

Sea Link

Consultation strategy

October 2022



This document sets out how National Grid Electricity Transmission intends to carry out pre-application non-statutory consultation in 2022 on the Sea Link project.

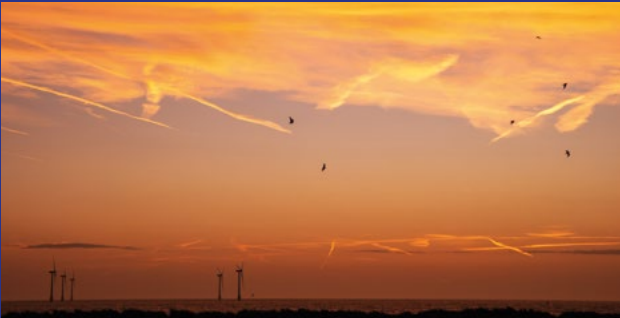
Our proposals include building an offshore high voltage direct current (HVDC) link between Suffolk and Kent, to address network constraints arising from existing and new nuclear generation, interconnectors and new renewable energy generation connecting into the network.

Representatives of Suffolk County Council, Kent County Council, Dover District Council, Thanet District Council and East Suffolk Council have been consulted about the proposed approach to consultation.

Following the initial stage of consultation, we will refine our plans using the feedback you have given us, and we will hold a second, statutory public consultation in 2023. Before that, we will consult with these local authorities to find the best way of running the consultation, which we will describe in a statement of community consultation (SoCC).

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1. About National Grid

National Grid sits at the heart of Britain’s energy system, connecting millions of people and businesses to the energy they use every day.

It is our vision to be at the heart of a clean, fair and affordable energy future.

We bring energy to life – in the heat, light and power we bring to our customers’ homes and businesses; in the way that we support our communities and help them to grow.

National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) owns, builds and maintains the network in England and Wales. It is NGET that is developing plans for the Sea Link project.

Within the National Grid Group there are distinctly separate legal entities, each with their individual responsibilities and roles. These are shown in the diagram below.

Each of the different entities within the National Grid Group are working to build a cleaner, fairer and more affordable energy system that serves everyone – powering the future of our homes, transport and industry.

Our general duties

Under the Electricity Act 1989, National Grid Electricity System Operator (ESO) and NGET must develop transmission network proposals in an efficient, coordinated, and economical way, and in a way which considers people and places. Options to deliver additional network capability and the options we take forward are evaluated against these statutory duties.

The world we live in is changing, and the UK is at a turning point as we embrace the enormous opportunities a cleaner, greener future brings. The net zero economy will be underpinned by affordable clean electricity. A clean, reliable power system is the foundation of a productive net zero economy as we electrify other sectors.

The UK has amongst the largest offshore wind capacity in the world, which is to achieve net zero by 2050. Put simply, this means that we will remove the same amount of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere as we produce.

As a country we are already making progress. The UK has one of the largest offshore wind capacities in the world, with some 11 gigawatts (GW) in operation.

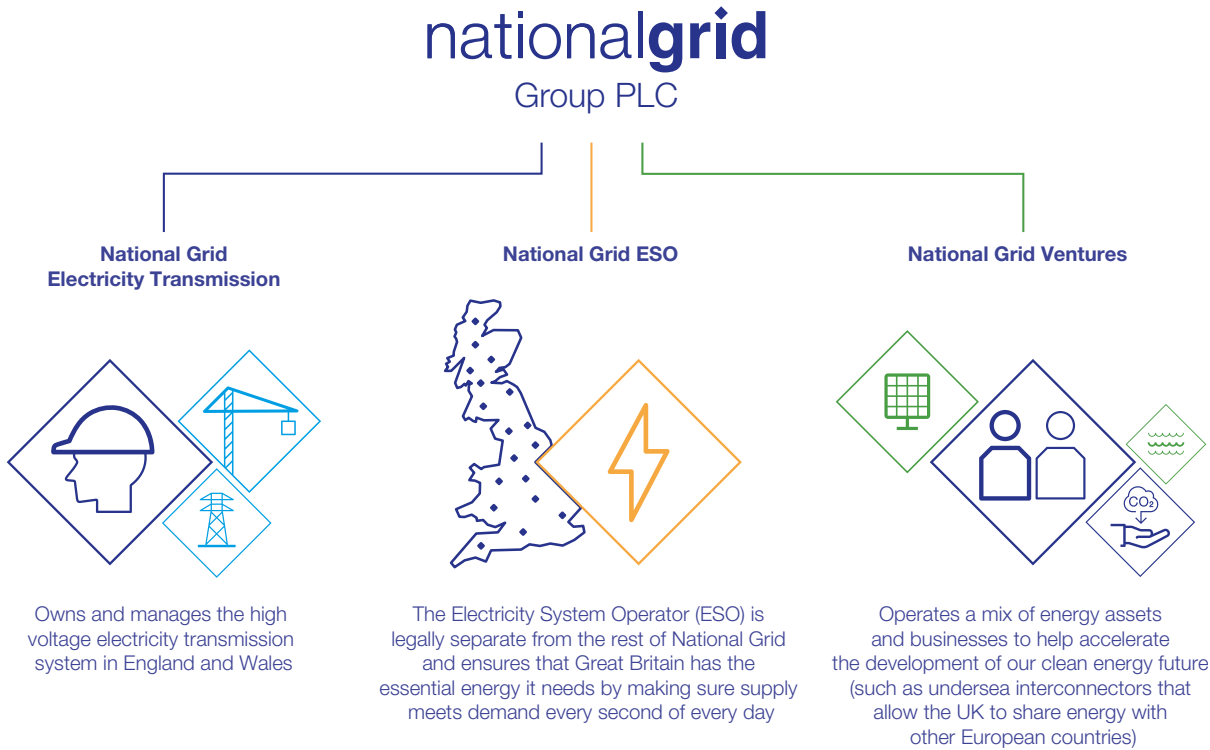
2020 was the greenest year on record for Britain’s electricity system. Spring 2020 saw the longest run since the industrial revolution without burning coal, stretching almost 68 days. 2020 was also a record breaking year for renewables. Wind generation records were broken several times during the year, peaking at 59.9 per cent of the electricity mix on August 26. Solar power too set new records with 9.7 GW of power being produced, and its highest share of the electricity mix reaching 34 per cent on several occasions in May.

In April 2021, Great Britain’s electricity transmission network set a record for being the greenest it has ever been and in April 2022, wind power generation peaked at 19.9 GW, a new record.

However, more needs to be done. A net zero future for Britain requires significant upgrades to our energy infrastructure to deliver new renewable, low carbon energy from where it is produced to where it is needed.

Decarbonising the energy system means replacing fossil fuel-based electricity production with renewable and low carbon energy technologies such as from wind turbines and nuclear power. Increasing the energy generated from offshore wind is a key part of achieving net zero and the Government’s British Energy Security Strategy sets an ambitious target to deliver up to 50 GW of offshore wind connected to the network by 2030 - enough to power every home in the UK.

We have explained how we set out to meet these responsibilities and our commitments relating to engagement and consultation about our proposal in our Stakeholder, Community and Amenity Policy.



2. The project

National Grid Electricity Transmission is proposing to reinforce the electricity transmission network across Suffolk and Kent.

This would be achieved by the construction and operation of a new 2 gigawatt (GW) high voltage direct current (HVDC) link approximately 140 km in length and predominantly offshore. This includes HVDC converter stations and high voltage alternating current (HVAC) connections onto the national electricity transmission system.

From north to south, the reinforcement would comprise:

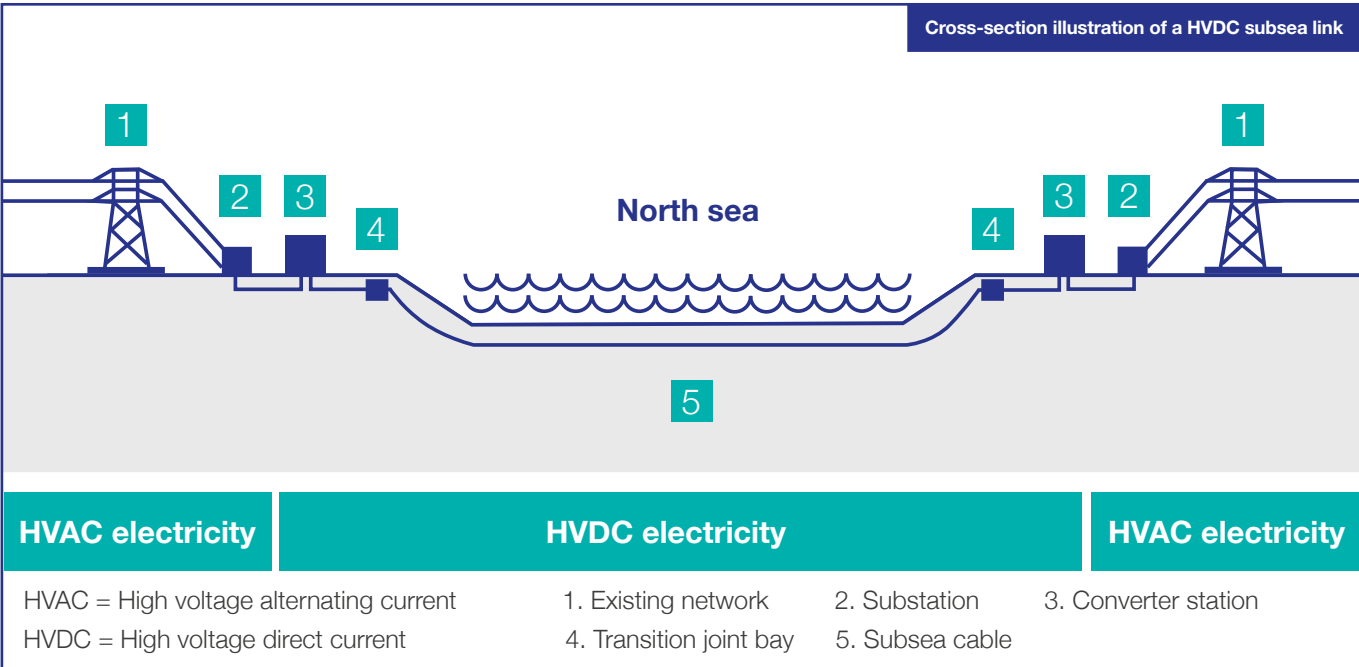
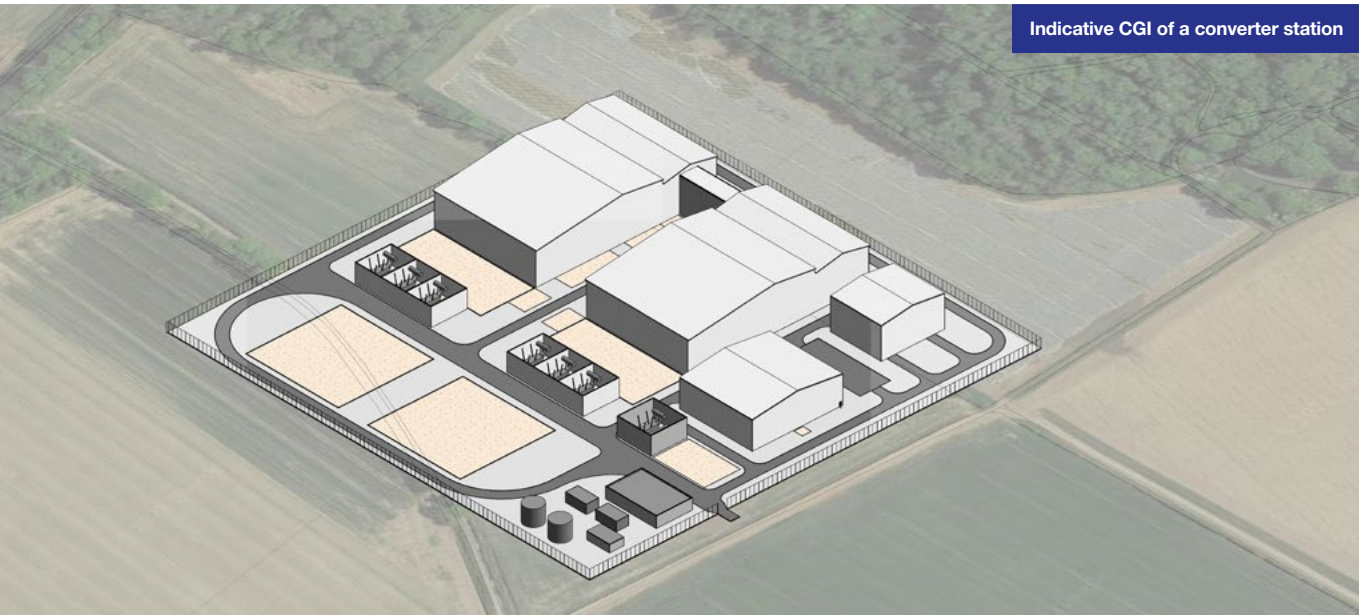
- an extension of the proposed substation at Friston to accommodate an extra bay for Sea Link to connect into
- a HVAC underground cable connection between the proposed Friston 400 kV substation and a proposed HVDC converter station (which converts AC to DC, and vice versa). This will also include underground cable joint bays (connecting different sections of underground cables together) along this part of the route
- a new 2 GW HVDC converter station in Suffolk, including essential utility services such as electric, water and drainage
- a HVDC underground cable connection from the HVDC converter station to the transition joint bay up to 1 km from the Suffolk landfall location (where the cable transitions from offshore to onshore). There will also be underground cable joint bays along this part of the route

- a buried subsea HVDC cable between the Suffolk coast and the Kent Coast, approximately 130 km in length
- restringing (replacing the existing conductor for a different type that is able to carry more power) of the Richborough to Canterbury 400 kV overhead line, which is necessary to cater for the increased power flows
- a HVDC underground cable connection from the transition joint bay up to 1 km from the Kent landfall location (where the cable transitions from offshore to onshore) and onto the Kent HVDC converter station location. There will also be underground cable joint bays along this part of the route
- a new 2 GW HVDC converter station in Kent which includes the essential utility services such as electric, water and drainage
- a HVAC connection (either underground cable or overhead line) between the proposed Kent HVDC converter station and the Richborough to Canterbury overhead line.

Other elements required to facilitate construction and operation of the project include, but are not limited to, temporary uses of land for construction activities such as working areas for construction equipment and machinery, site offices, welfare, storage, access, and haul roads.

What is a converter station?

Converter stations are the key components of HVDC links. They enable electricity to be converted from alternating current to direct current or vice versa depending on the direction of operation. Converter stations contain specialist electrical equipment; some of this must be located indoors in buildings potentially up to 30 m tall, while some could be located outdoors or in smaller buildings. The total footprint of the converter station is approximately 6 hectares but additional land will be needed during construction.



3. Proposal for consultation

We want to ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to provide feedback. Given the current status of work, our non-statutory consultation has a number of aims, to:

- introduce the project to the public and provide an overview
- explain why we need to build the reinforcement
- set out options that have been considered and how we made the decision on the corridor and graduated swathe being proposed
- present our proposed corridors with graduated swathe
- present our proposed high voltage direct current converter sites
- present our proposed marine route and cable landing locations
- give stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on our work to date
- outline next steps.

The feedback received throughout the first stage of consultation will inform how Sea Link is developed further and will influence the next stage in the design of the project. Our next stage of consultation is planned for 2023.

Exploring opportunities for coordination

In response to stakeholder feedback, NGET and National Grid Ventures (NGV) are exploring:

- in Suffolk, opportunities to coordinate NGV's projects, EuroLink and Nautilus, and NGET's project, Sea Link, including separately consulting on shared: converter station sites; cable route corridors; and landfalls
- opportunities with other developers to minimise the impact of construction on the environment and local communities
- offshore coordination with other developers as part of the Offshore Transmission Network Review

In exploring these opportunities to coordinate, NGV's EuroLink and NGET's Sea Link are consulting at the same time. We hope that by sharing our proposals, people feel better informed about how different parts of the infrastructure could fit together and can share their views on each of the projects accordingly.

4. Consultation timing

The non-statutory consultation will be held over an eight-week period, between Monday 24 October and Sunday 18 December 2022.

Consultation area

We have developed a primary consultation zone (PCZ) and a secondary consultation zone (SCZ), to inform our engagement activities. These consultation zones are geographical areas that sit within a certain distance of the proposed project. They will be used to help us tailor our communications and to engage more effectively with stakeholders across the area.

Primary consultation zone

The PCZ includes properties that lie within a 1 km radius of the proposed underground cable and overhead line route and 2 km around the converter site locations. Where appropriate, the PCZ has been extended to include whole streets rather than dissecting hamlets or neighbourhoods.

The PCZ includes stakeholders who will be most directly affected by the proposal. We want to ensure they are kept fully informed about the project and we will actively seek to engage with them.

Before we start our consultation, we will mail a newsletter to all properties within the PCZ. The newsletter will include:

- an introduction to the project and overview of the proposal
- details of the project website, consultation and how stakeholders can discuss the proposals with the project team through local public information events, and online webinars
- information on how people can provide feedback online, request copies of materials in printed form or in alternative formats, and how they can contact the project with further questions.

Secondary consultation zone

The SCZ includes properties that lie within a 4 km radius of the swathes that are to be consulted on. Where appropriate, the SCZ has been extended to include whole streets rather than dissecting hamlets or neighbourhoods.


We will seek to raise awareness of the project and public consultation with stakeholders within the SCZ through the broad dissemination of information. This will include:

- placing advertisements for the consultation and engagement events, along with information on how to get involved, in prominent community locations
- placing advertisements in local newspapers
- providing consultation material deposit points
- placing advertisements on social media to target different demographics and to include those who might not otherwise engage with the consultation
- providing contact details for queries or to request paper copies of project documents.




5. Materials

All project documents will be made available as below:




Project background document, to provide an overview of the project




Corridor preliminary routeing and converter station siting report



Summary newsletter, to provide a high-level description of the proposal and invite people to our consultation events



Detailed maps of the proposals




Feedback form



Dedicated project website


Documentation on deposit
All important project documents will be available on the consultation website. We will also place paper copies of important documents at suitable, publicly accessible locations along the route of the proposed connection. These will be available to stakeholders who are not able to access the project website and will include:



Project background document, to provide an overview of the project



Corridor preliminary routing and converter station siting report



Summary newsletter to provide a high-level description of the proposal and invite people to our consultation events



Feedback form



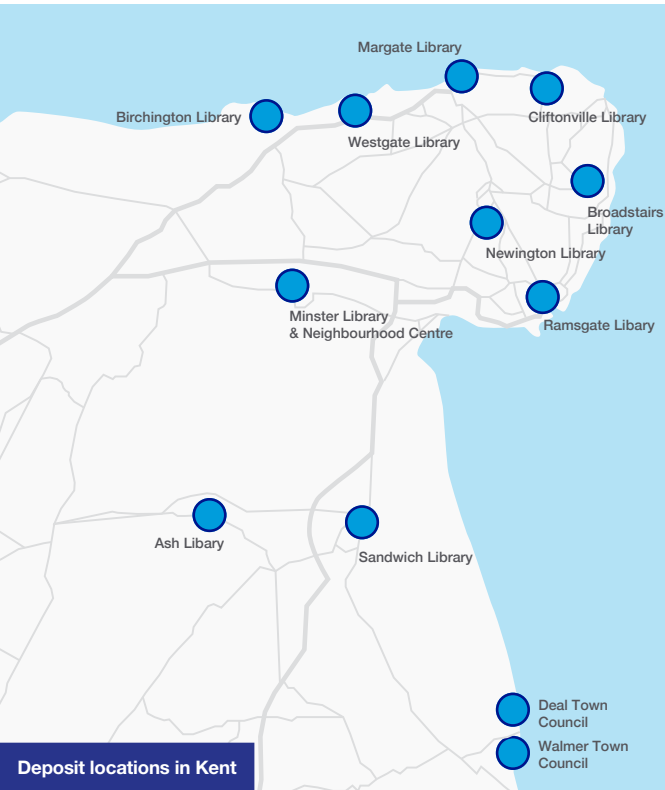
Postage paid envelopes

Consultation materials deposit points

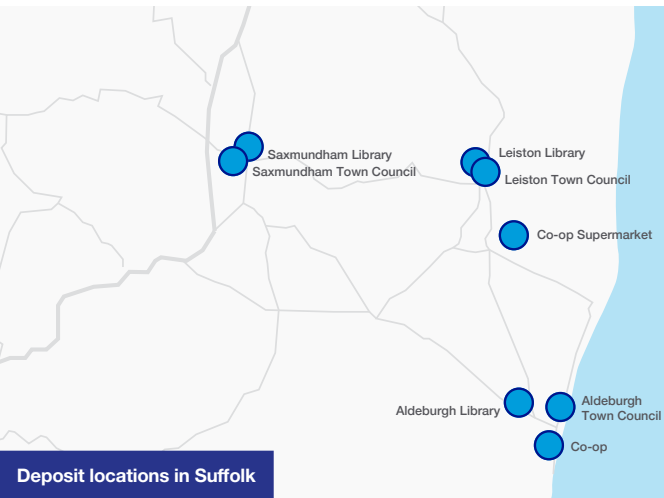
We will set up consultation materials deposit points at the following locations:

- Kent**

 - Ash Library, 11 Queen’s Rd, Ash, Canterbury, CT3 2BG
 - Broadstairs Library, the Broadway, Broadstairs, CT10 2BS
 - Birchington Library, Alpha Road, Birchington, Kent, CT7 9EG
 - Cliftonville Library, Queen Elizabeth Avenue, Margate, Kent, CT9 3JX
 - Deal Town Council, High St, Deal, CT14 6TR
 - Margate Library, Thanet Gateway Plus, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent, CT9 1RE
 - Minster-in-Thanet Library, 4A Monkton Road, Minster, Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 4EA
 - Newington Library, Marlowe Academy, Marlowe Way, Ramsgate, CT12 6NB
 - Ramsgate Library, Guildford Lawn, Ramsgate, CT11 9AY
- Sandwich Library, 13 Market Street, Sandwich, Kent, CT13 9DA
 - Walmer Town Council, 62 The Strand, Walmer, Deal CT14 7DP
 - Westgate Library, Minster Road, Westgate-On-Sea, Kent, CT8 8BP



- Suffolk**
- Aldeburgh Library, Victoria Rd, Aldeburgh IP15 5EG
 - Aldeburgh Town Council, Moot Hall, Market Cross Pl, Aldeburgh IP15 5DS
 - Co-op, 117 High Street, Aldeburgh, Suffolk IP15 5AR
 - Co-op, Sizewell Rd, Leiston IP16 4AE
 - Leiston Library, Old Post Office Square, Main St, Leiston IP16 4ER
 - Leiston Town Council, Main St, Leiston IP16 4ER
 - Saxmundham Library, Block B, Street Farm Rd, Saxmundham IP17 1AL
 - Saxmundham Town Council, Block B, Street Farm Rd, Saxmundham IP17 1AL



6. Stakeholder briefings and meetings

In the run up to, and during the early weeks of, our consultation we will offer briefing meetings with the following stakeholders:

- members of Parliament, where all or part of their constituencies lie within the primary and secondary consultation zones
- elected representatives of district and county councils that fall within the primary consultation zone (PCZ)
- Kent County Council and Suffolk County Council officers
- East Suffolk Council, Thanet and Dover District Council officers
- town and parish councils, where all or part of the parish fall inside the PCZ
- action groups SEAS and SASES.

We will consider all requests to engage with other organisations. These may include:

- third party groups, such as local enterprise partnerships and business groups
- community groups or residents’ associations with a close geographical relationship to the project
- parish councils which fall outside of the PCZ
- interest groups with a close relationship to the project
- those with close links to public rights of ways, such as the Thanet Ramblers, British Horse Society and Natural England.

These stakeholders will be sent digital copies of project information (paper copies will be provided upon request, or where digital receipt is not possible) and details on how to engage with the project team. We will keep them updated at key project milestones.

7. Public consultation

We are proposing to use a blend of digital and traditional engagement channels for this public consultation.

This will involve using the project website and other digital tools to present information on the project and gather feedback on our proposals. This approach is widely accepted for consultations on infrastructure proposals.

We also recognise that some people may not have access to or use of the internet. We have set out more details in section 10 on how we will make our consultation fully accessible to those who do not have digital access.

We remain committed to engaging with all stakeholders and we want to ensure that all our engagement and consultation is inclusive and that it will reach those who otherwise may not engage with us.



Project website

The website will be fully accessible for people using assisted technologies. It includes:

Function	Rationale
Document library	The document library will be the ‘go to’ digital location for all project information. It will ensure that all project information is available in one, easy to access location. We will encourage third parties hosting deposit locations (such as local authorities and libraries) to provide links to this page. All available documents will be easy-to-read and accessible for members of the public.
‘About Sea Link’ page	Project information will be laid out in a simple, visual and interactive format, with pointers and instructions throughout to aid easy navigation.
‘Consultation and next steps’ page	Details of dates and timings of public information events and webinars.
FAQs	This will be kept up to date throughout the consultation period to help visitors find answers to frequently asked questions.
Project videos, infographics and animations	A way of explaining the plans in a way that is accessible and understandable to the general public, ensuring greater levels of inclusion.
Project update section	Enabling members of the public to stay updated on the project and provides an easily accessible place for all recent updates to be hosted.
Project contact details	We will publish telephone, email and freepost details for the public to get in contact and request further details or ask questions.
Feedback form (including a downloadable version)	The online form will enable members of the public to provide their feedback easily and submit to the project team.
Webinar sign-up function and face-to-face event details	To enable members of the public to sign-up to our webinars and to find out details of where public information exhibitions will be held.
GDPR (legal statement)	All personal data will be held in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679 and personal data will not be transferred outside of the European Economic Area, or used for purposes other than those outlined. The website will be made accessible for all users through the provision of audio guides, videos, other visual material, and the ability to request translation. The website will include a full accessibility statement and privacy notice.

Interactive map

We have created an interactive map which shows the entire route and local points of interest that helps users to way-find. This will be hosted on the project website.

Public consultation webinars

A hybrid programme of public events and webinars will provide stakeholders opportunities to find out more about the proposals and to provide feedback.

At least one webinar will be recorded and available on the project website for playback by those who cannot attend the webinar sessions. The sessions will also include time for questions and answers. Different webinars have been organised to focus on specific geographical areas and the programme will be widely advertised.

Six project webinars will be held throughout the consultation period at the following date and time:

Date	Time	Topic
Tuesday 22 Nov Tuesday 29 Nov	6pm – 7pm 6pm – 7pm	Our proposals in Suffolk
Wednesday 23 Nov Wednesday 30 Nov	6pm – 7pm 6pm – 7pm	Our proposals in Kent
Thursday 24 Nov Thursday 1 Dec	6pm – 7pm 6pm – 7pm	Marine route proposals

Public consultation events

We will hold face-to-face events on eight separate days throughout the consultation period.

Any recurring questions will be added to the Frequently Asked Questions webpage, hosted on our project website.

Suffolk

Date	Time	Location
Thursday 10 Nov	1pm – 8pm	Old Generator Station, King's Field, Old Generator Station, Aldeburgh, IP15 5HY
Friday 11 Nov	1pm – 8pm	Friston Village Hall, Church Road, Friston, Saxmundham, IP17 1PU
Saturday 12 Nov	10am – 5pm	The Fromus Centre, The Saxmundham Hub, Street Farm Road, Saxmundham, IP17 1AL

Kent

Date	Time	Location
Thursday 17 Nov	9am – 4pm	Guildhall, Cattle Market, Sandwich, CT13 9AH
Friday 18 Nov	1pm – 8pm	Newington Community Centre, Princess Margaret Avenue, Ramsgate, CT12 6HX
Saturday 19 Nov	10am – 5pm	Cliffsend Village Hall, 55 Foads Ln, Cliffsend, Ramsgate, CT12 5JH

Events will be held at suitable, publicly accessible venues that are within or near to the consultation zone and close to the proposed converter station locations.

Paper copies of all relevant consultation materials will be made available at each exhibition. There will also be a series of information banners and maps to present the proposals. We will include details of where and when the events are taking place on the project website, in newspaper adverts, social media adverts and direct mailing.

If events need to be cancelled for any reason, we will endeavour to hold an online event at the published time. Online webinars will be organised to enable the project team to present the same information as that at the public events to a large number of interested stakeholders.



8. Feedback

We want to make providing feedback on our proposal as easy as possible for all stakeholders.

Paper copies of the feedback form will be available at consultation material deposit points. Visitors to our project website will be able to fill out a feedback form online and send it back directly or download and print and return via our freepost address.

Members of the public will also be able to telephone our freephone contact number and request a paper copy of the feedback form, enabling them to send

their feedback to the project team free of charge; alternatively feedback can be taken over the phone. Members of the public and key stakeholders can also submit feedback and comments regarding the proposal via the designated project email address.

A process will be implemented to address relevant design changes to the proposed draft corridor identified through feedback received from the non-statutory consultation. The process will ensure that each identified design change will be effectively assessed by National Grid Electricity Transmission's specialist teams covering environment, design and construction and land rights.



9. Advertisement

We will use advertising to raise awareness of the public consultation on the project proposal.

Print media

To raise general awareness of the project within the area and to advertise the consultation programme, we will place advertisements in key local and regional publications. These advertisements will help ensure that stakeholders without access to the internet, or who do not frequently use websites which will receive targeted virtual advertisement, are made aware of the consultation.

Advertisements will be quarter page prints, published in the run up to the start of public consultation, and during the consultation period, to inform stakeholders of deadlines for feedback and public information event and webinar dates.

Social media

We will use social media to advertise the consultation. We will target advertisements to the postcodes within the primary consultation zone (PCZ) . Social media advertisement may draw in stakeholders who wouldn't otherwise engage with the consultation, for example young people. We will also ask local authorities, and other identified groups, to use their own social media channels to advertise the consultation.



10. Seldom heard groups and accessibility strategy

We want to ensure that all our engagement and consultation is inclusive and that it will reach those who otherwise may not engage with us.

We are developing a strategy on how to engage groups that are considered as seldom heard. ‘Seldom-heard groups’ refers to under-represented people who are less likely to be heard by professionals and decision-makers, so are less likely to engage or be engaged by traditional or conventional methods of engagement.

While the coronavirus pandemic had presented us with a situation where digital consultation was a necessity, we recognise that some people and groups may not have access to, or use of, the internet. We want to engage equally with all stakeholders, irrespective of access to digital communications.

To ensure our consultation is accessible to all, we will:

- directly mail a newsletter with project information to all stakeholders within the primary consultation zone (PCZ); and provide details of how to access paper copies of other project documents and provide feedback by post
- make important information available in both digital and non-digital formats and we will provide alternative formats for those who need them, as set out in our seldom heard strategy
- make paper copies of the information available at deposit locations, along with contact details for the project team who will be able to provide further assistance
- send consultation packs to those who are unable to access the material online; advertise the consultation and project contact details through a variety of traditional methods and social media.

Seldom heard groups include the following:

- ethnic minority groups and people for whom English is a second language
- the traveller community
- the elderly
- people with visual and hearing impairments
- people with limited mobility and / or disability
- the 15-19 and 20-39 age groups
- carers and families with young children
- economically inactive individuals
- geographically isolated communities or individuals.

We will discuss how best to engage with seldom heard stakeholders with local authority leads on seldom heard engagement. Our strategy for engaging with seldom heard groups and interest groups will be developed before the start of the non-statutory consultation. It will include the use of the communication tools set out in the table opposite.

We welcome thoughts and input from local authorities on who the key interest groups are in their areas. We expect those interest groups will include:

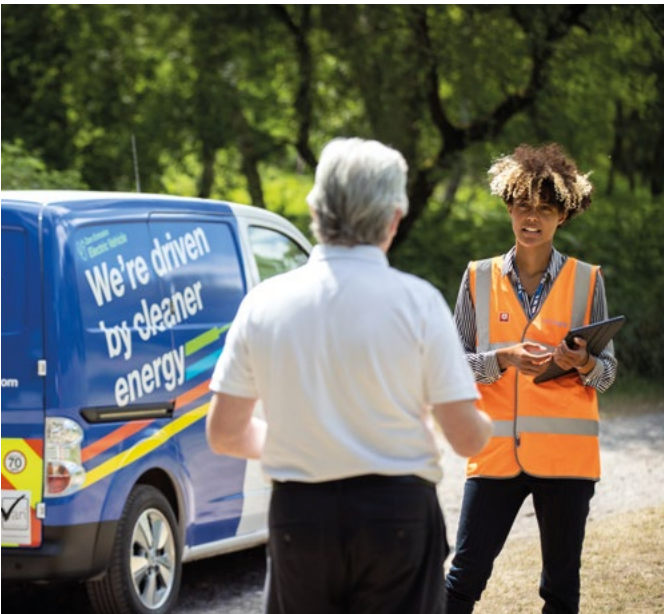
- business groups, such as local enterprise partnerships and chambers of commerce
- community groups, such as residents’ associations with a close geographical relationship to the project
- educational establishments, such as universities, colleges and schools.

Activity	Objective(s)	Result
Direct engagement with representative groups and organisations	To build up links to groups and organisations we identify as representing seldom heard sections and interest groups in local communities. These could include community groups, youth groups, business groups, activity centres, ethnic minority groups.	National Grid can make use of existing communications channels that these community groups have in place to communicate with a wider audience of harder to reach further groups and individuals.
Engagement with ambassadors / champions (for example, parish councils which have their own communications channels)	To facilitate wider consultation beyond traditional channels. To assist the project team in identifying likely issues and concerns from seldom heard audiences and ways to overcome them.	Feedback is received from seldom heard representatives and individuals.
Events and webinars, dates and times for which will be advertised through the following channels: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• printed materials• press releases• email/e-shot• paid advertising• social media advertising.	To engage with a wide range of audiences and spread awareness of the proposal and consultation to those who may not otherwise hear about them or have the opportunity to participate. These may be integrated with other consultation activities, such as the programme of digital consultation events.	To enable participation in the consultation process.

Seldom heard and interest groups contact database

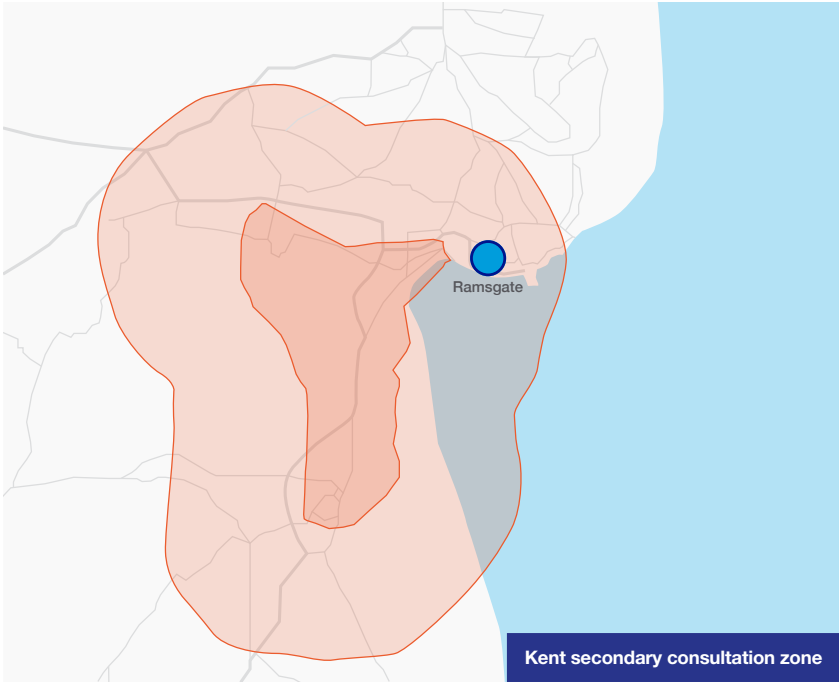
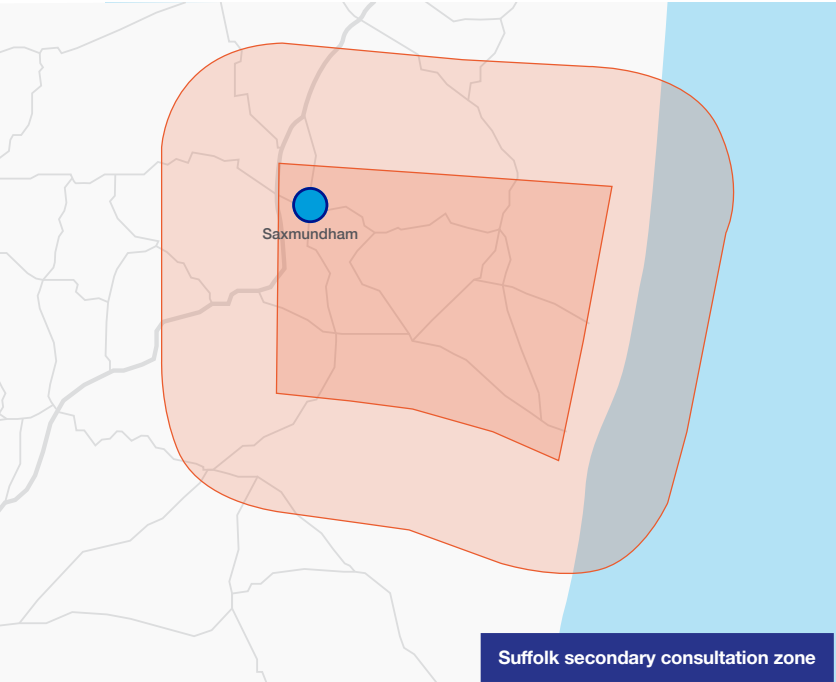
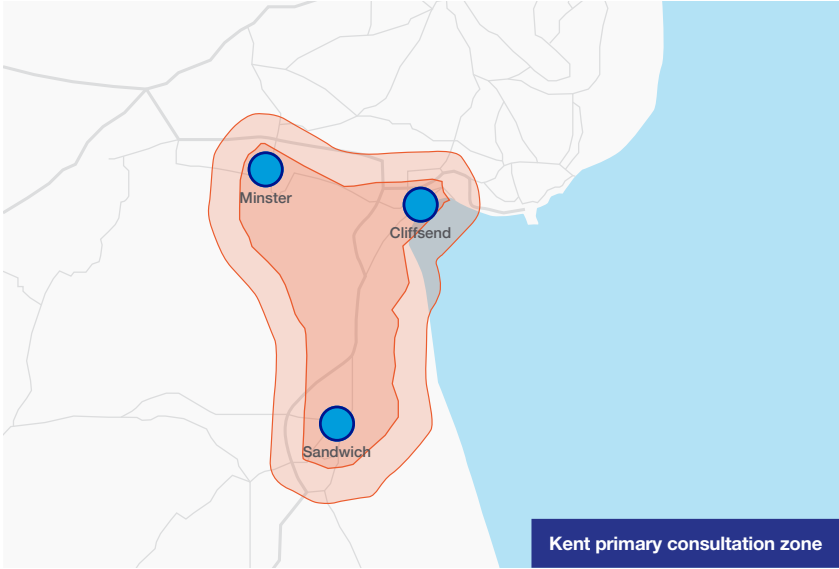
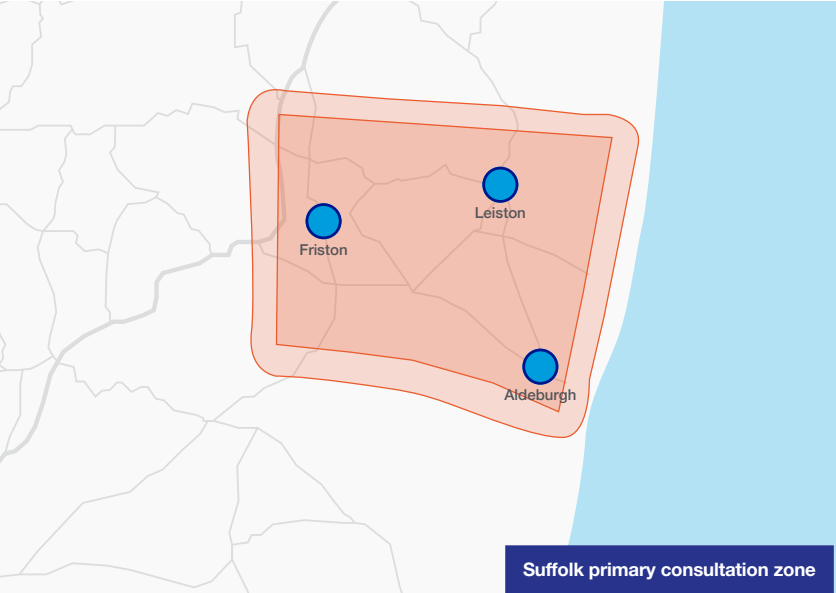
In addition to our engagement with local authorities, we have created a database of identified relevant contacts of seldom heard community groups, along with other interest groups and organisations. We will use this contact database to ensure these groups and organisations are kept up to date with the development of the scheme through regular mailing, telephone, digital and face to face contact.

We will also monitor the success of our communications tools to test the suitability of our approach to engagement. Depending on the reception of our early communications with these interest groups, we will adjust our approach to engagement accordingly.



11. Appendices

The maps below represent out consultation zones. The darker shade represents our primary consultation zone. The outer border of the primary consultation zone map represents a 1 km buffer. The outer border on the secondary consultation zone maps represent a 4 km buffer around the primary consultation zone.



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United Kingdom

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