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Eastern Green Link 3 and Eastern Green Link 4

PINS Pre-Application Planning Services – Programme Document

July 2024

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Introduction

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Programme Document has been prepared by National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (NGET) as a requirement under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application Prospectus in respect of the Eastern Green Link 3 (EGL 3) and Eastern Green Link 4 (EGL 4) Projects (hereinafter referred to as the ‘EGL 3 and EGL 4’ Projects).

1.2 Purpose and Structure

- 1.2.1 This Programme Document sets out the timetables and describes the activities necessary for an effective pre-application process, including the level of pre-application service requested from the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), and consultation with various parties required under the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) (the PA 2008) as per the requirements for a Programme Document set out in Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application Prospectus. It is expected that this document will be updated at key milestones throughout the pre-application process as the Project is further developed.
- 1.2.2 This Programme Document is structured as follows:
- Section 1: Introduction and purpose and structure of this document
 - Section 2: Background to the EGL 3 and EGL 4 Projects (‘the Projects’)
 - Section 3: PINS Pre-application service
 - Section 4: Expected Submission Timeframe
 - Section 5: Timeframe of the pre-application process
 - Section 6: Main issues for resolution
 - Section 7: Engaging with statutory consultees and Local Planning Authorities
 - Section 8: Pre-application risks and how these are tracked and managed
 - Section 9: Approach to preparing Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI).

Background to the Projects

2.1 Overview of the Projects

- 2.1.1 NGET is planning to enhance the electricity network with proposals for EGL 3 and EGL 4 – two new primarily offshore high voltage electricity links between Scotland and England. EGL 3 and EGL 4 are needed as the existing transmission network does not have enough capacity to securely and reliably transport the increasing amount of energy generated in Scotland and Scottish waters.
- 2.1.2 The EGL 3 and EGL 4 Projects are those elements of EGL 3 and EGL 4 that will be subject to an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO). This includes:
- Two separate HVDC subsea cables, each measuring approximately 430km length within English waters extending from the Scotland/England maritime boundary to the landfall point in the District of East Lindsey.
 - Two co-located HVDC underground cables, each measuring approximately 100km in length extending from a landfall point on the Lincolnshire coast in the District of East Lindsey, to three proposed converter stations, one near Bilsby in the District of East Lindsey and two in the vicinity of the existing Walpole substation in the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk.
 - A direct current switching station (DCSS), converter station and HVAC cables for the EGL 4 cables to connect the project to the new Lincolnshire Connection Substation (proposed by the NGET Grimsby to Walpole Project) near Bilsby, in the District of East Lindsey.
 - Two separate converter stations in the Walpole area in the Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk. One each for the EGL 3 and EGL 4 Projects.
 - HVAC underground cables, measuring approximately 5km in length between the proposed EGL 3 and EGL 4 Walpole converter stations and a new 400 kV Walpole substation in the vicinity of the existing Walpole substation in the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk.
 - One new 400kV substation in the Walpole area, (connecting both EGL 3 and EGL 4 to the transmission network), in the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk.
- 2.1.3 The local authorities that are presently anticipated to be affected by the project proposals are:
- Lincolnshire County Council
 - Norfolk County Council
 - East Lindsey District Council
 - Boston Borough Council
 - South Holland District Council
 - The Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk.

2.2 Planning Act 2008

- 2.2.1 The Proposed Development for each of the EGL 3 and EGL 4 Projects has been independently directed as energy projects within the scope of Section 35 of the Planning Act 2008 by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero.
- 2.2.2 The Proposed Development, as described in the relevant Direction requests are therefore treated as development for which development consent under the PA 2008 is required. The specific elements which are the subject of the Section 35 direction are the three converter stations and DCSS listed above. Under Section 115 of the PA 2008, development consent may also be granted for associated development and Section 149A of the Planning Act 2008 allows a deemed marine licence to be included within a DCO in England and waters adjacent to England up to the seaward limits of the territorial sea.

PINS Pre-application service

3.1 Pre-application Service

- 3.1.1 The Project is requesting the 'Standard' level of pre-application service. It is considered the standard level of service will provide the Project with an appropriate and proportionate level of pre-application engagement with PINS, reflective of the scale and nature of the Project and NGET's level of experience as an applicant.
- 3.1.2 The Project is similar to others within the Great Grid Upgrade that are further developed in their programme, and as such, lessons learnt and expertise in producing documentation are available to enable the application to be of a standard acceptable for examination.
- 3.1.3 The standard level of service will provide the Project with project update meetings, draft DCO documentation review and risk review.

Expected Submission Timeframe

- 4.1.1 The EGL 3 and EGL 4 Projects are currently undertaking Non-statutory Consultation which runs from 23 April – 15 July 2024. Due to the early stage of the project, the exact timescales for the DCO submission are not yet known, however it is anticipated that the DCO will be submitted in 2026. NGET will provide PINS with regular updates regarding the submission date as the Projects progress. 2026.

Timeframe of the pre-application process

5.1.1 An anticipated timeline for the pre-application process is set out in Table 1 below. The pre-application timeframe will be refined, and further detail added as required following Non-statutory and Statutory Consultation and as the period of submission draws closer.

Table 1: Anticipated Timeframes for the EGL 3 and EGL 4 Projects

Activity	Expected Timeframe (Status)
Non-statutory Consultation	23 April 2024 to 15 th July 2024 (Ongoing)
EIA Scoping	Q3 2024 (On-going)
Statutory Consultation	Q3 2025 (Planned)
PINS review of Draft DCO Documentation	Q1 2026 (Planned)
Adequacy of Consultation Milestone	Q2 2026 (Planned)
DCO Submission	2026 (Planned)

Main issues for resolution

6.1.1 The Projects are still at an early stage of development, and NGET has not yet completed its first stage of Non-Statutory Consultation. NGET is not therefore able to capture at this stage a comprehensive list of issues for resolution, and visibility of relevant issues will improve upon receipt of views from communities and stakeholders in relation to the emerging proposals.

6.1.2 However, in developing the projects, NGET's approach is mindful of the issues identified generically in NPS EN-1 and EN-5 which are likely to be relevant to projects of this type, including:

- Air Quality
- Aviation and Defence
- Alternatives
- Biodiversity and geological conservation
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- Climate Adaptation and Resilience
- Coastal change
- Electric and Magnetic Field's
- Flood risk
- Greenhouse Gas emissions
- Good design
- Hazardous Substances
- Health
- Historic environment
- Land rights and land interests
- Landscape and visual effects
- Land use including open space, green infrastructure, green belt
- Marine environment
- Noise and vibration
- Resource and Waste Management
- Safety
- Security
- Shipping and Navigation
- Socio economic impacts

- Strategic planning and co-ordination
- Traffic and Transport
- Water Quality and Resources

Engaging with statutory consultees and Local Planning Authorities

- 7.1.1 Since the end of 2023, regular meetings have been arranged and held with the relevant host local planning authorities in order to introduce the EGL 3 and EGL 4 Projects and seek views on emerging consultation, consenting and design issues. These project meetings will continue with all host authorities throughout the pre-application stage. We will be entering into Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) with all host authorities and engaging thereafter in accordance with the details set out within these. The relevant host Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) include:
- Lincolnshire County Council
 - South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (representing Boston Borough Council, East Lindsey District Council & South Holland District Council)
 - Norfolk County Council
 - King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
- 7.1.2 Introductory meetings were also held with Cambridgeshire County Council and Fenland District Council in the first instance given the proximity to the Cambridgeshire boundary.
- 7.1.3 The LPAs were consulted on the strategy for Non-statutory Consultation prior to its launch. Conversations are currently being held with LPAs to make them aware of the forthcoming EIA Scoping programme and related consultation. LPAs will also be consulted on the Statement of Community Consultation (SOCC) which will be developed prior to Statutory Consultation.
- 7.1.4 Discussions regarding setting up a PPA with each LPA have been had, and letters of intent have been issued where relevant. Draft Engagement Plans will be shared with the LPAs and implemented as early as possible. The Engagement Plans will:
- Set out an approach for engaging with LPAs on planning and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) matters, including towards development of Statements of Common Ground (SoCGs) and Principal Areas of Disagreement (PADs).
 - Assist LPAs with their resource planning for the projects;
 - In support of the above, provide LPAs with a look ahead to when key planning and EIA activities are programmed to take place, including proposed technical meetings and thematic working groups;
 - Assist all parties in agreeing a PPA.
- 7.1.5 The EGL 3 and EGL 4 Projects have contacted all statutory consultees through the Non-statutory Consultation, and held meetings with key statutory consultees such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England. A programme of engagement with matters to be discussed with statutory consultees has been developed, and NGET will continue to engage in accordance with this programme.

Pre-application risks and how these are tracked and managed

Risk	Description of Risk	Tracking and managing risk
Changes to planned consultation event dates to avoid the pre-election period.	The Non-statutory consultation has been extended to avoid consultation activity during the pre-election period resulting in a delay in receiving feedback.	All consultation events in the pre-election period have been rescheduled and the deadline for the receipt of responses has been extended to 15 July. Feedback is being continually reviewed to ensure this change does not affect the overall DCO programme.
Limited local authority resources which could limit their ability to engage with the proposals.	LPAs may have limited resources to have effective communication throughout the pre-application process for the DCO.	PPAs are to be entered into with the relevant LPAs to ensure that resource allocation is managed to have effective dialogue. Meetings have commenced with the LPAs to discuss their feedback.
Limited statutory consultee resources which could limit their ability to engage with the proposals.	Statutory consultees may have limited resources to have effective communication throughout the pre-application process for the DCO.	At present a SLA is in place between Natural England and National Grid. Cost recovery agreements will be put in place for relevant stakeholders to help enable effective dialogue. The introduction of cost

Risk	Description of Risk	Tracking and managing risk
Number of NSIPs within same geographical area and impact on resource/capacity within stakeholder organisations to engage effectively.	Local authorities and statutory consultees are seeing a significant increase in NSIPs in this region. Some of these have already advised that they are resource constrained which may result in delays to the receipt of formal inputs to the pre-application stage.	recovery will be engaged with positively, and engagement strategies will be mapped out on an ongoing nature. Use of PPAs/charging schemes and provision of an advanced programme of inputs to help manage the limited resources.
Potential unavailability of district level licensing could mean extensive species surveys are required.	Unavailability of district level licensing could mean extensive species surveys are required which could result in the requirement for extensive additional surveys requested or extension to programme.	Alternative strategies for key species will be discussed with stakeholders to ensure a reasonable level of survey effort is agreed in lieu of DLL.

Approach to Preliminary Environmental Information

- 8.1.1 At this early stage of the project, preparation of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) is still being considered. However it is expected to contain a good level of detail based on current survey access progress. In accordance with the timeframes set out in this document, the EIA Scoping Report is scheduled to be submitted to PINS in Q3 2024. The approach to preparing the PEIR will be informed by the Scoping Opinion received from PINS.

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