LionLink Community Newsletter

Summer 2024

Overview of the project

Welcome to the third edition of the quarterly community newsletter for the LionLink project. In this edition, we provide an update on the project, a spotlight on LionLink's offshore elements including the offshore surveys that are now underway, as well as a summary of our most recent public webinars.

LionLink is a new subsea electricity cable (known as an interconnector) proposed to run between Great Britain and the Netherlands. The project is being developed by National Grid Ventures (NGV).

LionLink will play an important role in reducing our 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 benefits, including:

- Supplying up to 1.8 gigawatts of electricity – enough to power approximately 2.5 million homes.
- Strengthening the UK's national energy security.
- Lowering energy bills – LionLink is expected to save UK consumers almost £300 million in its first ten years of operation.
- Providing clean, green, renewable energy – the carbon savings of its first year is equivalent to taking nearly 600,000 cars off the road.

Project update:

Since May, we have been conducting further seabed surveys to help identify our preferred subsea cable route and preferred landfall location. You can read more about the surveys on page 2.

In July, Ofgem announced that it is consulting on the possibility of Nautilus connecting at Friston as part of its Initial Project Assessment of Nautilus. Unlike the Isle of Grain, there is capacity in the electricity system at Friston. This means that the cost of connecting Nautilus at Friston is lower, as there are fewer reinforcements and upgrades needed to transmit the energy between Nautilus and the wider electricity grid.

The Ofgem consultation closed on 15 August 2024. We anticipate having clarity on the future of Nautilus in Autumn 2024, after this, we will be able to share more information on how the Nautilus and LionLink projects will be able to coordinate. Find out more about Nautilus here: **nationalgrid.com/nautilus-interconnector**

LIONLINK

Spotlight on offshore

Offshore constraints

When new infrastructure is proposed, it is understandable that people may have concerns around the impact of the project on their local area and environment.

Onshore impacts are a priority as we further develop our plans for LionLink. For more information on onshore construction please see our Spring 2024 Newsletter hosted on our website nationalgrid.com/lionlink.

As a predominantly offshore project (84% of LionLink's UK cable is offshore) we must also consider the impact on the marine environment, particularly in relation to the installation, operation, and maintenance of the subsea cables.

Declining numbers of marine species has become a global crisis and one that we must seriously consider as we refine our landfall options. This has led to us choosing landfall options that are closest to the Dutch windfarm. These challenges informed the discounting of our landfall option at Aldeburgh, which would see the longest route in European protected sites and require the highest number of cables to be crossed.

LionLink will approach the coast from the northeast after connecting with the Dutch windfarm located in the North Sea. From an offshore perspective, this can create challenges in crossing designated protected areas, including the Southern North Sea Special Area of Conservation and the Outer Thames Estuary Special Protection Area. These protected areas are designated to protect a range of species (e.g., harbour porpoises), habitats, and seabed features (e.g., sandbanks) which are all protected under UK law.

84% **of LionLink's UK cable is offshore**

The other challenge for the offshore route is crossing subsea cables and pipelines that are already in place e.g., telecoms and power cables, and gas pipelines. Each time a crossing is made, we must protect both the existing cable/pipeline and the cable we install. This protection is traditionally undertaken by placing loose rock or concrete mattresses on the seabed. Cable protection disturbs marine wildlife and has the potential to cause loss of habitat.

Seabed surveys

In May, LionLink began seabed surveys off the coast at Walberswick and Southwold to further assess the routes between these locations and the Dutch windfarm.

Detailed marine geophysical and geotechnical survey works are currently underway with six vessels (pictured on page 1) operating at different stages. Survey operations are conducted within the cable route search area extending 177 km. The works are anticipated to take five months, depending on weather conditions.

The geophysical data collected gives a highly accurate model of the seabed and underlying sediments (down to approximately 10 metres below the seabed).

The geophysical information is used to plan the subsequent geotechnical and environmental surveys. All the survey data is then used to refine the offshore cable route, whilst minimising risk to sensitive habitats and designated sites, and ensuring that the cable can be safely installed.

This data will feed into the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the project's Development Consent Order (DCO).

Offshore key questions

QUESTION:
How will we reach our final site preferences?

OUR RESPONSE: Alongside the offshore cable route surveys currently underway, we are also continuing our onshore surveys. These will help narrow down our current shortlisted locations to a final preference for our landfall, converter station and cable route. Once these locations are determined, they will be presented to the public for feedback as part of our statutory consultation in 2025.

Once all feedback has been received and all surveys and assessments undertaken, we will identify a final proposed design for the entire LionLink project to be included in our Development Consent Order (DCO) application. We expect to submit this to the Planning Inspectorate in 2025.

QUESTION:
Can a fully offshore grid be considered?

OUR RESPONSE: LionLink is an essential part of the transition to putting more infrastructure offshore and bringing offshore energy sources into the Grid. LionLink will run between the UK and the Netherlands via the Nederwiek 3 platform in the North Sea. 84% of LionLink's UK cable is offshore. Currently, there is no fully offshore solution to connecting offshore wind and/or interconnectors to the electricity grid.

Putting infrastructure offshore does not remove the need for infrastructure onshore. Energy generated or transmitted offshore needs to be connected to the onshore grid to power UK homes and businesses.

QUESTION:
If the grid cannot be fully offshore then why could the onshore connection not be at a brownfield site, such as Bradwell or the Isle of Grain?

OUR RESPONSE: There are no suitable brownfield sites in the vicinity of Leiston where our connection agreement was granted.

A hypothetical connection further down the coast at Bradwell or the Isle of Grain is expected to come at an even greater impact to the offshore environment as it would require a longer offshore cable route, which would cross several European designated sites and additional existing offshore cables. These crossings would require the installation of cable protections (as detailed on p.2) likely to result in a loss of marine habitat that is challenging to mitigate.

Both sites would also require significant network reinforcements to connect a project of this size to the grid.

Ground investigation works

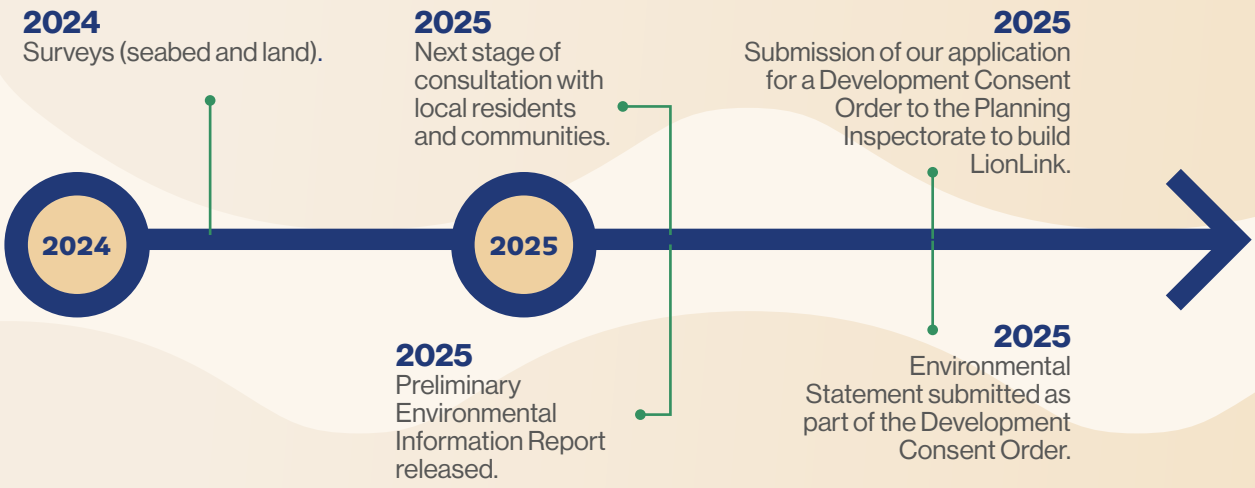
To inform the development of the project design, including route and construction, ground investigation works and surveys, will be taking place at our shortlisted landfall and cable route sites over the next few months.

From mid-August, ground investigation works will take place along the cable route, including on private land.

From September, onshore and offshore ground investigations will be taking place at the two proposed landfall locations – Walberswick and Southwold. Once timings are confirmed, details of the surveys and their timescales will be published on our website.

Access to Walberswick will be taken via Dunwich beach. No beach or car park closures will be required during this period and equipment will be clearly signposted.

Next steps – Timeline recap



Our commitment to you

This newsletter is the third in a series of quarterly communications updating you on the LionLink project.

If you would like to keep up to date with the latest news on LionLink and to receive a virtual copy of this newsletter, please sign up via our website or by scanning the QR code:

Thank you for your ongoing interest in the LionLink project

For more information on LionLink please contact:

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