

Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire

Section 51 Advice Log Version: 25 February 2026

There is a statutory duty under ['section 51 \(s51\) of the Planning Act 2008'](#) for The Planning Inspectorate to record the advice that it gives in relation to an application or potential application, and to make this publicly available.

This document comprises a record of the advice that has been provided by The Planning Inspectorate to the applicant National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (NGET) and their consultants during the pre-application stage. It will be updated by The Planning Inspectorate after every interaction with the applicant during which s51 has been provided. The applicant will always be given the opportunity to comment on The Planning Inspectorate's draft record of advice before it is published.

The applicant will use this advice log as the basis for demonstrating regard to s51 advice within the application.

Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire s51 Advice Log - Index	
Date of meeting	Meeting overview
03 September 2025	<u>Project Update Meeting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 1 consultation review • Stakeholder engagement update • EIA Scoping and surveys update • Project timeline update • Next steps and AOB
19 February 2026	Email update on pre-application services
23 February 2026	<u>EIA Scoping Opinion meeting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIA Scoping Opinion queries
25 February 2026	<u>Project Update Meeting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lands update • Stakeholder engagement update • Programme • Next steps and AOB

Project name - s51 Advice Library

Topic	Meeting date: 03 September 2025
Project update	<p>The Inspectorate queried whether the two new proposed substations, which will be included within the Development Consent Order (DCO), will also be pursued separately under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA1990). The applicant confirmed that the current strategy includes both substations in the DCO application and does not envisage separate TCPA1990 applications.</p> <p>The applicant confirmed that stage 1 non-statutory consultation activities concluded on 6 August 2025. Statutory consultation is scheduled to commence in September 2026. The DCO application is programmed for submission between January and March 2028. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2030, with completion targeted for 2034.</p>
Stage 1 consultation review	<p>The Inspectorate queried whether there had been any comments on the location and geographic spread of the consultation events, and whether any areas were less accessible. The Inspectorate encouraged the applicant to evaluate and improve accessibility of future events and the applicant confirmed it was doing so, along with analysing the demographic of attendees to encourage a broad range of groups.</p> <p>The Inspectorate encouraged ongoing discussions with emerging action groups.</p> <p>The Inspectorate queried whether any gypsy and traveller sites were identified along the route, noting that the public sector equality duty (PSED) would need to be considered. The applicant confirmed that none had been identified thus far but this will be monitored.</p> <p>The Inspectorate highlighted that where coordinating consultations with other projects, the applicant should consider how to ensure the information presented and responses received clearly differentiate between the two projects.</p>
Stakeholder engagement update	<p>The Inspectorate queried whether the planning performance agreement (PPA) with the local authorities covered the pre-application stage only or extended to subsequent stages. The Inspectorate encouraged the applicant to consider whether the PPA should cover potential post-decision matters to ensure that local authorities have the necessary</p>

	<p>resources, thereby reducing risk to the applicant's programme.</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised the importance of evidencing engagement with local authorities when structuring the consultation report. The Inspectorate also advised that, where no responses are received, it would be helpful to clearly state that engagement was undertaken but no responses were received.</p> <p>The Inspectorate queried how many land owners and category 3 persons (C3Ps) had been identified to date and advised that it is useful to have an indication of how many plots are likely to be included. The Inspectorate noted that the extent of compulsory acquisition (CA) can influence the appointment of the Examining Authority (ExA). The applicant confirmed that compulsory acquisition updates would be provided at future meetings.</p>
<p>EIA Scoping and surveys update</p>	<p>The applicant confirmed that they are preparing the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping report, and the scoping request is anticipated to be submitted in November 2025. The applicant confirmed that the scoping boundary is broader than the anticipated draft order limits and will be refined as the project progresses.</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised that justifications should be sufficiently clear and detailed to facilitate agreement to scope out topics, particularly when signposting to other legislation.</p> <p>The applicant confirmed that the scoping boundary is broader than the anticipated draft order limits and will be refined as the project progresses.</p> <p>Initial engagement has taken place with key statutory stakeholders including Natural England (NE), the Environment Agency (EA), Historic England (HE) and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), with introductory meetings held.</p> <p>The Inspectorate asked whether the applicant had experienced any difficulties with land access for surveys and whether any were anticipated. The applicant confirmed that no access applications had been made to date and that all surveys conducted so far had been on public land. Site access was not expected until January 2026. The Inspectorate advised that any issues with land access should be flagged early, as such concerns may carry through to the examination stage.</p> <p>The Inspectorate also signposted to advice set out in the Inspectorate's Advice Note Seven which sets out that the GIS shapefile should be submitted to the Inspectorate at least 10</p>

	<p>working days before the submission of the request for a scoping opinion.</p> <p>The Inspectorate strongly advised to avoid submitting the scoping request where the 42 statutory timeframe covered the Christmas period as it will mean that the statutory 28 day period for consultees to respond would fall at least partly over the festive break. The Inspectorate drew on previous experience of scoping consultation requests at this time of year and explained that many of the consultation bodies are unlikely to have the resource to fully respond within the 28 day period which may make the scoping opinion less helpful.</p>
Project timeline	<p>The applicant confirmed that non-statutory consultation activities were completed in August. Statutory consultation was scheduled to commence in September 2026.</p> <p>The Development Consent Order (DCO) application was programmed for submission between January and March 2028. Construction of the proposed development was anticipated to begin in 2030, with completion targeted for 2034.</p> <p>The Inspectorate welcomed the inclusion of tracked changes within the programme document, noting this as a helpful approach for monitoring updates and progress.</p>
Next steps and AOB	<p>The Inspectorate queried whether any crown land falls within the proposed order limits. The applicant confirmed that a small area of crown land was present but was likely to be avoided due to its limited extent.</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised the applicant of the importance of initiating and progressing engagement with The Crown Estate.</p>
Topic	Email dated 19 February 2026
	<p>Following a 6-month review of our services, our Pre-application Prospectus has been updated: 2024 Pre-application Prospectus. The update log at the bottom of the page summarises the changes and clarifications that have been applied.</p> <p>As an applicant with a live project at the pre-application stage of the process, please familiarise yourself with the update and consider how it might affect your pre-application programme and interaction with our services.</p>

Please note in particular:

- the establishment of land and rights negotiations tracking as a primary service feature – this means it is now expected for all applicants to develop and share a land and right negotiations tracker in 1 of 2 available templates, irrespective of the service tier they have subscribed to
- clarified expectations of applicants when preparing to interact with the Inspectorate at meetings – including clarified rights for the Inspectorate to delay or refuse service where pre-meeting expectations are not upheld e.g. an updated programme document or issues tracker is not provided, on time, to inform a meeting agenda.
- A new programme document template is available. Whilst there is no current requirement for your project to utilise the template, you may wish to review its content to see if you wish to make any changes to your existing document.

Please can I also draw your attention to paragraph 19, which includes “All meetings between the applicant and the Inspectorate must be agreed in advance through the applicant’s programme document. The Inspectorate expects for any materials required to inform discussion at a meeting to be provided to us at least 10 working days before the meeting is programmed to take place. As a minimum, these materials will include:

- the agenda for the meeting, which has been agreed with the Inspectorate
- an up-to-date programme document
- an up-to-date issues tracker (note that this should be a separate document to the programme document
- an up-to-date land and rights negotiations tracker
- any other materials required to inform the agenda”

Please note that other materials should normally include a slide pack. Should the applicant provide this, please note that it could be subject to Freedom of Information requests and therefore any commercially sensitive information may wish to be removed.

Topic	Advice given: 23 February 2026
EIA Scoping matters	<p><u>Decommissioning</u></p> <p>The applicant proposed to acknowledge decommissioning in chapter 4 of the Environmental Statement (ES) rather than producing a decommissioning specific appendix. The Inspectorate accepted this approach on the basis that reasonable justification is clearly set out.</p> <p><u>Heritage survey strategy</u></p> <p>The applicant advised that the survey timeframes of the heritage survey strategy are constrained by the stages of design development, land access and the results of other surveys. The applicant proposed to make effort to agree the timings of the heritage survey strategy with relevant consultation bodies.</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised that details should be clearly set out where agreement has been reached. If disagreement remains, the applicant should evidence their engagement efforts and provide reasoning for their position, as unresolved issues could impact on the smooth running of the examination.</p> <p><u>Geology/ hydrogeology – sink holes</u></p> <p>The applicant confirmed that human health impacts related to aquifer effects would be addressed through the groundwater risk assessment, and that any sink holes would be recorded as an engineering risk. Sink holes would not be directly assessed in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR).</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised that any justification for scoping matters out should be related to the likelihood of significant effects and encouraged the applicant to agree the proposed approach with the Environment Agency (EA) and the Mineral Planning Authority (MPA) on these matters.</p> <p><u>Traffic and transport</u></p> <p>The applicant stated that full understanding of the interface with hazardous loads, rail, and waterways may not be available by PEIR publication. However, further justification and evidence would be provided where possible.</p> <p>The Inspectorate welcomed the approach and advised that agreement should be sought with the relevant consultation bodies and targeted consultation may be considered post PEIR if further information is available.</p>

The applicant confirmed they will engage with blue light services as part of the traffic assessment. The Inspectorate advised the applicant to engage with Royal Mail.

Climate change

The applicant proposed to follow the approach on other National Grid projects, eg Grimsby to Walpole to scope out Climate Change Resilience (CCR) assessment and an In-combination Climate Change Impact (ICCI).

The Inspectorate agreed that a standalone CCR and ICCI assessment can be scoped out of the ES. The Inspectorate advised the applicant to continue engagement with Leicestershire County Council on this matter. The Inspectorate also advised that the description of the proposed development in the ES should describe any standards/ measures and processes which would be relied on to exclude likely significant effects and explain how they would be secured and implemented as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO).

Electromagnetic field (EMF)

The Inspectorate welcomed the inclusion of a summary of the EMF compliance report within the ES.

Waste

The applicant proposed to provide a summary of the Materials and Waste Management Plan setting out the anticipated types and quantities of waste during construction and operation within the ES project description rather than providing a standalone waste assessment within the ES.

The Inspectorate agreed with this approach on the basis that sufficient information is included to understand any potential impacts.

Ecology - EMF

In relation to the assessment of EMF and impacts on fish species, the applicant confirmed that there is currently no high voltage underground cable proposed which would cross watercourses and will undertake further engagement with the EA to confirm that assessment of these impacts is therefore not required.

The Inspectorate noted that optionality of watercourse crossings currently remains. The Inspectorate advised that the applicant should clearly justify the approach and demonstrate no likely significant effects if watercourse crossings are not required. If optionality for watercourse crossings remains at submission an assessment of these matters will be required in the ES. The Inspectorate

	<p>encourages the applicant to agree the proposed approach with the EA.</p> <p>Generators/Non-Road Mobile Machinery</p> <p>The applicant proposes to scope out an assessment of air quality impacts from generators/ non-road mobile machinery during the operational and maintenance phase of the proposed development. The Inspectorate agreed with this approach.</p>
Topic	Meeting date: 25 February 2026
Lands update and consultation	<p>The Inspectorate advised that it would be helpful to understand the scale of landownership involved and requested emerging details regarding any land interest groups. Information such as key contacts, geographical coverage and membership size would be useful. The Inspectorate also requested to be kept up to date should other community groups begin to form.</p> <p>The Inspectorate reiterated the importance of clear and consistent communication during the applicant's Stage 2 consultation, particularly where multiple projects overlap. The Inspectorate advised that stakeholders must be able to clearly distinguish between the projects they are being asked to respond to and understand the scope of each consultation.</p> <p>The applicant confirmed it is considering how the new Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 may influence its plans, programme and approach to consultation, which will continue to develop as guidance and further detail becomes available.</p> <p>The Inspectorate requested an update in early 2027 regarding progression of surveys and whether any issues with accessing land for surveys arise.</p> <p>The Inspectorate also requested a progress update on draft protective provisions with statutory undertakers at future meetings (as the applicant should seek to progress and agree such provisions, as much as feasibly possible, before examination starts).</p>
Stakeholder engagement update	<p>The Inspectorate noted that securing three planning performance agreements (PPAs) at this early stage represented good progress. The Inspectorate queried whether, in the applicant's view, host authorities were likely to experience difficulties in accessing specialist expertise, and</p>

	<p>whether such support requirements were being reflected within the PPAs.</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised that, where councils are new to the Development Consent Order (DCO) process, reference may be made to Suffolk County Council's NSIP Centre of Excellence guidance, which has been produced to assist local authorities in understanding and engaging effectively with the DCO regime.</p> <p>The Inspectorate highlighted proposed local government reorganisations and consultations ongoing in the area. It advised the applicant to consider potential impacts from the reorganisation proposals on the proposed development.</p>
<p>Programme Document and pre-application activities</p>	<p>The Inspectorate welcomed the applicant's updated Programme Document, which broadly follows most of the expected content as set out in the government's guidance on the pre-application stage at paragraph 10. However, the applicant should set out its view of the main issues arising from the proposed development and the applicant's plans to resolve them at the outset, rather than a list of potential topics.</p> <p>Additionally, it is helpful for the Inspectorate, members of the public, and statutory parties, if this section can include some high-level information about the main designated sites, heritage assets and sensitive receptors where surveys and assessments will be required and the applicant's plans to reach agreements with relevant statutory bodies on these matters. This assists the Inspectorate to have a good understanding of the landscape features, receptors and constraints along the proposed development corridor, and the type of issues that might require resolution before the application is submitted (the details of which to be included and evolved in the applicant's Issues Tracker).</p> <p>The Inspectorate emphasised that, in relation to draft documentation, it is particularly helpful to hold discussions on the material the applicant intends to submit. The Inspectorate noted that it may request sight of specific documents where doing so would support its understanding and assist in preparing for forthcoming stages of the process.</p>
<p>Next steps and AOB</p>	<p>The applicant confirmed that it would produce a Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report at Stage 2 consultation stage and detailed that the potential for likely significant effects on European sites and their relevant qualifying features is still being considered.</p>

The Inspectorate welcomed the applicant's first draft of its Issues Tracker and the level of detail provided, which appeared to be proportionate and comprehensive. However, the Inspectorate advised the applicant to include additional information in future iterations, namely denoting any specific designated sites and / or heritage assets that require surveys and assessments (and potential mitigation). This will enable the Inspectorate to gain a clear understanding of the progress the applicant has made to date (or risks involved) with agreeing the scope of surveys, methodology and assessments required with relevant statutory bodies and whether these could potentially become significant issues during examination.

The Inspectorate commented on the RAG-rating approach, acknowledging that it was appropriate for certain matters to be marked as green at this stage, even where discussions with statutory parties are ongoing. However, the Inspectorate advised that, as the applicant moves closer to submission, the ratings may need to be revisited so that 'green' represents genuinely settled positions rather than matters still subject to dialogue. The Inspectorate said that more detailed section 51 advice would be provided on later iterations, once further information becomes available from relevant parties. The Inspectorate emphasised that its interest is in understanding how issues are being responded to, mitigated and resolved ahead of the application being submitted, to enable an efficient examination.

The Inspectorate confirmed that the transboundary screening would be published on the project page shortly.

[Post meeting advice: in answer to a question from the applicant, the Inspectorate advises to review the Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statements (PADSS) on the 'Outer Dowsing Offshore Wind' NSIP application, which provides a useful example. The Inspectorate is currently reviewing the use of PADSS in the DCO process and may update its published advice and online good example documents page at a later date]

[Post meeting comment: the issue of Inspector involvement in 'standard' tier pre-application cases was discussed at the meeting. The applicant is pointed to the wording in the 2024 Pre-application Prospectus, which states that "Examining Inspector involvement in some elements of pre-application" might be possible for the standard tier. The Inspectorate will determine what advice, if any, is needed from an Examining Inspector outside of reviewing a draft DCO, explanatory

	memorandum and / or a planning statement, depending on the specific nature of the issue. However, any s51 advice comes from the Inspectorate and is not attributed to individuals.]
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