LionLink

National Grid Lion Link Limited

PINS Pre-application Planning Service Programme Document

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this document

1.1.1 This Programme Document has been prepared by National Grid Lion Link Limited (NGLLL), the Applicant, as a requirement under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-Application Prospectus in respect of LionLink (the Project).

1.1.2 This Programme Document sets out the timetable and describes the activities proposed to ensure 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.

1.1.3 This Programme Document will be updated at regular intervals as appropriate and is made available on the LionLink website throughout development of the project and will continue to be updated as appropriate.

1.1.4 The document is structured as follows:

- Introduction
- Background to the Project
- The Planning Inspectorate's Pre-Application Service
- The Pre-Application Programme
- Main issues for resolution
- Engaging with Statutory Bodies
- Engaging with Local Authorities
- Pre-Application risks

Chapter 2 Background to the Project

2.1 The Applicant

2.1.1 NGLLL, the Applicant, will be submitting to PINS for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Project, which forms one aspect of the National Grid Ventures (NGV) portfolio, part of the National Grid Group.

2.1.2 NGV is part of the National Grid Group but is operated independently, focusing on investments in energy projects, technologies, and strategic partnerships. While it functions autonomously, NGV is regulated alongside the wider National Grid Group to ensure its activities contribute to, decarbonising the economy, and building a more secure, resilient, and affordable energy system for Britain. The structure of the National Grid Group can be seen in Figure 1 - National Grid Group structurebelow.Figure 1 - National Grid Group structure

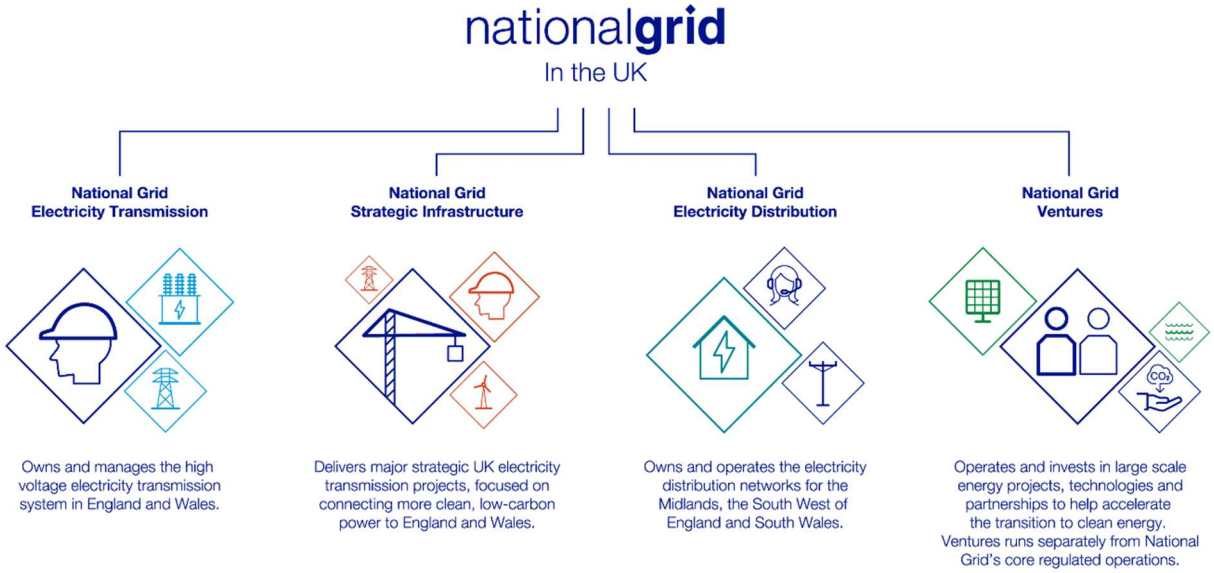

Figure 1 - National Grid Group structure

2.1.3 NGV currently operates six interconnectors with a combined capacity of 7.8 GW, comprising BritNed, IFA1, IFA2, Viking Link, North Sea Link and Nemo Link.

2.2 The Project

2.2.1 The Project comprises a new interconnector with a capacity of up to 2.0 gigawatts (GW) between the National Electricity Transmission Systems (NETS) of Great Britain (GB) and the Netherlands, including a connection into a wind farm located in Dutch waters.

2.2.2 Interconnectors connect the NETS of at least two countries to each other, and in some instances may include a connection to offshore power generation such as wind farms – where such an additional connection forms part of the development, this is known as an 'Offshore Hybrid Asset'. For this Project, the route of the Offshore electricity cables is from a grid connection point in the vicinity of the Suffolk coast, GB to the coast near Rotterdam in the Netherlands, with a connection to the Ijmuiden Ver and Nederwiek windfarm zones located in Dutch waters. An overview of the Project is illustrated in Figure 2 - Overview of the LionLink Projectbelow.

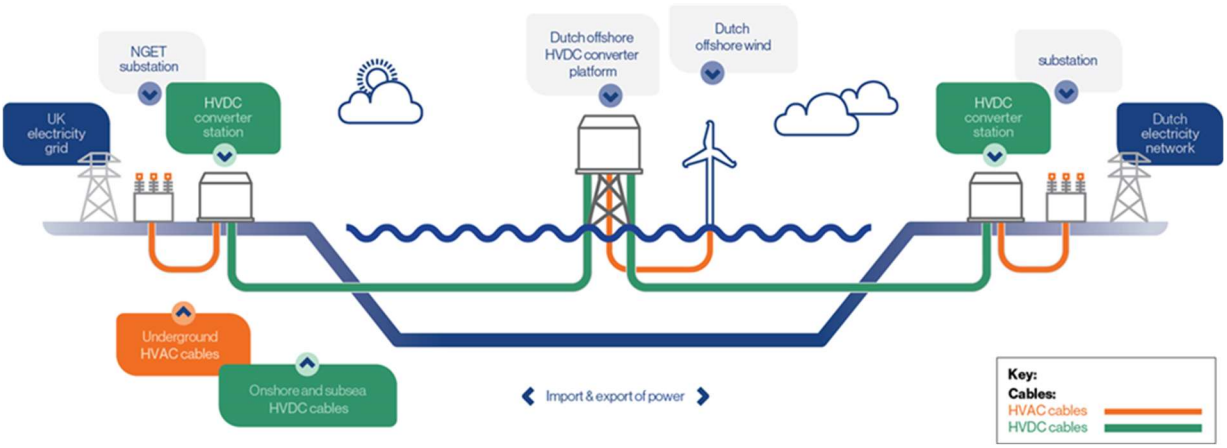

Figure 2 - Overview of the LionLink Project

2.2.3 The GB components of the Project are referred to as the Proposed Scheme. It is these components only that consent is being sought for through the planned DCO application.

2.2.4 The key infrastructural components of the Proposed Scheme are illustrated on the left side of Figure 2 and comprise:

- Kiln Lane Substation;
- Proposed Underground High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) cables between the Kiln Lane Substation and the proposed Converter Station;
- Proposed Converter Station;
- Proposed Underground High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) cables between the proposed Converter Station and Landfall;
- Landfall; and
- Proposed Offshore HVDC cables from the Landfall to the edge of the UK Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

2.2.5 The Project falls within the administrative boundaries of the following local authorities:

- Suffolk County Council
- East Suffolk District Council

2.3 The Planning Act 2008

2.3.1 LionLink is treated as a development for which development consent is required, pursuant to a section 35 direction issued by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) (as then known) on 22 August 2022.

2.3.2 In line with the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008), LionLink are legally required to consult with the community and stakeholders before the application for development consent is submitted to PINS on behalf of the Secretary of State.

2.4 Other Licenses and non-planning consents

2.4.1 Given the current stage of the Project, the Applicant has not identified any licenses or non-planning consents that will not be included within the DCO. This will continue to be monitored and updated as appropriate.

Chapter 3 The Planning Inspectorate's pre-application service

3.1 Pre-application service

3.1.1 LionLink requested the 'Standard' tier of pre-application service. It is considered 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, the Project team's delivery of other interconnector projects and the level of experience of the Applicant's project team.

3.1.2 LionLink was confirmed as being appropriate for the Standard tier by PINS in August 2024. The standard tier of service will provide the Project with project update meetings, draft document review and risk review.

Chapter 4 Pre-application Programme

4.1.1 An anticipated timeline of the pre-application process is set out in Table 1 below, including already completed activities. The pre-application timeframe will be refined, and further detail added as required and as the period of submission draws closer.

Table 1 – Timeline of Pre-application activities

Activity	Timeframe (Status)
Non-statutory Consultation	24 October 2022 – 18 December 2022 (complete)
Supplementary Non-statutory Consultation	08 September 2023 – 03 November 2023 (complete)
EIA Scoping	16 March 2024 – 16 April 2024 (complete)
Habitat Regulations Assessment (Stage 1 Screening)	October 2025 (complete)
Statement of Community Consultation	October 2025 (complete)
Project Update Meeting with PINS (pre-statutory consultation)	12 November 2026
Statutory Consultation, aligning with s42, s47 and s48 of PA2008	13 January 2026 – 10 March 2026
Regard to relevant responses to the Statutory Consultation, and preparation of Consultation Report	Q2-Q3 2026
Project Update Meeting with PINS (post-statutory consultation)	Q2/3 2026
Preparation and development of DCO documentation including: Draft DCO, Environmental Statement, Explanatory Memorandum, Book of Reference, Statement of Reasons, Funding Statement, Works/Land/Public Rights of Way and other Plans.	Q4 2025-Q3 2026
PINS and statutory stakeholder review of draft DCO documentation	Q3/Q4 2026
Adequacy of consultation milestone	Q3/Q4 2026
DCO submission	Q4 2026

Chapter 5 Main Issues for Resolution

5.1.1 The Applicant has completed two rounds of scheme-wide Non-statutory Consultation: one round in 2022, and a further round in 2023.

5.1.2 The main issues set out in Table 2 below reflect the key themes raised by consultees and local communities during the Non-statutory Consultations in 2022 and 2023. These key themes were also raised in the responses from the local planning authorities and statutory bodies.

5.1.3 This programme document will be available to statutory bodies prior to the Statutory Consultation in 2026 but some of the issues noted below are being continually discussed in the regular meetings with some of these statutory bodies. The feedback received from the Statutory Consultation will allow the Applicant to undertake further analysis in identifying the potential main issues. This will be refined into a 'potential main issues for examination document' for submission with the application.

5.1.4 An issue being listed below is not intended to imply that the Project considers any such issue to be insurmountable or unduly challenging to overcome. They are listed because they reflect the key feedback from consultation and ongoing discussions, and these are issues that will continue to be considered and addressed as the project progresses through Statutory Consultation, to application submission and beyond.

5.1.5 An application for a DCO will be supported by documents explaining the consideration of issues arising from consultation and the application of the relevant National Policy Statements. An Environmental Statement will set out how environmental effects have been identified; and measures taken to avoid, reduce, mitigate and compensate for effects.

Table 2 - Main Issues

Issue	Description of Issue
Landscape and visual effects associated with the Converter Station	Consideration of landscape and visual effects at the Converter Station Site, and possible mitigation including siting, planting & design approaches
Proposed access route to Converter Station	Approach to accessing the proposed converter station, including considering alternative accesses, the crossing of the River Fromus (including the scale of the bridge and associated heritage and landscape setting impacts), construction traffic, methodology for Abnormal Indivisible Loads, local road network, and interproject traffic effects.
Socio-economic and tourism effects	In respect of onshore proposals, the likely effects on socio-economic receptors, and

	tourism. Additional concern around the impact on Walberswick associated with the Landfall construction works.
Cumulative Effects (including Coordination with other projects)	Coordination – the interface with EA1N, EA2, Sea Link and Helios Energy Park around the proposed Kiln Lane Substation; the interface with Sea Link around the proposed HVAC Cable Corridor and Converter Station Site masterplan. Cumulative - the approach to assessment and mitigation of intra-project cumulative effects, in particular construction traffic with Sizewell C, EA1N, EA2, Sea Link, and Helios Energy Park.
Consenting Scenarios at Kiln Lane Substation	For certainty of delivery an extension scenario and full build out scenario have been assessed. The extension scenario relies on the main substation construction having been completed by another project in advance of Lionlink. Questions remain as to at what stage the full build out scenario can be discounted.

Chapter 6 Engaging with statutory bodies

6.1 Engagement with Statutory Bodies

6.1.1 NGLLL began early engagement with a number of statutory bodies prior to the Non-Statutory consultations in 2022 and 2023 and EIA Scoping in Q1/2 2024. Engagement has continued, and will be maintained through the Statutory consultation, DCO submission and its Examination.

6.1.2 The applicant considers that the main statutory bodies affected by the application are:

- Natural England
- The Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Suffolk Highways (the local highway authority)
- The Marine Management Organisation
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee
- Trinity House
- Cefas
- The Crown Estate
- Suffolk Wildlife Trust
- Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Partnership
- Maritime and Coastguard Agency

6.1.3 The Applicant has also undertaken engagement with a number of other organisations such as statutory undertakers, other interest and stakeholder groups, and other infrastructure developers who are progressing DCO projects in the same locality.

6.1.4 Separate monthly meetings are held with the following stakeholders: Natural England, The Environment Agency, the Marine Management Organisation, and Suffolk Highways. Meetings with the other organisations are currently undertaken as necessary.

6.1.5 A Service Level Agreement is in place with Natural England; an Enhanced Advisory Service agreement is in place with Historic England; and a Discretionary Advice Service agreement is in place with the Environment Agency and the Marine Management Organisation.

6.1.6 Following the analysis of feedback from statutory bodies to the Statutory consultation, the Applicant will be able to produce pre-application 'principal areas of disagreement summary statements' where these are identified. These will also include an indication of the degree to which it is considered that the specific issues raised will be resolved before the application is submitted.

Chapter 7 Engagement with local authorities

7.1.1 The Project is located within and affects the local authorities of East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council. NGLLL began early engagement with a number of statutory bodies prior to the Non-statutory consultations in 2022 and 2023. Specific engagement was also undertaken with the local authorities and their technical specialists as part of the EIA Scoping request in Q1/2 2024.

7.1.2 The Applicant has developed a programme of monthly meetings with the local authorities, with additional meetings for technical specialists as required and is engaging in accordance with that programme. Engagement has continued, and will be maintained through the Statutory consultation, DCO submission, Examination, and discharge of Requirements. Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) are being finalised with East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council.

7.1.3 It is anticipated that pre-application 'principal areas of disagreement summary statements' will be developed with both authorities. These will also include an indication of the degree to which it is considered that the specific issues raised will be resolved before the application is submitted.

Chapter 8 Pre-Application Risks

8.1.1 The Applicant has held two rounds of Non-statutory consultation, and has the Statutory consultation scheduled to be undertaken from 13 January to 10 March 2026.

8.1.2 It is considered that there are limited residual pre-application risks and these are listed in Table 3**Error! Reference source not found.** below. The Applicant does not consider that these risks are being or will be realised, subject to the risk management measures that are being undertaken and which are set out in the below table. They are provided however in order to record those areas which the Applicant considers could introduce delays to the pre-application timescale should the risk profile change.

Table 3 – Pre-application Risks

Risk	Description of Risk	Tracking and Management of Risk
Lack of sufficient resource/capacity within host Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to engage with proposals in detail	Resource availability and/or the volume of DCO projects, including those at Examination, causing delays in receiving stakeholder inputs or review. Numerous developments within proximity of the Project demand additional resource from Local Authorities which could reduce their ability to adequately engage with the Project proposals.	The Applicant is in the process of finalising a Planning Performance Agreement with the host LPAs and includes the provision for ongoing monthly meetings which will include the sharing of regular updates regarding project progress and programme.
Lack of sufficient resource/capacity within stakeholder organisations to engage with proposals in detail	Limited resource and capacity of some statutory consultees due to staffing and the volume of DCO and other projects in the region to which they are required to engage. Potential to result in limited engagement on the proposals and inability for statutory consultees to provide feedback throughout the pre-application stage of the project.	Early stakeholder engagement has commenced with key stakeholder organisations with meetings providing the sharing of regular updates regarding project progress and programme. Where applicable the Applicant has undertaken paid pre-application services with Statutory Consultees.

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