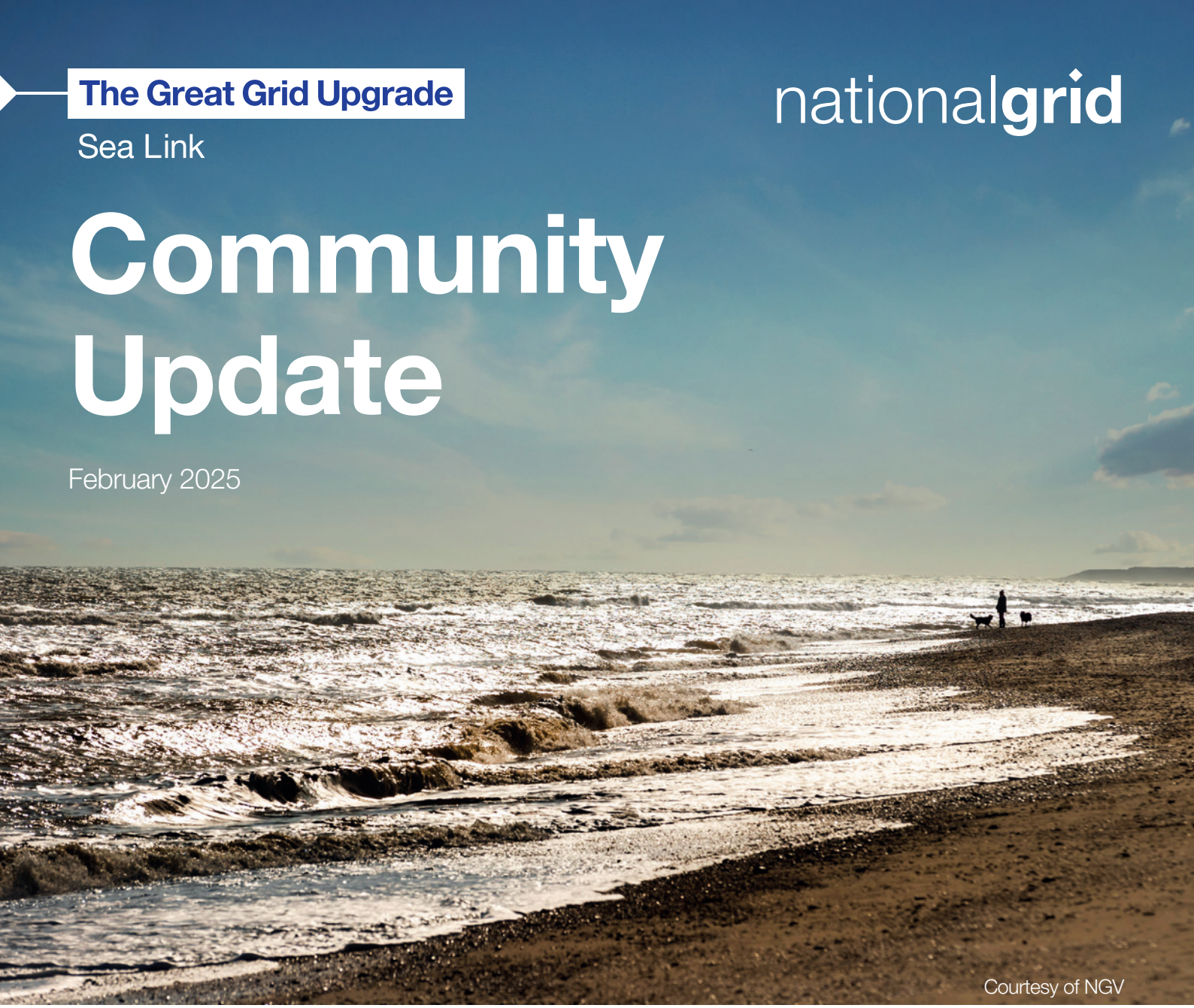
The Great Grid Upgrade

Sea Link

nationalgrid

Community Update

February 2025



Courtesy of NGV

As the UK moves to cleaner, more affordable sources of energy such as offshore wind, our infrastructure needs to be upgraded to connect this power to homes, businesses and public services.

Through The Great Grid Upgrade, National Grid is carrying out the largest overhaul of the electricity grid in generations. As part of this upgrade, we are developing plans for Sea Link, a proposed 138 km connection between Suffolk and Kent.

Around 122 km of Sea Link's cables would be out at sea. Where it is planned to come onshore between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness in Suffolk, the cables would be installed underground without impacting the beach. From there, underground cables would connect to a converter station at Saxmundham, before continuing underground to a substation near Friston, which has planning consent as part of Scottish Power Renewables' separate wind farm projects. The electricity would then flow into the Grid to be transported to where it is needed across East Anglia and the rest of the country.

Local communities in Suffolk and Kent have provided helpful feedback on our proposals for Sea Link across several stages of consultation held over the past few years. In this update, we are providing answers to some of the most common questions about Sea Link.

Key facts

Sea Link would strengthen the electricity network's ability to carry power from electricity generators to where it is needed.

Sea Link is not a wind farm and is not an interconnector which transports power between countries.

122 km – or 88% – of the Sea Link cables would be offshore, coming onshore deep underground in Suffolk.

No new pylons would be built in Suffolk as part of Sea Link.

12 km – or 9% – of the cable is onshore and underground in Suffolk, with the remaining 3% of cabling in Kent.

Aldeburgh beach and North Warren RSPB reserve would not be dug up to build Sea Link.

Trenchless construction, which would not disturb the land surface, is proposed to install cables deep underground in this area.

Benefits

2 million homes
could be powered through the energy carried by Sea Link.

Boosting energy security
by helping reduce our dependence on imported gas.

Lowering energy bills
by connecting the Grid to more affordable forms of electricity generation.

Your questions answered

1 Why can't it go to Bradwell or the Isle of Grain?

The high voltage electricity grid is a network across Britain. Some parts of it need to be upgraded so we can continue to benefit from a reliable flow of electricity. The Sizewell area requires grid reinforcement – that is why Sea Link is proposed here.

A connection at Bradwell or the Isle of Grain would be too far south of where Sea Link needs to be. Connecting at either of these locations would require more new infrastructure to meet the need for the upgrade.

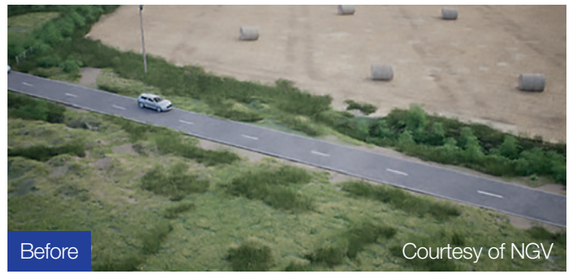
2 Why aren't you using brownfield sites?

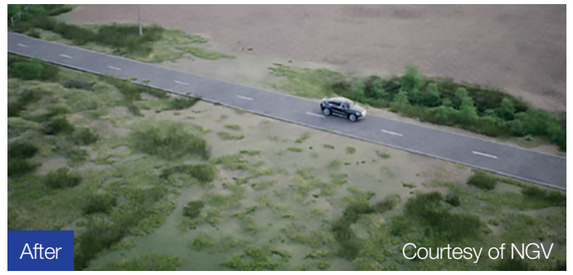
At the start of the project, we considered different locations, including brownfield sites in Suffolk, where Sea Link could come ashore. There were no brownfield sites large enough for the infrastructure required as part of Sea Link, such as the converter station, or near enough to where we need to connect.

3 Why don't you take power direct to London?

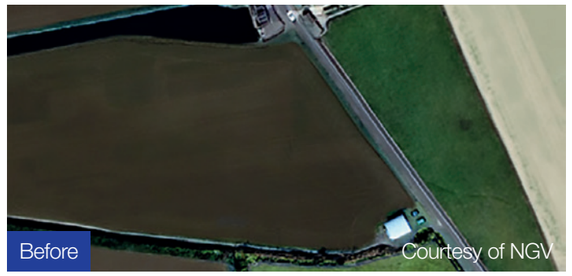
London accounts for 19% of energy demand at peak times, with 81% of electricity used across the rest of Great Britain. London is also a bottleneck in the electricity system (similar to the M25 at rush hour), meaning that we need more capacity that bypasses London so that power can be moved to homes and businesses across the UK. Sea Link would be part of that energy system moving power across Great Britain and is not exclusively taking power to London.

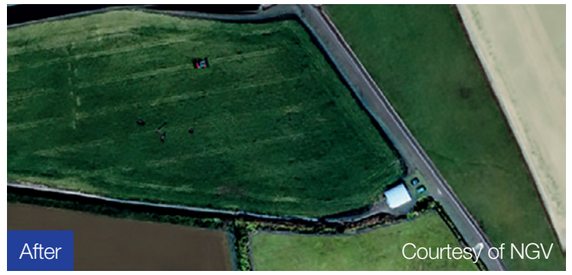
Example 1





Example 2





4 Will Sea Link damage the environment?

Sea Link would help to connect homes and businesses to cleaner, greener, more affordable electricity. Decarbonising the electricity grid is vital for tackling climate change – the biggest threat to nature.

Where our proposals are located in sensitive areas such as the Leiston/Aldeburgh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and RSPB North Warren, the cable would be deep below ground to avoid disturbing the environment. Cables in these areas would be installed using a trenchless construction method that would not disturb the ground above.

Some cables for the connection to the converter station and substation would be installed using open trenches. This would not take place within SSSI areas and once construction is complete, the land would be restored.

You can find two examples of construction and restoration works from previous National Grid Ventures projects above. The images are of previous underground cable construction sites.

5 Will construction traffic negatively impact villages and tourism?

We are proposing temporary haul roads so that construction traffic avoids the local road network where possible. **The average number of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) per day at the peak of construction would be 79. This would mean 158 vehicle movements per day**.

To avoid HGVs going through the centre of Saxmundham to the converter station, we are proposing a bridge across the River Fromus.

We will also be working with other developers in the area, including Sizewell C, Scottish Power Renewables and National Grid Ventures, to coordinate our construction activity. We are committed to identifying ways we can reduce the overall impact of construction on local communities.

Project timeline

October – December 2022
Non-statutory consultation

October 2022
Environmental impact assessment scoping submitted to the Planning Inspectorate

October – December 2023
Statutory consultation

July – August 2024
Targeted consultation

Now
Updating stakeholders

Early 2025
Submission of development consent order application

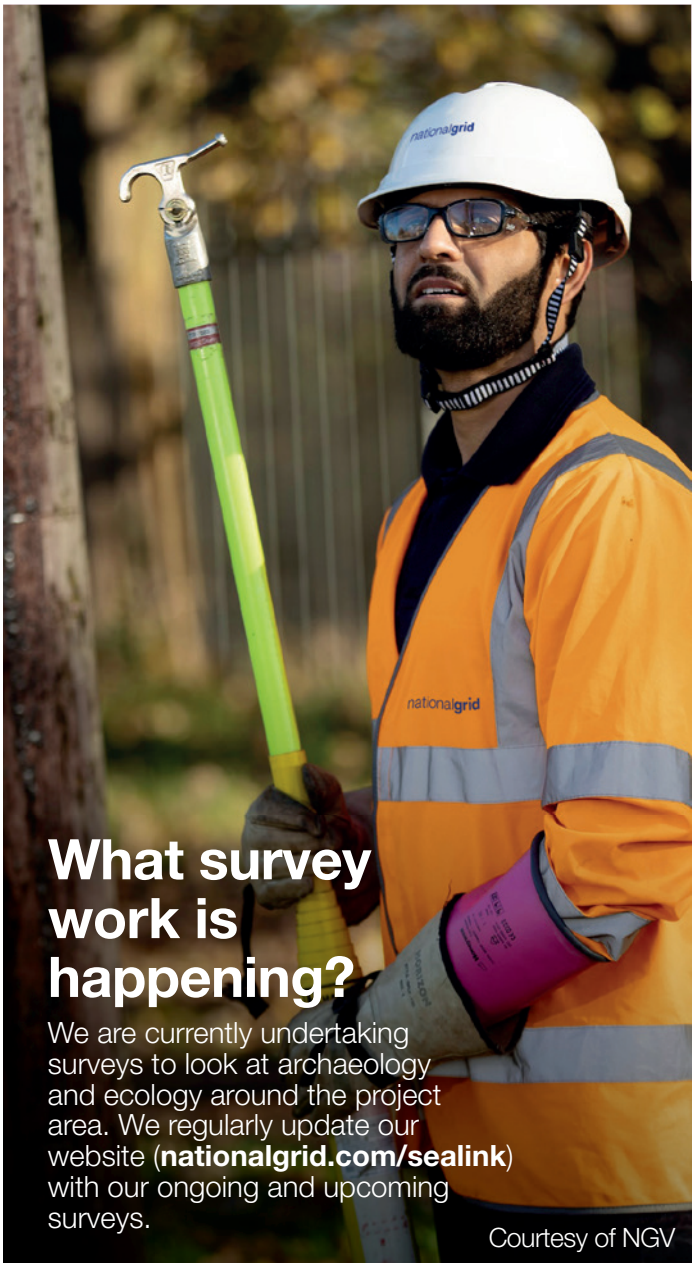
Summer 2025 – Summer 2026
Pre-examination, examination and reporting

Winter 2026
Secretary of State decision

2026 – 2030
Construction

Next steps

We are planning to submit our application for development consent early this year. For now, we are continuing to carry out survey works, which will help us understand more about any potential impacts and how we can avoid, limit, or mitigate them.



What survey work is happening?

We are currently undertaking surveys to look at archaeology and ecology around the project area. We regularly update our website (**nationalgrid.com/sealink**) with our ongoing and upcoming surveys.

Courtesy of NGV

Find out more

Scan the QR code or visit our website at **nationalgrid.com/sealink** to find out more about our proposals.

You can contact us at: **contact@sealink.nationalgrid.com**, or by calling **0808 134 9569**.

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