

Development of an electricity interconnector between the United Kingdom and Norway

Statement of Community Involvement

February 2014

National Grid NSN Link Limited
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1. INTRODUCTION – THE NSN LINK INTERCONNECTOR

NSN Link is the UK name for the project to lay high voltage electricity cables under the sea, which will connect the UK and Norway's electricity systems and allow the two countries to trade power. It is a joint project between National Grid NSN Link Limited, a subsidiary company of the UK's National Grid Plc, and Statnett, the Norwegian electricity transmission system operator.

NSN Link will consist of subsea and underground cables connected to a converter station and an electricity substation in each country, which will allow electricity to flow in either direction between the UK and Norway. The project will bring a number of benefits to both countries, including helping to secure electricity supplies and opportunities for shared use of renewable energy.

This report summarises the public engagement carried out by National Grid NSN Link Limited with regard to their planning application to Northumberland County Council and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for:

- A high voltage direct current (HVDC) converter station to be located on a 5 hectare site just off Brock Lane in East Sleekburn;
- A short section of 400kV high voltage alternating current underground electricity land cables to connect the existing Blyth electricity substation to the proposed HVDC converter station;
- Two high voltage direct current underground cables from the converter station to the landfall on the coast at Cambois Beach slipway, where they will be joined to the HVDC subsea cables; and
- Two HVDC subsea cables between the landfall and the UK international boundary with Norway.

This report has been prepared by Grayling, an independent community consultation company engaged by National Grid NSN Link Limited to provide community relations support. It forms part of NSN Link interconnector planning application documents and will be available to download from the project website. In addition, the report will be circulated to members of the project team, Northumberland County Council planning officers, local elected representatives and the MMO.

1.1 Letters

In November 2013 National Grid NSN Link Limited wrote to 804 residents (mail out area available at ANNEX A) and businesses living and operating near to the proposed converter station site in East Sleekburn to introduce their proposals and invite them to learn more about the project at two public information events (ANNEX B).

Locally elected representatives – including the MP for Wansbeck, neighbouring MPs, MEPs, Northumberland County Councillors and Chief Executive, and East Bedlington Parish Councillors – all received a separate letter notifying them of a stakeholder preview session, which took place before the information events were opened to the public.

1.2 Public information events

Residents and businesses living and operating near to the proposed converter station site were invited to attend two public information events at which the rationale for the project and details of the proposed works were presented. The events were held on Tuesday 3rd December between 3.00pm – 7.00pm at Charlton’s (Cambois, Blyth, Northumberland NE24 1SF) and on Wednesday 4th December between 3.00pm – 7.00pm at the Cambois Miners' Welfare Institute (Ridley Terrace, Cambois, Blyth, Northumberland NE24 1QS). A private stakeholder preview session was held between 1.00pm – 3.00pm at both events to ensure elected members were given the opportunity to view the proposals. Ten representatives from the project team were available to answer attendees’ questions and provide further information about the project.

National Grid NSN Link Limited reminded local residents and businesses about the public information events through an advertisement in the local press (ANNEX C).

Feedback forms were available for elected members and members of the public to provide feedback and record their comments. Two attendees completed feedback forms. A further 10 left their contact details and requested to be kept informed of the project’s progress. The forms were either left with the project team or sent back to NSN Link using a Freepost address provided (responses at ANNEX D).

A total of 43 local residents, businesses, elected members and interested parties attended the public information events - 23 on 3rd December and 20 on 4th December.

A complete set of the exhibition boards is available at ANNEX E for review.

1.3 Online

National Grid NSN Link Limited and Statnett are currently developing a project website, which will provide an overview of the project, latest news updates, the proposed construction timeline and contact details for the project team. The website’s content will be available in English and Norwegian. Copies of the planning application and Environmental Statement will also be available to download from the website.

Whilst the standalone website is being built NSN Link has a dedicated webpage hosted on both National Grid and Statnett’s websites.

1.4 Dedicated project Freephone, email and Freepost addresses

Letters and other materials carried details of the dedicated project Freephone number, email, webpage and Freepost address for providing comments and feedback at any stage of the project.

2. PUBLIC INFORMATION EVENTS

The purpose of the public information events was to give local stakeholders – in particular residents who live close to the proposed converter station site and onshore cable routes, and their elected representatives – an opportunity to view the proposals for the NSN Link interconnector.

Letters of invitation were mailed to 804 residents and businesses living near to the proposed converter station site off Brock Lane (see ANNEX A). Locally elected representatives including the site MP, neighbouring MPs, MEPs, Northumberland County Councillors and Chief Executive, and East Bedlington Parish Councillors all received a separate invitation notifying them of a stakeholder preview session, which took place before the information events were opened to the public. The public information events were also advertised in the following publication (see ANNEX C):

- News Post Leader – Thursday 28th November 2013

The public information events consisted of 13 exhibition display boards (ANNEX E). These included:

- Background information relating to the project partners (National Grid NSN Link Limited and Statnett);
- An explanation of why the NSN Link interconnector is needed;
- An outline of the proposals, including a site plan, construction timeline and photomontages of the proposed converter station;
- The rationale for selecting the route for the subsea and onshore underground cables;
- Effects on the community, with a focus on landscape/visual, noise, traffic and environmental impacts; and
- Contact details.

Representatives from National Grid NSN Link Limited, environmental consultants (TEP), marine consultants (Intertek) and community consultation specialists (Grayling) were present during both public information events to discuss the proposals and answer questions.

Attendees were given contact details (Freephone number, email and Freepost address) for further queries. They were also invited to submit their comments via feedback forms.

3. FEEDBACK

Having viewed and discussed the proposals in detail most attendees did not leave formal comments for the project team. Attendees' responses on the day were very positive, with the project being seen as a welcome addition to the local area. A number of attendees were pleased to hear that the project would restore and improve the slipway access onto Cambois beach.

Only one attendee completed a feedback form to express their concerns, which were to ensure that any impact on marine life and disruption to Cambois beach users during the cable installation would be minimised.

Attendees were also keen to understand the impact of the project on the community, in particular minimising disruption to local traffic and ensuring the local community is kept updated on the project.

National Grid NSN Link Limited is committed to staying in regular contact with residents and businesses to keep them informed about the project's progress and provided details of the dedicated project Freephone number, email and Freepost address for providing comments and feedback.

4. CONCLUSION

National Grid NSN Link Limited is grateful to those who attended the public information events and contributed to the discussion about proposals for the NSN Link interconnector. The aim of the public information events was to hear local stakeholders' views and comments and to involve them in the proposals.

National Grid NSN Link Limited is pleased that feedback was positive and will stay in touch with residents, businesses and elected members to keep them informed about the project's progress.

If you have any comments on this report or would like further information, please write to Freepost RSLG-YXEU-BJUC NSN Interconnector PO BOX 68215, London, SW1P 9UJ, call 0800 298 0405 or email nsninterconnector@communitycomms.co.uk

5. ANNEX A

Mail out area for local residents and businesses: 804 addresses



6. ANNEX B

Letter sent to residents and local businesses operating and living near to the proposed converter station site and onshore cable route, to introduce the proposals and invite them to learn more about the project at the public information events:

Freepost RSLG-YXEU-BJUC
NSN Interconnector
PO BOX 68215
London
SW1P 9UJ

Freephone: 0800 298 0405
Email: nsninterconnector@communitycomms.co.uk

nationalgrid

Address

19th November, 2013

Dear Resident,

Re: NSN Interconnector

I am writing to invite you to attend a public information event to find out more about our proposals to construct an electricity interconnector between the UK and Norway. This follows our recent submission of an outline planning application to Northumberland County Council.

National Grid connects people to the energy they use. We build, maintain and manage the networks that deliver electricity to millions of people, businesses and communities. We are working alongside Statnett SF, the Norwegian transmission system operator, on a project to link the two countries with a subsea interconnector.

This proposed link would connect the electricity systems of the two countries via a subsea cable, allowing the UK and Norway to trade power. If completed it would be the longest subsea interconnector in the world.

The subsea cable would link to a converter station and electricity substation in each country. In the UK, we plan to locate the converter station on a 5 hectare site just off Brock Lane in East Sleekburn forming part of the wider Blyth Estuary Renewable Energy Zone. A similar converter station and electricity substation is proposed in Kvildall, Norway.

We would very much welcome the opportunity to meet with you and answer any questions you may have about the project and the role interconnectors' play in ensuring the UK has a safe, secure and affordable energy supply. We will therefore be holding a series of public information events on the following dates:

- **Tuesday 3rd December:** 3.00pm – 7.00pm, Charltons, Cambois, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 1SF
- **Wednesday 4th December:** 3.00pm – 7.00pm, Cambois Miners' Welfare Institute, Ridley Terrace, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 1QS

National Grid is committed to keeping local residents, communities and all interested parties informed of our progress. If you have any questions, or would like to discuss the NSN Interconnector in greater detail, please contact our community relations team on 0800 298 0405 (Monday to Friday between 9.00am – 5.00pm) or email nsninterconnector@communitycomms.co.uk.


Yours sincerely,



Mark Pearce
Project Manager

7. ANNEX C

Advertisement in the News Post Leader:



NSN Link Interconnector

Public Information Events

Date: Tuesday 3 December: 3:00pm – 7:00pm
Venue: Charltons, Cambois, Blyth, Northumberland NE24 1SF



Date: Wednesday 4 December: 3:00pm – 7:00pm
Venue: Cambois Miners' Welfare Institute, Ridley Terrace, Cambois, Blyth, Northumberland NE24 1QS

Find out about our plans for the NSN Link Interconnector

National Grid is working alongside Statnett SF, the Norwegian transmission system operator, on a project to link the two countries with a subsea interconnector. In the UK, we plan to locate the converter station on a 5 hectare site just off Brock Lane in East Sleekburn forming part of the wider Blyth Estuary Renewable Energy Zone.

National Grid would like to invite you to attend a public information event to find out more about our proposals and answer any questions you may have. This follows our recent submission of an outline planning application to Northumberland County Council.

For more information

-  Call us on Freephone 0800 298 0405
(Monday to Friday between 9:00am – 5:00pm)
-  Email us at nsninterconnector@communitycomms.co.uk
-  Write to us at Freepost RSLG-YXEU-BJUC, NSN Interconnector
PO BOX 68215, London SW1P 9UJ

8. ANNEX D

Attendee feedback form:



NSN Link Interconnector Feedback Form

Thank you for attending our public information event today. Your feedback is important to us. Let us know what you think by completing this form.

Once completed please place your form in the comments box provided. Alternatively, you can email your comments to nsninterconnector@communitycomms.co.uk or return it to us at Freepost RSLG-YXEU-BJUC, NSN Interconnector, PO BOX 68215, London SW1P 9UJ.

YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

Title	First Name	Surname.....
Organisation (if relevant).....		
Address		
Telephone.....		
Email		
Are you happy to be contacted by us regarding the project? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		

DATA PRIVACY NOTICE

National Grid is committed to respecting your privacy and to complying with all applicable data protection and privacy laws. The information you provide to us may be disclosed or shared with the following:

- Other National Grid companies
- Third party service providers, contractors or advisors who provide services to us and form part of the project team
- The Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) and any relevant Local Planning Authorities

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 we will ensure that the data you supply to us is processed with skill and care and in accordance with the legislation and codes. Your details will not be passed to any third party outside National Grid and the professional development team. We take our responsibilities in respect of your Personal Data extremely seriously. We will not contact you for promotional purposes, unless you specifically agree to be contacted for such purposes at the time you submit your information.

9. ANNEX E

Exhibition display boards:

nationalgrid

NSN Link Interconnector

National Grid NSN Link Ltd and Statnett are proposing to construct an electricity interconnector between the UK and Norway known as NSN Link.

NSN Link will connect the electricity systems of the two countries via a subsea cable, allowing the UK and Norway to trade power. The subsea cable will link to a converter station and an electricity substation in each country.



NSN Link will be the longest subsea interconnector in the world, passing through British and Norwegian waters.

In the UK we plan to locate the converter station on a 5 hectare site just off Brock Lane in East Sleekburn, which forms part of the wider Blyth Estuary Renewable Energy Zone. A similar converter station and electricity substation is proposed in Kvidal, Norway.

Project partners

National Grid NSN Link Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of National Grid plc, a major UK company which owns and manages gas and electricity infrastructure in the UK and in the north eastern US.

Statnett is responsible for developing and operating the Norwegian power transmission system. It owns and operates several inter-connectors to other countries.

Working together with

Statnett



Why are interconnectors needed?

Interconnectors play an important role in meeting a number of challenges facing the UK energy sector. Links with France, known as IFA, and the Netherlands, known as BritNed, have already been developed by National Grid and its partners in the respective countries.

Energy security

With a number of power stations due to close between 2016-2020, new interconnectors will help ensure the UK maintains a secure and diverse electricity supply. Interconnectors also form a central part of the EU's strategy to achieve a competitive and integrated energy market to benefit consumers in Europe and Scandinavia.

In 2011 the British and Norwegian Governments set out their shared vision for the North Sea, including supporting efforts to develop an electricity interconnector between the two countries and continued cooperation within the North Sea Countries Offshore Grid Initiative.

Supporting renewables

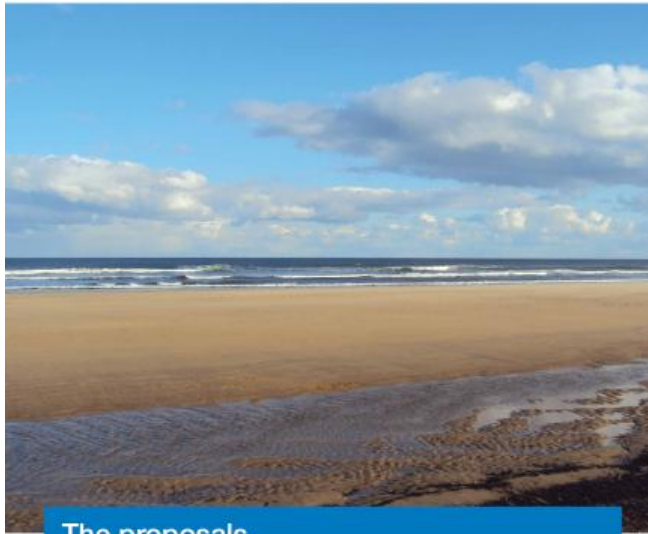
To meet domestic and international renewable and climate change targets, the UK and Norway will continue to generate more power from renewable sources, including offshore wind and hydro power. Interconnectors provide an effective way to manage fluctuations in supply and demand.

Electricity prices

Greater opportunities for the UK and Norway to trade with wider European energy markets will contribute to downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices. Supply and demand will result in lower prices during peak-consumption periods.

Working together with

Statnett



The proposals

We have submitted an outline application to Northumberland County Council for the development of a converter station and the installation of underground electricity cables.

The converter station will be located on a 5 hectare site just off Brock Lane in East Sleekburn. A new site access road will be constructed off Brock Lane. The site forms part of the wider Blyth Estuary Renewable Energy Zone and falls within the Cambois Zone of Economic Opportunity.

The converter station will comprise a series of buildings within a securely fenced compound. The buildings will be constructed with a steel frame and clad with grey insulated metal panels. Some additional outdoor electrical equipment may also be required, but most of the equipment will be indoors.

Onshore underground cables will be required to connect the subsea cable to the converter station. Underground electricity cables will then connect the converter station to the Blyth electricity substation owned and operated by National Grid Electricity Transmission.

What are converter stations and substations?

A converter station converts electricity between Alternating Current (AC) and Direct Current (DC). AC is used in each country's transmission systems, while DC is used for sending electricity along the subsea cable.

A substation is a point of connection to an electricity network, which lowers the voltage of electricity so that it can be delivered to consumers via a distribution network.

Working together with

Statnett



Locations

Why connect the UK and Norway?

By allowing the UK and Norway to trade power, the NSN Link interconnector will bring benefits to both countries.

NSN Link would:

- Help secure electricity supplies for the UK and Norway.
- Help increase opportunities for shared use of renewable energy - hydro power from Norway and a mix of generation including wind power from the UK.
- Provide additional transmission capacity for suppliers and generators of electricity to trade more efficiently.
- Contribute to reducing electricity prices in both countries.

Working together with

Statnett



Why East Sleekburn?

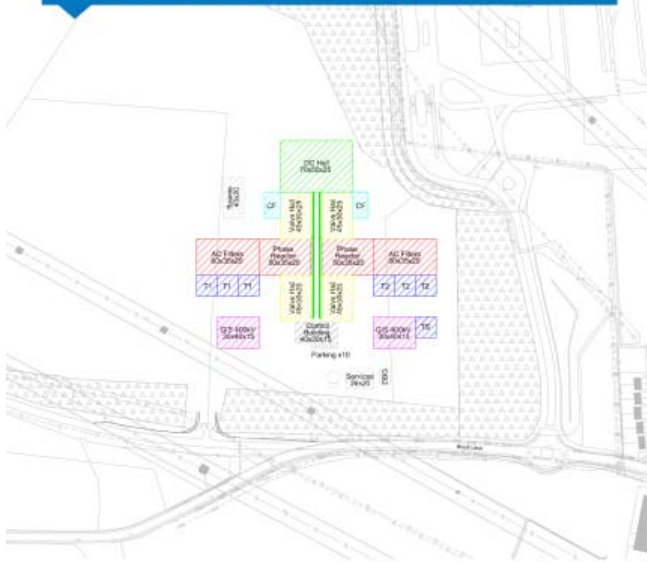
NSN Link undertook an extensive site selection process to identify the most appropriate landfall, converter station site and cable route for the NSN Link interconnector.

A number of potential sites were considered to assess the availability and suitability of land for a converter station.

After considering the land options available, the study concluded that the East Sleekburn site was the most suitable for the following reasons:

- The proposed converter station site is currently in agricultural use and falls within Cambois Zone of Economic Opportunity. It also forms part of the wider Blyth Estuary Renewable Energy Zone, which promotes the renewable energy industry in the area. The NSN Link project is consistent with this objective.
- A landfall has been identified at Cambois Beach Slipway, minimising the effects on the beach which is designated for its importance for winter birds.
- The existing Blyth electricity substation is close to the coast and offers a connection to the national electricity transmission system.
- There are short feasible underground cable routes from the coast to the proposed converter station site and from the converter station site to the Blyth electricity substation.

Proposed site plan and UK timeline



UK timeline

- 2013: Submission of outline planning application
- 2015: Engineering design
- 2015/16: Submission of detailed planning application
- 2016/17 Site preparation
- 2017/18: Construction begins
- 2019: Construction completed
- 2019/20: Interconnector operational

What will the converter station look like?



Existing view, north east from Brock Lane



Anticipated view on completion



Existing view, south west from coastal road close to Cambos First School



Anticipated view on completion. NB. The converter station would not be visible in this view. The outline indicates the position of the buildings behind the existing landform.



Existing view, south west from Wimbley Gardens



Anticipated view on completion

What will the converter station look like?



Existing view, south from coastal footpath south of Newbiggin-by-the-Sea



Anticipated view on completion



Existing view, east from field entrance along the A1147



Anticipated view on completion



Existing view, north west from Cowley Road in Blyth Riverside Business Park



Anticipated view on completion

Selecting the onshore cable routes



As well as considering the location of the converter station, factors affecting the onshore cable routes have also been considered.

Onshore underground DC cables will connect the subsea cables to the converter station. These cables will come ashore at Cambois Beach Slipway and run inland across agricultural land to the north of housing off Wembley Gardens. Close to the railway level crossing, the cable route will head south between Ferguson's Business Park and the Sleekburn Business Centre towards the converter station.

Underground AC cables will be routed beneath Brock Lane to connect the converter station to the existing Blyth electricity substation.

Factors which have influenced the cable routing study, and will continue to define the detailed cable route, include:

- Avoiding ecologically sensitive areas and effects on protected species
- Avoiding built development
- Minimising disturbance to residential areas including the road network
- Avoiding known archaeology
- Avoiding other known planning proposals
- Minimising effects on water courses
- Minimising risk of encountering contamination
- Avoiding existing utilities and services



Will the work affect me?

We are committed to minimising effects on the local community and ensuring that residents are kept informed of our proposals throughout the planning and construction stages of the project.

Visual impact

- The converter station has been designed to minimise the development's impact on the surrounding environment.
- It will be located close to a number of existing industrial buildings and energy developments.
- Modern building materials will be used, including exterior panels which lighten gradually from grey to pale grey to help reduce the visibility of the building against the sky.
- Vegetation surrounding the converter station site will also filter the views and additional landscaping will be carried out around the perimeter of the site.

Noise

- Noise will be continually monitored during the construction and operational phases in accordance with the local authority's requirements.

Traffic impact

- Traffic management and mitigation measures will be in place throughout the construction phase.
- A new access road will be built to the converter station site off Brock Lane to accommodate larger delivery vehicles.
- Perimeter and internal roads will be used for regular access and a number of car parking spaces will be provided.
- A new access road could also provide access to the wider East Sleekburn development site in the future.

Natural environment

- National Grid NSN Link Ltd has undertaken detailed assessments of the potential environmental effects.
- Alongside the Ecological Assessment, a separate ornithological report, Great Crested Newt survey and bat activity survey accompany the outline planning application.
- Works will be timed to take into account potential effects on wildlife.

Working together with

Statnett



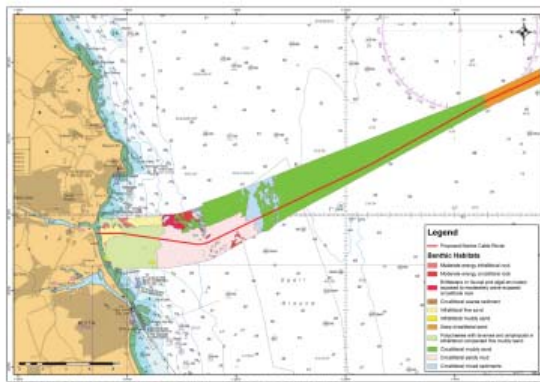
Marine impact

The NSN Link interconnector cable route will run from Hylen, in southwest Norway to Blyth, on the Northumberland coast, passing through Norwegian and British waters.

A desk-top cable routing study and detailed offshore survey was undertaken to determine the optimum route through British waters. The environmental impacts of this route have been assessed and an Environmental Report has been prepared.

A seabed survey was carried out using non-intrusive methods (geophysical) and intrusive methods (geotechnical) to provide information on the seabed type, for both engineering and environmental purposes.

The cables will be buried between 1m and 3m into the seabed using a range of installation techniques suited to the seabed conditions.



Marine environmental issues

NSN Link has conducted comprehensive assessments into the potential environmental effects from the cable installation and operation. The key issues raised by marine stakeholders in the UK included effects on protected sites off the Northumberland coast and associated bird and marine mammal populations, commercial fishing and other marine users.


- Protected sites and species:** The route has been designed to avoid the most sensitive areas, including areas of potential reef habitat, and areas of the greatest importance for bird life.
- Recreation and tourism:** Cable installation at the landfall at Cambois Beach Slipway will result in a temporary exclusion period in the area of works. There are no other adverse impacts to recreation and tourism as a result of this cable.
- Commercial fishing:** When undertaking the seabed survey the project team liaised closely with the fishing community through a Fisheries Liaison Officer. We also engaged with:
 - the Northumberland Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (NIFCA)
 - the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO)
 - the Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF)

Through its studies NSN Link does not anticipate any permanent adverse impacts on the fishing industry as a result of the project. Close liaison will also be maintained with local fishermen during the cable installation phase.
- Benthic and fish ecology:** A detailed offshore survey has been undertaken and no significant impact is forecast. Along the near-shore section of the cable route there are areas of low grade rocky reef. The cable has been routed to avoid these areas.
- Archaeology:** The cable route has been designed to avoid all wrecks and potential unexploded ordnance.
- Navigation:** The cable route does not cross any navigation channels and where possible will be buried to a depth of between 1m and 3m. Where burial is not possible rock protection will be used. No adverse impact is anticipated upon shipping and navigation.



Contact us

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the NSN Link interconnector further, please contact us in one of the following ways:

 Call us on Freephone 0800 298 0405 between 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday (an answerphone service is available outside these core hours)

 Email us at nsninterconnector@communitycomms.co.uk

 Write to us at: Freepost RSLG-YXEU-BJUC
NSN Interconnector, PO BOX 68215
London SW1P 9UJ