LIONLINK

Supplementary
Non-Statutory
Consultation Summary Report

March 2024



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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this report

This report provides an overview of the LionLink project, the approach taken to the 2022 and 2023 non-statutory consultations, and how feedback received was used to refine the proposals. The outcomes of the 2022 non-statutory consultation were presented in our interim report.

This report will summarise feedback received to the 2023 non-statutory consultation, provide our latest responses to key feedback, alongside the rationale for discounting some of the options previously presented. The emerging preferences are detailed in this report and will be further refined through the design development process.

A full glossary defining key project terms can be found on page 34.

Project Overview

National Grid Ventures (NGV) is developing plans to build a new subsea electricity cable (known as an interconnector) between Great Britain and the Netherlands. The project, called LionLink, will play an important role in reducing the UK's reliance on fossil fuels and supporting the UK government's objectives to create a secure, reliable, and affordable energy supply for UK households.

LionLink will deliver a range of national benefits, including:



The opportunity to supply up to 1.8 gigawatts (GW) of electricity – enough to power approximately 2.5 million homes



LionLink is expected to save UK consumers almost £300 million in its first ten years of operation



First year total carbon emission savings equivalent to taking nearly 600,000 cars off the road



Delivering increased interconnector capacity towards the government target of 18GW of interconnector capacity by 2030



Strengthening the UK's national energy security

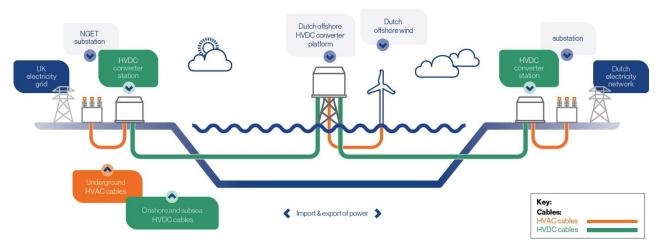


Supporting the UK and Europe's climate and energy goals



Boosting competition in the energy market and improving the affordability of energy

What infrastructure will be required?



Offshore infrastructure

LionLink will connect Great Britain to the Netherlands via High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) subsea cables, which will have capacity to connect to Dutch offshore wind via an offshore converter station platform. The offshore converter station will be in Dutch territorial waters and will be owned by our Dutch partners TenneT.

Onshore infrastructure

Onshore infrastructure will include a:

- Landfall site
- Underground HVDC cable corridor from the landfall site to the converter station
- Converter station
- High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) cable corridor from the converter station to the substation
- At the substation, the LionLink project will connect to the National Electricity Transmission System.

Project Timeline



SCOPE OF NON-STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

Introduction

A non-statutory consultation took place between October and December 2022, and a supplementary non-statutory consultation between September and November 2023. The approach taken to each consultation is summarised below.

Objectives of consultations

Both our 2022 and 2023 non-statutory consultation events were planned around three core objectives:

- Inform explain what the project will involve in an accessible, easy-to-understand and digestible format.
- **Engage** create opportunities to meaningfully interact with the project team and have questions answered.
- **Listen** establishing robust processes for ensuring that comments made by communities and statutory consultees are captured by the project.

The following steps were taken to maximise accessibility and participation:

- In-person exhibitions we held several events in community venues around LionLink's siting and routing options. These were advertised via leaflet drops to residents and businesses, social media advertising, notices in local newspapers, and correspondence with parish councils, local county and district councillors, and local authorities. Members of the project team were present to answer questions and utilised a series of informative banners, maps and handouts to explain the proposals in more detail.
- Project website a dedicated project website was set up to provide the public with clear and easy
 access to relevant information.
- Webinars we supplemented in-person events with webinars to enable more people to engage.
- Accessible materials events and information considered different requirements from communities and statutory consultees, including accessibility, clear visuals, placing less reliance on text.

2022 non-statutory consultation

The 2022 non-statutory consultation took place between Monday 24 October and Sunday 18 December 2022. It provided an opportunity for communities and statutory consultees to view and comment on our initial siting and routing options, as well as the HVDC and HVAC onshore cables. We also provided maps of the onshore and offshore environmental constraints. The feedback gave us valuable local insights into matters such as land quality, landscape, local ecology, tourism, archaeology, local heritage, flood risk, and traffic issues and concerns.

To maximise participation and engagement, we held five in-person community events in Leiston, Saxmundham, Aldeburgh, Reydon, and Dunwich. Alongside these in-person events, we also hosted two community webinars and a virtual exhibition of our project proposals, which was live and accessible across the eight-week consultation period on the project's website.

In addition, we provided virtual briefings with parish councils, district and county councillors, and local authorities. People were able to contact us through the consultation via our dedicated communication channels (phone line and email).

Overview of options in 2022 consultation

The siting and routing options presented are provided below (please refer to Appendix A for maps depicting the options):

Converter station sites	Landfill sites
Site 1: Converter station search area located north of Aldeburgh Road.	Landfall E: Landfall search area site located in Aldeburgh.
Site 3: Converter station search area located east of Saxmundham.	Landfall F: Landfall search area site located in Reydon and Southwold.
Site 4: Converter station search area located north west of Leiston.	Landfall G: Landfall search area site located in Walberswick.
Site 5: Converter station search area option located west of Leiston.	Landfall H: Landfall search area site located in Dunwich.

Outcomes of 2022 consultation

Engagement during our 2022 non-statutory consultation:

- 234 feedback responses were received from community members and statutory consultees, including town and parish councils, and Members of Parliament
- 87 people attended our community webinar events
- 8,006 views of our website and virtual exhibition
- 535 people attended our in-person community events.

In August 2023, we published an <u>interim report</u> providing an overview of the feedback we received and how this feedback was being used to refine our proposals. Including the identification of:

- An alternative landfall site at Walberswick, which was considered to have the potential to reduce access constraints and traffic impacts.
- An alternative onshore cable corridor to the north of Southwold, which was considered to have the potential to reduce impacts on designated sites of ecological importance.

We then held a supplementary non-statutory consultation to enable local communities and statutory consultees to provide their feedback on these alternative options, as well as provide a further opportunity to give feedback on the original options presented.

2023 supplementary non-statutory consultation

The 2023 supplementary non-statutory consultation took place between Friday 8 September 2023 and Friday 3 November 2023. The consultation provided an opportunity for people to view and comment on our alternative siting and routing options alongside those presented in the 2022 consultation.

Overview of options in 2023 consultation

The siting and routing options presented are shown below (please refer to Appendix A for maps depicting the options):

Converter station sites	Landfill sites	
Site 1: Converter station search area located north of Aldeburgh Road.	Landfall E: Landfall search area s located in Aldeburgh.	site
Site 3: Converter station search area located east of Saxmundham.	Landfall F: Landfall search area solution located in Reydon and Southwold.	
Site 4: Converter station search area located north west of Leiston.	Landfall G: Landfall search area s located in Walberswic	
Site 5: Converter station search area option located west of Leiston.	Landfall G2: Alternative Walberswi landfall search area s Including an alternativ onshore cable corrido the north of Southwol	ite. ⁄e r to
	Landfall H: Landfall search area solution located in Dunwich.	site

Method of publicising 2023 consultation

We advertised the consultation and encouraged people to take part by posting c.18,000 consultation leaflets to properties and businesses, once again utilising social media advertising via Facebook and Instagram and publishing an advert in the Eastern Daily Press and the East Anglian Daily Times. The 2023 supplementary non-statutory consultation had a larger consultation zone due to the alternative cable corridor identified north of Southwold.

To ensure we maximised participation and engagement with communities around the alternative siting and routing options, we held in-person community events in Walberswick, Reydon and Leiston. Alongside these in-person events, we once again hosted two community webinars and a virtual exhibition of our project proposals.

Similar to the 2022 consultation, we also arranged virtual briefings and meetings with parish councils, district and county councillors, local authorities, and statutory and technical consultees.

Communication and feedback channels

People were able to contact the project team and provide feedback via the following channels:

- In-person by attending our exhibition events
- Online via our project website (<u>nationalgrid.com/lionlink</u>)
- Writing to us or posting a hard copy feedback form to our freepost address (Freepost NGV LionLink)
- Calling us via our dedicated phoneline (0800 083 1787)
- Emailing us via our dedicated project email address info@lionlink.nationalgrid.com

Outcomes of 2023 consultation

Engagement during our 2023 supplementary non-statutory consultation:

- 1,318 feedback responses were received from community members and statutory consultees, including town and parish councils, and Members of Parliament
- 126 people attended our community webinar events
- 11,853 unique views of our website and virtual exhibition
- 1,317 people attended our in-person community events.

2023 supplementary non-statutory consultation materials

All our consultation materials were available on our dedicated project website and are still available to <u>view here</u>. The materials included:

- Public webinar presentation
- Exhibition banners
- Briefing pack
- Consultation leaflet
- FAQs
- Maps of all landfall sites, converter station sites and cable route options
- Maps of heritage sites, landscape and ecology, and marine environmental information
- Virtual exhibition

- Feedback form hardcopy
- Digital feedback form
- Links to 2022 non-statutory consultation materials
- Interim Non-Statutory Consultation Feedback Summary Report.

ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK FROM THE 2023 NON-STATUTORY CONSULTATION

Method of analysis

Following the conclusion of the 2023 non-statutory consultation, feedback received was analysed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Quantitative analysis was used for responses to close-ended questions contained in the feedback form, and qualitative analysis for open-ended questions, and detailed responses received by email or letter.

To facilitate the qualitative analysis, a coding framework was developed and informed by data collected from Natural Language Processing (NLP) analysis to establish key themes and topics. The coding framework was used to categorise feedback to identify key areas of interest and ensure a structured and consistent approach was taken to the qualitative analysis. Each response was read, and pertinent sections extracted and coded accordingly.

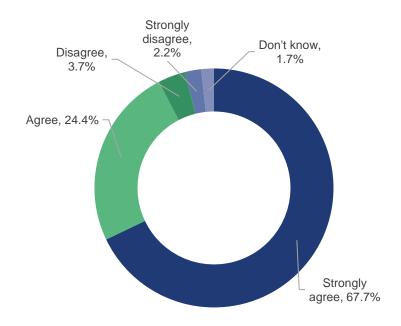
Workshops were subsequently held with technical specialists from the project team to consider feedback received to inform the design development process.

Respondents' attitudes to key drivers and needs

Similar to the 2022 non-statutory consultation, our feedback form included questions on strategic drivers for the LionLink project, including net zero, energy security, energy prices and coordination.

1. Delivering net zero

92.1% of respondents either "Agree" or "Strongly agree" that delivering the energy infrastructure required to deliver net zero and reduce carbon emissions should continue to be a national priority.



Strongly agree – 272 (67.7%)

Agree – 98 (24.4%)

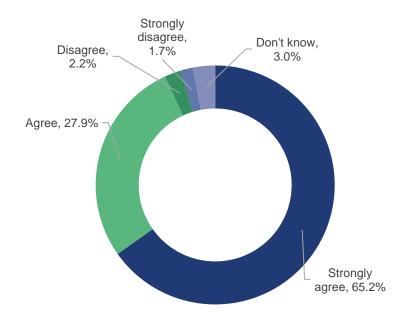
Disagree – 15 (3.7%)

Strongly disagree – 9 (2.2%)

Don't know – 7 (1.7%)

2. Improving energy security

93.1% of respondents "Strongly agree" or "Agree" that the UK needs to improve its energy security to protect against fluctuations in supply and demand.



Strongly agree – 262 (65.2%)

Agree – 112 (27.9%)

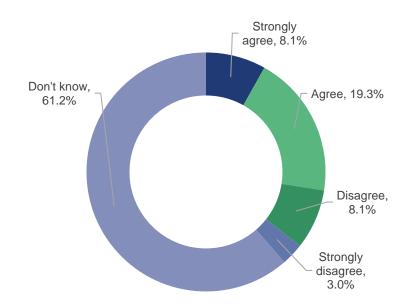
Disagree – 9 (2.2%)

Strongly disagree – 7 (1.7%)

Don't know – 12 (3%)

3. Keeping prices down

27.4% of respondents "Strongly agree" or "Agree" that energy infrastructure should be delivered if it would help keep energy prices down. The feedback received here indicated further work needs to be undertaken in engaging on this subject.



Strongly agree – 32 (8.1%)

Agree – 76 (19.3%)

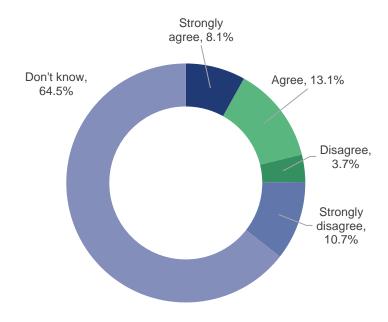
Disagree – 32 (8.1%)

Strongly disagree – 12 (3%)

Don't know – 241 (61.2%)

4. Commitment to coordination

21.2% of respondents "Strongly agree" or "Agree" that NGV's commitment to working with other developers in East Suffolk is a welcome step in improving coordination in the region. The feedback received here indicated further work needs to be undertaken in engaging with other developers on coordination.



Strongly agree – 31 (8.1%)

Agree - 50 (13.1%)

Disagree – 14 (3.7%)

Strongly disagree – 41 (10.7%)

Don't know – 247 (64.5%)

These questions identified that most respondents agreed net zero should continue to be a national priority and wanted to see the UK improve its energy security. Many respondents answered "Don't Know" to questions around energy prices and coordination, which suggests there is more for us to do to explain how LionLink will reduce prices and more effectively set out the approach we are taking on coordinating construction with other developers in the area.

There was a significant increase in the amount of feedback received in the 2023 non-statutory consultation compared to the 2022 non-statutory consultation, which resulted in a much higher percentage of respondents agreeing that net zero should be a priority and that the UK should improve its energy security. In 2022, although the majority of respondents either "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" with these questions, a large minority responded, "Don't Know". This suggests that there is a growing appreciation for the importance of net zero and energy security within the communities around the siting and routing options. Although this does not directly translate into similar levels of support for the project, there is common ground on the key strategic drivers for LionLink.

You said, our response

The tables below set out the recurring themes identified through the qualitative analysis, and our latest response to this feedback. Our response seeks to demonstrate how we are taking each matter into account through the ongoing design and assessment process.

01. Suggestions of alternative infrastructure options

Alongside objections to onshore infrastructure, three key alternatives were proposed by respondents:

What you told us

Alternative policy proposals, e.g., 'offshore grid'

Respondents questioned whether more extensive offshore options had been investigated and whether further studies could be undertaken and published on alternative offshore options before the project advanced further. Respondents said NGV should consider offshore grid alternatives like those being planned in Belgium, Germany, Holland, and Denmark, which they claimed did not involve large-scale onshore infrastructure being delivered.

Our response

LionLink is an offshore alternative to generating energy that would otherwise have to be produced onshore. LionLink is an essential part of the transition to putting more infrastructure offshore and bringing offshore wind into the Grid.

However, a fully offshore grid (or energy island) does not (and could not) form part of the project that is being consulted upon. LionLink must operate within existing legislation and regulations, and an offshore grid would require changes to these. We continue to monitor Government's response to this ongoing debate.

We can clarify that even with the provision of offshore converter stations and substation(s), onshore infrastructure would still be needed to connect to the onshore national electricity network. For instance, cables will still need to run onshore from an offshore grid; onshore converter stations would still be needed to convert the electricity (HVDC to HVAC) and; a substation to transform electricity into the required voltages.

We are listening to community feedback and understand the concerns about the impact of LionLink on the natural environment. Minimising the environmental impact onshore and offshore is front of mind as we develop our proposals.

Brownfield site alternatives

Suggestions included exploring brownfield alternatives like Bradwell or Sizewell C.

There are no suitable brownfield sites in the vicinity of Leiston where our connection agreement was granted. As per connection offer, we are assuming connection at the proposed Friston substation. It also delivers onshore coordination with other projects. Delivering coordination has been a key theme from our feedback to date.

Several factors weigh against LionLink connecting at **Bradwell**, Essex. From an offshore perspective there would be a significantly longer offshore cable route which would cross several European designated sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)), within which other infrastructure would need to be crossed (e.g., power and telecommunication cables). Where an infrastructure crossing is needed the submarine cables cannot be buried into the seabed and would require external protection to ensure the security of the cables. This external cable protection would result in a significant loss of marine habitat within European designated sites.

Connecting Bradwell to other areas of the transmission network would also necessitate substantial onshore infrastructure works to increase the voltage including the provision of new overhead lines.

The discounting of **Sizewell C** was informed by discussions with EDF and SPR, and the work they had undertaken as part of their EA1N and EA2 windfarm projects. LionLink found that there were significant technical challenges with co-locating infrastructure around Sizewell C due to the operational requirements of nuclear facilities and environmental protection areas.

Infrastructure closer to 'need' e.g., London

Respondents questioned why the project needed to be in Suffolk and asserted that the vast majority of the energy would be going to power demand centres like London.

Like all other energy sources in the UK, the energy brought to the UK via LionLink will be distributed across the UK by the national electricity transmission network. The purpose of this project is to bolster the security of Great Britain's energy supply, rather than a particular area.

02. Impact of construction on local tourist industries

What you told us

Respondents highlighted potential disruptions like construction traffic, noise, congestion, and changes to the local landscape, fearing adverse effects on the local economy by deterring tourists, especially at site G2 in Walberswick.

Impacts on tourism were further raised as chief concerns by statutory consultees including landowners, parishes and statutory environmental bodies.

Our response

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will consider socioeconomic impacts, including on the local tourist industry. Where adverse effects are detected, appropriate mitigation measures will be proposed for implementation.

Compensation will be assessed in accordance with the statutory 'Compensation Code'. We would advise anyone who thinks they have a compensable interest to seek advice from a suitable qualified Chartered Surveyor.

NGV remains committed to exploring options to coordinate our activities during the construction and operational phases with other projects in the area to minimise any impacts. This will further be assessed during the EIA process.

LionLink will deliver direct and indirect employment opportunities to the area through its construction and operation phases. This will be considered within the socio-economic impact assessment for LionLink.

We will continue to review and consider all feedback received from the community and statutory consultees and use this to help design the scheme to minimise impacts. Preliminary findings from the EIA will be shared in the 2025 statutory consultation through the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) before we submit our Development Consent Order (DCO) application which will be accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES).

03. Local ecology and biodiversity

What you told us

Although most respondents continue to support increasing our supply of renewable energy, it was considered by some that the expected environmental impact of LionLink would be too great, and that renewable energy projects should not be constructed at the expense of damaging sites with environmental protections.

Respondents expressed concerns about the potential environmental impact of the project in the Suffolk Coastal area, citing concerns around disruptions to ecosystems, wildlife habitats, pollution, and effects on prime farming land.

Concerns were also expressed around coastal and marine environments, including increased erosion and flooding risks. In Walberswick, concerns were raised about the potential threat to over 100 bird species, especially the Marsh Harriers, and the impact on reedbed habitat. The G2 landfall site, with over 63 bird species spotted in 2023, also raised environmental apprehensions.

Biodiversity impacts via a loss of woodland were raised as concerns during meetings with statutory consultees including the Forestry Commission and Natural England

Our response

We commit to conducting a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) before any DCO application submission, addressing various environmental aspects. Documents, starting with the EIA scoping report in March 2024.

The interaction with other regional projects will be assessed during the EIA and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) as part of the cumulative and in combination impact assessments.

Preliminary findings from the EIA will be shared in the 2025 statutory consultation through the PEIR before we submit our DCO application which will be accompanied by an environmental statement.

Key considerations

Wherever possible, we have sought to avoid or limit impacts to protected and notable habitats and species through the design process. Species specific and habitat surveys will be undertaken, and any UK priority habitats or species will be identified at this stage and steps taken to avoid or minimise impacts.

LionLink will mitigate any unavoidable loss of habitats and include enhancement to deliver biodiversity net gain of at least 10%, complying with the standards set out in the Environment Act 2021.

Retained woodland would be protected through construction with appropriate buffers and root protection zones following an arboricultural assessment. This will include a minimum 15m buffer in relation to ancient woodlands. Future siting and routing work will design the route

to avoid impacts to ancient and veteran trees and limit impacts to hedgerows wherever possible.

Additional offshore considerations

Preferred offshore routes have been identified to avoid or minimise impacts to offshore receptors such as designated sites, sensitive habitats and species, and other marine users e.g., shipping, commercial fisheries, recreational yachting. The EIA will assess the potential for direct and indirect impacts upon commercial fisheries from the project. Where adverse effects are identified, appropriate mitigation measures will be proposed for implementation.

See Appendix B for a map depicting our onshore and offshore environmental constraints.

04. Impact on land designations

What you told us

Respondents flagged conflicts with land designations in East Suffolk, including National Landscapes (formerly referred to as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and Ramsar sites.

Impacts on National Landscapes were raised as a particular concern during meetings held with statutory consultees including the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape. A preference was raised for converter sites that would fall outside of these designations. Construction impacts were similarly raised as potentially impacting upon people's enjoyment of the National Landscapes.

Sensitive areas along the Wang River and Blyth River valleys were cited as being potentially disrupted by the project.

Our response

The project is aware of the various designations that exist both onshore and offshore around the Suffolk Coast. Responding responsibly to these designations is front of mind for the project and we will continue to work closely with Natural England and other environmental organisations with interest in the area.

A landfall study area between Aldeburgh and Pakefield/Lowestoft was identified as appropriate for consideration due to the grid connection point identified in the Leiston area. As a result, there is no opportunity for the project to wholly avoid the National Landscape.

Through the optioneering process to date, and in the future, siting and routing will seek to limit the impact to National Landscapes where possible.

The impacts on National Landscapes will be assessed as part of the EIA and through the planning assessment. Where adverse effects are identified, appropriate mitigation measures will be implemented.

05. Construction methodologies

What you told us

Respondents flagged concerns around construction impacts both onshore and offshore and the impacts of restorative works required. Further concerns were raised around impacts on the fishing industry.

The impact on Walberswick was a major concern, with concerns about safety, insufficient access routes, potential disruption to footpaths and the main road, and the proximity of the proposed landfall location to residential properties.

Concerns also centered around increased traffic, noise, light pollution, and dust impacting the village's appeal to visitors and the local economy.

Some respondents expressed unease about the lack of road access for construction vehicles to site G2, speculating on the need for a haulage road near existing homes.

Our response

Respondents should be reassured that as the project progresses, a construction management plan will be developed. This plan will consider key times like the breeding season, wintering bird season, and tourism patterns to minimise construction impact and will be consulted on as part of the PEIR.

Onshore impacts

Additional studies by NGV will determine the need for temporary construction haul roads, depending on the selected landfall site and environmental considerations. Construction will be phased, lasting at least 12 months for the landfall site, up to four years for the cable corridor, and at least three years for the converter station, all completed in stages, considering specific conditions.

A construction air quality assessment will be undertaken as part of the EIA process. Any impacts to air quality will be short term and temporary for the duration of the construction phase. This assessment will identify any mitigation measures required to minimise adverse impacts, examples include vehicular wheel washing or dampening to help mitigate the level of dust and/or mud created when accessing construction sites.

Offshore impacts

Offshore routes have been developed to avoid or minimise impacts to offshore receptors such as designated sites, sensitive habitats and species, and other marine users e.g., shipping, commercial fisheries, recreational yachting. The EIA will assess the potential for direct and indirect impacts upon commercial fisheries from the project. Where adverse effects are identified, appropriate mitigation measures will be proposed for implementation.

06. Coordination

What you told us

Respondents continued to state their preference for coordinating with other renewable energy projects planned for the region to share infrastructure. There was some agreement that one landfall for multiple projects might help reduce the cumulative impact on the area.

Some frustration was expressed that although most respondents to the 2022 non-statutory consultation supported a commitment to coordination with other projects, the alternate options proposed as part of the 2023 non-statutory consultation will not accommodate coordination and are not focused on sharing infrastructure.

A number of statutory consultees expressed a strong preference for coordination with Sea Link in order to minimise impacts on their respective disciplines i.e., environmental, ecological, heritage.

Coordination was noted as a point of importance in meetings held with consultees including East Suffolk District Council, Suffolk County Council, local parishes and Anglian Water.

Our response

We are working closely with other developers in the area to explore opportunities to coordinate activities and minimise impact on local communities and the environment.

Coordination could range from co-location of infrastructure from different projects on the same site to coordinating construction activities to reduce potential impacts on local communities and the environment.

NGV and NGET (National Grid Electricity Transmission) are working collaboratively to explore opportunities to co-locate onshore infrastructure for LionLink and Sea Link where technically feasible.

As the project is refined and a more detailed construction programme developed, we will also explore opportunities to coordinate construction activity between LionLink and other developers in the local area.

Coordination could include aligning specific works to reduce impacts on the environment and local communities, alongside re-using materials, sharing site compounds, landscaping, mitigation opportunities, and how we invest in communities.

07. Health and community impacts

What you told us

Respondents raised concerns about the project having a detrimental impact on their respective local community, either by encouraging residents to move out from the village, affecting the local economy (as stated above) or altering the local landscape and biodiversity for years to come.

The large number of large-scale infrastructure projects planned for the region and their cumulative impact was highlighted as alarming; respondents raised concerns that the congestion, noise, light pollution, and dust associated with the construction of the projects, which may take place concurrently, will affect the local community's health and wellbeing.

Noise and air pollution impacts, as well as loss to quality of life from construction, were key themes in discussions with local parishes, councillors and landowners.

Our response

Our EIA and design development will consider potential impacts to health and wellbeing because of the construction and operation of LionLink. As part of this assessment, we will also consider any potential impacts to noise and light pollution and the mitigations required to reduce those impacts.

Currently, we can say that during the operational phase of the project, lighting will be present at the convertor station site only. It will be in use during normal working hours, and/or if access is required to the site to support emergency and/or security incidents during the night.

The interaction with other regional projects will be assessed during the EIA as part of the wider cumulative impact assessment.

Preliminary findings from the EIA will be shared in the 2025 statutory consultation before submitting our DCO application

08. Archaeology and local heritage

What you told us

Respondents emphasised the importance of protecting the area's heritage during construction and after the project was operating, e.g., sites like Aldeburgh beach.

Respondents raised that disruption associated with the project could erode the cultural heritage of the community, by impacting local landmarks, heritage sites, and traditional landscapes.

Concerns were raised regarding the alternative underground cable north search area, beginning at Landfall Option F (Southwold). It was stated that approximately two thirds of this search area is located within the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape, and that throughout this corridor there are several intact historic field boundaries, with irreplaceable veteran trees.

Meetings held with statutory consultee Historic England noted the likelihood of archaeological remains at landfall points including Dunwich, with the recommendation of thorough archaeological assessments to be undertaken as soon as possible.

Our response

The potential for heritage, archaeology and landscape quality impacts, will continue to be considered during the EIA and design development process. The results of surveys and assessments undertaken so far have led to our discounting of Landfall H in Dunwich, given the adverse expected impact on the medieval town. The potential for archaeological remains will be further assessed through desk-based research and archival data, geophysical surveys and where appropriate, trial trenching.

Where adverse effects are detected, appropriate mitigation measures will be proposed for implementation. Cumulative impacts with other regional projects will also be considered within our EIA and NGV remains committed to exploring options to coordinate our activities during the construction and operational phases.

Preliminary findings from the EIA will be shared in the 2025 statutory consultation before submitting our DCO application.

09. Feedback on consultation

What you told us

Some respondents expressed frustration that the initial options proposed as part of the 2022 non-statutory consultation remained under consideration and felt that the 2022 non-statutory consultation did not inform the 2023 consultation.

There was disappointment among some respondents that a second Walberswick option was proposed, despite providing feedback during the 2022 non-statutory consultation requesting that the village was excluded from the search area.

Furthermore, some respondents stated that they felt some of the questions put forward were unclear and would have liked NGV to provide further information explaining the proposals, including information on impact to residents, construction and restoration, particularly around flood plains. It was also stated that respondents would have liked to see more evidence of the research undertaken to justify the options being presented.

Some statutory consultees including East Suffolk District Council and Friston Parish Council raised that they would prefer further detail to have been included around matters including siting options, construction works, coordination, economic and environmental impacts.

Our response

We regret that any respondents felt our consultation events were uninformative and were dissatisfied.

Feedback on the consultation and associated materials is appreciated and will be used to inform the approach to upcoming engagement and the statutory consultation in 2025. In the interim, we are more than happy to provide clarifications if there are specific consultation materials that are unclear, or if anyone requires any additional information. Please contact us via the details provided on the back page.

We consider all feedback received and undertake detailed analysis of respondents' comments.

The alternative landfall site in Walberswick (G2) was identified in response to concerns around access to the original Walberswick landfall (G), whilst the alternative cable route north of Southwold was identified in response to concerns around other options passing through several environmental designations.

10. Land quality

What you told us

Several respondents expressed unease that arable farmland, and the future land quality of the site selected, would be impacted. It was considered that the northern landfall sites would result in the most damage to agricultural land and soils. It was referenced that Converter Station Sites 1 and 3 are either arable farmland, or adjacent to arable farmland.

Our response

We aim to reduce impacts to agriculture and soils as far as possible through the design development process. These impacts will be assessed as part of the EIA, and where any adverse effects are identified, appropriate mitigation will be implemented.

Preliminary findings from the EIA will be shared in the 2025 statutory consultation before submitting our DCO application

PROJECT EVOLUTION

A phased approach has been taken to develop the project proposals, which is summarised below:

Phase 1 - Securing a connection agreement

NGV applied for a connection point for LionLink to the National Grid Electricity System Operator (NGESO), which undertook an appraisal process to identify a point of connection on its network. This included an assessment of environmental, socio-economic, technical, and cost factors, which concluded that East Suffolk was the optimal connection point.

In 2017, NGV received a connection agreement from the NGESO to connect to a new substation in the Leiston area. As part of ongoing discussions with the NGESO we are progressing on the basis that the point of connection will be at the proposed Friston substation, as this already benefits from consent and has capacity to be extended to facilitate the project.

Phase 2 - Siting and routing options

The grid connection point at the proposed Friston substation was used as the geographic starting point to identify a longlist of potential siting and routing options for the landfall site, converter station site and associated onshore cable corridors. In generating the longlist of options, a range of onshore and offshore factors were considered, including:

- Location, topography, site size, access and ownership:
 - Landfall site requires a 2ha area along the coastline
 - Converter station site requires up to a 6ha permanent area (plus a 2ha temporary construction area) within a 5km radius of the proposed Friston substation – to reduce the length of the HVAC cables and subsequently minimise power transmission losses and construction working widths
 - Onshore cable corridors require permanent easements which allow maintenance of the cables, and up to a 150m wide working width during construction.
- Ecological, landscape, heritage designations and assets
- Amenity (including noise, vibration, light, air quality and traffic considerations)
- Settlements, properties, existing infrastructure and future developments
- Recreation and tourism
- Hydrology, flood risk, geology and coastal erosion
- Planning policies and allocations
- Shipping and vessel activity
- Commercial fishing operations
- Construction feasibility and cost.

In parallel, combinations of the different onshore infrastructure components were tested to identify optimum configurations due to the interdependencies of these components. Preliminary options for offshore cable routes were also considered.

An assessment of each onshore option contained on the longlist was then undertaken by our technical specialists to reach consensus on the optimum shortlist of options, which would be taken forward to non-statutory consultation. This assessment included consideration of opportunities for colocation and coordination with other major energy infrastructure projects in the region.

Phase 3 – 2022 non-statutory consultation

As described, the shortlisted onshore siting and routing options were subject to a non-statutory consultation between October and December 2022. Following the non-statutory consultation, further assessments were undertaken to consider the constraints and opportunities, and potential mitigation measures for the shortlisted options, alongside feedback received from the non-statutory consultation.

In response to consultation feedback received and technical and environmental considerations, the project team identified two alternative options; an alternative landfall site at Walberswick; and an alternative onshore underground cable corridor to the north of Southwold.

Phase 4 – 2023 supplementary non-statutory consultation

As described, a supplementary non-statutory consultation was held between September-November 2023. This consultation included the options presented during the 2022 non-statutory consultation, alongside the two alternative options described above (one alternative landfall site at Walberswick, and one alternative HVDC cable corridor to the north of Southwold).

Phase 5 – Emerging preferences

Our siting and routing process has assessed technically feasible options against a range of environmental, socio-economic and design considerations. It has also been informed by technical studies, environmental surveys and feedback received through stakeholder engagement, and the 2022 and 2023 consultations.

This approach has enabled the identification of our **emerging preferences**. Our emerging preferences are those options which are preferred over other options considered (but are not the final proposals) and which will be subject to further refinement through the EIA process, as well as our 2025 statutory consultation. Our emerging preferences and rationale for their selection is presented in the following section.

OUR EMERGING PREFERENCES

Over the next few pages, we have explained our emerging preferences, how they have been selected and how they respond to the feedback we have received.

Landfall sites and associated HVDC cable corridors

Discounted options:

- Landfall E (Aldeburgh)
- Landfall G (Original Walberswick)
- Landfall H (Dunwich)

Emerging preferences:

- Landfall F (Southwold/Reydon) and alternate cable corridor to the north of Southwold
- Landfall G2 (Alternative Walberswick)

Rationale for discounting options:

Landfall E (Aldeburgh) was discounted due to significant environmental and technical risks associated with the nearshore approach to the site. LionLink would approach the coast from the north after connecting with a Dutch windfarm located in the North Sea. The Aldeburgh landfall site would therefore result in the longest offshore cable route of the shortlisted options. The offshore cable route would also cross up to 11 other cable routes, all within European designated sites and likely to result in impacts to the Outer Thames Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA), which could not be mitigated. The crossings will require scouring of the seabed to build concrete beds as protection for the cable, which would result in the loss of existing seabed and impact on the marine environment. This option would also potentially impact the Coralline Crag (a unique geological feature) and fishing netting grounds.

Whilst offshore constraints were the primary reason for the discounting of Landfall E, a number of onshore environmental designations in this location create further challenges. These include the sites location within a SSSI and important bird areas which would require meaningful environmental protections, mitigations and restoration works.

Although consultation feedback favoured coordination with other developers at landfall and converter station sites, the benefits of this at Landfall E (such as a reduction in construction traffic and sharing of materials), were not sufficient to outweigh the challenges presented from an environmental and technical perspective. Although some of these challenges could in part be mitigated, consultation feedback strongly noted the need to protect onshore and offshore environmental sites and designations which also informed our decision to discount this site.

See Appendix B for a plan showing the onshore and offshore environmental constraints presented during the 2023 non-statutory consultation.

Landfall G (Original Walberswick) was discounted as it would have involved the temporary loss of the beach carpark and beach huts during construction, and construction traffic crossing the narrow bridge over the Dunwich River and passing through the centre of Walberswick.

Landfall H (Dunwich) was discounted due to the likelihood of adverse impacts on local heritage, particularly the archaeological asset around the site. There were also challenging technical constraints associated with constructing the landfall via trenchless installation method such as Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) due to the steep cliff face and speed of coastal erosion in the location, alongside any visual impacts on the character of the medieval village.

Rationale for emerging preferences:

Landfall F (Southwold/Reydon) is an emerging preference as whilst it falls within the National Landscape, it sits outside of statutory environmental designations, which were identified as a key concern in feedback received to both non-statutory consultations. Whilst the associated alternate onshore cable corridor to the north of Southwold would be the longest of the options taken to non-statutory consultation, it would avoid European designated sites and crossing the River Blyth, floodplain and associated habitat. It would also avoid impacts on the A1095 and minimise construction disruption through Southwold and Reydon.

The offshore cable route associated with this site would pass through environmental designations for a shorter extent (compared to Landfall E – Aldeburgh). The cable route would not cross any in service cables in the area from the common offshore cable route to the respective landfalls. This would avoid the need for any cable protection measures to be installed which would result in a lesser marine impact than Landfall E. As such, it is unlikely to have any impacts on the Outer Thames Estuary SPA.

Landfall G2 (Alternative Walberswick) is a second emerging preference. This landfall site results in a shorter onshore HVDC cable route than Landfall F (Southwold). The route crosses the Minsmere to Walberswick Ramsar site which comprises a SAC and SPA, all European designated sites, with a potential for direct impacts. Mitigation has identified potential for a trenchless crossing through the designation. This will need to be considered as the design develops in relation to technical feasibility, and the associated indirect impacts that would result on the European designations during construction.

In contrast to the original Walberswick landfall option (G), this option seeks to avoid the temporary loss of the beach carpark and beach huts during construction, reduce the impact of construction traffic on Walberswick, avoid the bridge crossing over the Dunwich River, and where possible reduce the potential impacts on designated sites. Furthermore, there is also the potential for a construction haul road that could mostly avoid Walberswick.

Like Landfall F, the offshore cable route associated with this site would pass through environmental designations for a shorter extent (compared to Landfall E - Aldeburgh). The cable route would not cross any in service cables in the area from the common offshore cable route to the respective landfalls. This would avoid the need for any cable protection measures to be installed which would result in a lesser marine impact than Landfall E (Aldeburgh). As such, it is unlikely to have any impacts on the Outer Thames Estuary SPA.

Converter station sites and associated HVAC cable corridors

Discounted options:

- Converter Station Site 1
- Converter Station Site 4
- Converter Station Site 5

Emerging preference:

Converter Station Site 3

Rationale for discounting options:

Following the discounting of Landfall E (Aldeburgh) for the reasons outlined above, Site 1 was identified as the least favourable option given the additional HVDC cable route required when connecting to the emerging landfall preferences of Southwold (F) or Walberswick (G2).

We considered the results of landscape and visual surveys and assessments, and technical construction considerations for the remaining converter station sites and associated HVAC cable routes.

The assessments found that whilst Site 4 has substantial planting which would provide screening, the site location would result in the greatest impact to views from within and to the National Landscape. In addition, Site 4 would also be technically challenging as the HVAC cable route would need to cross the existing mainline railway. It would also require additional HVAC cable crossings, which would result in a larger construction area due to the increased number of cables.

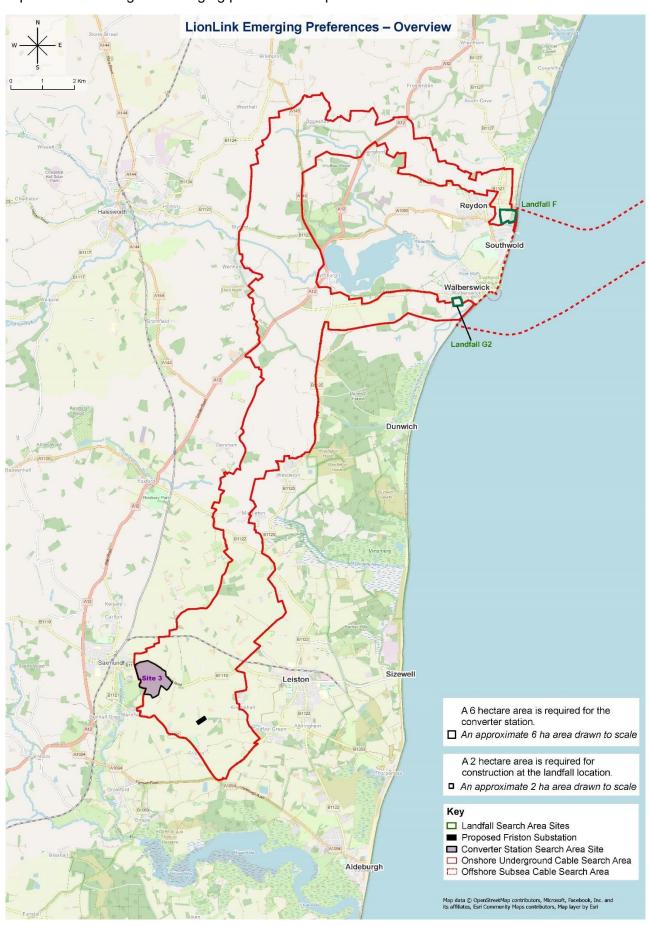
Site 5 was also unfavourable due to the setting of the historic village of Knodishall, and potential heritage and archaeological impacts.

Rationale for emerging preference:

Site 3 was identified as the most favourable option as it would benefit from screening from existing woodland and field boundaries. Since Site 3 is emerging as the preferred converter site for Sea Link, it provides the greatest opportunity for colocation. This aligns with feedback received to the non-statutory consultations which supported opportunities for coordination.

Now we have identified Site 3 as our emerging preference, we will continue to work closely with Sea Link regarding the potential for colocation at Converter Station Site 3 and combined HVAC corridors to the proposed Friston substation. We will also engage with NGET (responsible for designing the proposed Friston substation), SPR (consented the proposed Friston substation) and Sea Link (seeking an additional connection to the proposed Friston substation) to coordinate mitigation on key areas such as drainage, landscaping, traffic, cable crossings and construction. We will present an update on the results of these discussions as part of our 2025 statutory consultation.

A plan summarising our emerging preferences is provided below:



NEXT STEPS

The non-statutory consultations provided valuable feedback and have resulted in some refinements to our proposals. We value your views and will continue to work with local communities and statutory consultees, to develop the proposals further.

Following the 2023 non-statutory consultation, we will deliver the following:

1. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping report – March 2024

We will now progress the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process to undertake more detailed studies into the options that have become our emerging preferences. Our EIA scoping report will be submitted in March 2024 to the Planning Inspectorate. We will update our website with a link to this when available.

2. Socio-economic impact considerations - 2024

As part of our EIA Scoping process, we will undertake a full socio-economic impact assessment for LionLink. (As part of this scope of works, we will be engaging with local businesses and organisations to understand the impacts of the project on their respective industries, particularly tourism, and work with them to identify possible mitigations to be presented at our statutory consultation in 2025.)

3. Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) - 2025

Following publication of the EIA Scoping Report in 2024, we will undertake further environmental assessments and surveys to inform our PEIR.

4. Statutory consultation – 2025

Similar to the non-statutory consultations held in 2022 and 2023, the LionLink project will run a statutory consultation in 2025 where local communities and statutory consultees will be able to feedback on the preferred options of the project.

5. DCO application submission – 2025

The LionLink project will submit the DCO Application.

GLOSSARY

This glossary provides definitions for key terms, technical phrases, abbreviations, and site options referred to in this report.

Planning & governance

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP):

NSIPs are major infrastructure projects. They do not seek planning permission from local authorities. Instead, they are granted 'planning permission' via a Development Consent Order (DCO).

Development Consent Order (DCO):

A DCO is the planning process that grants 'permission' to major projects (NSIPs). A DCO application is submitted directly to the Planning Inspectorate (PINs). After a period of evaluation, the Secretary of State will then decide whether to grant the DCO. If permitted, the DCO provides all consents and permissions needed to enable the development including the Marine Licence for the subsea cable and land rights to access, install and construct and operate the onshore assets.

Learn more about our planning process <u>here</u>.

Planning Inspectorate (PINS):

PINS review DCO applications and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who will then decide whether to approve the DCO.

Siting and routing:

Siting is where the infrastructure for the project (e.g., landfall site and converter station) will be located and routing is how the infrastructure will be connected (i.e., the onshore cable route linking the landfall site to the converter station site and then to the substation).

Emerging preference(s):

The site options selected for more detailed studies via the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process are our emerging preferences. These options are preferred to the other options that were considered but are not the final proposals. The results of the EIA process of the emerging preferences will be presented as part of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) and consulted on by the Project in 2025.

Environment

Net zero:

Net zero means cutting greenhouse gas emissions to as close to zero as possible. The UK government has set a current target of achieving net zero by 2050.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA):

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process carried out to ensure that the likely significant environmental effects of projects are identified and assessed before a decision is taken on whether a proposal should be allowed to proceed.

Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR):

The PEIR describes the proposed project and sets out the potential impacts; considering the environmental, social and economic effects and the mitigation measures proposed to reduce impacts. The PEIR is published at Statutory Consultation stage for information and feedback.

Environmental Statement (ES):

The ES is a document that sets out the likely environmental impacts of the project. The ES is the main output from the EIA process. The ES is published as part of the DCO application.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA):

The HRA considers the impact of a project within a protected European site on native species and habitats.

Ramsar sites:

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance that have been designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands for containing representative, rare, or unique wetland types, or for their importance in conserving biological diversity.

Special Protection Areas (SPA):

SPAs are European protected areas for birds.

Special Area of Conservation (SAC):

SACs are European protected areas that contain one or more special habitats and/or species, considered to be under threat.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI):

A SSSI describes an area that is of particular national interest to science due to either the rare species of fauna or flora it contains, or other important geological features that may lie in its boundaries.

National Landscapes:

A National Landscape is an area of countryside designated by Natural England as having natural features of exceptional beauty and therefore given a protected status. The term came into effect in November 2023, replacing Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in England.

Public Rights of Way (PROW):

PROWs are routes that the public have a right to travel on.

Consultation

Non-statutory consultation:

Non-statutory consultations are the initial stage of public consultation undertaken as part of the DCO process. They are called "non-statutory" as they are not required by law, i.e., they are not statutory requirements.

This non-statutory consultation enables the developer to consider feedback on several initial options from the public, as well as local authorities and other statutory consultees, before further refining their proposals.

Statutory consultation:

The Planning Act 2008 has legal requirements for the developer of the proposed NSIP to hold public consultations, i.e., these consultations are statutory. These legal requirements include specific organisations that should be consulted ("statutory consultees"), the timetable for the consultation, how local communities should be consulted, and how the consultation should be publicised.

The statutory consultation is an opportunity to receive feedback on the plans, refined following the non-statutory consultation, which will be used to further refine the plans ahead of the submission of the DCO to PINS.

Natural Language Processing (NLP)

NLP is an area of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that enables computers to understand and interpret human language. By combining computational linguistics with machine learning, NLP allows machines to process and analyse large amounts of natural language data, facilitating tasks like translation, speech recognition, and text analysis.

Organisations and other projects

National Grid Group:

National Grid Group is one of the largest investor-owned energy companies in the world and plays a vital role in connecting people throughout Great Britain to the energy they use. There are four distinct electricity business entities under the umbrella of National Grid, all with different roles and responsibilities.

National Grid Ventures (NGV):

NGV develops, operates and invests in energy projects, technologies, and partnerships to accelerate the development of a clean energy future. NGV is part of National Grid Group and is the business unit that is bringing forward proposals for LionLink.

National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET):

NGET owns and maintains the high-voltage electricity transmission network in England and Wales. NGET is part of National Grid Group and a separate legal entity to NGV.

Sea Link:

Sea Link is a new 2 gigawatt (GW) High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) link between Suffolk and Kent. It will be approximately 145 km long and primarily offshore, with onshore infrastructure in Suffolk and Kent. Sea Link is being brought forward by NGET.

National Grid Electricity System Operator (NGESO):

NGESO ensure that Great Britain has the essential energy it needs by ensuring supply meets demand every second of the day.

TenneT:

NGV has partnered with Tennet, the Dutch Transmission Systems Operator (TSO), to deliver the LionLink project.

ScottishPower Renewables (East Anglia ONE, East Anglia TWO, East Anglia ONE North):

ScottishPower Renewables (SPR) is part of the ScottishPower group of companies operating in the UK and a leader in wind energy.

East Anglia ONE (EA1) is an adjacent, operational offshore windfarm, located approximately 43km from the Suffolk coast.

East Anglia ONE North Ltd (EA1N) is a consented offshore windfarm in the southern North Sea approximately 37.7km from the Suffolk coast. EA1N is proposed to connect to the proposed Friston Substation.

East Anglia TWO Ltd (EA2) is a consented offshore windfarm in the southern North Sea, located approximately 32.6km from the Suffolk coast. EA2 is proposed to connect to the proposed Friston Substation.

EDF Energy (Sizewell C):

EDF Energy is an energy provider that supplies electricity and gas to homes and businesses across the UK. EDF Energy is bringing forward the Sizewell C project.

LionLink project components

High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) and HVDC cable route:

A High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) route refers to an electricity transmission system that uses direct current (DC) for the bulk transmission of electrical power, as opposed to the more commonly used alternating current (AC) systems. HVDC systems are particularly useful for long-distance transmission because they can minimise power losses and maintain efficiency over vast distances.

The HVDC route for LionLink will run from the converter station site in Suffolk to the offshore converter platform in Dutch Waters (which is then connected to a Dutch offshore wind farm).

High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) and HVAC cable route:

A High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) route refers to a power transmission system that uses alternating current (AC) to transport electricity at high voltages.

HVAC technology is the principle means of power transmission in all modern power systems. Most electrical power is generated, transported, and consumed as alternating current including on the UK electricity transmission system.

For LionLink, the HVAC route runs from the converter station site to the proposed Friston substation, the project's connection to the UK electricity transmission system.

Interconnector:

Electricity interconnectors are high-voltage cables that connect the electricity systems of neighbouring countries.

They enable excess power, such as that generated from wind farms, to be traded and shared between countries. This ensures that renewable energy is not wasted and makes for a greener, more efficient power system.

LionLink is an interconnector that will transmit electricity under the North Sea through subsea cables between the UK and the Netherlands.

Converter Station:

A converter station switches alternating current (AC) electricity to direct current (DC) electricity, and vice versa. DC electricity can be more efficiently transmitted over long distances than AC electricity, whilst AC electricity is what we use in our day-to-day lives, i.e., electricity to the plug.

AC electricity needs to be converted into DC electricity to enable the energy to travel, for example between the Netherlands and the UK. DC electricity then needs to be converted back into AC electricity to be transmitted into households and businesses in the UK.

Substation:

Substations transform electricity into different voltages. This is needed so the electricity can be transmitted throughout the country and into our homes, businesses, and buildings. Whilst many substations will include a transformer, the proposed Friston substation to which LionLink is seeking to connect will not require a transformer, which will result in a lesser operational noise impact.

Offshore infrastructure:

Offshore infrastructure includes platforms, subsea structures, and cables that facilitate the transportation of energy over long distances offshore.

Onshore infrastructure:

Onshore infrastructure refers to infrastructure that is located on land to facilitate the transportation and delivery of electricity. Examples of onshore infrastructure include substations and converter stations.

Landfall:

Landfall is where the subsea cables are brought onto the land and are connected to the onshore cables.

Underground cabling:

All the cables for the LionLink project will be buried underground from the landfall site to the converter station and then underground again from the converter station to the substation.

Trenchless Installation:

Trenchless installation methods, such as Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD), is a minimal impact approach of installing underground cabling at a relatively shallow depth, using a surface-launched drilling rig. The method may result in lower surface restoration costs and a lower overall environmental impact, compared to trench installation methods, but is more expensive.

Site options

Converter station sites:

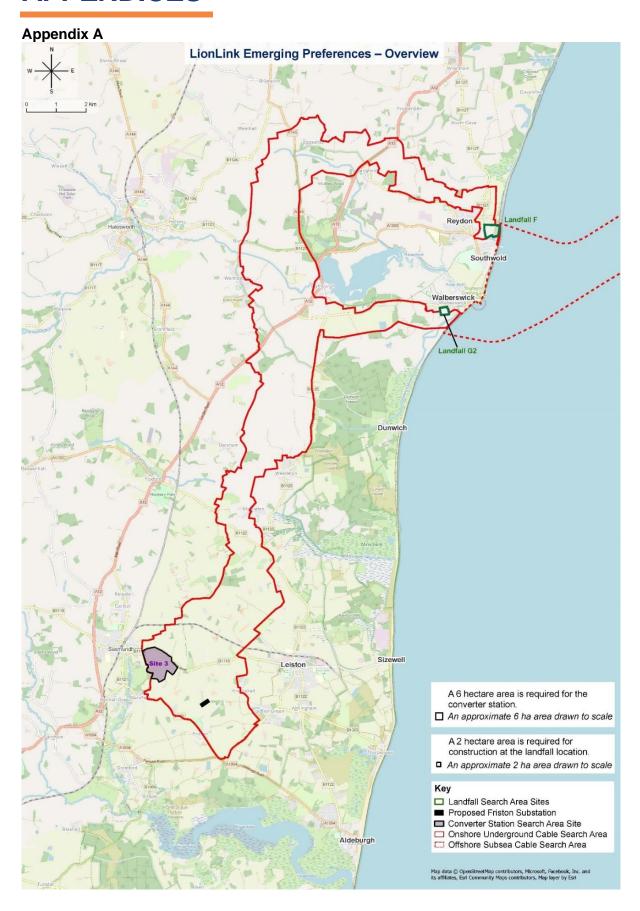
- Site 1: Converter station search area located north of Aldeburgh Road.
- Site 3: Converter station search area located east of Saxmundham.
- Site 4: Converter station search area located north west of Leiston.
- Site 5: Converter station search area located west of Leiston.

Landfall sites:

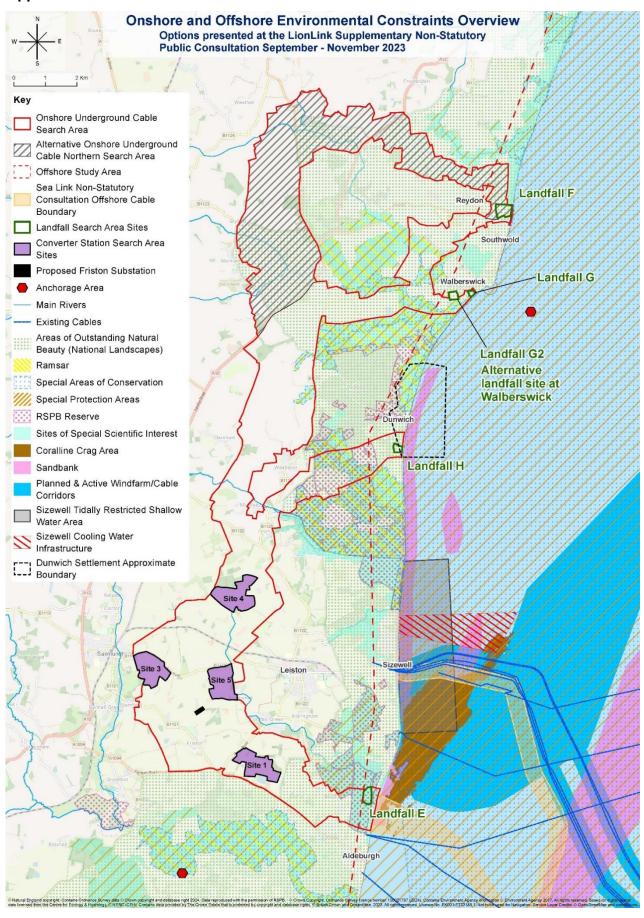
- Landfall E: Landfall search area site located in Aldeburgh.
- Landfall F: Landfall search area site located in Reydon and Southwold.
- Landfall G & G2: Landfall G was the initially proposed Walberswick landfall site. The project team
 identified an alternative Walberswick location (Landfall G2) that avoids the river crossing, beach car
 park and beach huts, with the potential for a construction haul road that could mostly avoid
 Walberswick.
- Landfall H: Landfall search area site located in Dunwich.

*Please refer to Appendix A for the map depicting the options from 2022 non-statutory consultation and Appendix B for the map depicting the options from 2023 supplementary non-statutory consultation.

APPENDICES



Appendix B







Contact us

We value your views and will continue to work with local communities and stakeholders, to develop the proposals further. If you have any feedback on LionLink you can contact us directly via the details below:

LionLink Project

Freepost NGV LionLink info@lionlink.nationalgrid.com 0800 083 1787 nationalgrid.com/lionlink

