



## Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	<b>Eastern Green Link (EGL) 3 and Eastern Green Link (EGL) 4</b>
<b>File reference</b>	<b>EN0210003</b>
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	<b>The Planning Inspectorate</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>23 May 2024</b>
<b>Meeting with</b>	<b>National Grid Electricity Transmission</b>
<b>Venue</b>	<b>Microsoft Teams</b>
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
<b>Circulation</b>	All attendees

### Summary of key points discussed, and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

### Introduction to EGL3 and EGL 4

The Applicant explained that Eastern Green Link 3 (EGL3) and Eastern Green Link 4 (EGL4) are part of the Great Grid Upgrade which will be the largest overhaul of the electricity grid in generations. The projects' aim is to help connect more renewable energy to homes and businesses and achieve the UK government's plan to boost homegrown power. EGL3 and EGL4 are two new high voltage direct current (HVDC) d links proposed between Scotland and England and are two of seventeen network reinforcements identified as 'essential' and for acceleration to meet 2030 targets. The proposals are intended to increase capacity in the electricity transmission system along the east coast of England and capable of transporting up to 4 GW, mostly from offshore wind farms in Scotland, to the Midlands and South of England. The proposed infrastructure will be predominantly offshore with both links totalling approximately 1000 km of marine cable. The onshore cabling for EGL3 and EGL4 is proposed to be co-located from the proposed landfall at the Lincolnshire coast to Walpole in Norfolk.

The Applicant provided a schematic overview of the proposals. Each link comprises two gigawatts high voltage direct current (HVDC) cable from Scotland to the Lincolnshire coast and on to a new substation at Walpole. EGL3 is a transmission reinforcement project that comprises a converter station in Norfolk, England, connecting to a converter station near Peterhead, Aberdeenshire via a HVDC submarine and underground electricity cable link. EGL 4 is a transmission reinforcement project comprising either: A converter station in Norfolk, England (Option 1); or A converter station in Norfolk, England and a switching station and a converter station in East Lindsey, Lincolnshire (Option 2) connecting to a

converter station in Fife, Scotland via HVDC submarine and underground electricity transmission cable.

The Applicant explained that it is currently undertaking non-statutory consultation (from 23 April to 17 June 2024). The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant is carrying out the consultation separately for the projects. The Applicant clarified that both projects are to be included within a single DCO for the English onshore works sought as a combined consent, and thus the consultation covered both. The Projects is the collective term used to refer to the English Onshore Scheme. More specifically the Projects comprise the 'Authorised' development and 'Associated' development for EGL 3 and EGL 4 that will be subject to a Development Consent Order (DCO) application. The proposed submarine HVDC cables from the East Coast of Scotland at point of entry to the marine environment until it meets the seabed at the Lincolnshire coast do not form part of the DCO application currently, though this remains under review. The Applicant is collaborating across the two companies, Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN) and Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSE) to secure the consent for all elements in Scotland. The proposals will connect into one or two proposed new substations which are part of a separate National Grid project, the Grimsby to Walpole (GtW) DCO, running in parallel to EGL3 and EGL4 in the consenting process. One of these proposed new substation connections is Walpole and this component forms part of both the EGL 3 and EGL 4 DCO and GtW DCO. The second potential connection is near Bilsby, however this substation will only be consented by the GtW DCO.

The proposed projects span multiple local authorities and county council boundaries, and the Applicant is actively engaging to ensure they are well informed and involved. The key project components will be in or near the districts of East Lindsey, Boston, South Holland, King's Lynn and West Norfolk and Fenland. These components include underground high voltage Direct Current (HVDC) cables, two proposed converter stations in the Walpole area, and a substation in the Walpole area to connect both EGL3 and EGL4 Walpole converter stations along with the necessary underground HVAC cables. Works associated with the potential connection to the Grimsby to Walpole substation near Bilsby include a direct current switching station, an additional converter and associated underground HVAC cables.

The Applicant provided reasoning behind the application for two separate s35 directions was clarified. The projects involve different partners, and although there may be joint delivery on the certain aspects of the project, others will be delivered separately. This approach necessitated separate s35 directions, which aligns with the overall consenting strategy. The details of this strategy will be discussed further in future meetings. A discussion was held in relation to the principal development and associated development and how the various project elements would be described and included in the draft DCO. The applicant emphasised that not all English onshore works will be covered by the DCO, as some minor works may be consented through permitted development rights or other types of consents.

The Applicant introduced the preferred corridor and sitting zones for the project, including potential landfall sites in Lincolnshire. The concept of graduated swathe was discussed as a method for determining the most likely routes for underground cables, with further details to be discussed in the future meetings. The proximity to the river Welland was mentioned and its interaction with other projects including Outer Dowsing Offshore Wind Farm and Grimsby to Walpole scheme.

The Applicant provided an update on the project's timeline, including upcoming environmental surveys, and anticipated submission of EIA Scoping and other key milestones in advance of its proposed submission of the DCO application in mid to late 2026. The Inspectorate queried the timelines for the Scottish consents and how that will affect the Applicants programme, upon which the Applicant clarified that the timeline is relatively similar for the Scottish consents. The Applicant explained that its current intention is to apply for the Marine Licence for the English Offshore Components in advance of and separately from the DCO, however this is being kept under review. A 'bridging document' will be provided with all major consent applications to provide a whole project assessment. The Applicant confirmed it has an upcoming meeting with the MMO focusing on its consenting strategy.

## **Approach to Environmental Assessments**

The Applicant explained that it proposes to undertake one joint Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for EGL 3 and EGL 4, with assessment 'scenarios' for their construction periods at the same time and separately. It has started discussions with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and Natural England (NE) to ascertain their views on this approach. In terms of Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), the proposed landfall areas are located within areas which are internationally designated (Ramsar Convention) and/or are designated National Site Network Sites (Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area). It has started discussions with NE on the potential implications for these sites. The other assessments to be included with the application will be a Flood Risk Assessment, Water Framework Directive Assessment and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment. The Applicant highlighted that it has not undertaken surveys that are subject to land access requirements but have completed the landscape, ecological and heritage initial walkovers of publicly accessible land for project team familiarisation within the site and to inform non-statutory consultation.

With respect to the EIA Scoping request, the applicant is looking to scope out major accidents and disasters and climate resilience. The applicant confirmed its intention to make the request on 28 June 2024 and to provide the required shapefile. The Inspectorate queried how the EIA assessment scenarios would be addressed within the applicant's scoping report, and highlighted the preference for separate report subsections for the offshore and onshore elements. The Applicant explained that it is currently working through how to best explain the various scenarios. The Applicant further explained that the offshore elements to be consented separately will undergo separate environmental assessments, and these will be referenced within the scoping report related to the DCO application, although as above, this remains under review.

## **Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement**

The Applicant provided initial feedback from its non-statutory consultation which has highlighted the concerns about the cumulative impacts, especially in areas with multiple ongoing projects. It is currently planning its statutory public consultation in Q2-Q3 2025.

The Applicant has been engaging with various stakeholders since April 2023 and has had meetings with the MMO, NE, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Historic England, the Wildlife Trusts and the Environment Agency. It had also engaged with various local

authorities including host and adjoining authorities. The meetings have included discussions on the challenges of co-ordinating consents across different project elements and the importance of ensuring that all relevant parties are consulted.

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant has an indication of the parties that it needs to consult with in terms of compulsory acquisition of land. The Applicant clarified that it has written to all the landowners affected and is establishing communications as they continue to refine the project corridors. The Inspectorate reiterated the need for engagement at an early stage.

## **AOB**

The Applicant had queries in relation to the pre-application service tiers offer from the Inspectorate. The Inspectorate explained that the expression of interest (EoI) for choice of tiers will be opening at the end of May and will run until July. The EoI will explain the information required in the response, including the reasoning for the tier requested. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to carefully consider its project programme when deciding its views on the most appropriate tier for the project. The Inspectorate drew the Applicant's attention to the newly published pre-application Prospectus for all relevant information including frequently asked questions, and encourage the applicant to contact the Inspectorate with any further queries.

The Inspectorate queried whether it would benefit from having a joint meeting with the Grimsby to Walpole project, which the Applicant resolved to take away to discuss at a later date. The Applicant sought advice on how to best co-ordinate with other projects, to which the Inspectorate responded that while it can provide advice based on the information other Applicants have shared, it must be noted that project designs develop over time and it is for the Applicants to collaborate with each other to determine the approach taken.

The Inspectorate also queried which project team is leading with the design work to which the Applicant confirmed it is the Grimsby to Walpole project leading the Walpole substation design and both are co-ordinating well together.