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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. It has been prepared having regard to the MHCLG guidance and the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application Prospectus. Whilst statutory pre-application consultation duties have been repealed by the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, NGET is continuing to follow previous guidance where appropriate. 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 consultees and Local Planning Authorities
 - Section 8: Pre-application risks and how these are tracked and managed
 - Section 9: Draft Environmental Statement (DES)

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
 - Charnwood Borough Council
- 2.1.4 The draft Order Limits have been increased to include some minor highway works on the A46 – Six Hills Junction. The proposed works are within the administrative boundary of Charnwood Borough Council and they have been contacted and notified as a new host authority.

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 Stage 1 Consultation on the Project has concluded and was held between 11 June 2025 to 6 August 2025. 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 Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, which received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025 and associated guidance, and assessing its potential implications for the programme. 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. This has included pre-Stage 2 consultation briefings with Planning Officers offered to all the host authorities listed in section 2.1.3 to explain the Project's current approach.

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 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	The following meetings have been scheduled with PINS: 26 August 2026 (Project Update Meeting) Further meetings will be scheduled ahead of DCO submission, which will be scheduled with PINS at the appropriate time.
<i>Stage 1 Consultation</i>	<i>11 June to 06 August 2025 (Complete)</i>
<i>Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Request</i>	<i>November 2025 (Complete)</i>
<i>EIA Scoping Opinion</i>	<i>December 2025 (Complete)</i>
<i>Consultation with host Local Authorities on Draft Statement of Community Consultation ('Stage 2 Consultation Strategy')</i>	<i>From July 2026</i>
Stage 2 Consultation	September 2026
PINS review of Draft DCO Documentation	Q2 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 submit an Engagement Summary Report with the application for development consent.
- 6.1.2 A draft Environmental Statement (DES) will be available on the project website from the start of Stage 2 consultation and will report a preliminary assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Project. All conclusions and assessments are by their nature preliminary and are based on the current early Project design as described within the DES. Refer to Section 9 below for further details regarding the approach to the DES. The full assessments will be reported in the ES with the application for development consent.
- 6.1.3 Following the Stage 2 consultation, the key themes and issues arising from 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
 - No key issues, preliminary assessments to be shared at Stage 2 Consultation.
 - Aviation and Defence
 - The Project is in proximity to a private air strip and a helipad. Following Stage 1 Consultation and meeting with the owners, these have been identified and the need for further assessments is being explored and will be reported in the ES.
 - Alternatives & Good Design
 - Stage 2 Consultation will set out the consideration of alternatives in Chapter 3 of the DES, and design changes in the localised information leaflets as a result of Stage 1 consultation, engineering and environmental considerations.
 - The National Electricity System Operator (NESO) released the Electricity Transmission Design Principles (The Principles) in June 2026. All future design changes will need to adhere to The Principles.
 - Biodiversity and geological conservation
 - Further assessments are being carried out, preliminary assessments to be shared at Stage 2 Consultation. Some initial surveys have been impacted by land access issues and alternative options for completing survey sets are being explored.

- The draft Order Limits cross Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA and Ramsar Site, as well as Birch Spinney and Mawsley Marsh SSSI.
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)
 - Opportunities for BNG are being progressed. A BNG assessment will be prepared for the application for development consent.
- Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF)
 - An EMF report will be prepared and submitted as part of the DCO application. No known issues at this stage.
- Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience
 - To be considered within the Flood Risk Assessment, a preliminary version of which will be shared at Stage 2 Consultation.
- Flood Risk
 - The eastern section interacts with the tidal section of the River Welland and other WFD surface water bodies cross draft Order Limits.
 - Includes some areas of Flood Zones 2 and 3
- Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions
 - Further assessments are being carried out, preliminary assessments to be shared at Stage 2 Consultation
- Health
 - Further assessments are being carried out, preliminary assessments to be shared at Stage 2 Consultation
- Historic Environment
 - Desk based surveys are progressing, site access may impact the level of field surveys e.g. trial trenching that are completed prior to application submission.
 - Known constraints include: listed buildings; non-designated heritage assets; Grimsthorpe Castle Registered Parks Gardens (RPG) to the south of the draft Order Limits; and Castle Ashby RPG to the south of draft Order Limits
 - Further assessments are being carried out, preliminary assessments to be shared at Stage 2 Consultation
- Inter-relationship with other infrastructure projects
 - Grimsby to Walpole Project will interact with the eastern end of the Project. Regular working groups are in place to capture opportunities for collaboration.
 - Opportunities to co-ordinate with other Projects will be explored through working groups and reported in the Inter-relationships Report.
 - An Inter-relationships Report will be submitted as part of the DCO application.

- Land rights and land interests
 - PRoW & MacMillian way (long distance recreational route) cross the draft Order limits.
 - Land access for surveys is being progressed, with voluntary agreements remaining the preferred route. Where access cannot be agreed, alternative statutory powers are being explored.
- Landscape and Visual
 - Preliminary assessments to be shared at Stage 2 Consultation.
 - Additional viewpoints requested by Local Authorities to tie in with heritage viewpoints / assessments.
- Noise and Vibration
 - No key issues, preliminary assessments to be shared at Stage 2 Consultation.
- Land use
 - No key issues, preliminary assessments to be shared at Stage 2 Consultation.
- Resource and Waste Management
 - No key issues, preliminary assessments to be shared at Stage 2 Consultation.
- Socio-economic
 - A separate Health Impact Assessment (HIA) will not be undertaken alongside the ES in addition to the Health and Wellbeing assessment to be included as Chapter 17 in the ES. This assessment will refer to relevant Joint Strategic Needs Assessments to inform the baseline and consideration of vulnerable groups and will capture and address equivalent considerations and incorporate local HIA tools and guidance where relevant.
 - Further assessments are being carried out, preliminary assessments to be shared at Stage 2 Consultation
- Traffic and Transport
 - The East Coast Main Line, the A1 and the A16 cross the draft Order Limits.
 - Further assessments are being carried out, preliminary assessments to be shared at Stage 2 Consultation
- Water Quality and Resources
 - Further assessments are being carried out, preliminary assessments to be shared at Stage 2 Consultation

7. Engaging with 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.
- 7.1.2 NGET have established regular meetings with host LPAs to discuss project updates and provide a lookahead of forthcoming workstreams. All host authorities have been invited to participate, although attendance has varied between authorities. Prior to Stage 2 consultation, NGET has consulted each host LPA on a draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) ('Stage 2 Consultation Strategy').
- 7.1.3 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. The PPAs agreed to date are effective up to the date upon which Stage 2 Consultation concludes. It is NGET's intention to update the PPA or develop a revised PPA for further stages of the DCO process.
- 7.1.4 A Host Authority Engagement Plan (HAEP) has been developed and shared with host LPAs, with a revised HAEP issued in May 2026.
- 7.1.5 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).
- 7.1.6 NGET has set up technical working groups from January 2026 with the objective of engaging with technical officers at the LPAs and relevant consultees. It is anticipated that technical working group meetings may become more regular following receipt of responses from the Stage 2 consultation.
- 7.1.7 Further information on engagement activities was shared in the Statement of Community Consultation ('Stage 2 Consultation Strategy').
- 7.1.8 In addition to engagement with the host authorities, NGET has and will continue to liaise with 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 relevant 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 consultees have the adequate resource to engage with the Project at key times. Consultees will be invited to attend the Technical Working Groups (TWGs), where relevant. These are topic working groups with multiple relevant stakeholders, used to present information to stakeholders and to create an opportunity for early feedback and technical. The intention of the TWGs is to provide a consolidated forum for discussions on environmental issues that are cross-cutting and/or are of interest to a range of stakeholders. TWGs occur once a quarter. To date, TWG meetings have been held with the following consultees:

- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Natural England
- Marine Management Organisation
- National Highways
- Lincolnshire County Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- South Holland District Council
- South Kesteven District Council
- South and East Lincolnshire
- Harborough District Council
- North Northamptonshire Council
- West Northamptonshire Council
- Canals and Rivers Trust
- Anglian Water
- Severn Trent Water
- Witham and Humber IDB
- Welland and Deepings IDB
- UKHSA
- Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

7.1.9 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

Risk	Description of Risk	Tracking and managing risk
		strategies will be mapped out on an ongoing nature.
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 sitting.	A committed development tracker is in place that captures pending and committed developments (reviewed monthly), allowing early identification of potential interfaces.

9. Draft Environmental Statement

- 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 From 24 July 2026, there is no longer a statutory requirement to provide a preliminary environmental information report. These changes mean that Applicants are now responsible for determining the consultation approach to their NSIP.
- 9.1.3 However, in this case, we have chosen to publish our preliminary environmental findings in the form of a draft Environmental Statement (DES). This will be available on the project website from the start of Stage 2 consultation and is shared for information purposes only, to help consultees understand the environmental considerations identified to date and to assist them in considering their feedback on our proposals.
- 9.1.4 NGET will have regard to the new Pre-Application Guidance (July 2026) and to the former list of prescribed persons under Schedule 1 of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 in identifying stakeholders with whom to consult and engage on our proposals.
- 9.1.5 The DES has been 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 DES.

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