

The Great Grid Upgrade

Sea Link

Statement of Community Consultation

Version A
October 2023

nationalgrid

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Sea Link

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the document

- 1.1.1 This Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) sets out how National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) intends to consult statutory consultees, stakeholders, affected residents and local communities on its proposals to build an offshore high voltage direct current (HVDC) link between Suffolk and Kent (and associated infrastructure), ahead of its application for development consent.
- 1.1.2 The Sea Link Project (“the proposed Project”) requires consent from the relevant Secretary of State via a Development Consent Order (DCO). This document has therefore been prepared in accordance with section 47(1) of the Planning Act 2008 (“the Planning Act”), which requires applicants to prepare a statement explaining how they will consult with the local community regarding their proposals, and to carry out pre-application consultation in accordance with this statement.
- 1.1.3 As the proposed Project is an ‘EIA Development’ (meaning that it is subject to an environmental impact assessment or “EIA”), this SoCC therefore also sets out how NGET intends to publicise and consult on the preliminary environmental information, in accordance with Regulation 12 of The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (“the EIA Regulations”).
- 1.1.4 In accordance with section 47(2) of the Planning Act, NGET has consulted with and had regard to comments from the following local authorities whilst developing the SoCC:
- Suffolk County Council
 - East Suffolk Council
 - Kent County Council
 - Thanet District Council
 - Dover District Council
- 1.1.5 The listed local authorities were consulted for 28 days, between 22 June and 20 July 2023 on the contents of this SoCC.

1.2 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

- 1.2.1 Offshore transmission cables and their associated onshore infrastructure do not meet the criteria to be considered Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) under the Planning Act, meaning that permission for their construction is not normally sought via an application for development consent.
- 1.2.2 However, on 4 March 2022 NGET wrote to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy¹ (“the Secretary of State”) to ask that they issue a direction on

¹ Now known as the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

whether the proposed Project can be treated as a development for which development consent is required.

- 1.2.3 On 31 March 2022, the Secretary of State issued a direction confirming that the proposed Project be treated as such, in accordance with section 35(1) of the Planning Act.
- 1.2.4 Development consent is therefore required before construction of the proposed Project can begin. However, ancillary works (such as the reconductoring of the existing 400 kilovolt (kV) line between Canterbury and Richborough) may be progressed through separate consenting regimes or permitted development rights.
- 1.2.5 Since the section 35(1) direction was issued, plans for the proposed Project have evolved to potentially include the installation of a new 400 kV overhead electric line of more than 2 km in length in Kent. Should this be the case, this element would meet the criteria to be classified as an NSIP under the Planning Act, meaning that development consent would be required for this aspect of the proposed Project, irrespective of the direction issued under section 35(1).
- 1.2.6 The application for development consent will be submitted to, and examined by, the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State. The Planning Inspectorate will provide a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who will ultimately decide whether to grant the development consent for the proposed Project. The development consent order process is explained in further detail in Figure 2.2.
- 1.2.7 Before submitting an application to the Planning Inspectorate, the Planning Act requires NGET to carry out consultation, including with people living in the vicinity of the land where the proposed Project is to be sited.
- 1.2.8 The early involvement of local communities, including local authorities and stakeholders, leads to applications that are better understood by all parties. It also helps NGET identify valuable information about the potential impacts of a scheme, providing the opportunity for mitigation measures to be considered and, where appropriate, built into designs, before an application is submitted and considered.

1.3 Environmental Impact Assessment

- 1.3.1 The proposed Project is an 'EIA Development'. On 24 October 2022, NGET submitted a Scoping Report to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, to inform the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed Project.
- 1.3.2 Within this Scoping Report, NGET gave formal notification under Regulation 8(1)(b) of the EIA Regulations that it considers the proposed Project to meet the criteria outlined in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations to be considered as 'EIA Development'.
- 1.3.3 A scoping opinion for the proposed Project was adopted by the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) on 1 December 2022.

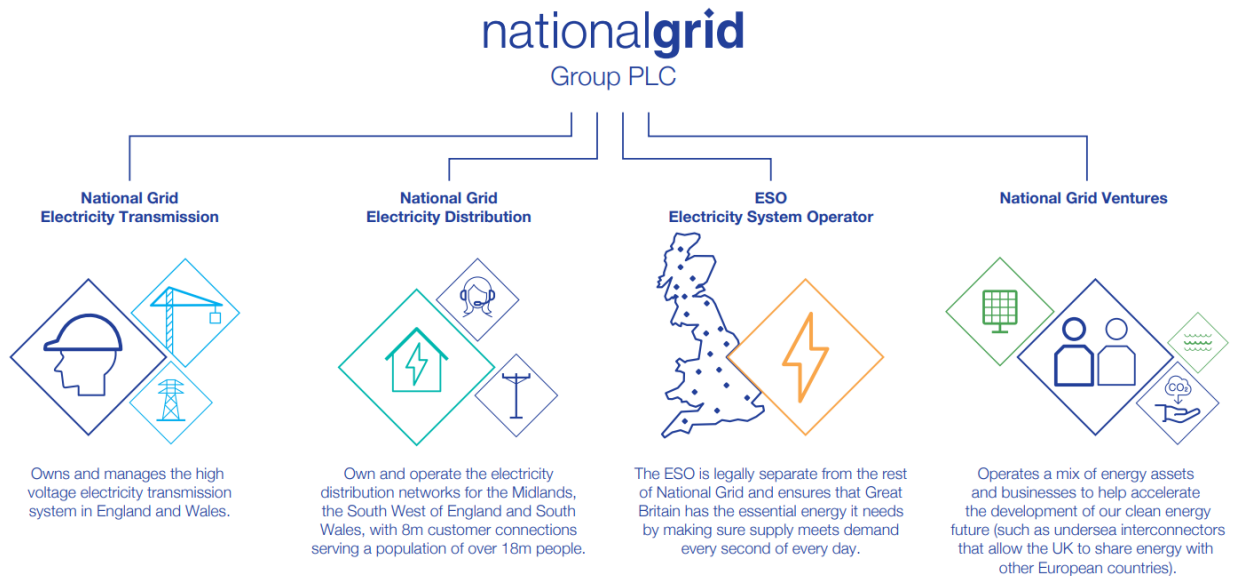
1.4 About National Grid Electricity Transmission plc

- 1.4.1 National Grid sits at the heart of Great Britain's energy system, connecting millions of people and businesses to the energy they use every day. We bring energy to life: in the heat, light and power we bring to our customer's homes and businesses; in the way that

we support our communities and help them to grow; and in the way we show up in the world. It is our vision to be at the heart of a clean, fair and affordable energy future.

- 1.4.2 Within the National Grid Group there are distinctly separate legal entities, each with their individual responsibilities and roles (see Figure 1.1). The roles of these are summarised below. The proposed Project is being promoted by National Grid Electricity Transmission.
- 1.4.3 **National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET)** holds the transmission licence for England and Wales under the Electricity Act 1989. NGET owns, builds, and maintains the high voltage electricity transmission system in England and Wales – the overhead lines, buried cables and substations that carry power around the country.
- 1.4.4 In 2022, Western Power Distribution became part of the National Grid Group and is now **National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED)**. It is the local distribution network operator for the Midlands, South West of England and South Wales.
- 1.4.5 The **Electricity System Operator (ESO)** controls the movement of electricity around the country, transporting power from generators (such as wind farms) to local distribution network operators, like NGED and UK Power Networks (UKPN), ensuring that supply meets demand.
- 1.4.6 **National Grid Ventures** sits outside the core regulated businesses, investing in technologies and partnerships that help accelerate our move to a clean energy future. That includes interconnectors - connecting the UK with countries across the North Sea, allowing trade between energy markets and efficient use of renewable energy resources.
- 1.4.7 Both NGET and the ESO are licensed by the Government as electricity transmission companies and are regulated by the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem), which sets price controls and monitors how the companies develop and operate their networks on behalf of consumers.

Figure 1.1 Structure of National Grid group of companies



1.4.8 NGET has a statutory duty to develop and maintain an efficient, coordinated and economical system of electricity transmission under the Electricity Act 1989 (“the Electricity Act”). This includes a statutory obligation to offer to connect any new generating stations or interconnectors applying to connect to the transmission system.

1.4.9 NGET is also required, under section 38 of the Electricity Act, to comply with the provisions of Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act. Schedule 9 requires licence holders, in the formulation of proposals to transmit electricity, to preserve amenity by:

Schedule 9(1)(a) ‘...have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest;’ and

Schedule 9(1)(b) ‘...do what [it] reasonably can to mitigate any effect which the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects’.

1.4.10 How we set out to meet these environmental responsibilities and our commitments relating to engagement and consultation about proposals, is explained in our [Stakeholder, Community and Amenity Policy](#).

2. The Sea Link Project

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 The way we power the things we love is changing. In the years ahead, more of our energy will come from renewable and low carbon sources of electricity as part of the transition towards a net zero future.
- 2.1.2 There has already been a significant shift in how energy is generated in the UK. Last year, coal was responsible for meeting just 1.5% of our energy needs, compared to 43% back in 2012. This is because more of the energy we use is coming from offshore wind, nuclear power and trading energy through interconnectors with other neighbouring countries. At the same time, demand for electricity is set to increase as other sectors of the economy are decarbonised through electrification, such as heating and transport.
- 2.1.3 Whilst the existing high voltage electricity network has been sufficient until now, it does not have the capability needed to reliably and securely transport all the energy that will be connected in the years ahead. To make sure everyone has access to the clean, affordable energy they need in the decades ahead, we need to deliver the largest overhaul of the electricity grid in generations.
- 2.1.4 As much of the new renewable and low carbon electricity generation planned for the UK is expected to be installed along the east coast, National Grid is investing significantly in upgrading the existing network. It also needs to build new infrastructure, such as Sea Link, to ensure that power can be transported from where it is generated to where it is needed.
- 2.1.5 All of this work forms part of The Great Grid Upgrade – National Grid’s programme to deliver over five times the amount of electricity transmission infrastructure in the next seven years than has been built in the last 30 years.

2.2 The proposed Project

- 2.2.1 National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) is proposing to reinforce the network between Suffolk and Kent via a new, primarily offshore, 2 GW high voltage direct current (HVDC) link.
- 2.2.2 Sea Link has been designed to increase the capability of the network to carry low carbon and renewable energy from where it is generated to homes and businesses across the country.
- 2.2.3 The proposed Project is split into three elements, which are outlined as follows:
- Suffolk Onshore Scheme;
 - Offshore Scheme; and
 - Kent Onshore Scheme.
- 2.2.4 The Suffolk Onshore Scheme requires construction of the following key infrastructure to facilitate the HVDC Link, including:

- a connection from the existing transmission network via the proposed Friston substation, including the National Grid part of the substation itself. The proposed Friston substation already has development consent as part of other third-party projects. If the proposed Friston substation has already been constructed under another consent, only a connection into the substation would be constructed by Sea Link
- a high voltage alternating current (HVAC) underground cable of approximately 1.7 km in length between the proposed Friston Substation and a proposed converter station (below)
- a 2 GW high voltage direct current (HVDC) converter station up to 26 metres high plus external equipment (such as lightning protection and railings for walkways) near Saxmundham
- a HVDC underground cable connection of approximately 10 km in length between the proposed converter station near Saxmundham, and a transition joint bay approximately 900 metres inshore from a landfall point (below) where the cable transitions from onshore to offshore technology
- a landfall on the Suffolk coast (between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness).

2.2.5 Our proposals in Suffolk have been developed for Sea Link as a standalone project, but also include opportunities to co-locate infrastructure for up to two further projects at the converter station, along the cable corridors and at the landfall location.

2.2.6 The Offshore Scheme comprises:

- approximately 130 km of subsea HVDC cable, running between the Suffolk landfall location (between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness), and the Kent landfall location at Pegwell Bay.

2.2.7 The Kent Onshore Scheme comprises:

- a landfall point on the Kent coast at Pegwell Bay
- a transition joint bay approximately 800 metres inshore to transition from offshore HVDC cable to onshore HVDC cable, before continuing underground for approximately 2 km to a proposed new converter station (below)
- a 2 GW HVDC converter station, up to 26 metres high plus external equipment (such as lightning protection and railings for walkways), near Minster. A new substation would be located immediately adjacent
- removal of up to 1 km of existing HVAC overhead line, and installation of approximately 2.25 km of new HVAC overhead line from the converter station and substation near Minster and the existing Richborough to Canterbury overhead line.

2.2.8 The proposed Project also includes modifications to sections of existing overhead lines in Suffolk and Kent, diversions of third-party assets, and land drainage from the construction and operational areas. It also includes opportunities for environmental mitigation, compensation and enhancement (such as hedgerow creation, native tree planting or funding local wildlife groups).

2.2.9 The construction phase will involve various temporary construction activities including working areas for construction equipment and machinery, site offices, storage,

accesses, bellmouths, and haul roads, as well as watercourse crossings and the diversion of public rights of way.

2.3 Consultation and engagement to date

2.3.1 NGET held a non-statutory consultation on the proposed Project between 24 October and 18 December 2022.

2.3.2 The consultation had the following aims:

- to introduce the proposed Project to the public, providing an overview of the proposed Project and why the reinforcement is needed
- to set out options that have been considered and the decision-making undertaken so far
- to present early plans, including proposed cable corridors, HVDC converter sites and landfall locations
- to provide an opportunity for stakeholders and those interested in the project to give their feedback on our work-to-date
- to outline the next steps and onward programme for the development of the proposed Project.

2.3.3 Over the course of the non-statutory consultation, the Project Team held four face-to-face public information events, two landowner information events, six online webinars and nine stakeholder briefings. The consultation was advertised through a mixture of direct mailings, email updates, newspaper, and social media adverts. Consultation materials were made available online and for inspection at 20 deposit points in the vicinity of the proposed Project. Dedicated contact channels were also established for those who had questions about the proposed Project. This engagement and advertisement activity in Suffolk and Kent is summarised in **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1 - Key statistics from non-statutory consultation

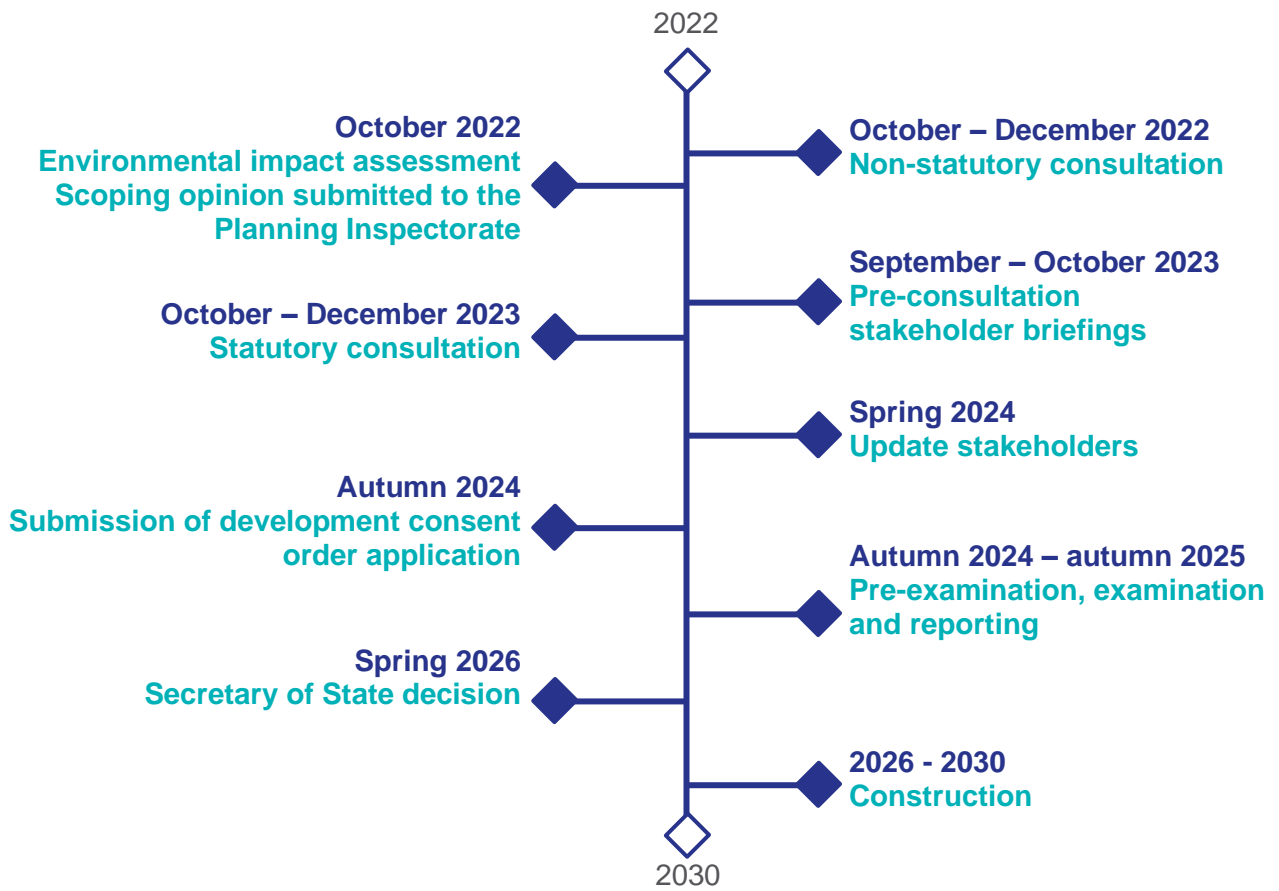
	Kent	Suffolk	Total
Deposit points	12	8	20
Community invites issued	11,061	6,624	17,685
Public information events	3	3	6
Landowner information events	1	1	2
Stakeholder briefings	2	7	9
Website visitors	-	-	11,360
Webinars	-	-	6
Enquiries to the freephone telephone number	-	-	19
Inbound enquiries through the proposed Project inbox	-	-	262
Newspaper adverts	3	3	6
Social media adverts	1	3	4

- 2.3.4 NGET provided a number of ways for members of the public and those interested in the consultation to give their feedback. These included:
- completing an online feedback form on the Project’s website (nationalgrid.com/sealink)
 - completing a paper feedback form or sending written comments by post (Freepost SEA LINK)
 - emailing feedback to the Project’s email address (contact@sealink.nationalgrid.com)
 - calling the Project’s information line (0808 134 9569)
- 2.3.5 340 responses to the feedback form on the proposals in Suffolk and 120 responses to the feedback form on the proposals in Kent were submitted as part of the non-statutory consultation.
- 2.3.6 The list of consultees is kept under ongoing review. In instances where additional prescribed consultees were identified following non-statutory consultation, these were subsequently contacted and given the opportunity to engage with the proposed Project. We have continued to review the list of consultees as the proposed Project has developed, to ensure that it is maintained and up-to-date. All prescribed consultees will be contacted formally and consulted as part of the statutory consultation.
- 2.3.7 In addition to the consultation periods detailed previously, the proposed Project has engaged with key stakeholders through meetings and other forms of discussion on a regular basis. These stakeholders include local authorities, the Marine Management Organisation, Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England.
- 2.3.8 More information on the non-statutory consultations carried out can be found in the Non-Statutory Consultation Report, which is part of the suite of documents published at statutory consultation. Archive documents from the non-statutory consultation will remain available on the Project’s website. Paper copies will be available on request and subject to a printing charge outlined in **paragraph 3.5.8**.

2.4 Project Timeline

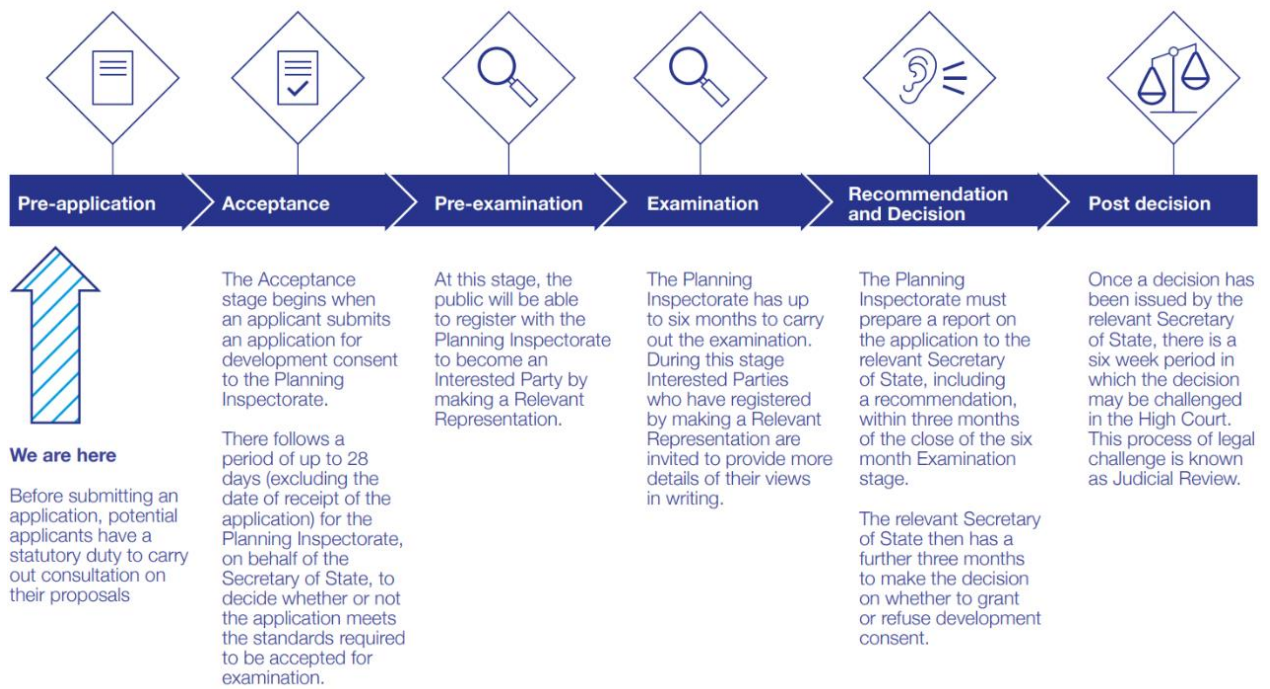
- 2.4.1 Figure 2.1 sets out an indicative timeline for each stage of the proposed Project, from consultation through to the decision from the Secretary of State and construction.

Figure 2.1 Project Timeline



2.4.2 **Figure 2.2** provides an overview of the DCO consenting process.

Figure 2.2 DCO process



3. Consulting on the proposed application

3.1 When will the consultation take place?

3.1.1 The statutory consultation will run for a period of eight weeks. It will take place between 24 October 2023 and 18 December 2023. All responses to the consultation must be received before 23:59 on the closing date. Postal responses will be accepted until 2 January 2024.

3.2 What will be consulted on?

3.2.1 National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) will seek views and feedback on all aspects of the proposed Project, including the:

- proposed Friston substation
- proposed offshore route of the high voltage direct current (HVDC) cable, from landfall to landfall
- proposed onshore route of the HVDC cable, from landfall to converter station
- proposed landfall locations in Suffolk and Kent
- proposed route of the high voltage alternating current (HVAC) link between the Suffolk converter station and the proposed Friston substation
- potential for coordination and co-location of infrastructure with other forthcoming infrastructure projects
- proposed HVAC overhead line between the Minster converter station and substation, and the Canterbury to Richborough 400 kV overhead line
- construction methodology
- likely environmental affects arising from the proposed Project
- approach to biodiversity net gain and mitigation of potential environmental impacts.

3.2.2 While comments are welcomed on all aspects of the proposed Project, this statutory consultation is not a means of influencing or contributing to separate exercises being undertaken by the Government and other bodies, such as the Offshore Coordination Support Scheme.

3.2.3 The proposed Project continues to evolve in response to consultation feedback and further technical and design assessments. The statutory consultation presents a snapshot in time. Documents such as the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) will allow consultees to develop an informed view of the likely significant environmental effects of the development. It will outline any limitations on the current assessments. If any substantive changes are made to the design of the proposed Project following this statutory consultation, NGET will consider whether there is a requirement for further consultation (see **section 4.3**).

3.2.4 The full PEIR will be available on the Project's website, with a link to this shared with the relevant consultees set out in the EIA Regulations. Access to digital copies of the PEIR

will be available at deposit points, with printed paper copies of the PEIR only available on request and subject to a printing charge outlined in **paragraph 3.5.8**. Paper copies of the non-technical summary of the PEIR will be available at deposit points and on request. A fee will not be charged for paper copies of the non-technical summary of the PEIR.

- 3.2.5 As part of the application for development consent, an Environmental Statement (ES) will be prepared. This document will present an assessment of likely significant effects arising from the proposed Project and potential mitigation where appropriate, based on the details of the proposals submitted with the application for development consent.

3.3 Who will be consulted?

- 3.3.1 Principally, this consultation is open to anyone who is interested in the proposed Project. All views are welcomed, and NGET will have regard to all comments and feedback when developing the details of the proposed Project for our application for development consent.
- 3.3.2 Under section 47 of the Planning Act, NGET has a duty to consult the local community. Two consultation zones have been developed to assist engagement with the local community.
- 3.3.3 The Primary Consultation Zone (PCZ) extends 3 km from the proposed draft Order Limits for the proposed Project onshore, whilst the Secondary Consultation Zone (SCZ) extends to at least 5 km from the draft Order Limits for the proposed Project (including the PCZ) onshore. The draft Order Limits are the proposed outer limits of the land required either on a temporary or permanent basis to deliver the proposed Project. Appendix A sets out the boundaries of these two consultation zones.
- 3.3.4 NGET will also directly consult the following groups and individuals:
- All residential and business addresses within the PCZ
 - Parish councils representing parishes within the PCZ
 - Members of Parliament (MPs) representing constituencies within and bordering the PCZ and SCZ
 - elected representatives in local authorities within the PCZ
 - ‘seldom heard groups’ within both consultation zones who have been drawn to our attention, representing people who are unlikely to respond to traditional consultation techniques, and may need additional support to access materials
 - relevant local interest groups, such as residents’ associations, community groups and groups with particular specialisms, such as environmental groups
 - relevant marine users such as fisheries, developers and existing infrastructure owners.

3.3.5 In addition to the local community, NGET will consult prescribed bodies² and local authorities as required under section 42(1)(a), (aa) and (b) of the Planning Act and undertake the relevant notification under the EIA Regulations. NGET will also consult Persons with an Interest in Land (PILs) under section 42(1)(d).

3.4 Consultation materials

3.4.1 **Table 3.1** sets out the consultation materials that will be developed to help people understand the proposals for the proposed Project and provide their feedback.

Table 3.1 - Consultation materials

Material	Description	Target audience
Newsletter	A summary newsletter which outlines how members of the public can get involved in the consultation, including dates and times of public information exhibitions, webinars and 'Ask the Experts' sessions, locations of where more detailed information about the proposals can be found (including both physical and virtual locations, such as on the Project's website), how to submit feedback and the contact details for the Project Team.	<p>All those interested in the consultation (see section 3.3 for detail).</p> <p>The newsletter will be posted to all residential and business addresses within the PCZ as part of the 'Consultation Pack.' Members of the public will also be able to collect a copy of the document at the deposit points (see section 3.11 for detail).</p> <p>The document will also be available to download via the Project's website and printed copies will be posted on request. A fee will not be charged for printed copies of this document.</p> <p>We will consider requests for copies of the document in alternative formats (such as braille, large print, translations) on a case-by-basis, taking into account individual circumstances.</p>
Project overview document	A single document which gives a comprehensive overview of the proposed Project, its various components and where to find more detailed	<p>All those interested in the consultation (see section 3.3 for detail).</p> <p>Members of the public will be able to access a copy at deposit points (see section 3.11 for detail). The</p>

² The relevant statutory consultees, as set out in Schedule 1 of The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 and as identified by NGET as relevant to the proposed Project.

Material	Description	Target audience
	<p>information and contact the Project Team.</p> <p>The document will be written in non-technical language that is readily accessible to the general public.</p>	<p>document will also be available to download via the Project’s website and printed copies will be posted on request. A fee will not be charged for printed copies of this document.</p> <p>NGET will consider requests for copies of the document in alternative formats (such as braille, large print, translations) on a case-by-basis, taking into account individual circumstances.</p>
<p>Project overview document – 10-minute read</p>	<p>A condensed version of the Project overview document, intended to concisely summarise and explain the background to the proposed Project and current proposals.</p> <p>The document is intended to have a ‘read time’ of 10 minutes or less.</p>	<p>All those interested in the consultation (see section 3.3 for detail).</p> <p>Members of the public will be able to access a copy at deposit points (see section 3.11 for detail). The document will also be available to download via the Project’s website and printed copies will be posted on request. A fee will not be charged for printed copies of this document.</p>
<p>Options selection and design evolution report</p>	<p>A document outlining the development of the proposed Project and the rationale behind each component.</p>	<p>All those interested in the consultation (see section 3.3 for detail).</p> <p>Members of the public will be able to access a copy at deposit points (see 3.11 for detail). The report will also be available to download via the Project’s website and printed copies will be posted on request. A fee will not be charged for printed copies of this document.</p>
<p>Non-statutory consultation report</p>	<p>A document outlining the non-statutory consultation undertaken between October and December 2022. The report will provide a summary of the feedback received and identify how NGET has</p>	<p>All those interested in the consultation (see section 3.3 for detail).</p> <p>Members of the public will be able to access a copy at the deposit points (see section 3.11 for detail). The report will also be available to download from the Project’s website and printed copies will be</p>

Material	Description	Target audience
	had regard to that feedback.	posted on request. A fee will not be charged for printed copies of this document.
Feedback form	<p>Feedback form with qualitative and quantitative questions to gain thoughts and feedback on the proposed Project.</p> <p>The feedback form will be split into a section specific to Kent and Suffolk.</p>	<p>All those interested in the consultation (see section 3.3 for detail).</p> <p>Feedback forms will be posted to all residential and business addresses within the PCZ as part of the ‘Consultation Pack’ (as detailed in 3.5.1). Members of the public will also be able to collect a copy of the document at the deposit points (see 3.11) for detail).</p> <p>The feedback form will be available to complete/download on the Project’s website and printed copies will be posted on request. A fee will not be charged for printed copies of this document.</p> <p>NGET will consider requests for copies of the document in alternative formats (such as braille, large print, translations) on a case-by-basis, taking into account individual circumstances.</p>
Consultation banners	<p>Summary consultation banners will be produced to provide an overview of key components of the proposed Project.</p> <p>Banners will be designed to assist the understanding of the proposed Project and will allow for further discussion with members of the Project Team during public information events and other meetings.</p>	<p>All those interested in the consultation (see section 3.3 for detail), although the consultation banners are primarily intended for use at the public information exhibitions.</p> <p>Members of the public will also be able to view the banners on the Project’s website and printed copies will be posted on request. A fee will not be charged for printed copies of this document.</p>

Material	Description	Target audience
Consultation banners – audio version	To assist those with visual impairments, an audio version of the consultation banners will be made available.	All those interested in the consultation (see section 3.3 for detail) and those with visual impairments. Members of the public will be able to access the audio version of the consultation banners on the Project’s website.
Plans and drawings	Plans and drawings of the proposed Project to assist with understanding the proposals.	All those interested in the consultation (see section 3.3 for detail). Plans and drawings will be used throughout the consultation materials listed in this table. Some may also be collated to form individual documents. Members of the public will be able to view the plans and drawings on the Project’s website and printed copies will be posted on request. A fee will not be charged for printed copies of these documents.
Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)	The PEIR details environmental information and the results of preliminary assessments of any likely significant environmental impacts of the proposed Project, along with proposed mitigations.	All those interested in the consultation (see section 3.3 for detail). Members of the public will be able to view a copy of the non-technical summary at the deposit points (see section 3.11 for detail). The full PEIR will be able to be downloaded from the Project’s website, with digital copies available for inspection at deposit points and printed copies posted on request. A fee will be charged for printed copies of the PEIR.
Non-technical summary of the PEIR	A condensed version of the PEIR, intended to concisely summarise and explain the purpose of the PEIR and its findings.	All those interested in the consultation (see section 3.3 for detail). Members of the public will be able to access a copy at deposit points (see section 3.11 for detail). The document will also be available to

Material	Description	Target audience
		download via the Project's website and printed copies will be posted on request. A fee will not be charged for printed copies of this document. NGET will consider requests for copies of the document in alternative formats (such as braille, large print, translations) on a case-by-basis, taking into account individual circumstances.
Project's website	A dedicated consultation website (see Table 3.2 for detail).	All those interested in the consultation (see section 3.3 for detail).

3.4.2 NGET will consider requests for copies of select consultation materials identified in **Table 3.1** in alternative formats (such as braille, large print, translations) on a case-by-basis, taking into account individual circumstances. All consultation materials will also be available on the Project's website. Information will be easy to access and will be presented in a variety of ways to suit user requirements. Further detail is provided in **Table 3.2**.

Table 3.2 - Website features

Function	Rationale
Interactive Project map with layers that can be added and removed	To enable members of the public to see how different components of the proposed Project fit together and how they interact with the existing area.
Interactive Project map directing members of the public and stakeholders to general arrangement plan maps	To enable members of the public and other stakeholders to access detailed maps of the proposed Project.
HTML/digitally accessible version of Project overview document	To present the content of the Project overview document in a format more compatible with accessibility tools and different device formats
Videos, infographics and animations	To aide with understanding of the proposed Project.
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)	To provide answers to frequently asked questions without the need to contact the Project Team or attend an in-person event.

Function	Rationale
Online feedback form	To enable members of the public to submit their feedback online and reduce the carbon footprint of consultation activity.
Webinar sign-up form	To enable members of the public to sign-up to webinars.
'Ask the Experts' sign-up form	To enable members of the public to book a video, telephone or in-person 'Ask the Experts' appointment.
Contact details	To provide details of how to contact the Project Team for any further questions.
Accessibility	The Project's website will be compatible with assistive technology such as screen readers, to ensure accessibility for all those engaging with the consultation.

3.5 Promoting the consultation

- 3.5.1 NGET will contact all addresses within the PCZ with a Consultation Pack (to include a newsletter, feedback form and freepost envelope). A map showing the PCZ can be found in **Appendix A**.
- 3.5.2 The consultation will be advertised in local newspapers to provide details of where more information can be found, how to respond, and the dates of the public exhibitions. The newspapers will include:
- Eastern Daily Press
 - East Anglian Daily Times
 - Ipswich Star
 - Kentish Gazette
 - Kent and Sussex Courier
 - KM Thanet Extra
 - East Kent Mercury
- 3.5.3 The circulation areas of these newspapers extend across both the PCZ and SCZ, and beyond.
- 3.5.4 The consultation will also be promoted via statutory notices published in local and national newspapers, as well as in the London Gazette, Fishing News and Lloyd's List, giving details about the consultation in accordance with section 47 and 48 of the Planning Act. Site notices displaying this information will also be placed at key locations along the route of the proposed Project.

- 3.5.5 NGET will work with parishes and local authorities across the PCZ to advertise the consultation in parish magazines, on council websites and on council social media channels. Posters will also be sent to parish councils to display and raise awareness of the consultation.
- 3.5.6 Adverts will be placed on Facebook and Instagram to help raise general awareness of the consultation and target a broad range of demographics across the PCZ and SCZ, including those that might not otherwise engage with the consultation. These social channels have been selected due to their success during the non-statutory consultation.
- 3.5.7 In accordance with the Government’s approach to digital communication, all consultation materials will be available on our website: nationalgrid.com/sealink. Those who have enquiries in relation to the documents, plans and maps will be able to call 0808 134 9569.
- 3.5.8 Requests for paper copies of the technical documents will be reviewed on a case by-case basis. To cover printing costs a reasonable copying charge may apply, to be paid for by the recipient and up-to a maximum value of £300 for the whole suite of consultation documents. These can be requested by contacting the Project Team by email at contact@sealink.nationalgrid.com, or by calling 0808 134 9569.
- 3.5.9 NGET will also consider requests for alternative formats of documents, such as translations and large print, on a case-by-case basis to take into account individual circumstances. Requests can be made using the contact details provided in **3.5.8**.

3.6 Public information exhibitions

- 3.6.1 Nine public information exhibitions will be held for communities to find out information about the proposed Project and the consultation and talk to representatives from the Project Team. The exhibitions will be held at suitable, publicly accessible venues that are within or near to the PCZ.
- 3.6.2 Copies of all relevant consultation materials will be made available in print format at each exhibition. There will also be a series of banners to present the proposals for the proposed Project, including maps.
- 3.6.3 Those attending the exhibitions will be encouraged to provide their feedback on the proposals.
- 3.6.4 **Table 3.3** outlines the dates, times and locations of each of the exhibitions.

Table 3.3 - Details of public information exhibitions

Date	Time	Location
Wednesday 8 November	12:30pm to 5:30pm	Old Generator Station, King's Field, Aldeburgh, IP15 5HY
Thursday 9 November	11am to 4:30pm	Old Generator Station, King's Field, Aldeburgh, IP15 5HY

Wednesday 15 November	2:30pm to 7:30pm	Cliffsend Village Hall, 55 Foads Lane, Cliffsend, Ramsgate, CT12 5JH
Thursday 16 November	12pm to 5:30pm	Minster Village Hall, 1 High Street, Minster, CT12 4BU
Friday 17 November	10am to 3pm	Guildhall, Cattle Market, Sandwich, CT13 9AH
Friday 24 November	1pm to 6pm	Market Hall, High St, Saxmundham, IP17 1AF
Saturday 25 November	11am to 4pm	Market Hall, High St, Saxmundham, IP17 1AF
Wednesday 29 November	2pm to 7pm	Cliffsend Village Hall, 55 Foads Lane, Cliffsend, Ramsgate, CT12 5JH
Saturday 2 December	11am to 3pm	Royal Harbour Academy, Marlowe Way, Newington, Ramsgate, CT12 6FA

3.6.5 At least one of the public information events, in both Kent and Suffolk, will be held on a weekend, to ensure as broad a range of people as possible are able to attend the events.

3.6.6 If, for any reason, it is unfortunately necessary to cancel a scheduled event, for example as a result of adverse weather, this information will be published on the proposed Project's website and a notice will be placed at the venue if practicable. In these circumstances NGET will also consider organising additional events if deemed to be reasonably necessary.

3.7 Webinars

3.7.1 A total of five webinars will be held during the consultation period.

3.7.2 Two webinars will focus on a summary of the proposals in Suffolk, whilst two will summarise the proposals in Kent. All four sessions will include details of the marine proposals relevant to the proposed Project.

3.7.3 A fifth, pre-recorded webinar will be shared on the project website at the start of the consultation period, providing an overview of the onshore proposals in Suffolk and Kent, along with the marine proposals.

3.7.4 **Table 3.4** provides a summary of the webinars that will take place.

Table 3.4 - Details of webinars

Date	Time	Topic
Start of consultation	N/A	Onshore proposals in Suffolk and Kent and marine proposals
Wednesday 25 October	6pm to 7pm	Onshore proposals in Suffolk and marine proposals
Thursday 26 October	6pm to 7pm	Onshore proposals in Kent and marine proposals
Tuesday 31 October	2pm to 3pm	Onshore proposals in Suffolk and marine proposals
Wednesday 1 November	2pm to 3pm	Onshore proposals in Kent and marine proposals

- 3.7.5 Each live webinar will include a ‘Question & Answer’ session, enabling members of the public to submit questions to the team for a response.
- 3.7.6 One of each type of webinar detailing the proposals in Suffolk and Kent will include live captions and include a British Sign Language interpreter.
- 3.7.7 Members of the public can register for a webinar through the Project’s website or by email.
- 3.7.8 The recording of one of each type of webinar will be posted on the Project’s website shortly after the webinar has taken place, to allow members of the public and those with an interest in the consultation to view in their own time.

3.8 ‘Ask the Experts’ sessions

- 3.8.1 ‘Ask the Experts’ sessions will provide an opportunity for those with more detailed questions about the proposed Project and/or those unable to attend a public exhibition or webinar to speak directly with members of the Project Team. These sessions will be delivered on an appointment-only basis and will be made available in person, via telephone call or video call.
- 3.8.2 Telephone and video call appointment slots will be offered throughout the consultation period, whilst in-person appointments will be offered during weeks that a public information exhibition is taking place. NGET will seek to hold in-person appointments at venues closer to our proposals that would not have been suitable for a full public information exhibition.
- 3.8.3 **Table 3.5** sets out the proposed format and schedule for the ‘Ask the Experts’ sessions.

Table 3.5 - Details of 'Ask the Experts' sessions

Date	Time	Location
Week 1 of consultation	Morning/afternoon	Online/telephone
Week 2 of consultation	Afternoon/evening	Online/telephone
Week 3 of consultation	Morning/afternoon	Online/telephone
Thursday 23 November	3pm to 7:30pm	Friston Village Hall, Church Rd, Friston, IP17 1PU
Friday 1 December	2pm to 6pm	Radford House, 18-20 Effingham St, Ramsgate, CT11 9AT
Week 7 of consultation	Afternoon/evening	Online/telephone

3.9 Stakeholder briefings and meetings

3.9.1 NGET will offer briefing meetings with the following stakeholders in the run-up to, or during the consultation:

- MPs, where all or part of their constituencies lie within either consultation zone
- elected representatives of district and county councils within the PCZ
- parish councils, where all or part of the parish falls within the PCZ
- local authorities
- key prescribed consultees, such as AONB conservation boards
- persons with an Interest in Land (PILs) under sections 42(1)(d) of the Planning Act

3.9.2 NGET will also meet with other organisations and individuals upon request. These may include:

- prescribed bodies and local authorities under section 42(1)(a), (aa) and (b) of the Planning Act
- third party groups such as local enterprise partnerships, business groups and destination management organisations
- community groups and residents' associations with a close geographical relationship to the proposed Project
- parish councils which fall outside of the PCZ
- interest groups with a close relationship to the proposed Project.

3.10 Seldom heard groups

- 3.10.1 Seldom heard groups are defined as being inaccessible to most traditional and conventional methods of consultation for any reason.
- 3.10.2 NGET wants to ensure that all our engagement and consultation activity is inclusive, and wants to reach those who otherwise may not engage with us. **Table 3.6** sets out how the proposed Project will seek to engage seldom heard groups in the consultation.

Table 3.6 - Seldom heard engagement tools

Seldom heard category	Methods utilised to engage with category
Older people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● directly mailing a Consultation Pack and project information to all properties within the PCZ, and providing details of how to access paper copies of other documents and provide feedback by post ● options to submit feedback through conventional communications channels including by post and telephone if deemed necessary ● face-to-face events at a variety of locations and times across the route ● in-person and virtual ‘Ask the Experts’ sessions for those with further questions, featuring a booking system which will take into consideration individual needs ● availability of an induction loop during public exhibitions ● providing important information in both digital and non-digital formats and providing alternate formats such as easy read, braille and large print (upon request and reviewed on a case-by-case basis) ● engaging with community groups serving the demographic ● providing paper copies of materials at deposit point locations along with contact details for the Project Team, who will be able to provide further assistance and send Consultation Packs to those who are unable to access the material online
People with visual impairments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● audio guide of consultation banners

Seldom heard category Methods utilised to engage with category

- providing important information in both digital and non-digital formats and providing alternate formats such as easy read, braille and large print (upon request and reviewed on a case-by-case basis)
- options to enlarge text on the Project's website
- advertising the availability of 'Ask the Experts' sessions for those with further questions, or those who would like to discuss the proposed Project further.

People with limited mobility/disability

- options to submit feedback through conventional communications channels including by post and telephone if deemed necessary
- directly mailing a Consultation Pack and Project information to all properties within the PCZ, and providing details of how to access paper copies of other documents and provide feedback by post
- online engagement opportunities through the consultation website, webinars and 'Ask the Experts' sessions, to negate the need for travel
- providing important information in both digital and non-digital formats and providing alternate formats such as easy read, braille and large print (upon request and reviewed on a case-by-case basis)
- face-to-face public information events at a variety of locations and times with disabled access, across the route of the proposed Project
- in-person and virtual 'Ask the Experts' sessions for those with further questions, featuring a booking system which will take into consideration individual needs
- availability of an induction loop during public exhibitions
- provision of a British Sign Language interpreter and live captions at webinars

Youth age groups

- online engagement
-

Seldom heard category Methods utilised to engage with category

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● social media advertisements● reaching out to local centres of education to offer engagement opportunities.
15-19 and 20-39 age groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● online engagement● social media advertisements● face-to-face public information events at a variety of locations and times across the route of the proposed Project● reaching out to local centres of education to offer engagement opportunities.
Carers and families with young children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● options to engage through conventional and digital channels, to provide flexibility● face-to-face public information events and 'Ask the Experts' sessions at a variety of locations and times across the route of the proposed Project● online engagement opportunities through the consultation website, webinars and 'Ask the Experts' sessions, to negate the need for travel● social media advertisements● advertising the availability of 'Ask the Experts' sessions for those with further questions, or those who would like to discuss the proposed Project further.
Economically inactive individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● online engagement● social media advertisements● options to engage through conventional and digital channels, to provide flexibility.
Geographically isolated individuals or communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● directly mailing a consultation pack and Project information to all properties within the PCZ; and providing details of how to access paper copies of other documents and provide feedback by post● face-to-face public information events and 'Ask the Experts' sessions at a variety of locations and times across the route of the proposed Project

Seldom heard category Methods utilised to engage with category

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● online engagement opportunities through the consultation website, webinars and ‘Ask the Experts’ sessions, to negate the need for travel● advertising the availability of ‘Ask the Experts’ sessions for those with further questions, or those who would like to discuss the proposed Project further.
Locally underrepresented minority ethnic groups (such as black, Asian and minority ethnicity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● reaching out to community groups representing underrepresented minority ethnic groups to offer engagement opportunities.
English as a Second Language (ESL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● providing consultation materials in alternative languages upon request● translation/interpreter facilities provide during ‘Ask the Experts’ sessions upon request.
Travellers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● reaching out to community groups representing travellers to offer engagement opportunities● directly mailing a consultation pack and Project information to all properties within the PCZ, and providing details of how to access paper copies of other documents and provide feedback by post.
Digitally isolated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● reaching out to community groups representing digitally isolated groups to offer engagement opportunities● directly mailing a consultation pack and Project information to all properties within the PCZ, and providing details of how to access paper copies of other documents and provide feedback by post● in-person ‘Ask the Experts’ sessions, with a booking system which will take into consideration individual needs● advertisement of the consultation in traditional media such as local newspapers circulating in the PCZ and SCZ● providing paper copies of materials at deposit point locations along with contact details for the Project Team, who will be able to provide further assistance and send Consultation Packs

Seldom heard category Methods utilised to engage with category

to those who are unable to access the material online.

3.11 Deposit points

- 3.11.1 Whilst this is no longer a statutory requirement, paper copies of the project overview document, options selection and design evolution report, non-statutory consultation report, SoCC, non-technical summary of the PEIR, newsletter, feedback form and freepost envelope will be made available at a number of deposit points local to the proposals. Information on how to access a digital copy of the full PEIR will also be provided at deposit point locations.
- 3.11.2 The locations set out in **Table 3.7** have been selected following a review of the success of the deposit points utilised at non-statutory consultation.

Table 3.7 - Details of deposit point locations

Location	Address	Opening times
Saxmundham Library	Block B, Street Farm Rd, Saxmundham IP17 1AL	Mon: Closed Tues: 9:30am–5:30pm Weds: 9:30am–5:30pm Thurs: Closed Fri: 9:30am–5:30pm Sat: 10am–1pm Sun: 10am–3pm
Leiston Library	Main St, Leiston IP16 4ER	Mon: Closed Tues: 9:30am–5:30pm Weds: Closed Thurs: 9:30am–5:30pm Fri: 9:30am–1pm and 2pm–5pm Sat: 9:30am–1pm and 2pm–5pm Sun: 10am–3pm
Aldeburgh Library	Victoria Rd, Aldeburgh IP15 5EG	Mon: 9am–1pm Tues: 9am–1pm Wed: 9am–6pm Thurs: 9am–1pm Fri: 9am–1pm Sat: 10am–3pm Sun: 10am–1pm

Location	Address	Opening times
Snape Village Hall	5 Garrett Cl, Snape, Saxmundham IP17 1RN	Mon: 7am–7pm Tues: 7am–7pm Weds: 7am–7pm Thurs: 7am–7pm Fri: 7am–7pm Sat: 7am–7pm Sun: Closed
Friston Village Hall	Church Rd, Friston, Saxmundham IP17 1PU	Village hall open depending on events. Contact the village hall in advance via email at fristonvillagehall@gmail.com or at 01728 687914.
Ash Library	11 Queen's Rd, Ash, Canterbury CT3 2BG	Mon: 11:30am–1pm and 2pm–3pm Tuesday: 9:30am–1pm Weds: 9:30am–2pm Thurs: Closed Fri: 11:30am–5pm Sat: 9am–2pm Sun: Closed
Minster Library	4a Monkton Rd, Minster, Ramsgate CT12 4EA	Mon: 1pm–5pm Tues: 9:30am–1:30pm Weds: Closed Thurs: 12pm–5pm Fri: 10am–4pm Sat: 9:30am–1:30pm Sun: Closed
Sandwich Library	13 Market St, Sandwich CT13 9DA	Mon: Closed Tues: 9:30am–5pm Weds: Closed Thurs: 9:30am–5pm Fri: 9:30am–5pm Sat: 9:30am–3pm Sun: Closed
Ramsgate Library	Guildford Lawn, Ramsgate CT11 9AY	Mon: Closed Tues: 9:30am–5:30pm Weds: 9:30am–5:30pm Thurs: 9:30am–5:30pm Fri: 9:30am–5:30pm Sat: 9:30am–3:30pm

Location	Address	Opening times
		Sun: Closed
Newington Library	Royal Harbour Academy, Stirling Way, Ramsgate CT12 6FA	Mon: 9am–1pm and 2pm–5pm Tues: 9am–1pm Weds: Closed Thurs: 9am–1pm and 2pm–5pm Fri: Closed Sat: 9am–1pm Sun: Closed
Thanet District Council	Cecil Street, Margate, CT9 1AY	Mon: 8:45am–5pm Tues: 8:45am–5pm Weds: 8:45am–5pm Thurs: 8:45am–5pm Fri: 8:45am–5pm Sat: Closed Sun: Closed
Margate Library	Cecil Street, Margate, CT9 1RE	Mon: 10am–5:30pm Tues: 10am–5pm Weds: 10am–5pm Thurs: 10am–5:30pm Fri: 10am–5:30pm Sat: 10am–3:30pm Sun: Closed

- 3.11.3 Materials will be available to view during the opening hours listed above, except in circumstances outside of NGET’s control, such as severe weather, which prevent the locations specified from opening.

3.12 Contact details

- 3.12.1 Table 3.8 sets out the contact channels that will be available throughout the consultation for members of the public and other stakeholders to ask questions, request further information or request printed copies of consultation materials and documents.

Table 3.8 - Contact channels

Method	Contact details	Hours of operation
Online	nationalgrid.com/sealink	24/7
Email	contact@sealink.nationalgrid.com	24/7
Freephone	0808 134 9569	9am-5pm weekdays
Post	Freepost SEA LINK	24/7

3.12.2 The Project Team will respond to enquiries as quickly as possible. Where a substantive response requires information that is not readily to hand, the Project Team will endeavour to respond within ten working days. Where this is not possible, an explanation and holding response will be provided within ten working days.

4. Responses to the consultation

4.1 Methods of responding

4.1.1 During the consultation period, feedback can be submitted in the following ways:

- online via the Project's website (nationalgrid.com/sealink)
- by post at Freepost SEA LINK
- by email (contact@sealink.nationalgrid.com)

4.1.2 Consultation responses received via any other method than those listed above, such as through social media, will not be formally recorded as part of the consultation.

4.1.3 Responses provided orally, such as via telephone, will be accepted in exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis, where someone may not otherwise be able to respond to the consultation.

4.1.4 Feedback submissions sent by post will be accepted up until 2 January 2024.

4.1.5 Although they will not be formally included as consultation feedback, National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) will endeavour to have regard to feedback received after the end of the consultation.

4.1.6 All feedback will be handled in accordance with all applicable laws concerning the protection of personal data, including the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

4.1.7 More information on how NGET will use the information collected about respondents can be found in the consultation feedback form and on the Project's website during the consultation period.

4.2 Presenting the results

4.2.1 As set out in **Figure 2.1**, following the close of the consultation all feedback will be collated, reviewed and analysed to understand key themes and concerns. Our proposals will be reviewed and, where practicable, refined in light of feedback.

4.2.2 The proposed application will be finalised, taking into consideration the feedback received from the consultation in accordance with section 49 of the Planning Act.

4.2.3 A Consultation report will be produced as part of the application for development consent, as required by section 37 (3)(c) of the Planning Act. The report will include a summary of the consultation process undertaken in accordance with this SoCC and will set out how the feedback from the consultation has shaped and influenced the proposals as submitted within the application for development consent.

4.2.4 Responses to the consultation and extracts of responses may be published as part of the report unless specifically stated in the response. Any responses that are published will have all personal details redacted.

4.2.5 Upon receipt of an application for development consent, the Planning Inspectorate will decide whether the application meets the required standards to proceed to examination

and will determine whether the statutory consultation process has been adequate. As part of this process, local authorities will be invited to provide an adequacy of the consultation response to the Planning Inspectorate.

- 4.2.6 The consultation report will be available online, alongside other application documents, once an application for development consent has been submitted. Paper copies will be available from the Project Team on request and subject to a printing charge outlined in 3.5.8.

4.3 Further consultation

- 4.3.1 If, following the statutory consultation, NGET considers it is necessary to undertake further targeted statutory consultation, this would be undertaken, so far as relevant and proportionate, in accordance with the principles and methods set out in this SoCC.

4.4 Other developers' consultations

- 4.4.1 The Project Team is aware that a number of other organisations are developing proposals in the area, including:

- NGET's Bramford to Twinstead and Norwich to Tilbury (formerly known as East Anglia GREEN) network reinforcements
- National Grid Ventures' LionLink (formerly known as EuroLink) and Nautilus interconnectors
- North Falls offshore wind farm
- Five Estuaries offshore wind farm.

- 4.4.2 NGET will work to understand other local projects to ensure that the scope and context of this Project is clear in relation to the other consultations. This could include:

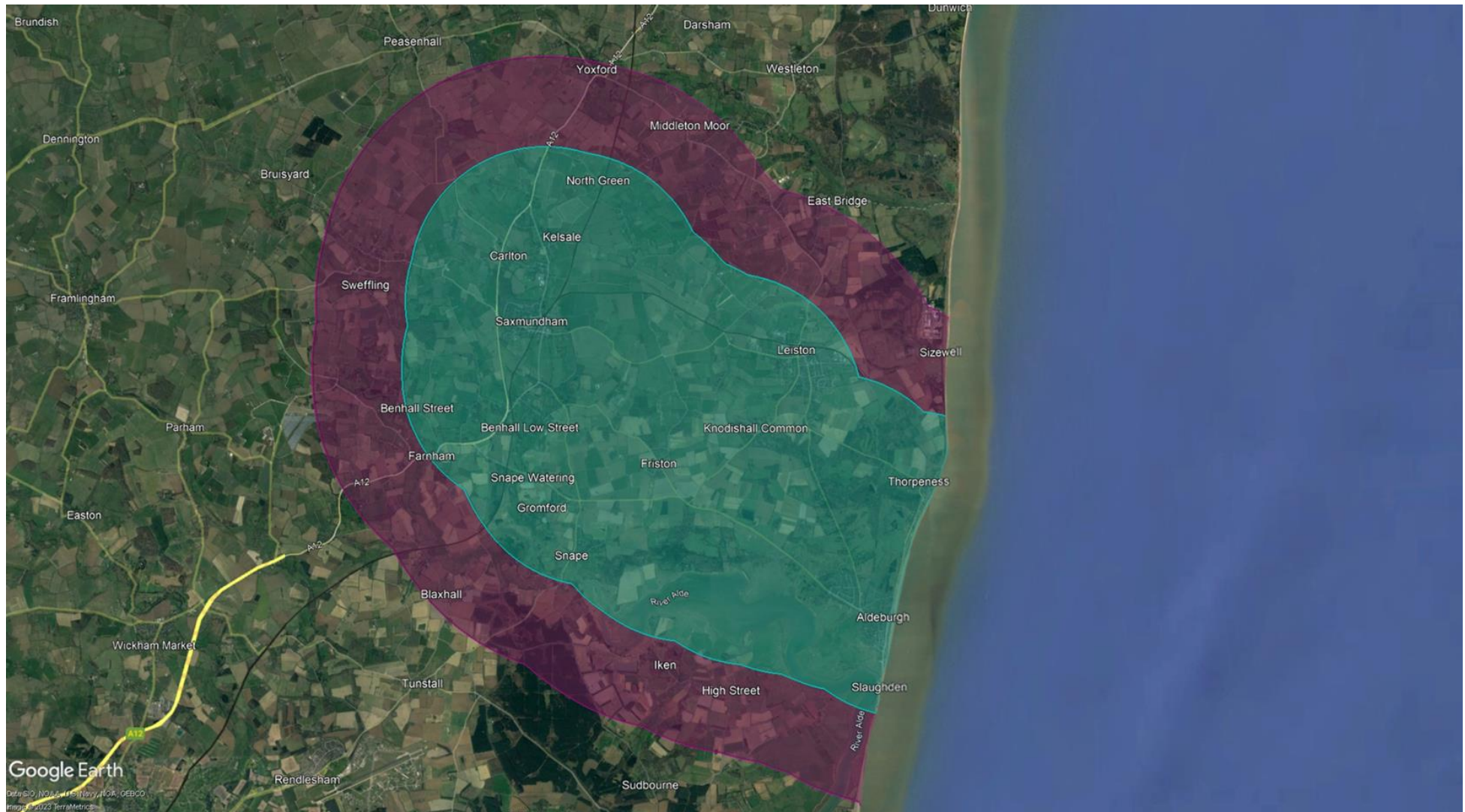
- having headline information about the other consultations at our events
- seeking to avoid holding events or running advertisements and press releases on the same dates and times as other consultations, where appropriate
- ensuring that any responses submitted to our statutory consultation that are intended for another consultation is passed on to the relevant community relations or consultation team.

- 4.4.3 Although we will pass on any misdirected consultation responses and provide headline information about other projects at our events, it is important to note that the events set out in this SoCC form part of the Sea Link statutory consultation only. Should attendees wish to comment on other local projects, they should engage directly with the relevant project team(s) and provide their feedback to these projects directly.

Appendix A PCZ and SCZ map

Figure A.1 Suffolk PCZ and SCZ map

Primary Consultation Zone Secondary Consultation Zone



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National Grid plc
National Grid House,
Warwick Technology Park,
Gallows Hill, Warwick.
CV34 6DA United Kingdom

Registered in England and Wales
No. 4031152
nationalgrid.com