



The Great Grid Upgrade

Sea Link

Additional Preliminary Environmental Information – Executive Summary

Version A

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nationalgrid

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Sea Link

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1. Additional Preliminary Environmental Information – Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This document is an executive summary of the additional Preliminary Environmental Information ('additional PEI'), which supports the Project Update Document. It sets out the potential for any additional or different likely significant environmental effects associated with the proposed changes to Sea Link (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Project'), comparing against those presented within the Preliminary Environmental Information Report ('original PEIR') produced in October 2023 and presented at statutory consultation.
- 1.1.2 As this document discusses the potential changes to effects identified in the original PEIR, it is recommended that the original PEIR (and its appendices and figures) is reviewed alongside the additional PEI.

1.2 Description of the Proposed Project and Changes Since Statutory Consultation

- 1.2.1 The additional PEI concentrates on the main changes which are proposed across the three aspects of the Proposed Project (Suffolk Onshore Scheme, Kent Onshore Scheme and the Offshore Scheme).
- 1.2.2 Changes proposed to the Suffolk Onshore Scheme include an alteration to the cable route north of Aldeburgh, confirmation of the proposed access route to the Saxmundham Converter Station and changes to the selected access route and associated bridge over the River Fromus. There are also various proposed changes to construction and maintenance access routes, compounds, and temporary overhead line diversions. New areas of land have also been introduced for environmental mitigation and enhancement. The strategy for coordination with other third-party land proposals in the vicinity has also evolved.
- 1.2.3 Changes proposed to the Offshore Scheme include refinements to the cable route, the introduction of additional marine areas for construction vessel manoeuvring, and changes to the approach for backfilling marine trenches.
- 1.2.4 Changes proposed to the Kent Onshore Scheme include an increase of the overall maximum height of the Minster Converter Station and confirmation of the type of pylon intended to be used for the connection to the Richborough to Canterbury 400 kV overhead line. A further construction and maintenance access route off Sandwich Road, via the former hoverport, has also been identified. Various other changes to construction and maintenance access routes, compounds and temporary overhead line diversions are also proposed, as well as new areas of land for environmental mitigation and enhancement.

1.3 Preliminary Environmental Impact of the Changes Since Statutory Consultation

- 1.3.1 The environmental assessment undertaken as part of the additional PEI has identified that for the majority of the environmental topics, the environmental effects resulting from the changes would be very similar to those presented within the original PEIR. Although there are some new receptors affected as a result of the change in the draft Order Limits whilst others are no longer affected, the scale of the effects are considered to be of a similar magnitude to those presented in the original PEIR. In these cases, there would be no additional significant adverse environmental effects to those already identified in the original PEIR.
- 1.3.2 There are also some design changes which are considered to be positive from an environmental perspective. These include, but are not limited to:
- the refinement to the construction compound on land south of North Warren Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Reserve and Sandlings SPA, which reduces the size of the compound and moves it further from the designated sites. This, coupled with noise and visual mitigation measures, address the disturbance impact on these designated sites identified in the original PEIR and mean that it is no longer likely to result in a significant adverse effect.
 - the modified western access route in Suffolk to reduce the interaction with the River Fromus floodplain. Works within the functional floodplain can be avoided which reduces the potential impact on flood risk.
 - additional land included within the draft Order Limits along the banks of the River Fromus either side of this crossing to facilitate watercourse improvements and deliver BNG. This could have benefits from a water environment and ecology perspective.
 - additional land north of A1094 in Suffolk, to enable the provision of acid grassland as long term habitat improvement, contiguous with other areas of acid grassland/heathland. This offsets the temporary loss of acid grassland south of Sandlings Special Protection Area (SPA) by improving the extent of foraging habitat for woodlark and nightjar (SPA qualifying species) in the long-term and accounts for the time which would be taken for the compound area south of Sandlings SPA to recover following works.
 - the creation of an approximately 11 hectares of new wetland areas/scrapes on land south of the existing Richborough to Canterbury 400 kV overhead line as foraging habitat for birds, and the inclusion of the River Stour channel for BNG watercourse enhancements within the draft Order Limits in Kent. These changes would offset permanent loss of foraging habitat for birds and deliver benefits from a water environment and ecology perspective.
- 1.3.3 The remainder of this executive summary sets out where new or different significant adverse environmental effects have been identified when compared with those presented in the original PEIR. Details of environmental effects that are likely to be very similar to those presented in the original PEIR (i.e. where changes are not expected to result in different or additional likely significant effects), are set out in Sections 1.7 to 1.9 and in particular Tables 1.1 to 1.3 of the Additional Preliminary Environmental Information submitted for the targeted consultation.

Suffolk Onshore Scheme (Part 2 of the PEIR)

- 1.3.4 The alteration to the cable route north of Aldeburgh, confirmation of the proposed access route to the Saxmundham Converter Station, most changes to construction and maintenance access routes and the strategy for coordination with other third-party land proposals in the vicinity are not expected to result in new or different significant environmental effects.
- 1.3.5 In terms of landscape and visual, the increased scale of the proposed bridge across the River Fromus (up to 80 metre approach ramps either side and up to 6 metres in height to the top of the bridge parapet from ground level), has the potential to result in a higher magnitude of effect on sensitive visual receptors within the vicinity and the Fromus Valley Landscape Character Area during construction and operation, due to its greater scale, the increased construction activity and removal of vegetation required to facilitate construction. However, there is no change to the significance of effects reported in the original PEIR as significant adverse effects were already reported in this location.
- 1.3.6 Confirmation of a temporary overhead line diversion, including temporary pylons or masts, at Friston Substation during construction, also has the potential to result in a higher magnitude of effect on visual receptors in the locality for a temporary period of time. However, there is no change to the significance of effects reported in the original PEIR as a significant adverse effect was already reported for visual receptors in the locality of the proposed Friston Substation.
- 1.3.7 In terms of ecology and biodiversity, as noted above the refinement to the construction compound on land south of North Warren RSPB Reserve and Sandlings SPA coupled with noise and visual mitigation measures, address the disturbance impact on these designated sites identified in the original PEIR and mean that it is no longer likely to result in a significant adverse effect.
- 1.3.8 A larger and relocated bridge over the River Fromus would involve more land take from terrestrial ecological features. At this stage it is assumed that there is potential for a significant adverse effect as a result of this design change, however this will be considered further within the Environmental Statement (ES) subject to the ongoing surveys, further bridge design and consideration of mitigation measures.
- 1.3.9 From a cultural heritage perspective, the potential requirement for topsoil stripping to create the additional acid grassland habitat on the new land north of the A1094, has the potential to impact on previously unrecorded remains. This area of land is to be subject to further investigation to understand the baseline and ascertain the potential for any significant adverse effects. The ES will report on the final significance of the effect from an archaeology perspective following the further assessment and once the approach to creating the grassland habitat has been confirmed.

Kent Onshore Scheme (Part 3 of the PEIR)

- 1.3.10 The increase in the overall maximum height of the Minster Converter Station, confirmation of the type of pylon intended to be used for the connection to the Richborough to Canterbury 400 kV overhead line, the various changes to construction and maintenance access routes and the new areas of land for environmental mitigation and enhancement are not expected to result in new or different significant environmental effects.
- 1.3.11 The inclusion of a temporary construction compound (just off Sandwich Road) located within a groundwater Source Protection Zone (SPZ) 1, has the potential for significant

adverse effects in relation to hydrogeology. This construction compound will be subject to consultation with both the Environment Agency and relevant water company, and further assessment (as appropriate) to identify any required mitigation.

- 1.3.12 In terms of landscape and visual, the temporary pylons or masts to facilitate overhead line works within the wetland area would introduce new structures into the views from the local Public Right of Way (PRoW) network and Saxon Shore Way which would result in a temporary increased concentration of wirescape. There is the possibility that the temporary pylons or masts may increase the magnitude of effect experienced during construction for a temporary period of time which might trigger a short term and temporary significant adverse effect, which was not reported within the original PEIR. There is also the potential for a localised increase in the magnitude of effect in a small part of the Ash Levels Landscape Character Area, but this is already reported as a significant adverse effect within the original PEIR.
- 1.3.13 The larger construction compound now proposed to the west of the A256 is located in an area of complex archaeological remains, while a new field has been included to accommodate a reception pit for the A256 crossing. There is the potential for these changes to result in physical impacts on the previously recorded archaeological remains around the Ebbsfleet Lane area to the west of the A256. Whilst it should be possible to mitigate any impacts through standard mitigation measures (i.e. excavation, recording, and publication), the remains in this area are deemed to be of national importance and therefore the residual effect may be significant adverse. Evaluation trenching is being undertaken, and this will provide additional information relating to the significance of the archaeological remains in this area.
- 1.3.14 The proposed construction methodology for the foundations of the Minster Substation and Converter Station has the potential to result in the loss of a relatively large area of potential archaeological and palaeo-archaeological deposits, resulting in a significant adverse effect, assuming the deposits are of high value/sensitivity. This will be considered in the ES following further analysis to establish the value of these deposits.

Offshore Scheme (Part 4 of the PEIR)

- 1.3.15 The refinements to the cable route, the introduction of additional marine areas for construction vessel manoeuvring, and changes to the approach for backfilling marine trenches do not introduce new or different significant environmental effects compared with those presented in the original PEIR.

Project Wide Effects (Part 5 of the original PEIR)

- 1.3.16 There are no changes in terms of significant environmental effects compared with those presented in the original PEIR.

Extended Working Hours for the Onshore Scheme

- 1.3.17 In terms of traffic and transport, the proposed extended working hours have the potential to result in significant adverse effects if unmitigated and without restrictions. Further details of the anticipated frequency of traffic movements on Sundays and bank holidays are to be confirmed, and because baseline traffic volumes are generally lower on a Sunday the potential for significant adverse effects as a result of a higher proportional uplift in traffic levels cannot be ruled out at this stage. Sunday and bank holiday working will be subject to further consultation with the local authorities. To

mitigate the potential for adverse effects, restrictions and other measures will be applied where required and included as part of the Outline Construction Traffic Management and Travel Plan. The ES will include further details of anticipated vehicle movements on these days with these mitigation measures applied.

- 1.3.18 For the socio-economics, recreation and tourism and the health and wellbeing assessments, these extended working hours have the potential to result in significant adverse effects to PRow if unmitigated and without restrictions. Sundays and bank holidays are typically days where residents and visitors are more likely to frequent recreational PRow. Therefore, there may be greater adverse effects on receptors accessing these recreational PRow. Further details of the anticipated construction activities on Sunday and bank holiday are to be confirmed, and therefore the potential for significant adverse effects cannot be ruled out at this stage. Sunday and bank holiday working will be subject to further consultation with the local authorities. To mitigate the potential for adverse effects, restrictions and other measures will be applied where required.

1.4 Environmental Statement

- 1.4.1 The additional PEI has not identified any change to the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as a result of the changes to the Proposed Project. Therefore, an updated EIA Scoping Opinion is not sought from the Planning Inspectorate. The ES being prepared for submission with the Development Consent Order (DCO) application will include a full assessment of the final proposals for the Proposed Project, taking account of feedback received from the targeted consultation.

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