections of overhead line including between Ellerker and Yokefleet and from south of Ousefleet to Luddington to limit the spread of new infrastructure and to limit barriers to movement for bird species. These sections are located in areas of high activity by Humber Estuary SPA and Ramsar qualifying species.<br>The proposed alignment facilitates a crossing of the River Ouse to the west of the existing 4ZQ overhead line, as preferred from an ornithological perspective so as not to introduce a new barrier to bird movements and collision risk. | RSPB await the **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology** and supporting **Application Document 6.9.A4 Environmental Statement Appendix 9.4 Ornithology Baseline Report** and **Appendix 9. Confidential Ornithology Baseline Report** in order to confirm their agreement. | 22/09/2026 | Under discussion |
| **RSPB support any agreement made or still under discussion with Natural England. These matters are outlined in the following section.** | | | | | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| RSP B-04 | Policy and legislation | The policy context, legislation and guidance considered when undertaking the ornithology assessment is presented in **Application Document 6.2 Environmental Statement Chapter 2 Legislation and Policy Context** and **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology**. All relevant legislation, policy and guidance have been identified and appropriately considered to inform the assessment. | Natural England **Application Document 6.2 Environmental Statement Chapter 2 Legislation and Policy Context** and **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology** in order to confirm their agreement. | 22/09/2026 | Agreed |
| RSP B-05 | Study area | The study area for Ornithology was agreed through the EIA Scoping Report (**Application Document 6.5.A1 Environmental Statement Appendix 5.1 Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report)** and Scoping Opinion (**Application Document 6.5.A2 Environmental Statement Appendix 5.2 Scoping Opinion).** | The study area was agreed through the EIA Scoping Report and **Application Document 6.5.A2 Environmental Statement Appendix 5.2 Scoping Opinion** received from the Planning Inspectorate. | 22/09/2026 | Agreed |
| RSP B-06 | Data sources | Sufficient desktop and survey data have been collected to inform the assessment, and the spatial, temporal and technical scope of the baseline surveys are adequate to inform a robust assessment as presented within **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology.** | Natural England has agreed to the data sources selected, therefore RSPB has no further comments. | 22/09/2026 | Agreed |

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| RSP B-07 | Mitigation | Mitigation measures outlined in section 9.8 of **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology** are considered appropriate and adequate, in terms of nature and scale to address potential significant effects on relevant ornithological features. This includes mitigation for the potential effects of operational collision risk and losses of potential Functionally Linked Land that might affect Humber Estuary SPA/RAMSAR/SSSI birds. | RSPB await the **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology** in order to confirm their agreement. | 22/09/2026 | Under Discussion |

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| RSP B-08 | Mitigation hierarchy | In line with the mitigation hierarchy, the Project has been designed to avoid important ecological features (designated ecological sites and other notable habitats and protected and notable species) through embedded measures, as far as practicable. **Application Document 5.9 Design Development Report** describes how the Project has been developed taking into account biodiversity conservation interests and **Application Document 6.3 Environmental Statement Chapter 3 Main Alternatives Considered** sets out the alternatives considered and the main reasons for the option chosen, considering the effects of the Project on the environment. The use of the mitigation hierarchy to avoid and minimise effects to ornithological receptors is considered appropriate and adequate.<br>The Project has considered opportunities to enhance the condition of existing habitats within the design. Where effects on important ornithological features are unavoidable, appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures will be implemented, as outlined in section 9.8 of **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology**.<br>The Project assesses effects on the ornithological receptors within the ES (Volume 6 of the DCO application) and includes justification of any residual effects. | RSPB await the **Application Document 5.9 Design Development Report, Application Document 6.3 Environmental Statement Chapter 3 Main Alternatives Considered,** and **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology** in order to confirm their agreement. | 22/09/2026 | Under Discussion |

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| RSP B-09 | Effects on SSSIs | Only those SSSIs with qualifying features of ornithology interest within the stated search area were considered in the ornithology chapter. Impacts and effects on all relevant SSSIs are set out in section 9.9 of **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology**. | RSPB await the **Application Document 6.9 Chapter 9 Environmental Statement Ornithology** in order to confirm their agreement. | 22/09/2026 | Under Discussion |
| RSP B-10 | Pre-works checks | The **Application Document 7.4 Outline Code of Construction Practice** includes pre-construction checks of reedbed habitats where these will be affected by construction works. | RSPB await the **Application Document 7.4 Outline Code of Construction Practice** to confirm their agreement. | | Under Discussion |
| RSP B-11 | Habitat Removal | Wherever possible in the Project design and construction programme there has been a presumption against habitat removal during the breeding bird season for the reasons stated by the Natural England, however this is not achievable across the entire Project.<br>**Application Document 7.2 Outline Code of Construction Practice** (CoCP) reflects this, with clearer wording on the measures in place to protect nesting birds where vegetation removal during the breeding season is required. The commitments register has also been updated to reflect the presumption against vegetation clearance during the breeding season where possible. | RSPB await the **Application Document 7.2 Outline Code of Construction Practice** (CoCP) in order to confirm their agreement. | 22/09/2026 | Under Discussion |
| RSP B-12 | Assessment findings | The findings of the ornithology assessment in **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology** are acceptable. | RSPB await the **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology** in order to confirm their agreement. | 22/09/2026 | Under Discussion |

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| RSP B-13 | Flight Activity Assessment | There is no reliable way to model the numbers of birds that could collide with the proposed Overhead Line such that bird mortality can be quantified.<br><br>An assessment of relative risk has been undertaken within **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology**, supported by a flight activity assessment presented in supporting **Appendix 9.3 Flight Activity Assessment**, which provides detailed information regarding the flight activity of relevant species and the relative levels of risk posed to them along the route of the proposed Overhead Line.<br><br>This is sufficient to provide a robust assessment of risk and to inform the mitigation measures presented in **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology**. | RSPB await the **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology** and **Application Document 6.9.A3 Environmental Statement Appendix 9.3 Flight Activity Assessment** in order to confirm their agreement. | 22/09/2026 | Under Discussion |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| RSP B-14 | Wintering / breeding birds | The breeding and non-breeding birds present within the Study and Survey areas have been adequately described in the baseline presented within **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology** and supporting **Application Document 6.9.A2 Environmental Statement Appendix 9.2 Ornithology Baseline Report** and **Application Document 6.9.A4 Environmental Statement Appendix 9.4 Confidential Ornithology Baseline Report**. Survey effort and desk study have been targeted appropriately for the purposes of assessing effects on potential receptors. | RSPB await the **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology** and supporting **Application Document 6.9.A2 Environmental Statement Appendix 9.2 Ornithology Baseline Report** and **Application Document 6.9.A4 Environmental Statement Appendix 9.4 Confidential Ornithology Baseline Report** in order to confirm their agreement. | 22/09/2026 | Under Discussion |
| RSP B-15 | Habitats Regulations Assessment | The **Application Document 5.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment Report** sets out multiple likely significant effects which cannot be screened out during the construction and operation period. These in-combination effects are under consideration and will be addressed in the Appropriate Assessment phase of the report. | RSPB await the **Application Document 5.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment Report** in order to confirm their agreement. | 22/09/2026 | Under Discussion |
| RSP B-16 | Functionally Linked Land | The assessment and provision of Functionally Linked Land set out in **Application Document 5.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment Report** and **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology** is considered appropriate. | RSPB awaits **Application Document 5.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment Report** and **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology** in order to confirm their agreement. | 22/09/2026 | Under Discussion |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| RSP B-17 | Defining potential Functionally Linked Land and the exclusion of functional linkages to the Humber Estuary SPA related to PFG occurring in the landscape south of Thorne & Hatfield Moors SPA. | The Proposed Development crosses land that is potentially functionally linked to the Humber Estuary SPA between Ellerker and Luddington.<br>Large numbers of pink-footed geese were recorded close to the River Idle and on Misterton Carrs. Surveys and additional desk study to address this matter have identified that these pink-footed geese forage south of Hatfield Moor as far as the River Idle Valley and Misterton and Gringley Carrs and roosting at Hatfield Moor. Due to this further survey work there is not considered to be a functional link between the Humber Estuary SPA and Misterton and Gringley Carrs.<br>National Grid has discussed this topic with Natural England who agree that there is no strong functional link for pink-footed goose moving between the Humber Estuary SPA and Misterton Carrs, based on the outline data presented. The matter remains open for further discussion pending presentation of the full baseline regarding this matter. | RSPB await the **Application Document 6.9 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ornithology** and supporting **Application Document 6.9.A2 Environmental Statement Appendix 9.2 Ornithology Baseline Report** and **Application Document 6.9.A4 Environmental Statement Appendix 9.4 Confidential Ornithology Baseline Report** in order to confirm their agreement. | 22/01/2026 | Under Discussion |

# 5. Matters Not Agreed

## 5.1 Overview

This section details the matters relevant to RSPB which have not been agreed between the parties.

[TABLES TO BE INSERTED AT EXAMINATION TO INCLUDE MATTERS NOT AGREED]

# 6. Confirmation of Agreement

The above SoCG is agreed between National Grid and RSPB on the date specified below.

Signed for and on behalf of National Grid:

……

Date:

……

Signed for and on behalf of RSPB:

……

Date:

……

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