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Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire

PINS Pre-Application Planning Services – Programme Document

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nationalgrid

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Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Programme Document has been prepared by National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (NGET) as a requirement under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application prospectus in respect of the Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire Project.

1.2 Purpose and Structure

1.2.1 This Programme Document sets out the timetables and describes the activities necessary for an effective pre-application process, including the level of pre-application service requested from the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), and consultation with various parties required under the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) as per the requirements for a Programme Document set out in Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application prospectus. It is expected that this document will be updated at key milestones throughout the pre-application process as the Project is further developed.

1.2.2 This Programme Document is structured as follows:

- Section 1: Introduction and purpose and structure of the document
- Section 2: Background to Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire ('the Project')
- Section 3: PINS Pre-application Service
- Section 4: Expected Submission Timeframe
- Section 5: Timeframe of the pre-application process
- Section 6: Main issues for resolution
- Section 7: Engaging with statutory consultees and Local Planning Authorities
- Section 8: Pre-application risks and how these are tracked and managed
- Section 9: Approach to preparing Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI)

2. Background to the Project

2.1 Overview of the Project

2.1.1 The Project proposes to upgrade the electricity transmission network through the construction of approximately 60km of new 400,000 volt (400kV) overhead line between Weston Marsh and East Leicestershire. This would also include the construction of two new 400kV substations and the upgrade (reconductoring) of 55km of existing overhead line between East Leicestershire and Grendon in Northamptonshire.

2.1.2 The Project is currently expected to pass through the following local authority areas:

- Lincolnshire County Council
- South Holland District Council
- South Kesteven District Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- Melton Borough Council
- Harborough District Council
- West Northamptonshire Council
- North Northamptonshire Council

2.2 Planning Act 2008

2.2.1 As an NSIP, the Project requires the grant of development consent by the making of a Development Consent Order (DCO) under the Planning Act 2008.

2.2.2 For the purpose of Section 115 of the Planning Act 2008, development consent may also be granted for associated development. At this stage of the Project the full extent of associated development has not yet been defined.

3. PINS Pre-application Service

3.1 Pre-application Service

- 3.1.1 The Project is requesting the 'Standard' level of pre-application service. It is considered that the standard level of service will provide the Project with an appropriate and proportionate level of pre-application engagement with PINS, reflective of the scale and nature of the project and NGET's level of experience as an applicant.
- 3.1.2 The Project is similar to others within the Great Grid Upgrade that are further developed in their programme, and as such, lessons learnt and expertise in producing documentation are available to enable the application to be of a standard acceptable for examination.
- 3.1.3 The standard level of service will provide the Project with project update meetings, draft document review and risk review.

4. Expected Submission Timeframe

- 4.1.1 The anticipated DCO application submission is Q1 2028. The submission date timeframe will be refined as the period of submission draws closer. NGET will provide PINS with regular updates regarding the submission date as the project progresses.

5. Timeframe of the pre-application process

5.1.1 An anticipated timeline of the pre-application process is set out in Table 1 below. The pre-application timeframe will be refined, and further detail add as required following non-statutory and statutory consultation and as the period of submission draws closer.

Table 1 - Anticipated application submission timeframe

| Activity | Timeframe (Status) |
|---|---|
| Future Project Update Meetings with Planning Inspectorate | The following meetings have been scheduled with PINS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 13th June 2025 (Project Inception Meeting) It is anticipated that further meetings will be scheduled ahead of DCO submission, which will be scheduled with PINS at the appropriate time. |
| Non-statutory Consultation | June to August 2025 |
| EIA Scoping Request | Q4 2025 |
| EIA Scoping Opinion | Q4 2025 |
| Consultation with host Local Authorities on Draft Statement of Community Consultation | Q2 2026 - Q3 2026 |
| Statutory Consultation | 2026 |
| Further targeted consultation (if required) | TBC |
| PINS review of Draft DCO Documentation | Q2 2027 – Q3 2027 (To be confirmed) |

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Adequacy of Consultation Milestone | Q1 2027 – Q3 2027 (To be confirmed) |
| DCO Submission | Q1 2028 (Planned) |

6. Main issues for resolution

- 6.1.1 The Project is still at an early stage of development, and NGET has not yet completed non-statutory consultation. NGET is therefore not able to capture at this stage a comprehensive list of issues for resolution. Visibility of issues will improve upon close of non-statutory consultation when NGET receives views of communities and stakeholders in relation to the emerging proposals. NGET intends to provide feedback to PINS on the matters identified through non-statutory consultation as part of a key milestone meeting under the Standard Tier service, namely the 'post-scoping, pre-section 42 consultation' meeting as described in the prospectus.
- 6.1.2 However, in developing the Project, NGET's approach is mindful of the issues identified generally in National Policy Statements EN-1 and EN-5 as being likely to be relevant to projects of this type, including:
- Air Quality
 - Aviation and Defence
 - Alternatives & Good Design
 - Biodiversity and geological conservation
 - Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)
 - Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience
 - Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF)
 - Flood Risk
 - Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions
 - Hazardous Substances
 - Health
 - Historic Environment
 - Inter-relationship with other infrastructure projects
 - Land rights and land interests
 - Landscape and Visual
 - Noise and Vibration
 - Land use
 - Resource and Waste Management
 - Safety
 - Security
 - Socio-economic

- Traffic and Transport
- Water Quality and Resources

7. Engaging with statutory consultees and Local Planning Authorities

- 7.1.1 NGET began early engagement with the host Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in late 2024. Engagement has continued throughout the early stages of the Project including prior to non-statutory consultation. In April 2025 NGET consulted each host LPA on a draft non-statutory consultation strategy ahead of the Non-Statutory Consultation. Feedback will be sought from the LPAs during non-statutory consultation.
- 7.1.2 NGET are seeking to enter into Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) with the host LPAs, with a draft PPA template shared with LPAs in April 2025. A Host Authority Engagement Plan has been developed to explain likely levels of engagement required on the Project, the key timeframes and dates which allow LPAs to provide cost estimates for PPA and charging purposes.
- 7.1.3 The intention is for NGET to establish meetings with host LPAs on a monthly basis, to discuss project updates and provide a lookahead of forthcoming workstreams.
- 7.1.4 NGET will set up technical working groups with the objective of engaging with technical officers at the LPAs. It is anticipated that technical working group meetings may become more regular following receipt of responses from the statutory consultation.
- 7.1.5 Further information on engagement activities will be shared as required in the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) which will be developed and shared with LPAs ahead of statutory consultation.

8. Pre-application risks and how these are tracked and managed

| Risk | Description of Risk | Tracking and managing risk |
|--|---|--|
| Limited local authority resources which could limit their ability to engage with the proposals. | LPAs may have limited resources to have effective communication throughout the pre-application process for the DCO. | PPAs are to be entered into with the relevant LPAs to ensure that resource allocation is managed to have effective dialogue. |
| Limited statutory consultee resources which could limit their ability to engage with the proposals. | Statutory consultees may have limited resources to have effective communication throughout the pre-application process for the DCO. | At present a Service Level Agreement (SLA) is in place between Natural England and National Grid. Cost recovery agreements will be put in place for relevant stakeholders to help enable effective dialogue. The introduction of cost recovery will be engaged with positively, and engagement strategies will be mapped out on an ongoing nature. |
| Local authority or statutory consultee resource/ability to respond to scoping consultation in the required timescales. | Resourcing and capacity issues may see difficulty for stakeholders and LPAs to respond within specified timeframes. | NGET is proactively engaging with introductory meetings and updates on Non-Statutory Consultation. The anticipated timescales for submission of the scoping report will be |

| Risk | Description of Risk | Tracking and managing risk |
|---|--|---|
| Challenges accessing land for surveys in a timely manner. | With some ecological surveys having seasonality constraints, there are time constraints in conducting these. | <p>communicated to these stakeholders to allow for their review.</p> <p>Effective communication between the relevant disciplines and land agents, in order to plan a survey schedule and timeframe to ensure land access is achieved.</p> |

9. Approach to Preliminary Environmental Information

9.1.1 At this early stage of the Project, preparation of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) is still being considered, however it is expected to contain a good level of detail based on current survey access progress. In accordance with the timeframes set out in this document, the EIA Scoping Report is scheduled to be submitted to PINS in Q4 2025. The approach to preparing the PEIR will be informed by the Scoping Opinion received from PINS.

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