



The Great Grid Upgrade

Sea Link

Development consent order factsheet

May 2025

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How does the development consent order process work?

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Some of our network reinforcement proposals meet the criteria to be classified as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP). Other examples of NSIPs include new airports, major roads, renewable energy projects and power stations.

These types of projects require a special type of planning permission, known as a **Development Consent Order (DCO)**, and we're required to submit a DCO application to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS).

DCO applications are examined by an expert independent inspector or panel of inspectors – known as the Examining Authority – who make a recommendation to Government on whether to approve or reject proposals. It's the Government that ultimately makes the decision on the DCO.



Initial planning

Before submitting a DCO application, our teams will spend a lot of time developing detailed plans for the new infrastructure we're proposing. We'll undertake technical work and environmental surveys and assessments, speak to landowners and other stakeholders, and seek feedback on our plans through consultation and engagement.

Public consultation and feedback

Optional non-statutory consultation

Before undertaking statutory consultation, we typically undertake an initial round of consultation on our plans. This consultation is designed to introduce our early proposals and gain feedback from the local community and stakeholders. It is called a 'non-statutory' consultation which is an optional stage of the DCO process.

We do this because local knowledge plays an important part in the development of our proposals. Seeking feedback from local communities, as soon as we have enough detail about a project, allows people to have an opportunity to influence it. Our non-statutory consultation for Sea Link took place between October and December 2022.

Statutory consultation

A statutory public consultation gives an opportunity for the local community and interested stakeholders to influence and shape our proposals. All feedback is carefully recorded and included in our DCO application, along with details of where it has led to changes in our designs. Our statutory consultation for Sea Link took place between October and December 2023, followed by a round of further, targeted consultation in summer 2024.





Planning inspectorate review

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Acceptance:

After our application is submitted, the Planning Inspectorate must decide whether our application includes enough detail for them to be able to accept and examine it. This decision must be made within 28 days.

At this stage, the Planning Inspectorate also asks the host local authorities whether National Grid has carried out the level of consultation required by national legislation, and by the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) published at Statutory Consultation.



Pre-examination:

Once the Application has been accepted, the Planning Inspectorate will appoint an inspector, or panel of inspectors, to examine the application. These inspector(s) are known as the Examining Authority.

At this stage, stakeholders and members of the public are able to register with the Planning Inspectorate as Interested Parties, allowing them to take part in the Examination.

Once registered, Interested Parties can comment on our proposals, highlighting areas they believe to be the key issues. These submissions are called Relevant Representations.

The Examining Authority will review all representations to help them set a timetable for the Examination. The Examining Authority will publish a draft timetable for the Examination, and invite all Interested Parties to a Preliminary Meeting to discuss the timetable. Once PINS is happy that the application meets the technical standard required, it begins work to carry out a detailed Examination of the plans. At this stage, members of the public can comment on the plans (this is called making a Relevant Representation) and register to become an Interested Party. PINS will invite all Interested Parties to a preliminary meeting to look at how the Examination will take place, what needs to be considered, and how this affects the Examination timetable. The Preliminary Meeting will not consider the proposals themselves. The Pre-examination period concludes once the Preliminary Meeting has taken place, this usually takes around three-months.



Examination:

The Examination formally begins the day after the Preliminary Meeting and will run for six months. During Examination, the Examining Authority will intensively scrutinise our proposals by reviewing our application documents, asking for written representations from National Grid and Interested Parties, and by holding public hearings.



Final approval for the proposed NSIP

When the Examination has concluded, the Planning Inspectorate will write a report on their findings, including a recommendation regarding whether or not to grant a DCO for the project. For applications by National Grid this report will go to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero within three months of the Examination closing.

The Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero has the final say on whether to grant or refuse development consent. They must make a decision within three months of receiving the Recommendation.

Once a decision has been made, there is a six week period in which anybody can legally challenge the Secretary of State's decision. If a challenge is made, the High Court will decide if there are grounds for the decision to be judicially reviewed.

How long does the approval process take?

From DCO application to Secretary of State decision, the entire process takes approximately 18 months.



Information about the plans

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The final plans are available on the Planning Inspectorate's website now the application has been accepted.

We have also prepared a signposting table that tells you where to find specific information about the topics you are interested in. This is available on the Document library of our website at nationalgrid.com/sealink. If you can't see what you need, contact the Sea Link team using the details below.



How to participate

To have your say in the planning process, you will need to register (as an Interested Party) [on the Planning Inspectorate's website](https://nationalgrid.com/sealink). **Registration closes on 23 June 2025.**

When you can participate in the process

If you are registered, you can speak at the Preliminary Meeting about the Examination itself, including the Examination timetable and any factors you think the Planning Inspectorate should consider.

Once registered, you can comment on the proposed Project ahead of the Examination, to tell the Planning Inspectorate what you think the key topics are. You can also respond to the Planning Inspectorate's questions during the Examination period. You can do this in writing, and by speaking at public hearings. The Examination timetable will be published in advance so you know when questions will be asked and hearings will be held.

For more information about taking part in the planning process, see planninginspectorate.gov.uk/having-your-say-guide.

Contacting PINS

Contact the Planning Inspectorate if you have questions about the Examination process:

**SouthEastAngliaLink@
planninginspectorate.gov.uk**

When writing an email, quote Sea Link in the subject line.

0303 444 5000

Open Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm.
Closed on weekends and bank holidays.

Call or email to ask for project documents in alternative formats such as PDF, large print, easy read, audio recording or braille.

Contacting National Grid

Contact National Grid if you have questions about the proposals:

contact@sealink.nationalgrid.com

0808 134 9569

Open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5:30pm.
Closed on weekends and bank holidays.