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Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire

PINS Pre-Application Planning Services – Programme Document

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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 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (“MHCLG”) guidance ‘Planning Act 2008: Pre-application stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects’ as well as 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). It is written in accordance with the requirements for a Programme Document set out in the MHCLG guidance and the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application Prospectus. This document is updated at key milestones throughout the pre-application process as the Project is further developed and will be hosted on the Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire Project Website.

- 1.2.2 This Programme Document is structured as follows:

- Section 1: Introduction, 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. The new overhead line starts from new 400kV substation infrastructure (up to two new substations) at Weston Marsh to the north east of Spalding and continues west to a new 400kV substation proposed to the west of the village of Ab Kettleby and north west of Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire (referred to as 'WMEL-B'), via a new 400kV substation proposed to the west of Corby Glen (referred to as 'WMEL-A'). The Project also includes approximately 66km of reconductoring of the existing overhead transmission line from WMEL-B substation to the existing Grendon substation, east of Northampton. The Project is expected to include the replacement of short sections of existing 400kV overhead line and local changes to the lower voltage distribution networks to facilitate the construction of the new overhead line and substations.
- 2.1.2 The Project is part of The Great Grid Upgrade and along with a number of other projects will support the UK's net zero target by reinforcing the electricity transmission network along the East Coast and facilitating the connection of planned offshore wind generation, interconnectors with other countries and other sources of electricity. Further information on The Great Grid Upgrade can be found online at: www.nationalgrid.com/the-great-grid-upgrade.
- 2.1.3 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 The Project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), as defined by the Planning Act and the Planning Act 2008 (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects) (Electricity Lines) Order 2013, as it involves the installation of an electric line above ground of more than 2km in length, which will operate at more than 132kV, in England.
- 2.2.2 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.

- 2.2.3 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 following the 'Standard' level of pre-application service. It is considered that the standard level of service provides 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 provides the Project with project update meetings, draft document review and risk review.

4. Expected Submission Timeframe

- 4.1.1 Non-Statutory Consultation ('Stage 1 Consultation') on the Project has concluded and was held between 11 June 2025 to 6 August 2025. Statutory Consultation ('Stage 2 Consultation') is expected to commence in September 2026.
- 4.1.2 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.
- 4.1.3 The Project Team is actively reviewing the emerging Planning and Infrastructure Bill, that received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025, and assessing its potential implications for the programme. As the detailed requirements and associated guidance evolve, there may be impacts on the timing and scope of forthcoming consultation activities. Consequently, some programme dates and activities presented within this document may be subject to change. The Project Team will continue to keep PINS, and all relevant stakeholders updated as further clarity becomes available.

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 added as required following Stage 1 Consultation and Stage 2 Consultation and as the period of submission draws closer. Whilst NGET has presented future programme milestones by reference to programmed quarter, PINS may illustrate this publicly on their website by the middle month of the quarter presented within this document.

Table 1 - Anticipated application submission timeframe

Activity	Timeframe (Status)
Future Project Update Meetings with Planning Inspectorate	<p>The following meetings have been scheduled with PINS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 25 February 2026 (Project Update Meeting) <p>Further meetings will be scheduled ahead of DCO submission, which will be scheduled with PINS at the appropriate time.</p>
Non-statutory Consultation ('Stage 1 Consultation')	11 June to 06 August 2025 (Complete)
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Request	November 2025 (Complete)
EIA Scoping Opinion	December 2025 (Complete)
Consultation with host Local Authorities on Draft Statement of Community Consultation	Q2 2026 - Q3 2026
Statutory Consultation ('Stage 2 Consultation')	September 2026
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 Application Submission	Q1 2028 (Planned)

6. Main issues for resolution

- 6.1.1 The Project is still at an early stage of development. NGET completed Stage 1 Consultation in August 2025. The key themes and issues arising from feedback are currently being reviewed and considered as the detailed design is developed ahead of the Stage 2 consultation (planned for September 2026). We will provide detailed responses to key topics in a consultation feedback report, which will be shared at Stage 2 consultation.
- 6.1.2 The Stage 2 consultation documentation will include a Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), which will present a preliminary assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Project. The purpose of the PEIR is to enable members of the public, consultation bodies, and other stakeholders, to develop an informed view of the likely significant effects of the Project and comment on matters of interest.
- 6.1.3 Following the Stage 2 consultation, the key themes and issues arising from the feedback will be included within an update to the Programme Document as an aide to a better understanding of the issues and their context.
- 6.1.4 Considering the early stage of development, 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 Stage 1 Consultation. In April 2025 NGET consulted each host LPA on a draft non-statutory consultation strategy and feedback was sought from the LPAs during the Stage 1 consultation. NGET have established meetings with host LPAs on a monthly basis, to discuss project updates and provide a lookahead of forthcoming workstreams.
- 7.1.2 NGET are seeking to enter into Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) with the host LPAs to assist with required resourcing and to allow for adequate engagement with the Project, with a draft PPA template shared with LPAs in April 2025. To date, three PPAs have been signed. A Host Authority Engagement Plan (HAEP) has been developed and shared with host LPAs, with a revised HAEP issued in January 2026.
- 7.1.3 The HAEP:
- Provides host authorities with a look ahead to when key planning and EIA activities are programmed to take place;
 - Sets out an overarching protocol for engaging with the host authorities on planning and EIA matters;
 - Assists host authorities with their resource planning for the project;
 - Assists all parties in agreeing PPAs; and
 - Provides guidelines to assist all parties in the development of Statements of Common Ground (SoCGs) and Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statements (PADSS) (if required).
- 7.1.4 NGET will set up technical working groups from January 2026 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 Stage 2 consultation.
- 7.1.5 Further information on engagement activities will be shared as required in the Statement of Community Consultation which will be developed and shared with LPAs ahead of Stage 2 consultation.
- 7.1.6 In addition to engagement with the host authorities, NGET has and will continue to liaise with the prescribed consultees, and other stakeholders including local interest groups. Feedback has been sought as part of the Stage 1 Consultation. Contact will be made with all prescribed consultees and other stakeholders relevant to the Project. A programme of engagement is in development, which includes entering into Service Level Agreements (or similar) where relevant, to ensure prescribed consultees have the adequate resource to engage with the Project at key times. Prescribed consultees will be invited to attend the technical working groups, where relevant.

- 7.1.7 To date, meetings have been held with the following prescribed consultees:

- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Natural England
- Marine Management Organisation

7.1.8 Further engagement with PINS will continue at relevant milestones and confirmed as the Project develops.

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. Three PPAs have now been signed.
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.	Cost recovery agreements have been put in place for some statutory consultees to help enable effective dialogue on the Project; and NGET is continuing to pursue agreements with other statutory consultees. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) is also in place between Natural England and National Grid. The introduction of cost recovery will be engaged with positively, and engagement strategies will be mapped out on an ongoing nature.

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.	Effective communication between the relevant disciplines and land agents, in order to plan a survey schedule and timeframe to ensure land access is achieved.
Conflicting developments may interface with the project at different stages of detail design	Conflicting development or committed developments may appear through the design lifecycle and require amendments to the final design and siting.	A committed development tracker is in place that captures pending and committed developments (reviewed monthly), allowing early identification of potential interfaces.

9. Approach to Preliminary Environmental Information

- 9.1.1 In November 2025, NGET submitted a Scoping Report to PINS, to inform a request for a Scoping Opinion under Regulation 10 of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. Subsequently a Scoping Opinion was adopted by PINS (on behalf of the Secretary of State) on 17 December 2025.
- 9.1.2 The Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) will be informed by the Scoping Opinion. Further information on the approach to EIA can be found in the Scoping Report and will be presented in the PEIR.
- 9.1.3 NGET is actively monitoring the development of the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and any supporting guidance, including how this could affect the PEIR. At this stage, we continue to prepare the PEIR in line with established best practice. Should any changes be confirmed that affect the scope, structure, or timing of the PEIR, we will provide PINS and stakeholders with an update at the appropriate time.

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