

Community newsletter

April 2026

Work is underway on Grain to Tilbury, where we're building a new tunnel under the Thames and upgrading overhead lines between Grain, Kingsnorth and Tilbury.

What's happening?

In early 2025, we received planning permission from Thurrock Council and Gravesham Borough Council to begin work on the project. This work includes replacing the existing 1960s cable tunnel beneath the River Thames between Tilbury and Gravesend, as it has reached the end of its working life and uses technology that is now out of date.

We are also upgrading overhead lines (OHL) in the area and improving older infrastructure along the overhead line route to help make the network more reliable for the future.

Why's it happening?

By upgrading the tunnel and overhead lines, more power can be transported from where it is generated to where it is needed. The project forms part of The Great Grid Upgrade, the largest overhaul of the electricity grid in generations. It will enable us to carry more home-grown clean energy, while boosting Britain's energy security and helping to meet the growing demand for energy.



Latest news

In March, we launched our tunnel boring machine. She's called Caroline (more on that later) and weighs 270 tonnes - equal to a loaded Boeing 777. Caroline will be constructing the entire 2.2 km tunnel under the Thames over the next eight months. To create a shaft big enough for Caroline, we used Europe's biggest 'vertical shaft machine'. It measures 15 m wide and 48 m deep and we are now doing the same in Gravesend, where the tunnel connects.

Meanwhile, our overhead line teams have started a programme of maintenance and upgrades between Gravesend and Kingsnorth Power Station. Works began in mid-April and will take approximately seven months to complete.

If you're interested in reading more about Caroline, the engineering involved, or the works in general, please visit nationalgrid.com/grain-to-tilbury.



Stay up to date

We will be sending out regular updates to our mailing list. Sign up today to receive the latest news and progress directly to your inbox. If you would prefer to receive this in the post, please contact the team using the details at the end of this newsletter.

Community Grant Programme is accepting new applications

If you're a local group or charity looking for some funding, our Community Grant Programme is open to you. Grants of up to £20,000 are available for initiatives that provide social, economic or environmental benefits for local people. Further information and the application form are available at nationalgrid.com/community-grant-programme.



Students make their mark

Over 30 students from St Clere's Secondary School and St John's Catholic Comprehensive School were given the opportunity to help name two of the major machines that will be used to build the new cable tunnel beneath the River Thames. These machines are the vertical shaft sinking machine (VSM) and the tunnel boring machine (TBM).

During a special STEM engagement day, students learned how the machines work and the important role they will play in constructing the tunnel.

The winning name for the TBM was Dame Caroline Haslett, recognising one of Britain's most influential women in engineering. The VSM was named after Verena Holmes, another pioneering British engineer.

The winning entries were submitted by Year 10 and Year 12 students from St John's Catholic Comprehensive School, highlighting the creativity and interest shown by local young people in the project and in future engineering careers.



School session in November 2025



VSM on-site at Tilbury

Supporting the local area

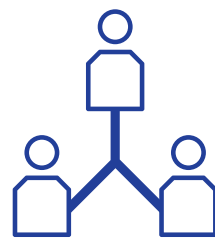


Community
Grant
Programme



22

22 apprenticeship
opportunities plus
graduate roles



11

work experience
placements



Supporting
Tilbury
food bank



Promoting
STEM in
schools



76

local employees

Local
careers
day



15

local suppliers



Staying in touch

For more information about the project, or to sign up to our mailing list to receive our newsletters, visit nationalgrid.com/grain-to-tilbury or scan the QR code:

Write to us at: **Freepost Grain to Tilbury Project**
(please note that you do not need a stamp)

Email us: contact@graintotilbury.nationalgrid.com

Phone us: **020 3398 1599**

