

The Great Grid Upgrade

Cross Border Connection

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Cross Border Connection - England

PINS Pre-Application Planning Services - Programme Document

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nationalgrid

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Cross Border Connection

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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 for Housing, Communities and Local Government (“MHCLG”) guidance ‘Planning Act 2008: Pre-application stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application Prospectus (as amended) in respect of the Cross Border Connection 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 will be updated at key milestones throughout the pre-application process as the Project is further developed and will be hosted on the Cross Border Connection Project website.

1.2.2 This Programme Document is structured as follows:

- Section 1: Introduction and purpose and structure of the document
- Section 2: Background to Cross Border Connection (‘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 Scheme is a proposed network reinforcement that is being developed jointly by National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (NGET) and Scottish Power ('SP') Energy Networks ('SPEN'). SP Energy Networks is developing the section located in Scotland, which extends from the proposed Gala North Substation, near Lauder, to the Scotland-England border. The Scottish section of the Project was subject to a separate routing and siting study undertaken by SP Energy Networks and will be delivered under a separate consent for development.
- 2.1.2 National Grid is developing the section of the Project located in England which extends from the Carlisle area in North England to the England-Scotland border.
- 2.1.3 The Project will include a new 400 kV substation in the Carlilse area ('new Carlisle substation'), a new double circuit 400 kV overhead line between the new Carlisle substation and the England-Scotland border and a connection from the new Carlisle substation to the existing network.
- 2.1.4 The Project (within England) is located wholly within the County of Cumbria, and the local authority that is presently anticipated to be affected by the Project's proposal is Cumberland 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, which will operate at 400kV 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 requesting the 'Standard' level 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 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 Stage 1 Consultation (Non-Statutory) for the Project was undertaken between October 15 and December 10, 2025.
- 4.1.2 Due to the early stage of the Project the exact timeframe for submission is not yet known. However, the anticipated DCO application submission is 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 added as required following Non-statutory and Statutory Consultation and as the period of submission draws closer. As such, the dates set out below are subject to change.

5.1.2 The anticipated timeframe details provided below is subject to any legislative change associated with the Planning and Infrastructure Bill that may come forward in the future and the programme document will be updated accordingly in the future as required.

Table 1 - Anticipated application submission timeframe

Activity	Timeframe (Status)
Future Project Update Meetings with Planning Inspectorate	The following meetings have been undertaken with Planning Inspectorate: - 20 November 2025 (Inception Meetings)
Second Meeting with PINS	2026
Third Meeting with PINS	2027
Fourth Meeting with PINS	2028
Introductory meetings with Statutory Consultees	May to September 2025
Non-statutory Consultation (Stage 1 Consultation)	15 October – 10 December 2025
EIA Scoping Request	2026
EIA Scoping Opinion	2026
Statement of Community Consultation	2027
Statutory Consultation	2027
Further targeted consultation (if required)	TBC

Environmental Impact Assessment Surveys	2026 – 2028
PINS review of Draft DCO Documentation	2028
Adequacy of Consultation Milestone	2028
DCO Submission	2028
DCO Examination and Decision	2028 – 2030
Discharge Requirements	2030
Construction	2030
Connection	2033

6. Main issues for resolution

6.1.1 The Project is still at an early stage of development and NGET has not yet completed its first round of 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.

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
- Biodiversity and geological conservation
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- Climate Adaption and Resilience
- Electric and Magnetic Fields
- Flood risk
- Greenhouse Gas emissions
- Good design
- Hazardous Substances
- Health
- Historic environment
- Land rights and land interests
- Landscape and visual effects
- Noise and vibration
- Land use including open space, green infrastructure, green belt
- Resource and Waste Management
- Safety
- Security
- Socio-economic impacts
- Strategic Planning and co-ordination
- Traffic and Transport
- Water Quality and Resources

7. Engaging with statutory consultees and Local Planning Authorities

- 7.1.1 Early engagement has commenced with Cumberland Council as the relevant affected Local Planning Authority, and engagement will continue throughout pre-application stage. To date, an introductory meeting and a briefing has been held.
- 7.1.2 Feedback will be sought from Cumberland Council during non-statutory consultation.
- 7.1.3 NGET are seeking to enter into a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with Cumberland Council to assist with resourcing required to adequately engage with the project, with a draft PPA template shared with Cumberland Council in September 2025. A Draft Engagement Plan has also been shared and will be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

The Engagement Plan will:

- Provide a look ahead to when key planning and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) activities are programmed to take place;
- Set out an overarching protocol for engaging on planning and EIA matters;
- Assist Cumberland Council/host authorities with their resource planning for the project;
- Assist all parties in agreeing Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs); and
- Provide guidelines to assist all parties in the development of Statements of Common Ground (SoCGs) and Principal Areas of Disagreement (PADs) (if required).

- 7.1.4 A programme of engagement is currently in development to be discussed with stakeholders, including methods for cost recovery.
- 7.1.5 Introductory meetings have been held for non-statutory consultation to inform them of the routeing and siting work that has been undertaken for the Project. To date, meetings have been held with the following bodies:
 - Environment Agency
 - Natural England
 - Historic England
 - Ministry of Defence
 - National Highways
 - SEPA
 - Historic Scotland
 - Nature Scot
 - Scottish Borders Council

- 7.1.6 Further meetings will be held post non-statutory consultation to enact a plan of engagement and discuss any comments that have been raised. This is anticipated to be ongoing throughout the pre-application process. The Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) will be developed and provided to stakeholders for comment ahead of Statutory Consultation in 2027.
- 7.1.7 Further engagement with PINS will continue as 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.	Cumberland Council may have limited resources to have effective communication throughout the pre-application process for the DCO.	A PPA is to be entered into with Cumberland Council 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 an SLA is in place between National Grid and prescribed bodies including Natural England. Cost recovery agreements will be put in place where appropriate for relevant stakeholders to help enable effective dialogue. The introduction of cost recovery will be engaged with positively, and engagement strategies are being mapped out with stakeholders.
Differing consenting regimes between England and Scotland	England section of the Project is a NSIP and requires a DCO under the Planning Act 2008. The Scotland section requires the consent of Scottish	At present, constant communication is being held between the project teams for both National Grid and SP

Risk	Description of Risk	Tracking and managing risk
	Ministers under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 (as amended).	Energy Networks. Further discussion between The Planning Inspectorate and Energy Consents Unit may be required throughout the project development.
Local authority or statutory 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.	Effective communication is currently being held with the LPAs with introductory meetings and updates following Non-Statutory Consultation. Continued dialogue will ensure that adequate notice is given for stakeholders to respond to any new information.
Challenges accessing land for surveys in a timely manner	With some ecological surveys having seasonally 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.

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. In accordance with the timeframes set out in this document, the EIA Scoping Report is scheduled to be submitted to PINS in 2026. The approach to preparing the PEIR will be informed by the Scoping Opinion received from PINS.

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