

PLANNING / CONSENTS

**THE NATIONAL GRID ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION PLC (SCOTLAND TO
ENGLAND GREEN LINK 1) COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 2023**

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE

**Hugh Smith
Consents Officer
National Grid Electricity Transmission plc**

1. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 1.1 My name is Hugh Smith and I am a Consents Officer with National Grid Electricity Transmission Plc (NGET). I hold a BA (Hons) degree in Geography from the University of Manchester, a Masters degree in Environmental Change and Management from the University of Oxford, and a Masters degree in Town Planning from the University of Manchester. I am a Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.
- 1.2 I have 21 years' experience in planning positions in private practice and in the electricity industry. I joined NGET in 2010 as a Consents Officer and have managed overhead line and underground cable routeing, substation siting, converter station siting, and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) activities for new electricity transmission infrastructure projects in England, Wales and Scotland.
- 1.3 In my role with NGET I am responsible for providing consenting advice in relation to various projects, including customer connections involving NGET substation extensions, NGET asset management such as replacement infrastructure, and asset protection such as flood resilience measures. This involves providing planning advice on projects both in the development and delivery stages and procuring consenting and environmental services.
- 1.4 Of relevance to the EGL1 project I was Lead Consents Officer for the 220km Shetland HVDC Link between Dounreay and Lerwick which involved siting of converter stations on the mainland and on Shetland, and of the terrestrial cable routeing to the connection points. On the North West Coast Connections project, to connect a proposed new nuclear power station on the east coast of Cumbria, I managed and led the delivery of the Statement of Proposed Route Corridor report from Carlisle in Cumbria to Heysham in Lancashire, which was consulted upon with the public and stakeholders.
- 1.5 I joined the Eastern Green Link 1 project in October 2020 as Lead Consents Officer replacing the previous Lead Consents Officer who had moved role within NGET.

2. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 2.1 The structure of my statement of evidence is set out in paragraph 2.3 below.
- 2.2 In high-level terms, my statement will explain the consenting position of the Project, including detail of the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) consent and the proposed approach in respect of obtaining additional consents as the development transitions to delivery. It will also provide evidence on the alternatives to siting considered and Local Planning Authority endorsement of both compliance with the extant development plan and recognition of project need in granting planning permission. My statement of evidence explains that planning and other consenting matters do not present any impediment to delivery of the Project in accordance with paragraph 15 of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Local Government's Guidance on Compulsory Purchase and the Crichel Down Rules¹ (July 2019) ("**CPO Guidance**") (**CD B.6**).

¹ DEPARTMENT FOR LEVELLING UP, HOUSING & COMMUNITIES (2019) Guidance on Compulsory purchase process and The Crichel Down Rules, [Online] Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1071500/CPO_guidance_-_with_2019_update.pdf

- 2.3 My statement of evidence is structured as follows:
- 2.3.1 Section 3 provides a description of the Project and need for the development.
 - 2.3.2 Section 4 provides an overview of the planning policy support for the Project.
 - 2.3.3 Section 5 provides a summary of the overarching consents strategy.
 - 2.3.4 Section 6 provides a review of the planning position.
 - 2.3.5 Section 67 provides a summary of the alternatives considered.
 - 2.3.6 Section 8 details the consultation undertaken.
 - 2.3.7 Section 9 provides detail of the mitigation measures proposed.
 - 2.3.8 Section 10 sets out the conclusion.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SCOTLAND TO ENGLAND GREEN LINK 1 PROJECT

The Development

- 3.1 NGET owns and maintains the high voltage electricity transmission network in England and Wales. In England and Wales, the high voltage electricity transmission system operates at 275,000 volts (275kV) and 400,000 volts (400kV), comprises some 7,000 route kilometres of overhead lines, over 600km of underground cable and over 320 substations. At the substations generation is connected to the system and the primary transmission voltage of 400kV or 275kV is transformed to lower voltages. The lower voltage electricity is taken by regional electricity distribution companies who supply it to industrial, commercial and domestic users across the UK.
- 3.2 NGET is promoting and developing proposals for a subsea High Voltage Direct Current Link (HVDC) alongside Scottish Power Transmission (SPT). This will provide an HVDC link between Torness in East Lothian and Hawthorn Pit in County Durham (**Project**). The Project has been proposed in partnership with SPT, which is the transmission owner for southern Scotland and responsible for the onshore and offshore aspects of the Project in Scotland.
- 3.3 The primary objective of the Project is to reinforce the electricity network and increase transmission capacity across the B6 boundary between southern Scotland and northern England before 2030. The benefits of the Project are that it provides this reinforcement and provides resilience to the electricity network, addressing the current boundary constraints and transmitting renewable energy produced in Scotland to the English national electricity system.
- 3.4 The Project comprises the following components:
- 3.4.1 **Scottish Onshore Scheme:** A converter station to the east of the Dunbar Energy Recovery Facility at Oxwell Mains, Dunbar, and a substation at Branxton in East Lothian, Scotland, with approximately 6.5 km of buried HVDC cable to a landfall south-east of Thorntonloch beach. The converter station and substation will be connected by approximately 3.5 km of HVAC cable. The substation connects the Scottish Onshore Scheme to the existing transmission system.
 - 3.4.2 **Marine Scheme:** Approximately 176 km of subsea HVDC cable from Thorntonloch Beach, Torness on the east coast of Scotland to Seaham, County Durham, in the north-east of England. The Marine Scheme is being developed jointly by NGET and

SPT who have secured marine licences from the Marine Scotland Licensing Operations Team (MS-LOT) and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO).

- 3.4.3 **English Onshore Scheme:** Approximately 10 km of underground HVDC cable from the mean low water mark at Seaham, to a converter station at Hawthorn Pit in County Durham. The converter station will be connected to a new 400 kilovolt (kV) substation by approximately 1 km of underground of High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) cable. The new 400 kV substation will connect the project to the existing 275 / 400 kV Hawthorn Pit substation and the existing electricity transmission system.
- 3.5 The Project also includes works to existing overhead line electricity infrastructure and the installation of new overhead line electricity infrastructure, comprising the re-alignment of existing overhead lines at Hawthorn Pit, the relocation of a pylon, the removal (net loss) of two pylons and the removal of existing overhead lines.
- 3.6 NGET has made The National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (Scotland to England Green Link 1) Compulsory Purchase Order 2023 (the **Order**) under the provisions of the 1989 Act. The Order has been made in order to acquire the compulsory acquisition of land and rights necessary to deliver the English Onshore Scheme components of the Project. In summary, the Order will authorise the acquisition of the:
- 3.6.1 land required to construct and operate the new converter station and substation;
- 3.6.2 rights required to install, construct, use, inspect, maintain, repair, protect, alter, renew, remove and decommission the underground electricity cables and associated infrastructure;
- 3.6.3 rights required to install, construct, use, inspect, maintain, repair, protect, alter, renew, remove and decommission the overhead electricity lines and associated infrastructure;
- 3.6.4 rights required in relation to access, drainage and landscaping; and
- 3.6.5 rights required in relation to construction compounds.

Need for the Development

- 3.7 The need for the Development is set out in section 8 of the Statement of Case (**CD D.10**) and in the Proofs of Evidence by Graham Law and Faisal Karim. My evidence below focuses on the policy support for the Project in planning terms.

4. PLANNING POLICY SUPPORT FOR THE PROJECT

- 4.1 Designated under the Planning Act 2008, and published in 2011, National Policy Statements (**NPS**) set out the government's policy for the delivery of major infrastructure and provide the legal framework for planning decisions. Although applying strictly to those projects falling within the definition of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, the NPSs may also be a material consideration for projects progressed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)², such as the Project.

² DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & CLIMATE CHANGE (July 2011) National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks

4.2 For the Project, the NPS for Energy (NPS EN-1) (**CD B.2**), and the NPS for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (NPS EN-5) (**CD B.3**), were considered to be material considerations. The Government has published and is consulting on draft replacements for the current NPS EN-1 and EN-5 (**CD B.4 and B.5**).

NPS for Energy (EN-1)

4.3 The overarching NPS for Energy (NPS EN-1) (**CD B.2**) sets out the Government's policy for delivery of major energy infrastructure.

4.4 NPS-EN-1 recognises the importance and need for the development of new and reinforced electricity transmission assets to support the growing demand and development of new renewable and low carbon generating facilities. NPS-EN-1 sets out the Government's policy for delivery of major energy infrastructure. This NPS, taken together with NPS EN-5 (NPS for Electricity Networks Infrastructure), is a material consideration in decision making on relevant applications that fall under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

4.5 Part 2 of NPS EN-1 sets out government policy on energy and energy infrastructure development and confirms the following:

- the Government's commitment to meet its (then) legally binding target to cut Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by at least 80% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels; the need to affect a transition to a low carbon economy so as to reduce GHG emissions; and
- the importance of maintaining secure and reliable energy supplies as older fossil fuel generating plant close as a result of the European Union Emissions Trading System ('EU ETS') and the UK moves toward a low carbon economy.

4.6 Specifically, Paragraph 2.1.2 recognises that *"energy is vital to economic prosperity and social well-being and so it is important to ensure that the UK has secure and affordable energy. Producing the energy the UK requires and getting it to where it is needed necessitates a significant amount of infrastructure, both large and small scale."*

4.7 Paragraph 2.20 of NPS EN-1 notes that it is critical that the UK continues to have secure and reliable supplies of electricity as we transition to a low carbon economy and further notes that to manage the risks to achieving security of supply we need sufficient electricity capacity to meet demand at all times, and that electricity demand must be simultaneously and continuously met by its supply.

4.8 Section 3.3 of NPS EN-1 sets out why the Government believes that there is an urgent need for new electricity infrastructure, including:

- Meeting energy security and carbon reduction objectives – all types of energy infrastructure covered by the NPS are needed to achieve energy security in the UK at the same time as reducing GHG emissions;
- The need to replace closing electricity generating capacity – at least 22 gigawatts (GW) of existing electricity generating capacity will need to be replaced in the coming years, as a result of ageing power stations and tightening environmental regulation. Additionally, 10 GW of nuclear generating capacity is expected to close over the next 20 years (from 2011);

Infrastructure (EN-5), p. 1, Para 1.2.3, [Online] Available from: [1942-national-policy-statement-electricity-networks.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/424221/1942-national-policy-statement-electricity-networks.pdf)

- The need for more electricity capacity to support the increased supply from renewable sources – decarbonisation of electricity generation is reliant on a dramatic increase in the amount of renewable energy; however, many renewable sources (such as wind, solar and tidal) are intermittent and cannot be adjusted to meet demand. Furthermore, NPS EN-1 recognises that there will still be a role for fossil fuel generation to provide a cost-effective means of ‘back up’ electricity generation at short notice to support renewable technologies; and
 - Future increases in electricity demand – the demand for electricity is expected to increase and total electricity consumption could double by 2050. Depending upon the choice of how electricity is supplied, total capacity may need to more than double to be sufficiently robust to all weather conditions.
- 4.9 Paragraph 3.3.15 states the urgency at which new energy infrastructure should be brought forward as soon as possible and certainly within the next 10-15 years (from 2011).
- 4.10 Paragraph 3.7.2 states that both demand and supply of electricity will increase in the coming decades and that existing transmission networks will have to evolve and adapt to handle increases in demand.
- 4.11 Paragraph 3.7.4 states that new electricity infrastructure projects will add to the reliability of the national energy supply and will provide crucial national benefits which are shared by all users of the system. Paragraph 3.7.10 develops this point noting that there is an *“urgent need for new electricity transmission and distribution infrastructure to be provided.”*
- 4.12 The Government announced a review of the NPSs in the 2020 Energy White Paper: *Powering our net zero future*. This review was to ensure the NPSs were brought up to date to reflect the policies set out in the White Paper. The Government held a public consultation on the revised NPSs EN-1 to EN-5 in 2021 and published a government response in March 2023 upon which it is currently consulting. The Government states that the current draft consultation is more focused than the 2020 consultation and includes consideration on strengthening the electricity networks NPS to include more detail on the role of strategic planning of networks, which considers the network as a whole, rather than just individual transmission projects.
- 4.13 The most recent draft of NPS EN-1 (April 2023) re-states that *“There is an urgent need for new electricity network infrastructure to meet our energy objectives”* (draft paragraph 3.3.63).
- 4.14 Draft paragraph 3.3.68 states that *“Of particular strategic importance this decade is the role of offshore wind, as stated in the British Energy Security Strategy (up to 50GW including 5GW floating by 2030) in our generation mix which presents a challenge of connecting a large volume of generation located beyond the periphery of the existing transmission network. To support this ambition, supporting onshore and offshore transmission infrastructure is considered CNP [Critical National Priority] Infrastructure.”*
- 4.15 In recent consent decisions the Secretary of State has afforded substantial weight to proposed developments that contribute to the established need for new low carbon energy sources and has noted that these energy-related benefits and resultant conformity with the NPSs weigh heavily in favour of the proposed developments (for example the Hornsea Four Offshore Windfarm decision on 12 July 2023). This reflects the direction of travel in Secretary of State decisions in respect of the weight to be afforded to projects which contribute towards Net Zero.

- 4.16 Draft paragraph 3.3.75 notes that “it is recognised that the case for a new connection or network reinforcement is demonstrated if the proposed development represents an efficient and economical means of:
- connecting a new generating station to the network;
 - reinforcing the network to accommodate such connections; or
 - reinforcing the network to ensure that it is sufficiently resilient and capacious (as per any performance standards set by Ofgem) to reliably supply present and/or anticipated future levels of demand.

NPS for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5)

- 4.17 The NPS for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) (**CD B.3**), taken together with EN1, provides the primary basis for decisions taken on applications for electricity networks infrastructure.
- 4.18 Infrastructure covered by NPS EN-5 includes transmission systems through 275 kV and 400 kV overhead lines and underground cables, and associated infrastructure including substations and converter stations.
- 4.19 This NPS, taken together with EN-1, is a material consideration in decision making on relevant applications that fall under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). NPS EN-5 recognises the need to ensure a ‘robust’ electricity network to support a more complex system of supply and demand in moving towards a low carbon economy.
- 4.20 NPS EN-5 paragraph 2.2 states that *‘The general location of electricity network projects is often determined by the location, or anticipated location, of a particular generating station and the existing network infrastructure taking electricity to centres of energy use. This gives a locationally specific beginning and end to a line.’* It goes on to state that it is *“not necessarily the case that the connection between the beginning and end points should be via the most direct route (indeed this may be practically impossible), as the applicant will need to take a number of factors, including engineering and environmental aspects, into account”*.
- 4.21 Draft NPS EN-5 notes that siting is determined by both the location of new generating stations or other infrastructure requiring connection to the network, and/or system capacity and resilience requirements determined by the Electricity System Operator (draft paragraph 2.2).
- 4.22 These twin constraints, coupled with the government’s legislative commitment to net zero by 2050, strategic commitment to new interconnectors with neighbouring North Seas countries and an ambition of up to 50GW of offshore wind generation by 2030, means that significant new electricity networks infrastructure is required, including in areas with comparatively little build-out to date (draft paragraph 2.3).
- 4.23 Draft NPS-EN5 goes on to explain that applicants retain control in managing the identification of routing and site selection for infrastructure and have a duty to consider and balance site-selection considerations. It notes that siting constraints, such as engineering, environmental or community considerations will be important in determining a feasible route. It goes on to explain that usually there is a degree of flexibility in the location of the development’s associated substations, and that applicants should consider carefully their placement in the local landscape, as well as their design (draft paragraphs 2.25 – 2.28).

A low carbon economy

- 4.24 NPS EN-1 and Draft NPS-EN1 set out government policy on energy and energy infrastructure development and confirm the Government’s commitment to affect a transition to a low carbon economy so as to reduce GHG emissions. They also confirm the Government’s long-term plan for the economy-wide transition to net zero that will take place over the next three decades, with an ambition to deploy up to 50GW of offshore wind capacity by 2030.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.25 The National Planning Policy Framework⁷ (**CD B.1**) (“**NPPF**”) (July 2021) was a material planning consideration when assessing and determining the EOS planning application.
- 4.26 The overriding message of the NPPF is that new development that is sustainable should go ahead without delay. It defines the role of planning in achieving sustainable development under three overarching objectives – economic, social and environmental, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.
- 4.27 Three sections of the NPPF are of specific relevance to the EOS are NPPF - Part 9, Part 14 and Part 15.
- 4.28 Part 9 Promoting Sustainable Transport states that encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce.
- 4.29 Part 14 Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change explains that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 4.30 Part 15 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment explains that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, site of biodiversity or geological conservation interests, recognising the wider benefits of ecosystems, minimising the impacts on biodiversity, preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from pollution and land stability, and remediating contaminated or other degraded land where appropriate.

Local Development Plan

- 4.31 The statutory development plan for Durham County Council’s (DCC) administrative area includes the County Durham Plan (adopted October 2020) (**CD B.15**), together with Neighbourhood Plans which have subsequently been adopted for certain areas and which sit alongside the County Durham Plan policies, as well as ‘saved’ policies from the Minerals Local Plan (adopted December 2020), and ‘saved’ policies from the County Durham Waste Local Plan (adopted April 2005).
- 4.32 The following spatial objectives and policies from the development plan are relevant to the EOS.

- 4.33 Policy 10 Development in the Countryside States that development in the countryside will not be permitted unless allowed for by specific policies within the Plan or within an adopted neighbourhood plan relating to the application site or where the proposed development relates to the stated exceptions.
- 4.34 Policy 14 Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land and Soil Resources states that development of the best and most versatile agricultural land, will be permitted where it is demonstrated that the benefits of the development outweigh the harm, taking into account economic and other benefits. Development proposals relating to previously undeveloped land must demonstrate that soil resources will be managed and conserved in a viable condition and used sustainably in line with accepted best practice.
- 4.35 Policy 21 Delivering Sustainable Transport requires planning applications to address the transport implications of the proposed development. All development shall deliver sustainable transport by delivering, accommodating and facilitating investment in sustainable modes of transport; providing appropriate, well designed, permeable and direct routes for all modes of transport; ensuring that any vehicular traffic generated by new development can be safely accommodated; creating new or improvements to existing routes and assessing potential increase in risk resulting from new development in vicinity of level crossings.
- 4.36 Supporting text to Policy 23 (Allocating and Safeguarding Transport Routes and Facilities) states:
- 4.36.1 “A number of other schemes have been considered for inclusion in this policy however for various reasons including the limited benefits that would result, they have not been included at this time. These schemes will be reconsidered as part of future reviews of the Plan. This is particularly relevant to the proposed East Durham Link Road which would improve east-west links in the county and into Sunderland City Council's administrative area. However, the part of the route in Sunderland's area has not been included in their current local plan and therefore if it was included in our Plan, it would be impossible to complete. If Sunderland were to include it in a future version of their local plan, then this position would be revisited.”
- 4.37 Discussions between NGET and DCC indicated that plans to implement the East Durham Link Road around Murton may still come forward in the next decade. The DCC Planning Policy Team confirmed that there is no safeguarded route alignment that would need to be considered from a planning policy perspective. Notwithstanding, NGET gave the supporting text to Plan Policy 23 due weight as a material consideration in the potential siting of a converter station on the former proposed alignment of the East Durham Link Road, because it could sterilise the East Durham Link Road alignment south of Murton and prejudice its future development, or the development of the EOS if the Link Road came forward in the near future whilst the EOS was being developed. On this basis NGET discounted siting a converter station on the alignment of the East Durham Link Road and considered alternative converter station sites.
- 4.38 Policy 25 Developer Contributions advises that any mitigation necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms will be secured through appropriate planning conditions or planning obligations. Planning conditions will be imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise

and reasonable in all other respects. Planning obligations must be directly related to the development and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

- 4.39 Policy 26 Green Infrastructure states that development will be expected to maintain and protect, and where appropriate improve, the County's green infrastructure network. Advice is provided on the circumstances in which existing green infrastructure may be lost to development, the requirements of new provision within development proposals and advice in regard to public rights of way.
- 4.40 Policy 27 Utilities, Telecommunications and Other Broadcast Infrastructure states that proposals will be permitted for new or extensions to existing energy generation, utility transmission facilities, telecommunication masts or other broadcast and broadband equipment which facilitate the electronic transfer of data where it can be demonstrated that the scheme will not cause significant adverse impacts or that its benefits outweigh any adverse negative effects.
- 4.41 Policy 28 Safeguarded Areas within safeguarded areas development will be subject to consultation with the relevant authority and will be permitted within the defined consultation zones of the Major Hazard Sites and Major Hazard Pipelines, where it can be demonstrated that it would not prejudice current or future public safety. The Policy also requires that development would not prejudice the safety of air traffic and air traffic services, that there would be no unacceptable adverse impacts upon the operation of High Moorsely Meteorological Officer radar and the operation of Fishburn Airfield, Shotton Airfield and Peterlee Parachute Drop Zone Safeguarding Areas.
- 4.42 Policy 31 Amenity and Pollution sets out that development will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that there will be no unacceptable impact, either individually or cumulatively, on health, living or working conditions or the natural environment and that the development can be effectively integrated with any existing business and community facilities. Development will not be permitted where inappropriate odours, noise, vibration and other sources of pollution cannot be suitably mitigated against, as well as where light pollution is not suitably minimised to an acceptable level.
- 4.43 Policy 32 Despoiled, Degraded, Derelict, Contaminated and Unstable Land requires that where development involves such land, any necessary mitigation measures to make the site safe for local communities and the environment are undertaken prior to the construction or occupation of the proposed development and that all necessary assessments are undertaken by a suitably qualified person.
- 4.44 Policy 35 Water Management requires all development proposals to consider the effect of the proposed development on flood risk, both on-site and off-site, commensurate with the scale and impact of the development and taking into account the predicted impacts of climate change for the lifetime of the proposal. All new development must ensure there is no net increase in surface water runoff for the lifetime of the development.
- 4.45 Policy 39 Landscape States that proposals for new development will only be permitted where they would not cause unacceptable harm to the character, quality or distinctiveness of the landscape, or to important features or views. Proposals are expected to incorporate appropriate mitigation measures where adverse landscape and visual impacts occur. Development affecting Areas of Higher landscape Value will only be permitted where it conserves and

enhances the special qualities of the landscape, unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh its impacts. Development proposals should have regard to the County Durham Landscape Character Assessment and County Durham Landscape Strategy and contribute, where possible, to the conservation or enhancement of the local landscape.

- 4.46 Policy 40 Trees, Woodlands and Hedges states that proposals for new development will not be permitted that would result in the loss of, or damage to, trees, hedges or woodland of high landscape, amenity or biodiversity value unless the benefits of the scheme clearly outweigh the harm. Proposals for new development will be expected to retain existing trees and hedges. Where trees are lost, suitable replacement planting, including appropriate provision for maintenance and management, will be required within the site or the locality.
- 4.47 Policy 41 Biodiversity and Geodiversity restricts development that would result in significant harm to biodiversity or geodiversity and cannot be mitigated or compensated. The retention and enhancement of existing biodiversity assets and features is required as well as biodiversity net gains. Proposals are expected to protect geological features and have regard to Geodiversity Action Plans and the Durham Geodiversity Audit and where appropriate promote public access, appreciation and interpretation of geodiversity. Development proposals which are likely to result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitat(s) will not be permitted unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.
- 4.48 Policy 43 Protected Species and Nationally and Locally Protected Sites states that development proposals that would adversely impact upon nationally protected sites will only be permitted where the benefits clearly outweigh the impacts whilst adverse impacts. Appropriate mitigation or, as a last resort, compensation must be provided where adverse impacts are expected. In relation to protected species and their habitats, all development likely to have an adverse impact on the species' abilities to survive and maintain their distribution will not be permitted unless appropriate mitigation is provided, or the proposal meets licensing criteria in relation to European protected species.
- 4.49 Policy 44 Historic Environment requires development proposals to contribute positively to the built and historic environment. Development should seek opportunities to enhance and where appropriate better reveal the significance and understanding of heritage assets.
- 4.50 Policy 56 Safeguarding Mineral Resources states that planning permission will not be granted for non-mineral development that would lead to the sterilisation of mineral resources within a Mineral Safeguarding Area. This is unless it can be demonstrated that the mineral in the location concerned is no longer of any current or potential value, provision can be made for the mineral to be extracted satisfactorily prior to the nonminerals development taking place without unacceptable adverse impact, the nonminerals development is of a temporary nature that does not inhibit extraction or there is an overriding need for the non-minerals development which outweighs the need to safeguard the mineral or it constitutes exempt development as set out in the Plan. Unless the proposal is exempt development or temporary in nature, all planning applications for non-mineral development within a Mineral Safeguarding Area must be accompanied by a Mineral Assessment of the effect of the proposed development on the mineral resource beneath or adjacent to the site of the proposed development.

5. OVERARCHING CONSENTS STRATEGY

- 5.1 The overarching consents strategy for the EOS was early pre-application engagement with DCC, Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency to explain the need for the EOS and to consult with them on early cable routeing and infrastructure siting options.
- 5.2 Once NGET had developed a proposed route corridor and identified proposed substation and converter station sites it submitted a request to DCC for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion for the EOS on 11 February 2021 (the Screening Request). DCC issued its Screening Opinion on 25 March 2021 confirming that the proposed EOS was not “EIA development”, and so did not need to be accompanied by a statutory Environmental Statement. However, NGET - in line with its statutory obligations – has provided information about the EOS’s potential environmental impacts in a non-statutory Environmental Appraisal Report (EAR). The purpose of the EAR is to support the planning application for the relevant elements of the English Onshore Scheme (EOS – set out in section 7 below) by describing the proposed development, documenting the assessment of its effects on the environment, and detailing proposed mitigation measures.
- 5.3 By virtue of the EOS not being EIA development NGET retained its Permitted Development Right which means that installation of underground cables and laying out of temporary construction compounds and haul roads did not need to be included as part of the planning application, details of which are set out in section 6 below.
- 5.4 An Outline planning application for the construction of a converter station, 400 kV substation, and laying out of public open space, with all matters reserved, was submitted to DCC on 19 May 2022 and was validated on 8 June 2022. It was accompanied by the EAR.
- 5.5 As part of the EOS the 4TF overhead line to the existing Hawthorn Pit substation will need to be re-aligned to connect into the proposed new 400 kV substation. These works require consent from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 (“section 37 consent”).
- 5.6 NGET sought an EIA Screening opinion from DCC on the proposed section 37 works on 14 September 2022, and DCC concluded that the proposed works were not EIA development on 22 November 2022. NGET made an application for section 37 consent to DESNZ on 6th December 2022 which is currently being determined.

6. PLANNING POSITION

- 6.1 The consents required for the Project are set out within the table below.

Description	Primary Consenting Regime	Relevant Determining Authority
English Onshore Scheme		
Erection of a Converter Station Erection of a 400kV GIS substation	Outline planning permission granted 1 November 2022	DCC

Description	Primary Consenting Regime	Relevant Determining Authority
Laying out of replacement Public Open Space	(DM/22/01663/OUT) under the TCPA	
Approximately 10 km of underground HVDC cable from mean low water mark to the Converter Station.	Permitted Development, General Permitted Development Order 2015, Part 15, Class B (a) electricity undertakings	n/a
Approximately 1 km of underground HVAC cable between the converter station and the new substation, and the new 400kV substation and the existing substation.	Permitted Development, General Permitted Development Order 2015, Part 15, Class B (a) electricity undertakings	n/a
Amendments to the existing overhead line to turn into the new substation including a new pylon	Section 37 consent under the Electricity Act 1989	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
Removal of three existing pylons and associated spans (net loss of two pylons).	Existing consent for the 4TF overhead line	n/a
Cable construction compounds	Permitted Development, General Permitted Development Order 2015, Part 4, Class A – temporary works	n/a
Construction compounds and laydown areas for substation and converter station	Permitted Development, General Permitted Development Order 2015, Part 4, Class A – temporary works	n/a
Temporary access roads to construction areas	Permitted Development, General Permitted Development Order 2015, Part 4, Class A – temporary works	n/a

Description	Primary Consenting Regime	Relevant Determining Authority
Marine Scheme		
English Marine Scheme	Marine Licence under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009	Marine Management Organisation
Scottish Marine Scheme	Marine Licence under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010	Marine Scotland – Licensing Operations Team
Scottish Onshore Scheme		
Planning permission in principle for a converter station and associated development including a landfall at Thorntonloch and connecting buried cabling, all in association with the Scottish Power Eastern Link 1 project, for a new subsea High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) link	Planning in principle granted 2 May 2023 (22/00852/PPM) under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997	East Lothian Council

English Onshore Scheme

- 6.2 NGET’s outline planning application for “the erection of a new 400 kilovolt electricity substation, a converter station, and the laying out of replacement public open space on land to the west and south of Jade Business Park, with all matters reserved” was determined at DCC’s County Planning Committee on 1 November 2022. The Committee Report recommended approval subject conditions and completion of an agreement under Section 39 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to secure biodiversity management for the life of the development.
- 6.3 The Committee Report stated that the EOS comprises part of a “major reinforcement to the National Electricity Transmission System (NETS) between England and Scotland. It is needed to enable the transmission of electricity, including that generated from renewable sources such as wind, from where it is generated to where it is used. As such, the proposed development represents enhanced electricity infrastructure that is urgently needed in order to achieve the Government’s objectives and commitments for a secure and low carbon energy system.”
- 6.4 The Committee Report notes that the location of the proposed development at Hawthorn Pit had been carefully selected to provide the transmission benefits that arise from the proposed converter station and substation being located close to the point of connection to the NETS, whilst balancing the environmental and financial implications of its delivery.

It goes on to explain that the scale of the proposed development is necessary for it to operate effectively and has been kept to the minimum envelope that is needed to ensure the proposed development and the benefits that would result can be delivered.

- 6.5 The Committee Report observes that the EOS has generated limited public interest, with a small number of letters of objection having been received. It notes that concerns expressed regarding the proposal have been taken into account, and carefully balanced against the scheme's wider social, environmental and economic benefits. It concludes that the EOS is considered to broadly accord with the relevant policies of the County Durham Plan and relevant sections of the NPPF.
- 6.6 The application was unanimously approved by the Committee.
- 6.7 Following discussions between NGET and DCC it was agreed that the biodiversity net gain would be secured by an agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) (a "section 106 agreement").
- 6.8 The outline planning application was taken back to County Planning Committee on 4 April 2023 with a Committee Report recommending approval subject to conditions and completion of an obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requiring future completion of an agreement under Section 39 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to secure biodiversity management for the life of the development. The application was unanimously approved by the Committee.
- 6.9 A section 106 agreement was signed by NGET and DCC and the Decision Notice was issued on 28 July 2023.
- 6.10 NGET submitted to DESNZ a "Section 37 application relating to the 4TF (Norton to Hawthorn Pit) 400 kV overhead line to install and keep installed a new tower 4TF078 and two new adjoining spans" on 6 December 2022. In advance of submission of the section 37 application NGET had formally consulted with Natural England, Historic England, the Environment Agency and DCC, and all four organisations confirmed that they have no objection to the works proposed in the section 37 application.
- 6.11 Section 37 applications do not have a statutory timescale for determination and section 37 consents are only issued by the Secretary of State once land rights have been secured and confirmed.

Marine Scheme

- 6.12 NGET submitted a marine licence application (reference MLA/2022/00231) to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) on 31 May 2022. The application sought approval for activities including landfall installation, cable preparation and installation, Unexploded Ordnance Survey Identification, installation of materials for the purposes of cable protection and required crossings, and operation and maintenance. The MMO granted the marine licence (L/2023/00212/) on 20 July 2023.
- 6.13 SPT submitted a marine licence application (MS-00009880) to the Marine Scotland – Licensing Operations Team on 31 May 2022 for the SEGL Eastern Link 1 HVDC Cable and Cable Protection - Torness to Hawthorn Pit which was granted a licence on 26 May 2023.

Scottish Onshore Scheme

- 6.14 SPT submitted an application for planning permission in principle to East Lothian Council on 29 July 2022 for a converter station and associated development including a landfall at Thorntonloch and connecting buried cabling, all in association with the Scottish Power Eastern Link 1 project, for a new subsea High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) link (22/00852/PPM). The application was approved at Planning Committee on 2 May 2023 subject to conditions. The Committee Report noted that the application is in accordance with Policy 11 of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), which states that development proposals for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies will be supported, including enabling works, such as grid transmission and distribution infrastructure.

Public Open Space

- 6.15 In respect of the replacement public open space to the north of the existing substation the only works would be to grass the area, and this would not constitute development as defined by section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

7. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

NGET's Approach to Developing and Delivering New Infrastructure

- 7.1 Published in August 2012, NGET's 'Approach to Options Appraisal' (**CD F.3**) describes a framework and references a list of topics which should be addressed, which allows NGET to identify and balance technical, socio-economic, environmental and cost considerations to help inform decisions around Project options. It also enables the information on which judgements have been based to be documented in a transparent manner.
- 7.2 The strategic options assessed comprised a fixed 'start' point on the network in Scotland, at Torness and appraised a number of alternative 'end' points at substations on the network in England, from Blyth in Northumberland as far south as Middlesbrough, both on the coast and inland.
- 7.3 The strategic options appraisal identified a number of alternative 'end' points at substations on the network in England, in an area from Blyth in Northumberland as far south as Middlesbrough, both on the coast and inland. The objective of the strategic options appraisal was to identify a preferred Strategic Proposal which would best meet the need case by providing additional network capability when it is needed while also taking account of NGET's statutory and licence obligations.
- 7.4 Each strategic option assessed network capability and technical considerations, environmental and socio-economic impacts, programme and cost implications, and transmission boundary transfer capability. The existing Hawthorn Pit substation was identified as the connection point for the English end of the Project. Hawthorn Pit substation was identified as the 'end' point because it provides a strong point on the network to connect into and has the benefit of being relatively close to the coast when compared to the other options, which reduces the length of onshore cable routes.
- 7.5 Once Hawthorn Pit substation was confirmed as the preferred English connection point, a number of terrestrial and marine siting and routeing studies were undertaken across the various project components. These focused on identifying a preferred subsea cable route, preferred landfall, and preferred underground cable routes, and converter station and

substation sites, in proximity to Hawthorn Pit substation. Once identified, these preferences were subject to consultation and dialogue with the relevant local authorities.

Site Selection and Options Appraisal

- 7.6 To identify the preferred site for the new substation and to comply with the approach established for sensitive siting of such infrastructure under the Horlock Rules, NGET commissioned a ‘site selection and options appraisal’ which was progressed in 2020.
- 7.7 Once a Strategic Proposal is identified NGET then developed the Project through three steps: Options Identification and Selection, Assessment and Land Rights, and Application and Decision.
- 7.8 The Options Identification and Selection step identified and appraised project options, engaged with stakeholders and sought consultee feedback to shape the project.
- 7.9 The Assessment and Land Rights step refined the project design in response to feedback, assessed the project impacts, sought voluntary land rights, and prepared the planning application documents.
- 7.10 The Application and Decision step saw submission of the planning application, placing of public notices, and responding to questions.
- 7.11 Development of the EOS comprised two main steps: first, the identification and assessment of alternative landfall, substation and converter station sites (siting); and second, the identification and assessment of alternative cable routes (routeing).
- 7.12 The approach to identifying and assessing alternative sites and routes has ensured the integrated and iterative consideration of potential impacts on the environment and local communities, alongside technical and engineering considerations. The overall aim of this approach was to identify sites or routes which best balanced these factors.
- 7.13 This approach is set out in detail in the Environmental Appraisal Report Chapter 2 Project Alternatives sections 2.7 – 2.8 (**CD D.6**).

Approach to Landfall Siting

- 7.14 The approach to landfall siting is set out in detail in the Environmental Appraisal Report Chapter 2 Project Alternatives section 29.2.1 (**CD D.6**).
- 7.15 The landfall is where the offshore (submarine) cables come ashore; it is the interface between the English Onshore Scheme and the Marine Scheme and where the submarine cables connect to onshore cables at a buried transition joint pit (TJP). Following the identification of the connection point at the Hawthorn Pit substation, a study area was initially based on a landfall zone approximately 5 km inland from the landward side of Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS) to provide sufficient opportunity to locate landfall infrastructure (TJP), converter station and cable routes to the connection point.
- 7.16 Nine landfall sites between Ryehope and Easington were considered in developing the EOS, which included the review of technical and environmental factors influencing engineering and design. The preferred landfall site provided the best balance between impacts on the environment and the local community with technical and engineering feasibility.

- 7.17 Assessment of the suitability of the coastline within the study area to accommodate a landfall site considered the suitability of ground conditions, site accessibility, and potential drill and/or trench profiles to install the cable. The coastline was divided into nine potential landfall areas, which were assigned a RAG (red/ amber/ green) rating correlating to the number of constraints in each landfall, with red being the most constrained and green the least constrained.

Approach to Cable Routeing

- 7.18 The approach to cable routeing is set out in detail in the Environmental Appraisal Report Chapter 2 Project Alternatives section 29.2.2 (CD D.6).
- 7.19 Following the selection of Landfall Area 1B as the emerging preferred option, a broad route corridor to the connection point at Hawthorn Pit substation was mapped by excluding major areas of built development and environmental designations including nature conservation designations, ancient woodland and areas of priority habitat, landscape designations such as the Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) and key historic and environmental designations.
- 7.20 The purpose of identifying the broad route corridor was to identify the area within which the converter station could be located as well as potential cable routes to connect the landfall with Hawthorn Pit substation. From reviewing constraint mapping it was apparent that there was only one potential corridor between Landfall Area 1B and Hawthorn Pit substation due to the constraints present, particularly large areas of built development associated with Seaham and Murton and the relatively short distance and therefore, because of a lack of alternative options (without unnecessarily extending the length of the route), no options appraisal to compare different cable corridors was undertaken.
- 7.21 Moving from a broad route corridor to a detailed cable alignment was an iterative approach that sought to take the most direct route whilst avoiding constraints including environmental, ecological, socioeconomic, heritage and landscape receptors. These features, and how they have been avoided, can be seen on the various figures in the topic-specific chapters of the Environmental Appraisal Report document.

Approach to Converter Station Siting

- 7.22 The approach to converter station siting is set out in detail in the Environmental Appraisal Report Chapter 2 Project Alternatives section 29.2.3 (CD D.6).
- 7.23 The optioneering for converter station sites was based on assumptions about footprint, height, and temporary construction areas based on similar NGET infrastructure. Converter station sites were sought as close as reasonably possible to the substation site to reduce the length of the AC cable circuits which require a wider swathe than DC cables and therefore have greater potential for environmental effects and can limit routeing options.
- 7.24 Converter station sites were identified with the aim of minimising the landscape and visual effects of the permanent built elements taking into account landform and any existing features which could help screen it as well as adjoining land uses and the amenity of local inhabitants. Known ecological and historic environment constraints were mapped and the engineering design parameters and requirements were also considered.
- 7.25 Five sites (Sites A – E) were identified for a possible converter station site.

- 7.26 Site A is to the immediate south of the Hawthorn Pit substation and is on the alignment of the East Durham Link Road which was previously safeguarded in the former Easington District Council Local Plan, and which is referenced in the County Durham Plan. Site A was not taken forward because its development would preclude any future development of the Link Road.
- 7.27 Site B is to the immediate north-east of the Hawthorn Pit substation and was subsequently proposed as part of a solar farm which has been granted planning permission.
- 7.28 Site C is approximately 2km north and Site D is approximately 3km north-west of Hawthorn Pit respectively. Both are close to an Area of Higher Landscape Value designation (County Durham Plan Policy 39: Landscape), have poor road access, are located further away than Site A, Site B and Site E and thus have longer HVAC cable swathes, which are wider than HVDC cable swathes, and are therefore more likely to give rise to environmental effects.
- 7.29 Site E is approximately 800m south-east of Hawthorn Pit substation and is bounded to the north by Jade Park, to the south and west by Coop House Wood and to the east by gently rising land that has been reprofiled with the arisings from the developed part of Jade Park.
- 7.30 In summary Site A was discounted to avoid sterilisation of the East Durham Link Road, Site B is not available, and Site C and Site D have potential adverse landscape and access effects and longer HVAC cable swathes than the other three sites. Site E is available, is nearby to Hawthorn Pit resulting in a shorter HVAC cable swathe, is afforded natural visual and landscape screening by Jade Park and Coop House Wood and allows the East Durham Link Road to be delivered.

Approach to Substation Siting

- 7.31 Hawthorn Pit substation benefits from land around the existing substation on which to locate a new 400kV substation station. The intention is to site the new 400kV substation as close as possible to the existing Hawthorn Pit substation because the two substations need to be connected together by underground cables, and the existing 4TF overhead line the drops into the southern side of the existing substation needs to be re-aligned to drop into the new 400kV substation. The closer that the new 400kV substation is sited to the existing substation then the shorter AC cable swathe between the two, which minimises potential environmental effects, and a lesser amount of work is required to re-align the 4TF overhead line.

Review and Consideration of Planning Allocations

- 7.32 NGET took account of planning allocations (or the development aspirations of landowners) in the site selection and options appraisal process, and in the refinement of the English Onshore Scheme.
- 7.33 Planning allocations in the County Durham Plan (**CD B.15**) were identified and mapped and were considered along with ecological and historic environment constraints. The planning allocations in the route corridor are the Seaton Nurseries housing allocation (reference 5/SE/17) at the western end of Seaton, and the Jade Park employment allocation (reference EMP36) nearby to Hawthorn Pit substation.
- 7.34 The Seaton Nurseries allocation was granted planning permission in 2018 (reference .DM/16/03710/OUT) and is being developed.

Review and Consideration of Planning Permissions

- 7.35 NGET took account of planning permissions in the site selection and options appraisal process, and in the refinement of the English Onshore Scheme.
- 7.36 Development has already taken place on part of the Jade Park site (“Jade Phase 1”) and discussions with DCC identified that a planning application was being developed for the remainder of the allocated Jade Park site (“Jade Phase 2”). NGET and DCC worked together to ensure that the EOS and Jade Phase 2 scheme were developed in cognisance of each other. The Jade Phase 2 planning application (reference DM/21/02901/OUT) was submitted to DCC in August 2021 and approved in October 2022.
- 7.37 Discussions took place between NGET and Aura Power which is proposing to develop a solar farm on land to the north of the existing substation. This land is not allocated for any particular land use in the County Durham Plan. NGET and Aura Power worked together to ensure that the EOS and the solar farm scheme were developed in cognisance of each other. The solar farm planning application (DM/21/03420/FPA) was submitted to DCC in December 2021 and was refused in July 2022 but was approved upon appeal to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) in May 2023.
- 7.38 Discussions took place between NGET and Harmony Energy which is proposing to develop a battery storage scheme on land to the east of the existing substation. This land is not allocated for any particular land use in the County Durham Plan. NGET and Harmony Energy worked together to ensure that the EOS and the battery storage scheme were developed in cognisance of each other. The battery storage scheme planning application was submitted to DCC in March 2022 and was approved in November 2022 (reference DM/22/00747/FPA).
- 7.39 The battery storage scheme is subject to planning conditions requiring compliance with a number of approved plans. Whilst there is a planning condition which requires reinstatement, this only applies if the battery storage facility is inoperative for a period of 12 months or longer.

8. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

- 8.1 Before submitting any planning applications or making the Order in respect of the English Onshore Scheme, NGET undertook pre-application consultation comprising discussions with Local Planning Authorities and statutory consultees, a public consultation in June 2021, and public information events in February 2022. The approach to this consultation and the output of this consultation is set out in the Community Engagement Report at Appendix A.
- 8.2 Once Hawthorn Pit substation was confirmed as the preferred English connection point and work had been undertaken to identify a preferred subsea cable route, preferred landfall, preferred cable routes, and converter station and substation sites these preferences were subject to consultation with DCC, Sunderland City Council, Natural England, Historic England, and the Environment Agency. This consultation further developed NGET’s emerging preferred option, enabling it to be subject to effective public consultations during Spring 2021, and public information events during February 2022.
- 8.3 The public consultation events set out the proposed EOS and formally sought landowners, residents and stakeholders’ views on the construction of a new converter station and substation at Hawthorn Pit; the route of the cables from the landfall point north of Seaham to the new

converter station and substation; and the anticipated impact to local communities and the environment. Consultation responses were collated, and the issues raised and NGET's responses to them are presented in the Community Engagement Report. All consultees who submitted feedback or questions received a response from the project team.

- 8.4 The purpose of the public information events was to set out details of the anticipated planning application, taking into account comments made during consultation, so that landowners, residents and stakeholders could review and ask questions about the proposed development before it was submitted to DCC.
- 8.5 NGET provided briefings to DCC Officers and Councillors, Seaham Town Council, South Hetton Parish Council and Murton Parish Council between May and July 2021, and with Seaham Town Council and Seaton and Slingley Parish Council between March and May 2022.
- 8.6 The application was advertised by DCC in the local press and by site notice as part of planning procedures. In addition, DCC sent neighbour notification letters to 1,590 properties. A total of three letters of objection were received in response to the consultation.

Planning Objections

- 8.7 No statutory consultees objected to the planning application for the English Onshore Scheme. The Environment Agency submitted a "holding objection" relating to a potential contamination risk to controlled waters arising from the former use of the site as sludge beds associated with the former Hawthorn Mine. This information was contained within the planning application submission, but NGET and the Environment Agency agreed to present it in a more amenable way and the Environment Agency removed its holding objection subject to the imposition of ground remediation conditions.
- 8.8 One of the three letters of objection received did not raise material planning considerations.
- 8.9 The Committee Report notes that material planning issues raised by the two objectors relate to amenity, including noise both during construction and in operation, and the visual impact of the development, in part due to not knowing the exact dimensions of the buildings at that time. An objection to the application raised concerns in respect of harm to biodiversity on and around the site. The Committee Report notes that DCC Ecology Officers and Natural England have not raised any objection to the proposal. An objector states that public open space would be reduced as a result of the development. The Committee Report considers that the proposed development would not result in the loss of deterioration in quality of existing public rights of way, or the net loss of public open space.
- 8.10 No statutory consultees objected to the section 37 consent application for the English Onshore Scheme.

CPO Objections

Obj1 – Alternative Uses

- 8.11 NGET engaged extensively with DCC as part of the design of the English Onshore Scheme and has selected a design which does not prejudice current or potential development plans. This is recorded at section 4.5 of the Planning Statement, which demonstrates the regard that NGET had to DCC's potential development plans. This demonstrates how the converter station site was chosen, in part, to ensure that it:

- 8.11.1 was sited on the opposite side of the road from the allocated Jade Business Park site and would be seen in the context of the Jade Business Park development on the wider site. This demonstrates that NGET has had regard to the allocated Employment site (Jade Business Park) in the County Durham Plan (October 2020) and adjusted its proposals accordingly; and
- 8.11.2 did not prejudice any future development of the East Durham Link Road (a long-term ambition of DCC and which DCC advised may come forward in the next decade). This demonstrates that NGET had regard to historic safeguarded sites shown on the adopted (and now defunct) Easington District Council Local Plan Proposals Map.

Obj1 - Alternative Converter Station Compound

- 8.12 Discussions between NGET and DCC identified that the south-eastern part of the Jade Park employment site (EMP36) would be available for a temporary converter station construction compound for enabling works on the converter station site. It was anticipated that the NGET enabling works would be completed before this part of the Jade Park site would be developed. However, the programme of development for Jade Phase 2 changed and it became apparent that the south-eastern part of the Jade Park site would not be available to NGET at the time it was required. An alternative converter station enabling works compound was identified by DCC on land to the immediate east of the converter station site and is acceptable to NGET.
- 8.13 The alternative converter station enabling works compound is considered in more detail in Elliot Chandler's evidence.

Obj8

- 8.14 In respect of the potential alternative land uses, the site is not subject to any planning allocations for development in the development plan and is not subject to any planning application.

Obj9

- 8.15 In respect of the potential alternative land uses, the site is not subject to any planning allocations for development in the development plan and is not subject to any planning applications. No public rights of way over this land are anticipated to be permanently diverted.

Obj10

- 8.16 In respect of the potential alternative land uses, the site is not subject to any planning allocations for development in the development plan and is not subject to any planning applications

Obj11

- 8.17 In respect of the potential alternative land uses, the site is not subject to any planning allocations for development in the development plan and is not subject to any planning applications.
- 8.18 Where there were known proposals for development, NGET took this into account as part of its design of the cable route. This included taking account of the existence of the option for the national housebuilder. NGET engaged with the national housebuilder over an original

preferred cable corridor and agreed the location of an alternative cable corridor in order to ensure that the English Onshore Scheme was compatible with the national housebuilder's proposals. Those proposals have not come forward through a planning application, a development plan "call for sites", or a planning allocation.

Obj12

- 8.19 In respect of the potential alternative land uses, the site is not subject to any planning allocations for development in the development plan and is not subject to any planning applications

Obj13

- 8.20 In respect of the potential alternative land uses, the site is not subject to any planning allocations for development in the development plan and is not subject to any planning applications

Car Boot Sale

- 8.21 The landfall site is within the Car Boot Sale site and will temporarily adversely affect operation of that business. An alternative temporary car boot sale site has been identified on land immediately to the north of the existing site, which is in the same ownership as the land currently used for the business, which could be used during EOS construction works on the Car Boot Site. The proposed temporary change of use will require temporary planning permission from DCC. To this end NGET has agreed to underwrite the costs of the car boot sale business in undertaking best endeavours to secure the necessary temporary planning permission.

- 8.22 Matters relating to the Car Boot Site are considered in more detail in Elliot Chandler's evidence.

National Farmers Union

- 8.23 The NFU Statement of Case section 4.3 states that a letter was sent to me on 10 November 2022 highlighting the frustration over the lack of engagement by National Grid and the lack of detailed consultation with some landowners on how the proposed scheme will affect landholdings and businesses.

- 8.24 I have no record of having received a letter on 10 November 2022. I received a letter from Caroline Horn of George F White on behalf of Mr Gregson and Mr Davidson on 14 November 2022 via the SEGL1 project email address (attached as George F White Letter at Appendix B). The letter states that Mr Gregson and Mr Davidson have not received "proper" consultation as landowners affected by the Project and that NGET does not appear to believe that Mr Davidson's land is affected when plans of the cable route show the cable route crossing directly through the middle of Mr Davidson's land.

- 8.25 I responded by letter to Ms Horn on 23 November 2022 (attached as NGET Letter 1 at Appendix C) explaining that as an applicant for planning permission NGET was required to serve notice on any landowner or tenant whose land is within the red line boundary of the planning application. I explained that in the case of SEGL1 the planning application red line boundary did not include the AC and DC cabling works because these works are permitted development, as confirmed through Durham County Council's negative EIA Screening opinion of 25 March 2021. I explained that the permitted development works did not form

part of the planning application and therefore these elements were not included within the planning application redline boundary.

9. MITIGATION MEASURES

9.1 The outline planning permission has been granted subject to conditions which are summarised below.

Soil and Soil Management

9.2 Mitigation measures for soil and soil management are set out in the Outline Soil Management Plan (SMP). This sets out principles and procedures for good practice (embedded mitigation measures) and bespoke mitigation measures in soil handling, storage and reinstatement to be used for the EOS. The outline SMP describes the principals that the appointed Contractor will follow to minimise adverse effects on the nature and quality of the soil.

Ecology

9.3 NGET is committed to delivering a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of plus 10% in relation to the current status of the habitats within the planning application boundary. This has been secured by a section 106 agreement which forms part of the planning permission for the EOS.

Landscape and Visual Amenity

9.4 Careful site selection and design, including the use of existing woodland and topography to minimise visibility of the proposed structures have contributed to a reduction in potential visual effects.

9.5 The Outline Landscape Mitigation Plan identifies extensive landscape planting and earthwork mounds around the converter station and the substation that will screen views of these sites. The location and extent of the earthworks has been agreed with the DCC Landscape Officer

9.6 The EOS will also see the removal of two existing electricity pylons resulting in positive change from some locations, including Viewpoint 11: Coronation Square, South Hetton for which minor beneficial effects are anticipated.

9.7 The materials and colours used for the converter station and substation will seek to match those used on the Jade Park developments so that there is a consistent site-wide character.

Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

9.8 A geophysical survey has been completed on the EOS and has informed a Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation and Mitigation (WSI) which has been agreed with the DCC County Archaeologist and is a condition of the planning permission for the EOS.

Hydrology and Drainage

9.9 The EOS is located entirely within Flood Zone 1, which are areas deemed to have been shown to be at less than 0.1% chance of flooding in any year. A condition of the planning permission is that the converter station and substation sites will have sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to the principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Contaminated Land

- 9.10 A condition of the planning permission is for a land contamination scheme to be agreed with DCC and will include a Phase 2 site investigation and ground gas risk assessment. If the Phase 2 site investigation identifies any unacceptable risks, a Phase 3 remediation strategy will be prepared, which may include a programme of implementation and, where necessary, gas protection measures.

Noise and Lighting

- 9.11 A condition of the planning permission is that the rating level of noise emitted from the converter station development and the substation developments shall not exceed certain limits at certain times of the day at Woodlands Caravan Storage (Windemere Road). The agreed limits are 40dB (1hr) 07.00 - 23.00 and 35dB LAeq (15 minutes) 23.00 - 07.00. The measurements and assessment of noise levels will be made in accordance with British Standard 4142:2014.

Construction and operational access and traffic management

- 9.12 A condition of the planning permission is that a Construction Traffic Management Plan for the converter station and substation developments will specify lorry routes, parking and turning provision to be made on site for construction vehicles and operatives' vehicles, measures to prevent mud from being deposited on the highway, and a programme of construction.

Construction Works

- 9.13 A condition of the planning permission is that a Construction Environmental Management Plan for the converter station and the substation developments will provide:
- 9.13.1 details of the working times and working arrangements;
 - 9.13.2 details of a coal mining risk assessment and generic quantitative risk assessment and any appropriate remedial measures or construction methodologies.
 - 9.13.3 details of the management of public access, via public highways and public or permissive rights-of-way, during the works;
 - 9.13.4 a health and safety plan;
 - 9.13.5 a management plan for noise, vibration, dust, smoke and odour emissions;
 - 9.13.6 a detailed construction soil management plan, incorporating the provisions of the submitted 'Outline Construction Soil Management Plan';
 - 9.13.7 a soil and land drainage management plan;
 - 9.13.8 a site compound and working area drainage management plan;
 - 9.13.9 an artificial light emissions plan;
 - 9.13.10 a site waste management plan;
 - 9.13.11 a pollution prevention and emergency incident response plan;
 - 9.13.12 an ecological and biodiversity management plan, to be informed by updated pre-commencement surveys; and
 - 9.13.13 communications plan.

10. CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1 As my statement of evidence has demonstrated, there is planning policy support for the Project in terms of its accordance with Government policy contained in the adopted and draft National Policy Statements EN—1 and EN-5, the National Planning Policy Framework and the Development Plan, which includes the adopted County Durham Plan. The EOS will deliver nationally significant benefits in a way that has due regard to its surroundings and appropriately minimises and mitigates its impacts. The overarching need and benefits of the Project are clear and were awarded appropriate weight in the determination of the planning application.
- 10.2 The Project will contribute to maintaining essential infrastructure for electricity supply beyond the boundaries of the district and thus provide significant public benefits. In addition to ensuring security of supply in the immediate vicinity, the Project will form an integral part of the UK's wider electricity network and provide energy reliably whilst ensuring security of supply.
- 10.3 The primary consents for the Project are in place following the grants of the Planning Permission by Durham County Council and East Lothian District Council, and grants of marine licences by the Marine Management Organisation and Marine Scotland-Licensing Operations Team. In addition, NGET is able to make use of its permitted development rights as a statutory undertaker.
- 10.4 Through applying NGET's 'Approach to Options Appraisal' (**CD F.3**), an options appraisal process has been which demonstrates how NGET has been able to identify and balance technical, socio-economic, environmental and cost considerations to help inform decisions around alternative Project options. In complying with the approach established for sensitive siting of such infrastructure under the Horlock Rules (**CD F.2**) this has helped to identify the preferred site for the new NGET substation.
- 10.5 Appropriate consultation has been undertaken with DCC, statutory consultees and the wider community for the duration of the development of the EOS, while environmental reporting has led to the proposal of suitable mitigation measures.
- 10.6 Of the five converter station sites considered Site A was discounted to avoid sterilisation of the East Durham Link Road, Site B is not available, and Site C and Site D have potential adverse landscape and access effects and longer HVAC cable swathes than the other three sites. Site E is available, is nearby to Hawthorn Pit resulting in a shorter HVAC cable swathe, is afforded natural visual and landscape screening by Jade Park and Coop House Wood and allows the East Durham Link Road to be delivered.
- 10.7 The proposed 400kV substation is sited as close as reasonably possible to the existing Hawthorn Pit station which minimises the length of HVAC cable swathe between the two substations, which minimises potential environmental effects, and requires the least amount of work to re-align the 4TF overhead line to connect into the new 400kV substation.
- 10.8 In my view, there are no planning impediments to the delivery of the project.

11. DECLARATION

- 11.1 This statement of evidence has been prepared and provided for this inquiry and given in accordance with the guidance of the Royal Town Planning Institute. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

Hugh Smith

5 September 2023

Appendix A – Community Engagement Report

Appendix B – George.F.White letter

Appendix C – NGET letter

APPENDIX A

Scotland to England Green Link - SEGL1

Community Engagement Report



nationalgrid

Executive summary

This community engagement report has been developed by National Grid, following the completion of a public consultation and public information exhibition and events (PIEEs) for our proposed Scotland to England Green Link (SEGL1) project.

SEGL1 is a High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) electricity 'superhighway' from the Torness area, in East Lothian, to Hawthorn Pit, between South Hetton and Murton, in County Durham.

This report details the project's engagement with local communities and stakeholders prior to the submission of an outline planning application to Durham County Council. This engagement comprised two main phases: a public consultation in May and June 2021 and PIEEs in February 2022.

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National Grid's SEGL1

The UK is a world leader in offshore wind energy and its target of becoming net-zero in all greenhouse gases by 2050 for England and Wales and 2045 for Scotland is now enshrined in law. In addition, the Government has shown a clear commitment to developing offshore wind at scale. The recent Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and Energy White Paper set a target of delivering 40GW of wind energy by 2030; enough to power every home in the UK.

As the country transitions away from fossil fuels and looks to become less dependent on foreign energy, there will be a greater need for domestically produced green electricity.

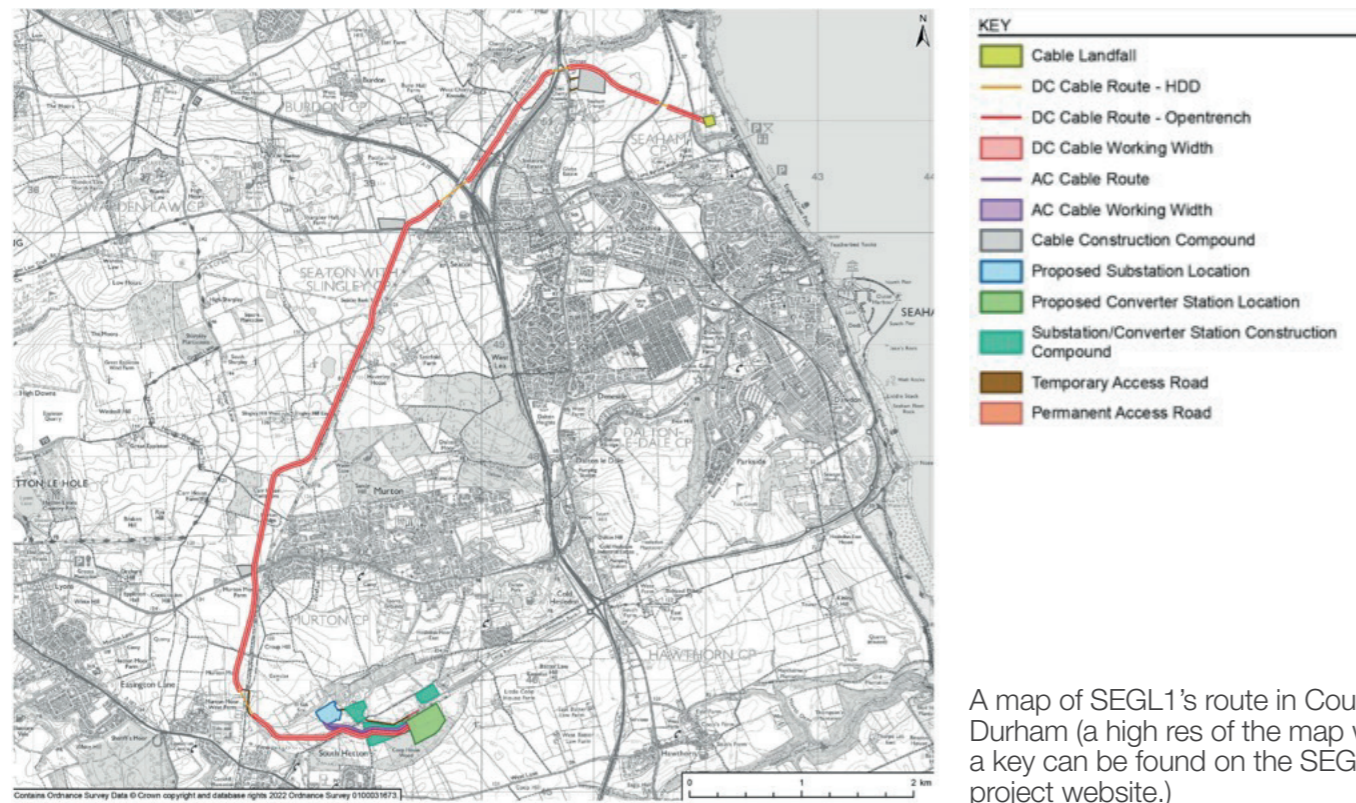
Network reinforcements are required to help bring Scotland's vast reserves of renewable energy to millions of homes across the rest of the UK. As such, we're proposing the construction of two new HVDC Links; one from Torness, in East Lothian, to Hawthorn Pit in County Durham and another from Peterhead in Aberdeenshire to Drax in North Yorkshire.

These electricity 'superhighways', with buried cables under the North Sea, will transport renewable energy over the long distances from Scotland in an optimum way, whilst creating minimal disruption. The shorter delivery program also maximises benefits to the consumer.

For SEGL1, the link will come ashore just north of Seaham in County Durham and connect to the national grid at Hawthorn Pit, in between the villages of South Hetton and Murton. After making landfall, the SEGL1 cable will run underground for 10km to a new converter station and new substation near our existing infrastructure at Hawthorn Pit. If approved, the project intends on beginning construction on SEGL1 in 2024 and completing the works in 2027.

As part of the planning application for these projects we consulted and engaged with local communities to explain what we're proposing and get their feedback, as well as sharing more detailed plans during the PIEEs. For SEGL1's public consultation, and subsequent PIEEs, we consulted with landowners, residents and stakeholders on three fundamental components of the project:

- the construction of a new converter station and substation at Hawthorn Pit
- the route of the cables from the landfall point north of Seaham to the new converter station and substation
- the anticipated impact to local communities and the environment.



A map of SEGL1's route in County Durham (a high res of the map with a key can be found on the SEGL1 project website.)

Consultation plan

We're committed to engaging with all communities in which our works take place, and we take great pride in our legacy of thorough public consultations. To ensure that our plans take account of the views of local communities, we delivered a comprehensive pre-application consultation to gauge local residents' and stakeholders' views on the proposed project, with feedback helping to shape the development of SEGL1.

The pre-application community engagement took place in two phases, with the first being a public consultation that took place between Monday 24 May and Friday 18 June 2021, followed by PIEEs between Monday 7 February and Saturday 19 February 2022. In between these dates, the project remained in listening mode and responded to enquiries from consultees.

In the public consultation, the project team presented its proposals and received comments and feedback on them. This feedback is explored in detail on pages 19 to 28.

The objective of the subsequent PIEEs was to brief residents, community groups and stakeholders on the plans, which had developed since the public consultation, ahead of the submission of the planning application, as well as answer any questions. It was not to take further feedback, although questions and comments by participants were collated (as outlined on pages 29 and 30) and shared with the SEGL1 team. We ensured that it was clear in the PIEEs materials and to event attendees that further feedback on SEGL1 can be made via Durham County Council's planning portal during the formal planning consultation once the application is made.

In addition to the above phases, the project also 'soft launched' the scheme at the start of 2021, when relevant landowners were approached by the project's lands team to organise surveys. This marked the first direct contact the project had with the local community. At the same time, we proactively introduced SEGL1 to the wider community and stakeholders by issuing a newsletter to landowners, issuing letters to stakeholders, opening a dedicated project 0800 number and email address, and launching the project website. This ensured that we effectively communicated the rationale and potential impact of the project from the outset and laid the groundwork for constructive engagement during the consultation.

We advertised the public consultation and PIEEs extensively and by a variety of methods, including:

- print advertising in two local newspapers with a combined reach of 44,136 people (public consultation only)
- a press release which was covered by our priority media outlet, The Northern Echo (public consultation only)
- targeted social media advertising that reached 25,600 people during the public consultation and 105,160 people during the PIEEs
- two hardcopy newsletters that were posted to 3,452 properties in close proximity to the project
- two letters were also sent to 59 local councillors and hard-to-reach groups informing them of the public consultation and PIEEs.



Results of the public consultation

Due to government restrictions that were in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the public consultation was held online via a dedicated website that displayed information about the proposed scheme and encouraged people to share their views on it.

The overview of the public consultation in figures, focussing on feedback (feedback forms, email and telephone enquiries, stakeholder letters and briefings, digital consultation sessions), are below.

- **Unique page views of website:** 1,559
- **Total responses to the consultation:** 31
- **Response rate:** 2%
- **Support:** 4 (13% of responses)
- **Oppose:** 8 (26% of responses)
- **Neutral:** 19 (61% of responses)
- **Overall average sentiment:** neutral/slightly negative

This report aims to set out the feedback received from throughout the consultation process. Overall, the volume of website visitors and the nature of the responses indicates that the project was successful in reaching members of the community and informing them of the consultation and the project's aims. The response rate of those that visited the website was 2%, indicating that most people who viewed the information project did not feel strongly enough about it to leave feedback.

Results of the public information exhibition and events

Following the emergence of the Omicron variant in December 2021 and the high potential for new restrictions in the proceeding months, we took the difficult decision to pursue virtual-only PIEEs, instead of a blend of the in-person and virtual exhibitions and events that had been previously planned. The public and stakeholders were given the same amount of time to engage with the project as was planned for the non-restricted events. Provisions were made for those without access to the internet.

The overview of the PIEEs in figures are below.

- **Unique page views of website:** 2,350 (791 more than the public consultation)
- **Downloads of the PDF digital exhibition boards:** 113
- **Hours of online events:** 17
- **Public participants in online events:** 9

Of the feedback that was received, the majority sentiment was neutral. Broadly, residents, local government and statutory bodies were supportive of the aims of the project. However, they did have queries and concerns about its location and impact, particularly on views of the area, the environment and whether development would affect public right of ways.

Of the 31 responses received, three (approx. 10% of total responses) were from local landowners regarding their own land interests and subsequently passed to the project team.

The project team held several briefings with local councils to explain the aims and proposed outcomes of the project. Here, the team did encounter some negative feedback, notably from members of the public who attended the in-person Seaham Town Council meeting and were openly unsupportive of the project. A critical question was raised during this meeting regarding whether National Grid had considered an alternative route for the cable along the 'old mineral line' south of Seaham.

Of the 10 feedback forms completed online, six were from residents of the local area. Their feedback indicated that their primary concern with the project was how it would impact the local landscape and views.

2. Engagement through the COVID-19 pandemic

Government guidance about in-person meetings and indoor events shifted several times throughout the period that the public consultation and PIEEs took place. During the public consultation there were restrictions on public gatherings, and there was uncertainty around the impact of the rapid emergence of the Omicron variant when in the planning phase of the PIEEs. Nevertheless, the project's priority was to ensure that as many people as possible could take part in the consultation and PIEEs.

With impacts of the pandemic in mind, following guidance from the Durham County Council's Statement of Community Involvement and the Government's advice on planning consultations during COVID-19, we decided to run a digital-first public consultation and PIEEs, albeit with in-person briefings with councillors and other stakeholders when safe and appropriate.

The project team ensured that there was support for any individuals who had any problems with being able to view information and join events online. Furthermore, the project team shared its plans for an online consultation with the Council's planning officers.

County Durham Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (4.0 Your involvement in the development management process section)

The Statement of Community Involvement was implemented by Durham County Council in 2020, and it was reviewed and updated in light of COVID-19. The key points from the SCI are outlined below (Section 4.7 - Pre-application Community Involvement):

The role of the developer in facilitating your involvement prior to submitting planning applications

4.35 We encourage the developers to engage with the local community in developing their proposals and ahead of submission of a planning application. It is now also a mandatory requirement for certain developments (set out under Section 122 of the Localism Act) to undertake pre-application community consultation. Upon request we will discuss the need and scope of any required community engagement exercise with the prospective developer. This will ensure that the views of all stakeholders, including statutory organisations, town and parish councils, neighbourhood forums, Area Action Partnerships, residents' associations, and other local interested parties are sought at an early stage to ensure their views are known.

4.36 We may refuse to validate planning applications which are submitted without any mandatory pre-application consultation having been undertaken.

4.37 In cases where mandatory consultation is required the planning application should be accompanied by a consultation statement setting out the community engagement undertaken and including:

- a description of the publicity, consultation and engagement methods used and the reasons for their use
- a description of the proposals that were the subject of community consultation
- an assessment of the inclusiveness of the approach
- a summary of the comments received, and issues raised
- the developers' response to the issues raised and how they have been addressed, or alternatively reasons for not addressing them
- a description of how the proposal has changed as a result of public consultation where applicable
- an appendix providing copies of all written comments.

4.38 It is also recommended that the developers forward a copy of the consultation statement to the main organisations and groups involved in the consultation process and advise all respondents where a copy of the consultation statement can be examined.

Guidance from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The Government has committed to increasing the ability of local communities to influence planning decisions and future development in their areas. The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) sets out the Government’s commitment to involve all interested parties in planning. National Grid ensured that it followed all necessary aspects of this framework, specifically:

- paragraph 16: “Plans should ... be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees”
- paragraph 39: “Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”

Government advice on consultations during COVID-19

Government guidance around consultation during COVID-19 was adhered to at every stage of the consultation process. In particular, regarding the temporary changes to the publicity requirements for certain planning applications that have been introduced through the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure, Listed Buildings and Environmental Impact Assessment) (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. These changes were made to support timely decision-making, and avoid delays to development as a result of the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic, while maintaining public participation in the decision-making process:

- the temporary publicity requirements still require local planning authorities (and in the case of certain applications for EIA development, applicants or recipients of further information) to publicise planning applications so that those with an interest can make representations and effectively participate in the decision-making process. Consultation, transparency, and community engagement are key to effective decision-making in local planning authorities
- the temporary changes give local planning authorities greater flexibility in how they publicise certain planning applications during the response to Coronavirus
- however, if the authority is not able to comply with a requirement which applies to that application because it is not reasonably practicable for reasons connected to the effects of Coronavirus, including restrictions on movement, the authority must take reasonable steps to inform any persons who are likely to have an interest in the application of the website where notice of the application can be found. Those steps may include use of social media and communication by electronic means and must be proportionate to the scale and impact of the development.

3. Promotion of the public consultation and PIEEs

Given the pandemic and guidance from local and national government, the public consultation and PIEEs took place virtually on the project’s dedicated website nationalgrid.com/segl1

As with any consultation, it was critically important to ensure that landowners, residents, stakeholders and community groups were aware of the plans and the upcoming public consultation and PIEEs in good time, particularly those harder to reach audiences. As such, information about the plans was shared via a variety of mediums to reach as many people as possible.

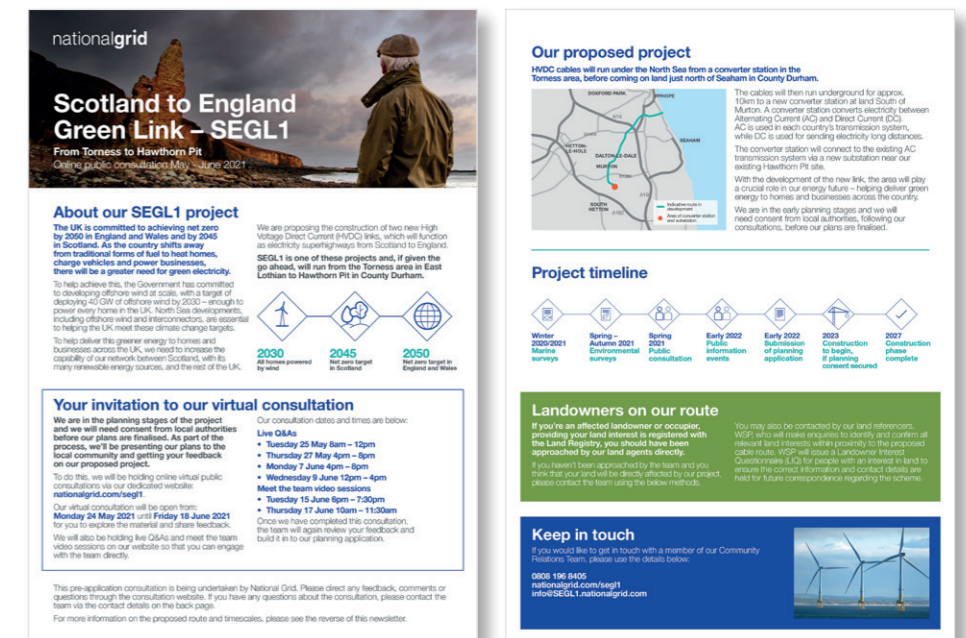
Newsletter mailouts

To advertise the public consultation and PIEEs to communities along the proposed project route, we distributed two separate, public consultation and PIEEs specific, hardcopy newsletters providing details of its proposal and how to take part in the public consultation and PIEEs.

For the public consultation, the project team designed and issued a two-page newsletter. A four-page newsletter, containing more detailed information on the project, was issued for the PIEEs. These newsletters can be seen on the next page.

In total, 3,452 properties received both newsletters. The areas targeted for the newsletters were settlements closest to the proposed converter station and substation, as well as those closest to the cable route. The newsletter was distributed a week in advance of the consultation launching. These settlements included: Murton Moor, North Seaham, South Hetton, Hetton-le-Hole and Seaton, as well as individual dwellings, such as farms. In addition, the project’s lands team also sent the newsletters to directly impacted local landowners they were engaging with.

As per National Grid best-practice, we purposely used plain English copy to make the content of our public consultation and PIEEs as accessible as possible. For anyone who was unable to access the online public consultation and PIEEs, the newsletter provided contact details for the project team who were available to support them with either guidance on how to access the website or provide hard copies of materials through the post.



The two-page newsletter for the public consultation



Scotland to England Green Link - SEGL1

Torness to Hawthorn Pit
Public information sessions and events - February 2022

About our SEGL1 project
As the UK shifts away from traditional forms of fuel to heat homes, charge vehicles, and power businesses, there will be greater need for green electricity throughout the country.

To help deliver the green energy we need across the UK, we are proposing the construction of two new High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) links, which will function as electricity superhighways from Scotland to England. SEGL1 is one of these projects and, if approved, it will run from the Torness area in East Lothian to Hawthorn Pit in County Durham.

We are hosting an online public information exhibition on our project website (details below), to give you the opportunity to learn more about SEGL1, find out how public consultation feedback has been taken on board, and ask our project team questions. The exhibition and events will take place from Monday 7 February to Saturday 19 February, and the exhibition will remain online until the submission of the planning application to Durham County Council in spring 2022.

Join our online public information events
Our online events and one-to-one calls are open to everyone and are easy to join.

Live chat sessions
We are holding live chat sessions on our SEGL1 website, with members of the project team who can answer your questions in real time via a chat messenger. There is no need to pre-register for the live chat sessions.

- 10am - 2pm Tuesday 8 February
- 2pm - 5pm Thursday 10 February
- 11am - 5pm Saturday 19 February

Webinar
We are holding an online webinar on the SEGL1 website on the project from 6:30pm - 7:30pm on Wednesday 16 February. This will include a presentation on the project, followed by a Q&A session with the SEGL1 project team.

One-to-one calls
If you would like a one-to-one telephone or video call with a member of the project team, please call or email our community relations team, using the below contact details.

Our community relations team will work with you to arrange a call with a relevant member of the project team at a suitable time. The one-to-one calls will take place between 9am - 5pm, Monday 7 February to Saturday 19 February. This will include a presentation on the project, followed by a Q&A session with the SEGL1 project team.

Website: nationalgrid.com/seg1
Email: info@seg1.nationalgrid.com
Phone: 0800 196 405

National Grid | February 2022 | Scotland to England Green Link - SEGL1

About our SEGL1 public information exhibition and online events

Our public information exhibition follows on from our public consultation, held in spring 2021, where we took feedback on our proposals from landowners, residents, organisations and local elected members.

The purpose of our public information events is to show people how our plans have evolved and answer any questions they have at this stage. There will be further opportunity to give formal feedback during the planning application process after we have submitted our outline planning application to Durham County Council and the statutory period of consultation opens. During this time, you will be able to comment on the planning application via the Council's planning portal.

The Council will then decide whether to approve our proposed project.

The impact of COVID-19 on our events
Given the circumstances there have been some changes around COVID-19 and the remaining live sessions. We will be holding a digital public information exhibition and events. If you have any questions, please visit our website: www.nationalgrid.com/seg1

About our proposal

The UK is committed to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and as the country moves away from historical fuel sources like coal and oil to heat homes, and power vehicles and businesses, we will need more renewable power to green electricity.

The construction of SEGL1 and its sister project SEGL2, will create two electrical High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) links from Scotland to England.

These links will increase the capacity of our network between Scotland, with its many renewable energy sources, and the rest of the UK.

If approved, SEGL1 will run from the Torness area in East Lothian to Hawthorn Pit between Murton and South Hetton in County Durham, via the North Sea. If approved, SEGL2 will run from Peterhead in Aberdeenshire to Drax in North Yorkshire.

Both SEGL1 and SEGL2 are essential to meet the UK's net-zero commitments and deliver a cleaner, greener future.

What we plan to build

We are proposing to build a new converter station in the field south of Jade Business Park and a new substation next to our existing substation at Hawthorn Pit.

We also propose to install a 15km underground cable from the coastline just north of Seaham to the new converter station and substation at Hawthorn Pit, which are critical components of our project. The converter station will convert the UK's AC electricity and connect it to the new substation which will enable it to be transmitted around the country.

This is an illustrative image of what our proposed converter station could look like. Further images will be available on our website from 7 February as part of our public exhibition.

Scotland to England Green Link - SEGL1 | February 2022 | National Grid

Reducing the impacts of the converter station and substation

During our consultation last spring, we were asked about the impacts of the converter station and substation. We take great care to minimise the impact of our work, both for local communities and the environment. Below we set out some of our proposed mitigation measures.

- The proposed location for the converter station is south of Jade Business Park and to woodland. The new substation is proposed alongside the existing substation. These locations have been chosen to integrate both into the landscape.
- Our project team is developing a landscape restoration that incorporates new public open space, replacement habitats and biodiversity net gain of at least 10%, landscape planting, and public rights of way.
- We propose to remove three existing pylons and replace them with a single pylon to connect the new substation to the existing overhead line.

Visit our website after 7 February to view visuals of what the converter station and substation could look like. Alternatively, please get in touch to request printed materials.

Our proposed route


Our cable will come ashore just north of Seaham in County Durham and will travel underground for around 15km to Hawthorn Pit.

Our cable route on land

During our consultation last spring, some people suggested that making landfall at Nones Point and following the old mineral line might be a better route for our underground cables. We have taken another look and after a further comprehensive review, our original route remains our preferred option for the following reasons:

- Following the mineral line in its entirety would cause a great deal of disruption to Seaham including its historic residents' homes, businesses, compared to the original route.
- Due to the nature of the coasted around Nones Point we can't think of a way to protect the cable by burial meaning that we would need to use alternative methods that may create obstacles to vessels and disturb both operations at the port and potentially marine habitats.
- Nones Point has very complex topography and geology, for example, its height would present significant challenges and increase both risk when installing the cable and during its lifetime.
- Making landfall at Nones Point would increase the length of the offshore portion of the cable by 5km, so overall there wouldn't be a significant reduction in cable length.

Therefore, we consider that our proposed route, from north of Seaham to Hawthorn Pit, strikes the right balance between onshore and offshore environmental considerations, minimising impacts on residents and helping us meet our responsibility to provide affordable electricity infrastructure.



Please visit our project website after 7 February to view more detailed maps of our proposed route. Alternatively, please get in touch to request printed materials.

Scotland to England Green Link - SEGL1 | February 2022 | National Grid

When will the work happen?

If approved, construction is expected to begin in 2024 and finish in 2027.

We held our public consultation in spring 2021 and we will soon be holding our public information exhibition and events.

Early 2022 Public information events
Spring 2022 Submission of planning application
2024 Construction to begin, if planning permission is granted
2027 Construction phase complete

Being a good neighbour

Due to the very nature of what we do - connecting people to the energy we all use - National Grid is at the heart of communities.

We are members of the Considerate Constructors Scheme, and abide by the Code of Considerate Practice, which encourages best practice approaches above and beyond statutory requirements. We are committed to keeping disruption to a minimum and will proactively share information with affected communities through our SEGL1 website.

We know that our responsibility as a business goes beyond safely building new energy infrastructure to ensure a cleaner, safer and affordable future. We want to make a lasting positive impact where we build our projects to help those areas and communities thrive and to support a sustainable future.

Here are some of the ways we're planning to do that through this project:

- Improving biodiversity**
When operating in an area, charities and community groups can apply for funding of up to £25,000 for projects that meet local community needs by providing a range of social, economic and environmental benefits.
- Community Grant Programme**
When operating in an area, charities and community groups can apply for funding of up to £25,000 for projects that meet local community needs by providing a range of social, economic and environmental benefits.

Landowners on our route

If you're an affected landowner or occupier, you should have been contacted by our land team, and we apologise if you haven't been approached by the team and you think that your land has been affected. If you have any questions, please contact Bell Ingram on 01845 522095.

Bell Ingram will be in touch with all affected landowners and occupiers shortly to share the project's latest proposals and commercial more detailed discussions regarding the project.

Keep in touch

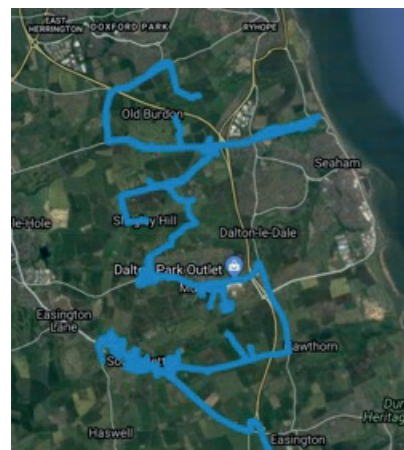
If you would like to get in touch with a member of our Community Relations team, please use the details below:

0800 196 405
nationalgrid.com/seg1
info@seg1.nationalgrid.com

See our digital exhibition on our website for more detail - nationalgrid.com/seg1



The four-page newsletter for the PIEEs



To ensure that every targeted address received the two newsletters, the project used satellite tracking software to monitor their delivery. The map to the left is from the tracking report the project created to check where the newsletters were delivered.

Letter and briefing for stakeholders

To promote the public consultation and PIEEs, we contacted local parish councils and MPs directly via email and reached out to planning officers at Durham County Council to make them aware that we were approaching members.

Every MP, ward councillor and parish council whose area would be directly impacted by the project was contacted and offered a briefing on the project in advance of the public consultation and PIEEs. Separately, we contacted any stakeholder whose electoral area was within 5km of the converter station and the cable route introducing the project and informing them of the public consultation.

To ensure wider engagement, the project also contacted local hard-to-reach organisations informing them of the consultations and offering briefings, these included Age UK, The Box Youth and Community Project, The Shaw Trust Enterprise, East Durham Trust, Blind Life in Durham and Durham Carers.

Stakeholder	Number of stakeholder (each sent a letter for public consultation and PIEE)
Parish Councils	14
Local Councillors	35
MPs	3
Hard-to-reach groups	7
Total	59

Of the stakeholders who received a briefing offer for the public consultation, the following accepted our offer and were briefed separately:

- Local Durham County Ward Councillors and portfolio holder for neighbourhoods and climate change
- Seaham Town Council
- South Hetton Parish Council
- Murton Parish Council.

Of the stakeholders who received a briefing offer for the PIEEs, the following accepted our offer:

- Seaham Town Council
- Seaton with Slingley Parish Council.

Seaham Town Council were briefed separately, and a briefing has been arranged for Seaton with Slingley Parish Council in mid-May.

Media

The project utilised both press releases and advertising to publicise the public consultation in the media. Ahead of it beginning, a press release introducing the project and announcing the public consultation was sent to local and energy trade media, with one paper, the Northern Echo, covering the news and reaching an estimated total readership of 15,200.

The press release included an explanation of the project, the link to the consultation website and the dates and times for live chat sessions. In addition, the project also advertised the details of the consultation on Monday 17 May and again on Friday 21 May in two local print newspapers: the Northern Echo and the Sunderland Echo. Together, these outlets have an estimated reach of 44,136 people and these adverts helped ensure that the project reached residents who are not on social media but who consume traditional print media.

For the PIEEs, we decided to concentrate resources on social media advertising and the mailout of a four-page hardcopy newsletter rather than advertise again via local newspapers. This decision was reached due to the high engagement with the public consultation social media advert and newsletter from a wide range of people living in communities immediately next to the project area.



The Scotland to England Green Link - SEGL1 - is a proposed project by National Grid that will help to deliver greener energy to homes and businesses across the UK.

If approved, the project will increase the capacity of our network between Scotland, with its many renewable energy sources, and the rest of the country, helping the country meet its net zero ambitions. To do this, we are proposing the construction of a new High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) link - an electrical superhighway - between the Torness area in East Lothian and Hawthorn Pit in County Durham, travelling most of its way under the North Sea.

We'll be holding an online public consultation on the project from **Monday 29 March 2021 to Friday 23 April 2021**, where we will share our plans and ask for your feedback. Below are dates and times for our live sessions:

Date	Time	Format
Tuesday 30 March	08:00 - 12:00	Live Q&A session
Wednesday 31 March	16:00 - 20:00	Live Q&A session
Monday 12 April	08:00 - 09:30	Video drop-in session
Wednesday 14 April	15:00 - 16:30	Video drop-in session
Monday 19 April	18:00 - 19:30	Video drop-in session
Wednesday 21 April	10:00 - 11:30	Video drop-in session

Please register in advance for our video drop-in sessions via our website.

To find out more, attend our digital exhibition and live sessions, and share your feedback, please visit us at our website: Nationalgrid.com/seg1

Newspaper advert for the public consultation

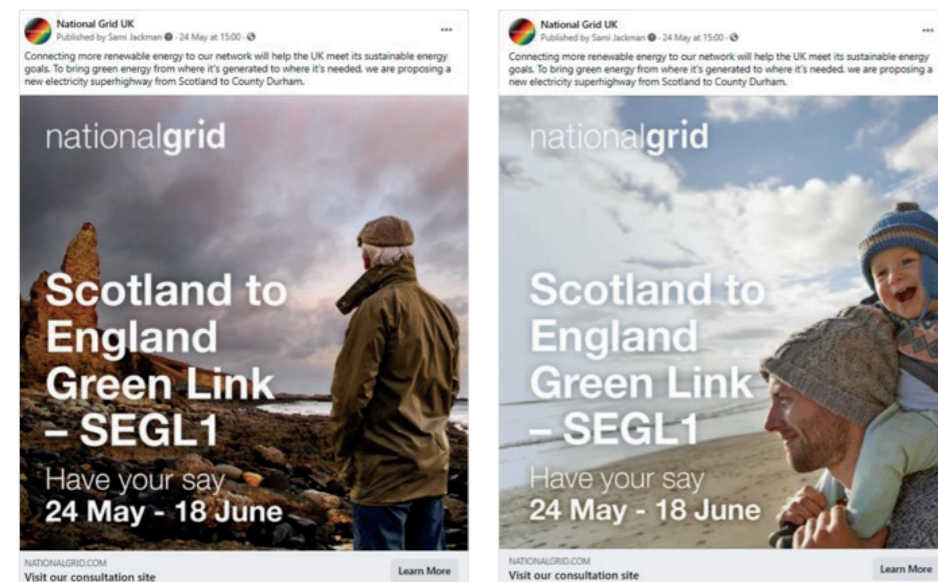
Social media advertising

In addition to traditional promotion methods, the project utilised social media to drive people to the SEGL1 public consultation and PIEEs websites. Given the high levels of its consumption by the local population, and the digital nature of our public consultation, social media was a critical tool at our disposal. This was evidenced by the fact that nearly 45% of respondents to the feedback forms from the public consultation found out about the consultation via our social media advertising.

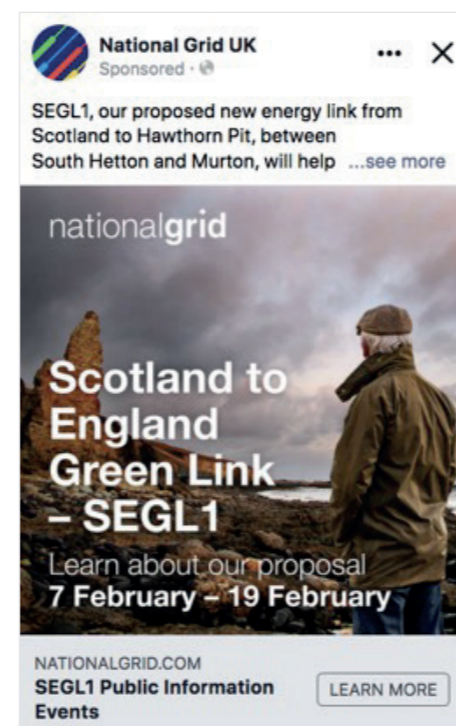
Facebook was selected as the most suitable social media platform for advertising due to its use among a wide range of demographics and its increasing use as a virtual village community noticeboard by online community groups. Advertising via Instagram was also considered, but after finding that this performed poorly for the SEGL2 project, we opted to focus solely on Facebook.

For the public consultation, the activity on Facebook consisted of publishing 10 geo-targeted recurring Facebook adverts from National Grid over a 5-week period. In total, the adverts generated a reach of nearly 25,600. The Facebook ads resulted in 1,042 click throughs to the public consultation website.

For the PIEEs, the activity on Facebook consisted of publishing one geo-targeted recurring Facebook advert from the project over a 3-week period. In total, the advert generated a reach of 105,160 and resulted in 3,246 click throughs to the PIEE website. This increase in engagement, when compared to the public consultation advertising, has been attributed to more local interest in SEGL1 and the project team's refinement of the advertising strategy.



Examples of public consultation Facebook adverts



The PIEE Facebook advert

4. Public consultation engagement process

Throughout planning the public consultation, the project looked to ensure everyone who wanted to provide feedback could do so without any difficulties. We designed the website to have a detailed, yet user-friendly, feedback form, with a printable version also available, that asked a series of questions for participants to provide their views. It also had a dedicated email address and telephone number that anyone could use to contact the project team.

Although the public consultation was held online, the project did not want this to exclude anyone, so ensured through the community newsletter, press releases and adverts that it made it clear that anyone who could not take part online was able to participate by getting in touch with our community relations team to arrange for a consultation pack to be sent to them via mail.

Through the website we also held four live chat sessions where anyone could speak directly to the team via an easy-to-use live chat function. The project also held Meet the Team video drop-in sessions, which allowed consultees to speak directly with a member of the project team. Overall, there were 19 hours of engagement sessions available to the public.

Across the different mediums, the project had the following number of participants between Monday 24 May and Friday 18 June 2021:

Unique page views*	1,559
Total responses from individual consultees (including elected members and other organisations, excluding emails from councillors arranging a briefing)	31
Total hours of engagement sessions run by project team	19
Response breakdown	
Responses to the online feedback	10
Email enquiries received	4
Letters received	2
Meet the Team Drop-in sessions	1 (consequently called by project team afterwards)
Live chat participants	8
Telephone enquiries received	2
Requests for help as no access to internet	0
Stakeholder organisation briefings	4 (South Hetton PC, Murton PC, Seaham TC and Durham County Council)

*Unique page views indicate the number of unique users that have viewed a web page and counts only one visit per unique user account.

To ensure complete accessibility for all residents, we offered support to anyone who was unable to access the digital consultation. Details were included the newsletter, which was distributed to all landowners being liaised with for surveys by the project's lands team and those in villages most impacted by the project (3,452 properties in total).

Digital exhibition, live chat and meet the team video session

To replicate the experience of attending a physical consultation event, the project developed a digital exhibition (open for the duration of the consultation), that was complemented by the live chat function at certain times and dates. This allowed participants to review the digital exhibition boards and ask questions to the project team in a similar way to how they could at a physical event. Any questions that we were unable to answer on the chat were answered via email following the live chat session.



The public consultation digital exhibition

To ensure that the live chat feature was accessible to as many people as possible, the project held the live sessions over four four-hour timeslots across four days at different times. In total, eight consultees took part in the live chat sessions, which took place on:

- **Tuesday 25 May 08:00 – 12:00**
- **Thursday 27 May 16:00 – 20:00**
- **Monday 7 June 16:00 – 20:00**
- **Wednesday 9 June 12:00 – 16:00**

The project also held meet the team video drop-in sessions, where consultees had the opportunity to speak to a member of the team directly. Consultees could book a half hour session in advance at select times on Tuesday 15 June or Thursday 17 June.

In total, 13 individuals registered for a meet the team session, with one attending. Five consultees who registered for the sessions were landowners with specific questions for the project's lands team. Due to the potential sensitive and complex nature of these discussions, the community relations team arranged for the lands team to contact them directly.

The individuals who weren't landowners and didn't attend the video sessions were followed up with via email and telephone to answer any of their questions.

Briefings with stakeholders

Durham County Council - Durham Local Council Planning officers and Durham local councillors attended a briefing on 24 May 2021. These councillors included:

- Cllr. David Hall - Sherburn
- Cllr. Chris Hood - South Hetton, Haswell & Shotton Colliery
- Cllr. Louise Fenwick - Peterlee West.

Seaham Town Council – An initial video briefing to Seaham Town Council's Planning Committee took place 8 June 2021 and an in-person briefing was subsequently arranged.

South Hetton Parish Council – An in-person briefing with South Hetton Parish Council took place in person on 14 June 2021.

Durham County Council – A second briefing with Durham Council took place on 17 June 2021, via video call. The following councillors were in attendance:

- Mark Wilkes - Framwellgate and Newton Hall, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change

Durham County Council – A third briefing with Durham County Council took place on 22 June 2021, via video call. The following councillors were in attendance:

- Cllr. Julie Griffiths - Murton
- Cllr. Robert Adcock-Forster – Murton
- Cllr. David McKenna – Seaham.

Seaham Town Council – The project team presented the proposals, in-person, at the Environment and Planning committee on 6 July 2021.

Murton Parish Council – An in-person briefing with Murton Parish Council took place on 7 July 2021.



5. PIEE engagement process

The engagement process for the PIEEs mirrored that of the proceeding public consultation, although the focus of that phase was to show more detailed project plans and answer questions from communities and stakeholders. The exhibition went live on the PIEE website on Monday 7 February 2022, with online events taking place over a two-week period, from Monday 7 February to Sunday 20 February 2022.

Those people with no access to the internet were encouraged to call the 0800 line to arrange for their questions to be answered, the mailing out of hard copies of the materials (such as the newsletter if they are outside the mailout zone) or to arrange a one-to-one call with the project team.

The website and digital exhibition remain live following the completion of the PIEEs, albeit in a reworded form to reflect the end of the two-week period. Similarly, the 0800 number and project email address remain open and those contacting the project will receive a response.

Unique page views*	2,350
Participant breakdown	
Live chat session participants	3 (129 people were viewing website materials during live chat sessions)
Webinar participants	6 (12 people signed up to attend)
Participants raising questions (individuals and organisations)	6
One-on-one calls requested	0
Total hours of engagement sessions run by project team	17
Email enquiries received	0
Letters received	0
Telephone enquiries received	0
Requests for help as no access to internet	0
Stakeholder organisation briefings	1 - Seaham Town Council (a briefing with Seaton with Slingley Parish Council has been arranged for mid-May)

*Unique page views indicate the number of unique users that have viewed a web page and counts only one visit per unique user account.

Digital exhibition, live chat sessions, webinar and one-to-one calls

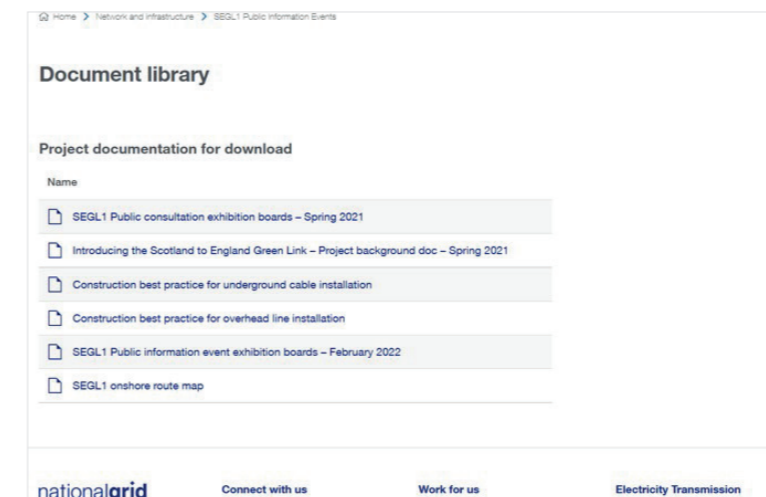
Similar to the public consultations, the project replicated the experience of attending physical events through the hosting of a digital exhibition, project document library, live chat sessions and a webinar on the project's dedicated website, as well as a dedicated page for landowners. Altogether, there were 17 hours of engagement sessions open to people interested in the project.

The PIEE website saw 2,350 unique page views, an increase of 791 people when compared with the public consultation. This increase can be attributed to wider knowledge of the project in the local area and our focused social media campaign.

We ensured that the rationale for the public information events was communicated prominently and made it clear that any formal feedback should be directed at Durham City Council's planning portals when the formal consultation stage begins following the submission of the outline planning application.



The PIEE digital exhibition



The PIEE project document library

To ensure that the live chat feature was accessible to as many people as possible, the project held the live sessions over two six-hour timeslots and one four-hour timeslot across three days at different times, including the weekend. In total, three participants actively engaged with the project team during live chat sessions, although 129 people actively viewed the digital exhibition during sessions. The sessions took place on:

- **Tuesday 8 February 10:00 – 14:00**
- **Thursday 10 February 14:00 – 20:00**
- **Saturday 19 February 11:00 – 17:00**

In addition to live chat sessions, on Wednesday 16 February, 18:30 – 19:30, the project held a webinar that included a presentation on the project and addressed points that were raised in the public consultation (see pages 19 to 28 for more detail). People were required to pre-register to attend via a simple form on the website and they were able to ask the project team questions via a chat function, with us answering via video call. In total, 12 people registered to attend the SEGL1 webinar, with six attending on the evening. Their questions and comments are captured on pages 29 and 30.

In addition to the webinar and the live chat sessions, we offered one-to-one calls with a range of specialists in the project team (engineering, lands, marine consents, etc). These ad-hoc sessions catered for those people who are either unable (or unwilling) to take part in the online sessions or would have liked to speak in confidence with a member or members of the project team. These calls could have taken place over Microsoft Teams or telephone. There was no interest from the public or stakeholders.



Telephone and email engagement

Over the course of the consultation, the project received no enquiries via the project’s freephone number and project email.

Briefings with stakeholders

Seaham Town Council – The project team presented the proposals, in-person, at the Environment and Planning committee on 8 March 2022.

Seaton and Slingley Parish Council – An in-person briefing with the Parish Council is scheduled for mid-May.

6. Feedback from the public consultation

The objective of the public consultation phase was to present SEGL1 to communities and stakeholders and request feedback on the project. This feedback is presented below.

All consultees who submitted feedback or questions received a response from the project team.

In contrast, the objective of the PIEEs was to brief residents, community groups and stakeholders, on the content of the planning applications, as well as answer any questions. However, topics of interest raised in the PIEEs are outlined in the next chapter.

Telephone and email

In summary, the project received six telephone and email enquires over the course of the public consultation period. The two telephone enquiries were received from Seaham Town Council and a landowner, both looking to participate in the consultation events. Consequently, a one-to-one briefing was set up with a councillor and a video-drop-in session with a landowner.

The project received emails from a resident and landowner who wanted to participate in the consultation events or had already participated in an event and followed up with detailed questions on the proposals. A local councillor enquired about the proposals on behalf of their residents. We also received a query from a landowner, concerned about the impact the development would have on their views and the surrounding area. Once callers were identified as a landowner, their contact details were shared with the project’s lands team to handle directly.

Feedback forms

The feedback below was collated via an easy to follow and clearly signposted survey form on the consultation website and was received over the consultation period. In the feedback form, consultees were asked a number of questions relating to their views on the project. The form consisted of a set of yes/no questions, an issues league table and sections for freeform writing. Any visitors to the consultation website encountered multiple prompts to fill out the feedback form.

Out of the 10 feedback forms completed, two were from landowners, one was from a statutory body (The National Trust completed from Newcastle and also sent a letter), six were from residents (one of which was responding from an IP address in Florida but left a Seaham postcode, so we assume they are an overseas resident) and one from a councillor at Murton Parish Council. Below are the results:

How supportive are you of National Grid developing new infrastructure in your area that will enable the country to achieve Net Zero by 2050?

Strongly support	Support	Unsure	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
0	3	0	0	6

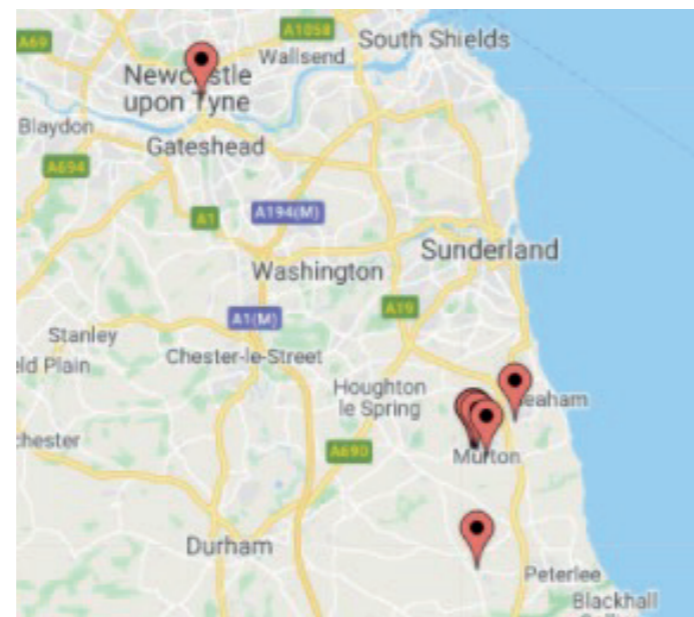
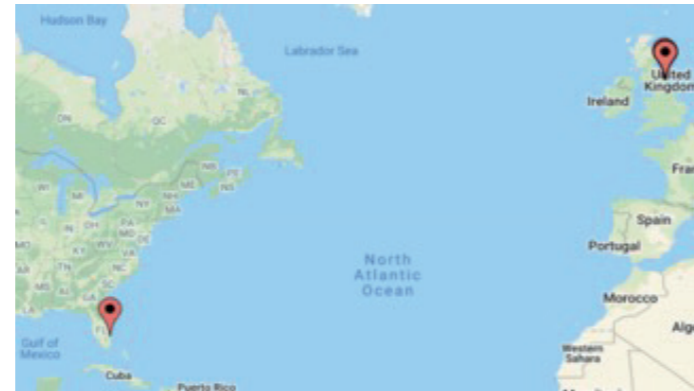
How was your experience of the public consultation taking place online?

Excellent	Good	Unsure	Poor	Very Poor
0	3	0	4	3

The issues league table

Issues	AVERAGE Score (out of 5)	Importance
Landscape and visual impacts	5	Most important
Ecology	4.8	
Heritage	4.8	
Noise impacts	4.5	
Air quality	4.3	
Materials and waste	4	
Greenhouse gas emissions	3.8	
Socioeconomics	3.7	
Transport	3.4	
Ground conditions	3.3	
Offshore water impacts	3.1	
Onshore water impacts	2.6	
Other	1.4	Least important

Location of feedback form entries



Stakeholder feedback

Over the course of the public consultation, the project received several letters and emails containing feedback from statutory bodies and local elected members, as well as holding briefings. These are listed below. Responses addressing the feedback are included in a table on pages 26 to 28.

Durham County Council – three briefings – neutral/slightly supportive

Three meetings with Durham County Council took place, where the project team presented the proposals to councillors and officers and answered any questions they may have had. The councillors raised a number of questions centred around the socio-economic benefits of the project for the local area and the UK. They wanted to better understand the direct benefits the project would have on the local area and for their residents. The councillors were concerned that the development may affect views and walking and cycling routes but felt reassured that these would not be affected after the sessions. Overall, the councillors appeared to be supportive of the project. The councillors who attended were:

- Cllr. David Hall - Sherburn
- Cllr. Chris Hood - South Hetton, Haswell & Shotton Colliery
- Cllr. Louise Fenwick - Peterlee West
- Mark Wilkes - Framwellgate and Newton Hall, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change
- Cllr. Julie Griffiths - Murton
- Cllr. Robert Adcock-Forster – Murton
- Cllr. David McKenna – Seaham.

Seaham Town Council – video and in-person briefings – Slightly unsupportive

The project team presented the proposals at two Environment and Planning committees, one in-person and one virtually. The sentiment of the two meetings was mixed, with councillors generally supporting the principle of development, but with some reservations over the size and height of the buildings, the impact of the project on marine ecology and the suitability of the local geology. The councillors asked whether the project has considered a route immediately south of the Seaham (known as the old mineral line). Some members of the public at the meeting were openly unsupportive of the proposed project.

South Hetton Parish Council – in-person briefing – neutral/slightly supportive

The in-person briefing with South Hetton Parish Council was generally positive, with the councillors explaining that although they were not ‘thrilled’ with the converter station being next to the village they understood the needs case.

The councillors also raised concerns about restrictions to the various public rights of way in the area and stated that they were very interested in National Grid’s community grant funding for community projects.

Murton Parish Council – in-person briefing – slightly supportive

The meeting took place virtually and it was generally positive, with majority of the questions aimed at establishing the facts of the route from the rumours that had been circulating amongst some local residents. Councillors wanted to share correct information with residents to dispel any misunderstanding.

Councillors explained that there were currently five planning applications in the area, which meant residents were getting confused between the various applications. The councillors raised a number of questions, including whether a shorter route had been considered and how landowners had responded to the consultation.

The National Trust – via letter – neutral/slightly supportive

The National Trust stated that it supported the project in principle but provided several comments relating to the impact of the project, particularly on the marine environment. These include:

- it wanted to register its interest in being included in the consultation stages for the MMO
- it looks after significant coastal and offshore property interests in the project area, including the Northumberland Coast, Farne Islands and Durham Coast
- that the onshore element of the project does not appear to raise direct impacts for the National Trust
- that there is an opportunity for National Grid to be aspirational in the biodiversity net gain for marine environments, complementing the net gain on the onshore element of the project
- the Environmental Appraisal Scoping report does not appear to include assessment of some marine features (such as intertidal mudflats and large shallow inlets), the monitoring of impacts on cetaceans and sea birds, and there is very little mention of the impact on grey seals
- if there are any ‘direct and significant’ impacts on marine environments, then what mitigation measures and net gain will be put in place by the project
- what impact the project will have on seabed archaeology.

The Wildlife Trusts and Durham Wildlife Trust – neutral

The Wildlife Trusts and Durham Wildlife Trust's joint response was neutral and stated that they welcomed the projects ambitions and aims. The Trust wanted further information on whether the route passed through Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and the impact of underwater noise impacts on marine mammals. The Trusts also ask for the project to consider implementing a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and whether the project will be following a pre-application evidence plan.

Analysis of public consultation feedback

In total, the project received 1,559 unique page views of the consultation website during the consultation period. The vast majority of consultees did not provide feedback or raise any questions on the project through the methods outlined on the website. Of the 31 total responses the project did receive over the course of the consultation, only 10 were explicit feedback via the dedicated project feedback form, which was clearly signposted the digital exhibition and website. **This suggests that the vast majority of visitors to the website viewed the information about the proposed scheme but did not feel strongly enough to comment on the proposed scheme.**

The proposed project has attracted some opposition, notably from residents in Murton and Seaham. From the feedback forms and from in-person meetings, we encountered opposition to the proposal, mainly regarding the potential for visual and land/marine environmental impact. However, we understand that some of the opposition from residents in Murton was probably aggravated by proposals for a third-party solar farm close to Murton. This understanding is evidenced by feedback and conversations with Murton residents and Parish Council, as well as explicit feedback from our feedback form.

From the explicit feedback we did receive, three responses were supportive of the project, versus six that strongly opposed the proposed scheme. Interestingly, 100% of respondents stated that combatting climate change was important to them, although 60% then stated that they did not support National Grid developing new infrastructure in their area that will enable the country to achieve Net Zero by 2050. When viewed as a whole, the rest of the feedback was broadly neutral, including that from stakeholders that provided responses via letter (i.e. The Wildlife Trusts) and those that accepted briefings from the project team, with the exception of Seaham Town Council. **When all this feedback is viewed together, it gives a neutral/slightly negative sentiment for the project from consultees who appear to be generally accepting of the project and its rationale, but not its specific location.**

The feedback was also concerned with a wide range of elements of the project. This included questions and concerns on the offshore cable route, the onshore cable route, and the converter station/substation. This specific feedback is explored below.

Primary concerns/interests of feedback

Visual impact of converter station and substation

The visual impact of the converter station, and substation to a lesser extent, have featured highly in consultees' feedback and the main source of opposition to the project. Feedback form respondents ranked landscape and visual impact as their number one issue in our issues league table.

The majority of respondents were concerned about the height of the converter station and how it would be integrated into the surrounding landscape. As the design for the converter station is still to be confirmed, some consultees asked for more detail on its appearance. In addition, some consultees asked what measures could be put in place to mitigate the visual impact of the converter station, including if the converter station could be buried.

Residents from Murton, in particular those living in houses that have views towards Hawthorn Pit, were concerned about potential visual impact and the associated reduction in house prices. The issue has also been aggravated due to an unrelated proposed solar farm in the farmland between Hawthorn Pit and Murton seeking planning permission.

Respondents were also concerned about the possibility of additional 400kV pylons being installed as part of the works.

Alternative onshore cable routing South of Seaham

A number of local consultees separately asked whether the project had considered an alternative route for the cable by making landfall at Nose's Point, south of Seaham harbour, and following the old mineral line. They stated that this would be a shorter and less disruptive route to take.

Why another North East port area wasn't chosen

Many consultees asked why the project was making landfall at Seaham and joining the transmission network at Hawthorn Pit. Instead, consultees suggested that port areas Tyneside, Teesside or Sunderland would be more suitable as opposed to 'industrialising the countryside'.



Impact on marine and land environments

The potential of the project to impact upon the environment featured prominently in the feedback, with ecology being ranked highly by feedback form respondents. Specific environmental concerns included:

- protecting great crested newts, ‘ancient’ woodland and ponds near to the proposed converter station and substation site
- damage to hedgerows and woodland during the installation of the cables
- disruption to marine habitats off the coast of Seaham, including marine mammals such as dolphins, which are residents in the area
- the use of a greenfield site for the converter station site, rather than the brownfield site on Jade Business Park.

More strategic comments about the environment came from The Wildlife Trusts and the National Trust, who asked for reassurance that measures would be taken to limit the impact of the project onshore and offshore. The Wildlife Trusts asked for the project to consider implementing a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and whether the project will be following a pre-application evidence plan. The National Trust requested detail on marine mitigation and biodiversity net gain measures, and queried omissions in the Environmental Scoping Appraisal report.

Recreational access to the project area

The project area runs near to and across several well-used public rights of way, including bridleways, footpaths and the Sustrans NCR 1. Many consultees, in particular parish councils, were concerned about the project’s disruption of these routes.

Secondary concerns/interests of feedback

- **Electromagnetic Fields (EMFs)**
One respondent was concerned about the health impacts of the cable’s electromagnetic field.
- **Suitability of local geology**
Two consultees stated that the cliffs north of Seaham were unstable and therefore unsuitable for landfall. They also questioned if the project was aware of geological faults that crossed the project area.
- **Impact on job creation**
One respondent objected, stating that the project would take up land from Jade Business Park, therefore reducing the ability of the Business Park to grow and create new jobs.
- **Traffic disruption during construction**
One respondent raised concerns about the disruption to the local road network and asked what National Grid would do to mitigate any issues.



Feedback on public consultation methods

The feedback that the project received for the online consultation was slightly negative as demonstrated by the below data. From the responses, 70% of consultees who viewed the public consultation online had a negative experience, this appears to be related to the fact that 60% of consultees who filled out the form stated that they could not find all of the information they needed on the website.

However, anecdotally it appears that some respondents to the feedback form simply did not attempt to attend the live chat Q&A or meet the team sessions to have their questions answered in real time.

Interestingly, 50% of consultees still said that they would be happy for future consultations to take place online, suggesting that a hybrid, in-person/online approach would be appropriate for future consultations.

The project did not take feedback on engagement methods during the PIEEs. However, the feedback from the public consultation was addressed in the development of the PIEEs.

How was your experience of the public consultation taking place online?

Excellent	Good	Unsure	Poor	Very Poor
0	3	0	4	3

Did you find all the information you needed on the website and digital exhibition boards?

Yes	Unsure	No
3	1	6

If we were to hold this consultation again, after the Covid pandemic restrictions on events have lifted, would you be happy for the consultation to take place online?

Yes	Unsure	No
5	1	4

Constructive/negative feedback examples

- “Limited opportunity to talk to a member of the team.”
- “Did not communicate it widely. Doing this during a national lockdown, local people are not aware.”
- “More detailed information should be available early on which may alleviate concerns before they are even raised with you.”

How feedback from public consultation will be incorporated

Feedback from landowners, residents, stakeholders, and elected members from the public consultation provided insight on how the project could develop the design of its proposed scheme and address consultees' concerns on a variety of issues, as well as shaping the subsequent PIEEs.

Please note, all consultees who submitted feedback or questions received a response from the project team.

You said		Our response to feedback
Topic	Feedback	
SEGL1 proposal		
Visual impact of converter station and substation	1. Concerns about how the buildings will be integrated into their surroundings.	1. We will develop building design and appearance (colours and materials) and a detailed landscape planting and screening plan, in consultation with Durham County Council.
	2. Concerns whether additional pylons would be installed as part of the works.	2. Due to the proposed configuration of the new substation, we will connect into the existing substation by an underground cable and so will remove two pylons that are no longer required.
Alternative onshore and offshore cable routing	1. Suggestions by several consultees that a route via the Old Mineral Line and Nose's Point would be a more direct and less disruptive route.	1. Following the local insight provided by the consultees, the project deployed additional resource into conducting further investigations (following already extensive original routeing investigations) into the suggested routes and evaluated them against the project's preferred cable routeing. We found that our preferred cable route north of Seaham was still the optimal route.
	2. Queries as to why SEGL1 is making landfall near Seaham, rather than the ports of Tyne, Wear and Tees.	2. The project team provided the consultees with a detailed explanation as to why Seaham, rather than other areas on the North East coast, is the optimal location for the cable landfall.

You said		Our response to feedback
Topic	Feedback	
SEGL1 proposal		
Environmental impact	1. Request from The Wildlife Trusts/Durham Wildlife Trust for a Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SEA) and a pre-application evidence plan.	1. SEA is for plans and programmes. This proposed development is a single project and therefore SEA doesn't apply. Outline planning permission for the project is sought under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and not through a Development Consent Order (DCO) under the Planning Act 2008, and therefore an evidence plan is not required as part of the planning application.
	2. The National Trust's comments on: A. Inclusion in the consultation stages in the MMO; B. Including marine features and monitoring of marine environment in Environmental Appraisal Scoping report; C. Details of marine mitigation and biodiversity net gain measures; D. Impact on marine archaeology.	2. We have engaged with the National Trust on consultation with the MMO. The marine features and monitoring raised by the National Trust were included in an Appendix which the National Trust had not seen. Marine biodiversity net gain is in early development as a concept compared to terrestrial net gain which is now enshrined in law. National Grid is working with government and other stakeholders (including The Wildlife Trusts) on marine net gain to develop this. We have met with the National Trust and taken its specialist staff through our approach to marine archaeology and have committed to sharing our survey results with the Trust.
	3. Request and concerns from several consultees on the protection afforded to onshore and offshore environments.	3. The onshore and offshore elements of the project are deemed by Durham County Council and the MMO not to be 'EIA development'. Nonetheless we have chosen to follow the EIA Regulations and have produced a thorough Environmental Appraisal Report for the onshore and offshore parts of the project which identify potential environmental effects and set out proposed mitigation measures.
Disruption to PRowS	1. Concerns were raised about the impact of the converter station, substation and cable installation on PRowS in the area.	1. Public rights of way will be kept open during the construction works, either by active management or temporary diversions if necessary. The PIEEs digital exhibition included a section on how SEGL1 could affect PRow access. Four detailed maps showed how both National Grid, and Durham County Council's plans, could improve informal paths and public rights of way in the Hawthorn Pit area if all of the proposed plans are approved.
EMFs	1. Concerns were raised about impact of EMFs in the area located near to the cable.	1. Although addressed in the public consultation, this issue was included in the PIEE FAQs, complete with a dedicated National Grid EMF helpline to reassure interested consultees. Project-specific detailed information on AC and DC EMFs, including background levels, has been produced and will be submitted as part of the outline planning application

You said		Our response to feedback
Topic	Feedback	
SEGL1 proposal		
Suitability of local geology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The cliffs north of Seaham are unstable and therefore unsuitable for landfall. There are geological faults that cross the project area. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The cables will come ashore using horizontal directional drilling (HDD) techniques which will not involve any construction activity on the beach or cliffs at Seaham. The location of all the faults intersecting the project area have been identified and the project has been designed with due consideration of these constraints.
Impact on job creation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The project will take up land from Jade Business Park, therefore reducing the ability of the business park to grow and create jobs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The project's footprint does not overlap with the employment site allocated for Phase 1 or Phase 2 of Jade Business Park.
Traffic during construction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns were raised about the disruption to the local road network and what National Grid would do to mitigate any issues. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The topic of traffic associated with the works was explored in the subsequent PIEEs, as more detailed information became available. This information included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the location and method of road crossings for the cable a rough indication of which roads works traffic will follow procedure around the transportation of abnormal loads expected working times and dates number of personnel expected to be working onsite.
Consultation methods		
Finding information easier	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Some respondents stated that they did not find everything they wanted to know in consultation materials. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Although there was only outline detail on the project available during the public consultation, we ensured that the subsequent PIEEs included as much detail as possible at that stage in the project. This included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> detailed mapping that included site compounds, road crossing information and a refined route corridor a selection of CGIs of the site, from various locations and angles a dedicated FAQ page a dedicated page for those with land interests, which includes an FAQ a document library page 17 hours of potential engagement with the project team over three live chat sessions and a webinar the offer of one-to-one calls with members of the project team.

7. Topics of interest from PIEEs

The objective of the PIEEs was to brief residents, community groups, and stakeholders, on the content of the planning applications, as well as answer any questions, rather than accept feedback on the proposals. Over the course of the PIEEs, we received questions and comments from six members of the public and two town/parish councils. These topics of interest were shared with the wider project team to aid the further development of the project, where relevant.

The topics are outlined below by theme.

Impact on landowner property

- A resident of Murton asked if their property was going to be directly impacted by the project. The team informed shared maps demonstrating that the resident's property was not impacted.
- Seaham Town Council asked whether landowners have been engaged by the project team. The project team confirmed that they were.

Type of information shared in the planning application

- A resident of Murton asked whether the planning application would have specific information on road or path diversions, as the resident wanted to know how the Sustrans 1 route immediately west of Murton would be diverted.

We informed the resident that any temporary diversions will be publicised, and rights of way will remain open. This is because although the outline planning application won't include specific information on any temporary diversions of rights of way, because the detail won't be known at that stage.

The impact of EMFs on people and animals

- A member of the public asked whether the buried DC cables would produce magnetic fields and what the impact would be on human and animal navigation onshore and offshore.

We responded and shared information on the EMFs (electric and magnetic fields). Furthermore, a detailed project-specific information sheet has been produced and confirms that all of the equipment proposed for the SEGL1 connection complies with independent safety guidelines set to protect us all against EMF exposure.

Design of SEGL1

- Seaham Town Council asked whether the height and footprint of the converter station has changed since the public consultation.

The Council was informed that the converter station maximum height has not changed but it will be built on a -4m balanced cut and fill platform, so it will be set down by 4m from the Jade roundabout level. In addition, we have been able to reduce the converter station height from being up to 30m high to being up to 26m high. This will have the effect of it being up to 22m above the level of the Jade roundabout, noting that the proposed Jade Business Park Phase 2 scheme is proposed to be up to 20m high. Outline planning permission is being sought and the detailed design will be developed should outline planning permission be granted.

- A resident asked if the design of SEGL1 will allow electricity to be sent both ways. We confirmed that it can be.

Local job creation associated with the project

- Seaham Town Council asked if the project would lead to new jobs and apprenticeships for people in the local area.

We stated that it is too early in the project to state any figures, but that National Grid's research suggests that 400,000 new jobs will be created in the UK in the drive to net zero.

Impact of the project on marine environments and vessels

- A member of the public asked if the cable will be present a danger to sea trawlers.

We informed the member of the public that we will seek to bury the cable in the seabed or protect it with rock armouring to avoid cable strike by other sea users. The position of the cable will be shown on nautical charts.

- Seaham Town Council asked for reassurance on the impact of the project on the marine environment, particularly whether the project would cause noise that will disrupt marine mammals, such as dolphins.

We informed the Town Council that detailed ecological surveys have been undertaken, and will continue to be undertaken, and we will work closely with the regulators, including Natural England and the Marine Management Organisation, to avoid impacts on cetaceans.

Commercial opportunities

- During the webinar, two individuals involved professionally in planning and infrastructure asked what the budget cost for the project is and when a main works contractor will be appointed.

Works on A19/Murton junction

- Seaham Town Council made the project aware of road works planned by DCC at the Murton/A19 junction. The Council added that it could cause significant traffic congestion if works vehicles also used the junction as the works took place.

We informed the Council that works on SEGL1 are expected to take place after works at the junction have been completed.



8. Conclusion

If approved, SEGL1, along with its sister project, SEGL2, will have a transformative impact on the UK's energy supply. It will give people and businesses more access to secure, UK-produced renewable energy, helping the country meet its ambitious net zero carbon target.

The project's public consultation comprised an introduction to the project and a relatively detailed overview. By consulting predominantly online, via a dedicated website, we also overcame the challenges associated with COVID-19 restrictions.

The main objective of this consultation was to engage with landowners, residents, and stakeholders who live along the 10km proposed cable route and around the Hawthorn Pit area, where National Grid is proposing to build a new converter station and substation. We wanted consultees to learn about the proposed scheme at an early stage, understand their views and concerns and collate their feedback. Therefore, we utilised several communication methods to reach as many people as reasonably possible, from targeted social media to a newsletter sent to landowners and people in settlements closest to the project. For those unable or unwilling to use our website, we had a freephone number and email address that came direct to the public consultation team. We also approached 59 stakeholders directly to introduce the project and inform them of the consultation.

Our public consultation website saw 1,559 unique page views, representing a strong interest in the project from local people. Although we received a range of neutral to negative feedback from landowners, residents, and stakeholders, this was a small fraction of the consultees that reviewed the project plans via our consultation website. This, coupled with the nature of the feedback, leads to the conclusion that a significant number of consultees did not feel strongly about SEGL1 and received adequate information through the consultation materials. Moreover, when analysing the sentiment of all responses and engagement over the course of the consultation we arrive at a neutral/slightly negative sentiment.

The project's PIEEs, which came eight months after the public consultation, complemented the public consultation by providing local communities and stakeholders with a host of easily available detailed information on the project, and its likely impact on them. As demonstrated in the How feedback from public consultation will be incorporated section (pages 26 to 28), the project took great care in exploring and addressing people's feedback on the project.

Considering that the PIEEs website saw 2,350 unique page views (791 more than the public consultation), the fact that the project team received only several questions and no objections, reinforces the conclusion that a significant number of consultees did not feel strongly about SEGL1 and received adequate information through the wealth of materials made available by the project.

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APPENDIX B

GEORGE F. WHITE

RESIDENTIAL . COMMERCIAL . RURAL . DEVELOPMENT

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Hugh Smith
National Grid

Extension: 4207
Mobile: 07469 152151
Email: carolinehorn@georgefwhite.co.uk
Our Ref: SEGL1/CH/LAA
Your Ref:
Date: 14 November 2022

SEGL2@nationalgrid.com

SENT BY E-MAIL ONLY

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Dear Hugh

SCOTLAND TO ENGLAND GREENLINK (SEGL1) PROJECT OUR CLIENTS: GREGSON/DAVIDSON/LEE

Further to your letter dated the 3rd of November to my client Stephen Gregson, I want to bring you up to speed with the correspondence we have had between Derek Tyson and our position.

I enclose the letters I sent to Durham County Council with regards to the planning application which sets out the background to our position.

We still do not believe the above clients have received proper consultation and due process has been followed.

I understand that National Grid do not believe that my other client Keith Davidson's land is affected when indeed the plans of the route show the route crossing directly through the middle of Keith Davidson's land. Mr Davidson has not been offered any consultation which is required, nor do I believe Mr Gregson has received any proper consultation as to how the proposed scheme will affect his property and his business.

In addition to this, I have seen various different versions of the Heads of Terms; and I am unclear as to which is the most recent heads of terms to review. However, I have repeatedly asked for clear plans of the route with dimensions of the easement and the working width so I can properly advise my client and understand the scheme, but I am still yet to receive them.

We also require clarity on the working methods of installing the cable and more importantly the methods with regards to ensuring our clients' drainage is properly protected and undisturbed.

I also require clarity on the access and the route ancillary routes of installing the cable. All of the clients referred to above have various different schemes and developments happening on their land and it is paramount that you engage with us so we can ensure that all schemes and developments can pursue uninterrupted.

I am still waiting for a confirmation of a cost undertaking of our fees and proposed meeting dates. I have had an email from Derek Tyson stating that they will pay hourly rates which we agree but subject to a cap which we absolutely do not agree with given the complexity and the scale of the works.

I would be grateful if you can respond with a fee undertaking without a cap and then provide me with the information stated above, so I can review and then I propose to meet on site to discuss the impacts.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'C. Horn'.

Caroline Horn MRICS FAAV
Partner

For and on behalf of George F. White LLP

Encs Letters to Durham County Council x 2

APPENDIX C

Caroline Horn
George F White LLP
9 South End
Bedale
North Yorkshire
DL8 2BJ

Your ref: SEGL1/CH/LAA

By email only to: carolinehorn@georgefwhite.co.uk

22nd November 2022

Dear Caroline,

**Scotland England Green Link 1 (SEGL1) project
Re: your clients Gregson, Davidson and Lee**

Thank you for your letter of 14th November restating that you do not consider that your clients, Mr Gregson, Mr Davidson and Mr Lee, have received proper consultation and that due process has not been followed.

I am happy to meet with you to discuss the matter, but in advance of that I thought it would be helpful to clarify the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and explain how we have followed the statutory process, which I hope clarifies the position.

As an applicant for planning permission National Grid was required to serve notice on any land owner or tenant whose land is within the red line boundary of the planning application. An owner is defined as a person having a freehold interest or a leasehold interest the unexpired term of which is not less than seven years. A tenant means a tenant of an agricultural holding any part of which is comprised in the land within the red line boundary.

For the SEGL1 project the red line boundary for the planning permission is the area within which the converter station, substation, replacement public open space and landscaping will be located.

In the case of SEGL1 the planning application red line boundary did not include the AC and DC cabling works, the temporary haul roads or temporary compounds; the reason for this is that these works are permitted development, as confirmed through Durham County Council's negative EIA Screening opinion of 25 March 2021. The permitted development works did not form part of the planning application and therefore these elements were not included within the planning application redline boundary. There was no requirement under the Development Management Procedure 2015 to serve notice on landowners or tenants whose land is not affected by the planning application.

Of your three clients, only Mr Gregson has any land interest within the planning application red line boundary and we served notice on 19 May 2022. Your other two clients, Mr Davidson and Mr Lee, have land which is affected by the DC cabling works and, for the reasons set out above, they were not served notice of the planning application because their land is not within the planning application red line boundary.

In your letter you state that your clients have not received proper consultation about the works on their land. During 2021/22 we undertook environmental surveys on land along the cable route and in the area around Hawthorn Pit, all with the agreement of the landowners, including your clients. We undertook pre-application community engagement in two phases: the first being a public consultation that took place between Monday 24 May and Friday 18 June 2021; this was followed by Public Information Exhibitions and Events (PIEEs) between Monday 7 February and Saturday 19 February 2022. We are continuing to engage with your clients.

While the cable works fall within permitted development, National Grid is aware that we need to obtain the necessary land rights. As demonstrated by the Heads of Terms and Occupier's Consent documents sent to

your clients, National Grid endeavours to agree these rights by private treaty. National Grid will also submit a Compulsory Purchase Order application as a means of being granted the necessary land rights to deliver the scheme. Your clients will be notified of the making of the Compulsory Purchase Order in due course. Whilst National Grid will make a Compulsory Purchase Order it will continue to negotiate with affected parties.

In relation to the fee cap, applying a fee cap does not mean this is the limit on fees. Instead, National Grid implements a fee cap as a means of tracking the costs payable to claimants for their surveyors' fees, which can be increased on a case-by-case basis as deemed appropriate by the Lands Surveyor.

I hope you find this information helpful. If we may, my colleague Derek Tyson (Bell Ingram) will get in touch to arrange a suitable date for us to meet with you.

Yours sincerely,



Hugh Smith
Consents Officer

cc: Elliot Chandler, Lands Surveyor, SEGL1
Derek Tyson, Partner, Bell Ingram