

Scotland to England Green Link - SEGL1

Community Engagement Report



nationalgrid

Executive summary

This community engagement report has been developed by National Grid, following the completion of a public consultation and public information exhibition and events (PIEEs) for our proposed Scotland to England Green Link (SEGL1) project.

SEGL1 is a High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) electricity 'superhighway' from the Torness area, in East Lothian, to Hawthorn Pit, between South Hetton and Murton, in County Durham.

This report details the project's engagement with local communities and stakeholders prior to the submission of an outline planning application to Durham County Council. This engagement comprised two main phases: a public consultation in May and June 2021 and PIEEs in February 2022.

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National Grid's SEGL1

The UK is a world leader in offshore wind energy and its target of becoming net-zero in all greenhouse gases by 2050 for England and Wales and 2045 for Scotland is now enshrined in law. In addition, the Government has shown a clear commitment to developing offshore wind at scale. The recent Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and Energy White Paper set a target of delivering 40GW of wind energy by 2030; enough to power every home in the UK.

As the country transitions away from fossil fuels and looks to become less dependent on foreign energy, there will be a greater need for domestically produced green electricity.

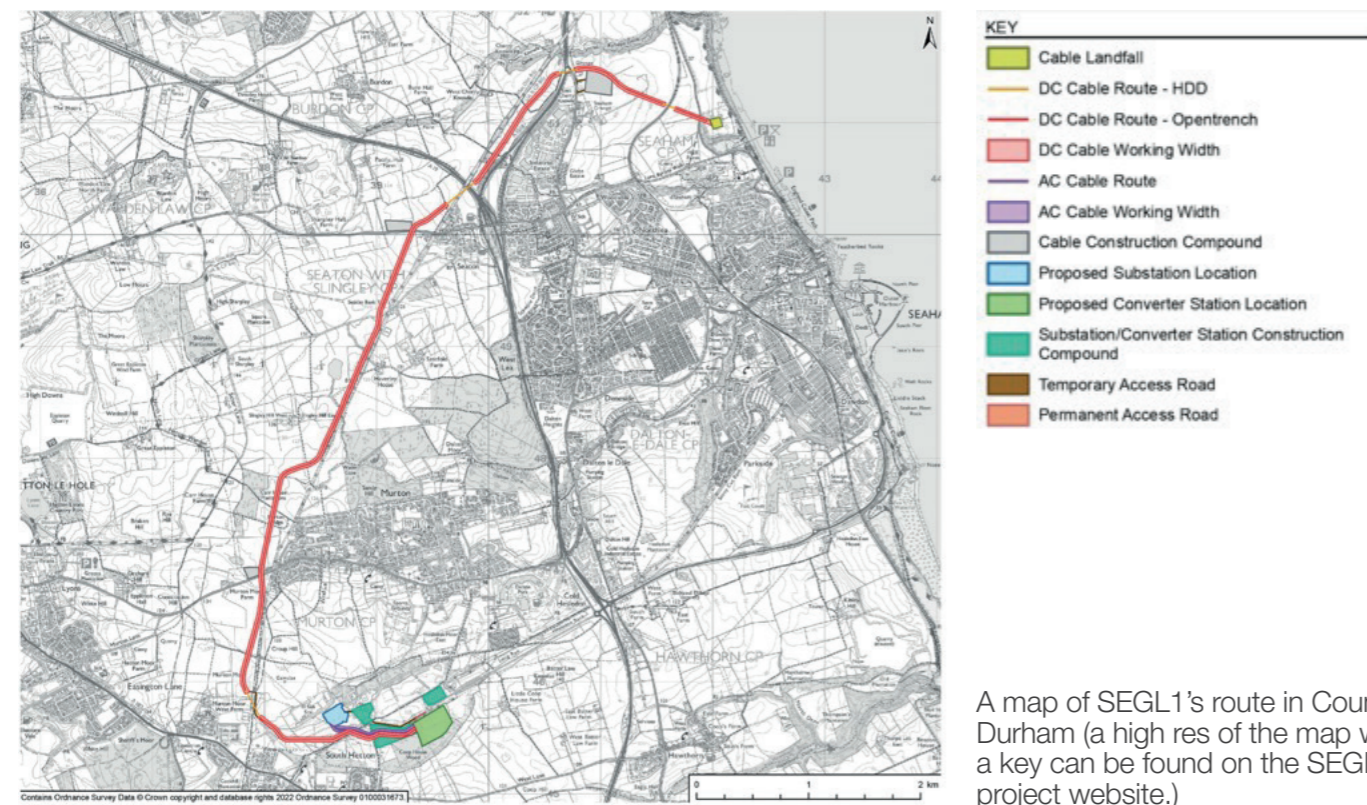
Network reinforcements are required to help bring Scotland's vast reserves of renewable energy to millions of homes across the rest of the UK. As such, we're proposing the construction of two new HVDC Links; one from Torness, in East Lothian, to Hawthorn Pit in County Durham and another from Peterhead in Aberdeenshire to Drax in North Yorkshire.

These electricity 'superhighways', with buried cables under the North Sea, will transport renewable energy over the long distances from Scotland in an optimum way, whilst creating minimal disruption. The shorter delivery program also maximises benefits to the consumer.

For SEGL1, the link will come ashore just north of Seaham in County Durham and connect to the national grid at Hawthorn Pit, in between the villages of South Hetton and Murton. After making landfall, the SEGL1 cable will run underground for 10km to a new converter station and new substation near our existing infrastructure at Hawthorn Pit. If approved, the project intends on beginning construction on SEGL1 in 2024 and completing the works in 2027.

As part of the planning application for these projects we consulted and engaged with local communities to explain what we're proposing and get their feedback, as well as sharing more detailed plans during the PIEEs. For SEGL1's public consultation, and subsequent PIEEs, we consulted with landowners, residents and stakeholders on three fundamental components of the project:

- the construction of a new converter station and substation at Hawthorn Pit
- the route of the cables from the landfall point north of Seaham to the new converter station and substation
- the anticipated impact to local communities and the environment.



A map of SEGL1's route in County Durham (a high res of the map with a key can be found on the SEGL1 project website.)

Consultation plan

We're committed to engaging with all communities in which our works take place, and we take great pride in our legacy of thorough public consultations. To ensure that our plans take account of the views of local communities, we delivered a comprehensive pre-application consultation to gauge local residents' and stakeholders' views on the proposed project, with feedback helping to shape the development of SEGL1.

The pre-application community engagement took place in two phases, with the first being a public consultation that took place between Monday 24 May and Friday 18 June 2021, followed by PIEEs between Monday 7 February and Saturday 19 February 2022. In between these dates, the project remained in listening mode and responded to enquiries from consultees.

In the public consultation, the project team presented its proposals and received comments and feedback on them. This feedback is explored in detail on pages 19 to 28.

The objective of the subsequent PIEEs was to brief residents, community groups and stakeholders on the plans, which had developed since the public consultation, ahead of the submission of the planning application, as well as answer any questions. It was not to take further feedback, although questions and comments by participants were collated (as outlined on pages 29 and 30) and shared with the SEGL1 team. We ensured that it was clear in the PIEEs materials and to event attendees that further feedback on SEGL1 can be made via Durham County Council's planning portal during the formal planning consultation once the application is made.

In addition to the above phases, the project also 'soft launched' the scheme at the start of 2021, when relevant landowners were approached by the project's lands team to organise surveys. This marked the first direct contact the project had with the local community. At the same time, we proactively introduced SEGL1 to the wider community and stakeholders by issuing a newsletter to landowners, issuing letters to stakeholders, opening a dedicated project 0800 number and email address, and launching the project website. This ensured that we effectively communicated the rationale and potential impact of the project from the outset and laid the groundwork for constructive engagement during the consultation.

We advertised the public consultation and PIEEs extensively and by a variety of methods, including:

- print advertising in two local newspapers with a combined reach of 44,136 people (public consultation only)
- a press release which was covered by our priority media outlet, The Northern Echo (public consultation only)
- targeted social media advertising that reached 25,600 people during the public consultation and 105,160 people during the PIEEs
- two hardcopy newsletters that were posted to 3,452 properties in close proximity to the project
- two letters were also sent to 59 local councillors and hard-to-reach groups informing them of the public consultation and PIEEs.



Results of the public consultation

Due to government restrictions that were in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the public consultation was held online via a dedicated website that displayed information about the proposed scheme and encouraged people to share their views on it.

The overview of the public consultation in figures, focussing on feedback (feedback forms, email and telephone enquiries, stakeholder letters and briefings, digital consultation sessions), are below.

- **Unique page views of website:** 1,559
- **Total responses to the consultation:** 31
- **Response rate:** 2%
- **Support:** 4 (13% of responses)
- **Oppose:** 8 (26% of responses)
- **Neutral:** 19 (61% of responses)
- **Overall average sentiment:** neutral/slightly negative

This report aims to set out the feedback received from throughout the consultation process. Overall, the volume of website visitors and the nature of the responses indicates that the project was successful in reaching members of the community and informing them of the consultation and the project's aims. The response rate of those that visited the website was 2%, indicating that most people who viewed the information project did not feel strongly enough about it to leave feedback.

Results of the public information exhibition and events

Following the emergence of the Omicron variant in December 2021 and the high potential for new restrictions in the proceeding months, we took the difficult decision to pursue virtual-only PIEEs, instead of a blend of the in-person and virtual exhibitions and events that had been previously planned. The public and stakeholders were given the same amount of time to engage with the project as was planned for the non-restricted events. Provisions were made for those without access to the internet.

The overview of the PIEEs in figures are below.

- **Unique page views of website:** 2,350 (791 more than the public consultation)
- **Downloads of the PDF digital exhibition boards:** 113
- **Hours of online events:** 17
- **Public participants in online events:** 9

Of the feedback that was received, the majority sentiment was neutral. Broadly, residents, local government and statutory bodies were supportive of the aims of the project. However, they did have queries and concerns about its location and impact, particularly on views of the area, the environment and whether development would affect public right of ways.

Of the 31 responses received, three (approx. 10% of total responses) were from local landowners regarding their own land interests and subsequently passed to the project team.

The project team held several briefings with local councils to explain the aims and proposed outcomes of the project. Here, the team did encounter some negative feedback, notably from members of the public who attended the in-person Seaham Town Council meeting and were openly unsupportive of the project. A critical question was raised during this meeting regarding whether National Grid had considered an alternative route for the cable along the 'old mineral line' south of Seaham.

Of the 10 feedback forms completed online, six were from residents of the local area. Their feedback indicated that their primary concern with the project was how it would impact the local landscape and views.

2. Engagement through the COVID-19 pandemic

Government guidance about in-person meetings and indoor events shifted several times throughout the period that the public consultation and PIEEs took place. During the public consultation there were restrictions on public gatherings, and there was uncertainty around the impact of the rapid emergence of the Omicron variant when in the planning phase of the PIEEs. Nevertheless, the project's priority was to ensure that as many people as possible could take part in the consultation and PIEEs.

With impacts of the pandemic in mind, following guidance from the Durham County Council's Statement of Community Involvement and the Government's advice on planning consultations during COVID-19, we decided to run a digital-first public consultation and PIEEs, albeit with in-person briefings with councillors and other stakeholders when safe and appropriate.

The project team ensured that there was support for any individuals who had any problems with being able to view information and join events online. Furthermore, the project team shared its plans for an online consultation with the Council's planning officers.

County Durham Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (4.0 Your involvement in the development management process section)

The Statement of Community Involvement was implemented by Durham County Council in 2020, and it was reviewed and updated in light of COVID-19. The key points from the SCI are outlined below (Section 4.7 - Pre-application Community Involvement):

The role of the developer in facilitating your involvement prior to submitting planning applications

4.35 We encourage the developers to engage with the local community in developing their proposals and ahead of submission of a planning application. It is now also a mandatory requirement for certain developments (set out under Section 122 of the Localism Act) to undertake pre-application community consultation. Upon request we will discuss the need and scope of any required community engagement exercise with the prospective developer. This will ensure that the views of all stakeholders, including statutory organisations, town and parish councils, neighbourhood forums, Area Action Partnerships, residents' associations, and other local interested parties are sought at an early stage to ensure their views are known.

4.36 We may refuse to validate planning applications which are submitted without any mandatory pre-application consultation having been undertaken.

4.37 In cases where mandatory consultation is required the planning application should be accompanied by a consultation statement setting out the community engagement undertaken and including:

- a description of the publicity, consultation and engagement methods used and the reasons for their use
- a description of the proposals that were the subject of community consultation
- an assessment of the inclusiveness of the approach
- a summary of the comments received, and issues raised
- the developers' response to the issues raised and how they have been addressed, or alternatively reasons for not addressing them
- a description of how the proposal has changed as a result of public consultation where applicable
- an appendix providing copies of all written comments.

4.38 It is also recommended that the developers forward a copy of the consultation statement to the main organisations and groups involved in the consultation process and advise all respondents where a copy of the consultation statement can be examined.

Guidance from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The Government has committed to increasing the ability of local communities to influence planning decisions and future development in their areas. The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) sets out the Government’s commitment to involve all interested parties in planning. National Grid ensured that it followed all necessary aspects of this framework, specifically:

- paragraph 16: “Plans should ... be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees”
- paragraph 39: “Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”

Government advice on consultations during COVID-19

Government guidance around consultation during COVID-19 was adhered to at every stage of the consultation process. In particular, regarding the temporary changes to the publicity requirements for certain planning applications that have been introduced through the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure, Listed Buildings and Environmental Impact Assessment) (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. These changes were made to support timely decision-making, and avoid delays to development as a result of the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic, while maintaining public participation in the decision-making process:

- the temporary publicity requirements still require local planning authorities (and in the case of certain applications for EIA development, applicants or recipients of further information) to publicise planning applications so that those with an interest can make representations and effectively participate in the decision-making process. Consultation, transparency, and community engagement are key to effective decision-making in local planning authorities
- the temporary changes give local planning authorities greater flexibility in how they publicise certain planning applications during the response to Coronavirus
- however, if the authority is not able to comply with a requirement which applies to that application because it is not reasonably practicable for reasons connected to the effects of Coronavirus, including restrictions on movement, the authority must take reasonable steps to inform any persons who are likely to have an interest in the application of the website where notice of the application can be found. Those steps may include use of social media and communication by electronic means and must be proportionate to the scale and impact of the development.

3. Promotion of the public consultation and PIEEs

Given the pandemic and guidance from local and national government, the public consultation and PIEEs took place virtually on the project’s dedicated website nationalgrid.com/segl1

As with any consultation, it was critically important to ensure that landowners, residents, stakeholders and community groups were aware of the plans and the upcoming public consultation and PIEEs in good time, particularly those harder to reach audiences. As such, information about the plans was shared via a variety of mediums to reach as many people as possible.

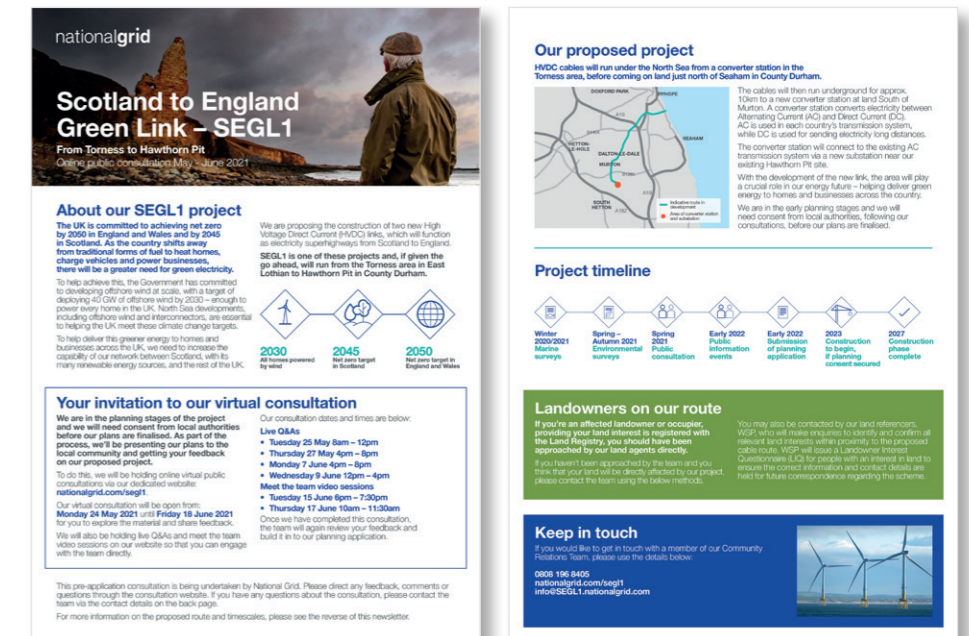
Newsletter mailouts

To advertise the public consultation and PIEEs to communities along the proposed project route, we distributed two separate, public consultation and PIEEs specific, hardcopy newsletters providing details of its proposal and how to take part in the public consultation and PIEEs.


For the public consultation, the project team designed and issued a two-page newsletter. A four-page newsletter, containing more detailed information on the project, was issued for the PIEEs. These newsletters can be seen on the next page.

In total, 3,452 properties received both newsletters. The areas targeted for the newsletters were settlements closest to the proposed converter station and substation, as well as those closest to the cable route. The newsletter was distributed a week in advance of the consultation launching. These settlements included: Murton Moor, North Seaham, South Hetton, Hetton-le-Hole and Seaton, as well as individual dwellings, such as farms. In addition, the project’s lands team also sent the newsletters to directly impacted local landowners they were engaging with.

As per National Grid best-practice, we purposely used plain English copy to make the content of our public consultation and PIEEs as accessible as possible. For anyone who was unable to access the online public consultation and PIEEs, the newsletter provided contact details for the project team who were available to support them with either guidance on how to access the website or provide hard copies of materials through the post.



The two-page newsletter for the public consultation



Scotland to England Green Link - SEGL1

Torness to Hawthorn Pit
Public information sessions and events - February 2022

About our SEGL1 project
As the UK shifts away from traditional forms of fuel to heat homes, charge vehicles, and power businesses, there will be greater need for green electricity throughout the country.

To help deliver the green energy we need across the UK, we are proposing the construction of two new High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) links, which will function as electricity superhighways from Scotland to England. SEGL1 is one of these projects and, if approved, it will run from the Torness area in East Lothian to Hawthorn Pit in County Durham.

We are hosting an online public information exhibition on our project website (details below), to give you the opportunity to learn more about SEGL1, find out how public consultation feedback has been taken on board, and ask our project team questions. The exhibition and events will take place from Monday 7 February to Saturday 19 February, and the exhibition will remain online until the submission of the planning application to Durham County Council in spring 2022.

Join our online public information events
Our online events and one-to-one calls are open to everyone and are easy to join.

Live chat sessions
We are holding live chat sessions on our SEGL1 website, with members of the project team who can answer your questions in real time via a chat messenger. There is no need to pre-register for the live chat sessions.

- 10am - 2pm Tuesday 8 February
- 2pm - 5pm Thursday 10 February
- 11am - 5pm Saturday 19 February

One-to-one calls
If you would like a one-to-one telephone or video call with a member of the project team, please call or email our community relations team, using the below contact details.

Webinar
We are holding an online webinar on the SEGL1 website on the project from 6:30pm - 7:30pm on Wednesday 16 February. This will include a presentation on the project, followed by a Q&A session with the SEGL1 project team.

Website: nationalgrid.com/seg1
Email: info@seg1.nationalgrid.com
Phone: 0800 1960 405

National Grid | February 2022 | Scotland to England Green Link - SEGL1

About our SEGL1 public information exhibition and online events

Our public information exhibition follows on from our public consultation, held in spring 2021, where we took feedback on our proposals from landowners, residents, organisations and local elected members.

The purpose of our public information events is to show people how our plans have evolved and answer any questions they have at this stage. There will be further opportunity to give formal feedback during the planning application process after we have submitted our outline planning application to Durham County Council and the statutory period of consultation opens. During this time, you will be able to comment on the planning application via the Council's planning portal.

The Council will then decide whether to approve our proposed project.

The impact of COVID-19 on our events
Given the circumstances there have been some changes around COVID-19 and the remaining live sessions. We will be hosting a digital public information exhibition and events. If you have any queries, please visit our website: www.nationalgrid.com/seg1

About our proposal

The UK is committed to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and as the country moves away from historical fuel sources like coal and oil to heat homes, and power vehicles and businesses, we will need more renewable power to green electricity.

The construction of SEGL1 and its sister project SEGL2, will create two electrical High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) links from Scotland to England.

These links will increase the capacity of our network between Scotland, with its many renewable energy sources, and the rest of the UK.

If approved, SEGL1 will run from the Torness area in East Lothian to Hawthorn Pit between Murton and South Hetton in County Durham, via the North Sea. If approved, SEGL2 will run from Peterhead in Aberdeenshire to Drax in North Yorkshire.

Both SEGL1 and SEGL2 are essential to meet the UK's net-zero commitments and deliver a cleaner, greener future.

What we plan to build

We are proposing to build a new converter station in the field south of Jade Business Park and a new substation next to our existing substation at Hawthorn Pit.

We also propose to install a 15km underground cable from the coastline just north of Seaham to the new converter station and substation at Hawthorn Pit, which are critical components of our project. The converter station will convert the UK's AC electricity and connect it to the new substation which will enable it to be transmitted around the country.

This is an illustrative image of what our proposed converter station could look like. Further images will be available on our website from 7 February as part of our public exhibition.

Scotland to England Green Link - SEGL1 | February 2022 | National Grid

Reducing the impacts of the converter station and substation

During our consultation last spring, we were asked about the impacts of the converter station and substation. We take great care to minimise the impact of our work, both for local communities and the environment. Below we set out some of our proposed mitigation measures.

- The proposed location for the converter station is south of Jade Business Park and to woodland. The new substation is proposed alongside the existing substation. These locations have been chosen to integrate both into the landscape.
- Our project team is developing a landscape restoration that incorporates new public open space, replacement habitats and biodiversity net gain of at least 10%, landscape planting, and public rights of way.
- We propose to remove three existing pylons and replace them with a single pylon to connect the new substation to the existing overhead line.

Visit our website after 7 February to view visuals of what the converter station and substation could look like. Alternatively, please get in touch to request printed materials.

Our proposed route

Our cable will come ashore just north of Seaham in County Durham and will travel underground for around 15km to Hawthorn Pit.

Our cable route on land

During our consultation last spring, some people suggested that making landfall at Nones Point and following the old mineral line might be a better route for our underground cables. We have taken another look and after a further comprehensive review, our original route remains our preferred option for the following reasons:

- Following the mineral line in its entirety would cause a great deal of disruption to Seaham including its historic residents, homes, businesses, compared to the original route.
- Due to the nature of the seabed around Nones Point we can't think of a way to protect the cables by burial meaning that we would need to use alternative methods that may create obstacles to vessels and disturb both operations at the port and potentially marine habitats.

Therefore, we consider that our proposed route, from north of Seaham to Hawthorn Pit, strikes the right balance between nature and affords environmental considerations, minimising impacts on residents and helping us meet our responsibility to provide affordable electricity infrastructure.

Nones Point has very complex topography and geology, for example, its height would present significant challenges and increase both risk when installing the cable and during its lifetime.

- Making landfall at Nones Point would increase the length of the offshore portion of the cable by 5km, so overall there wouldn't be a significant reduction in cable length.

Here are some of the ways we're planning to do that through this project:


- **Improving biodiversity**
When operating in an area, charities and community groups can apply for funding of up to £25,000 for projects that meet local community needs by providing a range of social, economic and environmental benefits.
- **Community Grant Programme**
When operating in an area, charities and community groups can apply for funding of up to £25,000 for projects that meet local community needs by providing a range of social, economic and environmental benefits.

Landowners on our route
If you're an affected landowner or occupier, you should have been contacted by our land team, and we apologise if you haven't been approached by the team and you think that your land has been affected. If you have any queries, please contact Bell Ingram on 01845 522095.

Keep in touch
If you would like to get in touch with a member of our Community Relations team, please use the details below.

0800 196 0405
nationalgrid.com/seg1
info@seg1.nationalgrid.com

See our digital exhibition on our website for more detail - nationalgrid.com/seg1



Scotland to England Green Link - SEGL1 | February 2022 | National Grid

When will the work happen?

If approved, construction is expected to begin in 2024 and finish in 2027.

We held our public consultation in spring 2021 and we will soon be holding our public information exhibition and events.

Early 2022 Public information events
Spring 2022 Submission of planning application
2024 Construction to begin, if planning permission is granted
2027 Construction phase complete

Being a good neighbour

Due to the very nature of what we do - connecting people to the energy we all use - National Grid is at the heart of communities.

We are members of the Considerate Constructors Scheme, and abide by the Code of Considerate Practice, which encourages best practice approaches above and beyond statutory requirements. We are committed to keeping disruption to a minimum and will proactively share information with affected communities through our SEGL1 website.

We know that our responsibility as a business goes beyond safely building new energy infrastructure to ensure a cleaner, safer and affordable future. We want to make a lasting positive impact where we build our projects to help those areas and communities thrive and to support a sustainable future.

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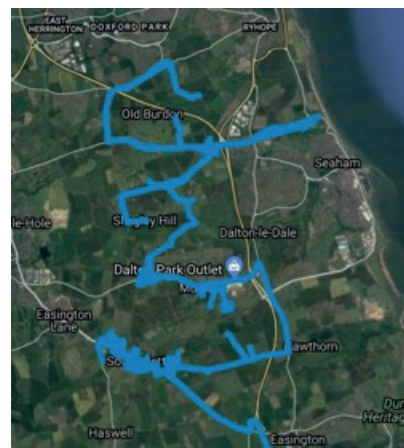
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See our digital exhibition on our website for more detail - nationalgrid.com/seg1



The four-page newsletter for the PIEEs



To ensure that every targeted address received the two newsletters, the project used satellite tracking software to monitor their delivery. The map to the left is from the tracking report the project created to check where the newsletters were delivered.

Letter and briefing for stakeholders

To promote the public consultation and PIEEs, we contacted local parish councils and MPs directly via email and reached out to planning officers at Durham County Council to make them aware that we were approaching members.

Every MP, ward councillor and parish council whose area would be directly impacted by the project was contacted and offered a briefing on the project in advance of the public consultation and PIEEs. Separately, we contacted any stakeholder whose electoral area was within 5km of the converter station and the cable route introducing the project and informing them of the public consultation.

To ensure wider engagement, the project also contacted local hard-to-reach organisations informing them of the consultations and offering briefings, these included Age UK, The Box Youth and Community Project, The Shaw Trust Enterprise, East Durham Trust, Blind Life in Durham and Durham Carers.

Stakeholder	Number of stakeholder (each sent a letter for public consultation and PIEE)
Parish Councils	14
Local Councillors	35
MPs	3
Hard-to-reach groups	7
Total	59

Of the stakeholders who received a briefing offer for the public consultation, the following accepted our offer and were briefed separately:

- Local Durham County Ward Councillors and portfolio holder for neighbourhoods and climate change
- Seaham Town Council
- South Hetton Parish Council
- Murton Parish Council.

Of the stakeholders who received a briefing offer for the PIEEs, the following accepted our offer:

- Seaham Town Council
- Seaton with Slingley Parish Council.

Seaham Town Council were briefed separately, and a briefing has been arranged for Seaton with Slingley Parish Council in mid-May.

Media

The project utilised both press releases and advertising to publicise the public consultation in the media. Ahead of it beginning, a press release introducing the project and announcing the public consultation was sent to local and energy trade media, with one paper, the Northern Echo, covering the news and reaching an estimated total readership of 15,200.

The press release included an explanation of the project, the link to the consultation website and the dates and times for live chat sessions. In addition, the project also advertised the details of the consultation on Monday 17 May and again on Friday 21 May in two local print newspapers: the Northern Echo and the Sunderland Echo. Together, these outlets have an estimated reach of 44,136 people and these adverts helped ensure that the project reached residents who are not on social media but who consume traditional print media.

For the PIEEs, we decided to concentrate resources on social media advertising and the mailout of a four-page hardcopy newsletter rather than advertise again via local newspapers. This decision was reached due to the high engagement with the public consultation social media advert and newsletter from a wide range of people living in communities immediately next to the project area.



The Scotland to England Green Link - SEGL1 - is a proposed project by National Grid that will help to deliver greener energy to homes and businesses across the UK.

If approved, the project will increase the capacity of our network between Scotland, with its many renewable energy sources, and the rest of the country, helping the country meet its net zero ambitions. To do this, we are proposing the construction of a new High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) link - an electrical superhighway - between the Torness area in East Lothian and Hawthorn Pit in County Durham, travelling most of its way under the North Sea.

We'll be holding an online public consultation on the project from **Monday 29 March 2021 to Friday 23 April 2021**, where we will share our plans and ask for your feedback. Below are dates and times for our live sessions:

Date	Time	Format
Tuesday 30 March	08:00 - 12:00	Live Q&A session
Wednesday 31 March	16:00 - 20:00	Live Q&A session
Monday 12 April	08:00 - 09:30	Video drop-in session
Wednesday 14 April	15:00 - 16:30	Video drop-in session
Monday 19 April	18:00 - 19:30	Video drop-in session
Wednesday 21 April	10:00 - 11:30	Video drop-in session

Please register in advance for our video drop-in sessions via our website.

To find out more, attend our digital exhibition and live sessions, and share your feedback, please visit us at our website: Nationalgrid.com/seg1

Newspaper advert for the public consultation

Social media advertising

In addition to traditional promotion methods, the project utilised social media to drive people to the SEGL1 public consultation and PIEEs websites. Given the high levels of its consumption by the local population, and the digital nature of our public consultation, social media was a critical tool at our disposal. This was evidenced by the fact that nearly 45% of respondents to the feedback forms from the public consultation found out about the consultation via our social media advertising.

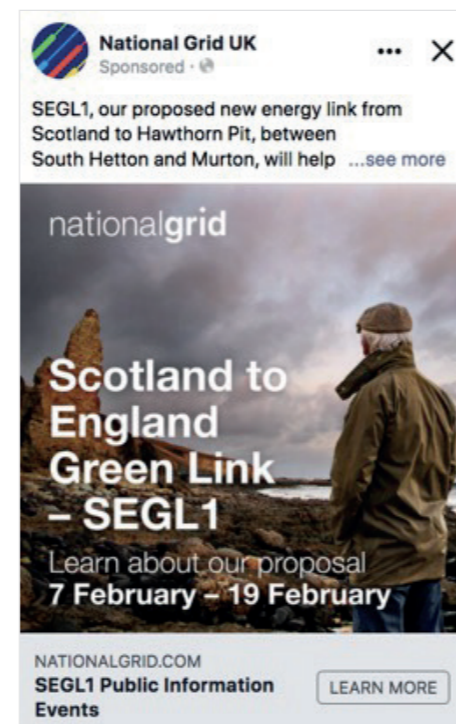
Facebook was selected as the most suitable social media platform for advertising due to its use among a wide range of demographics and its increasing use as a virtual village community noticeboard by online community groups. Advertising via Instagram was also considered, but after finding that this performed poorly for the SEGL2 project, we opted to focus solely on Facebook.

For the public consultation, the activity on Facebook consisted of publishing 10 geo-targeted recurring Facebook adverts from National Grid over a 5-week period. In total, the adverts generated a reach of nearly 25,600. The Facebook ads resulted in 1,042 click throughs to the public consultation website.

For the PIEEs, the activity on Facebook consisted of publishing one geo-targeted recurring Facebook advert from the project over a 3-week period. In total, the advert generated a reach of 105,160 and resulted in 3,246 click throughs to the PIEE website. This increase in engagement, when compared to the public consultation advertising, has been attributed to more local interest in SEGL1 and the project team’s refinement of the advertising strategy.



Examples of public consultation Facebook adverts



The PIEE Facebook advert

4. Public consultation engagement process

Throughout planning the public consultation, the project looked to ensure everyone who wanted to provide feedback could do so without any difficulties. We designed the website to have a detailed, yet user-friendly, feedback form, with a printable version also available, that asked a series of questions for participants to provide their views. It also had a dedicated email address and telephone number that anyone could use to contact the project team.

Although the public consultation was held online, the project did not want this to exclude anyone, so ensured through the community newsletter, press releases and adverts that it made it clear that anyone who could not take part online was able to participate by getting in touch with our community relations team to arrange for a consultation pack to be sent to them via mail.

Through the website we also held four live chat sessions where anyone could speak directly to the team via an easy-to-use live chat function. The project also held Meet the Team video drop-in sessions, which allowed consultees to speak directly with a member of the project team. Overall, there were 19 hours of engagement sessions available to the public.

Across the different mediums, the project had the following number of participants between Monday 24 May and Friday 18 June 2021:

Unique page views*	1,559
Total responses from individual consultees (including elected members and other organisations, excluding emails from councillors arranging a briefing)	31
Total hours of engagement sessions run by project team	19
Response breakdown	
Responses to the online feedback	10
Email enquiries received	4
Letters received	2
Meet the Team Drop-in sessions	1 (consequently called by project team afterwards)
Live chat participants	8
Telephone enquiries received	2
Requests for help as no access to internet	0
Stakeholder organisation briefings	4 (South Hetton PC, Murton PC, Seaham TC and Durham County Council)

*Unique page views indicate the number of unique users that have viewed a web page and counts only one visit per unique user account.

To ensure complete accessibility for all residents, we offered support to anyone who was unable to access the digital consultation. Details were included the newsletter, which was distributed to all landowners being liaised with for surveys by the project’s lands team and those in villages most impacted by the project (3,452 properties in total).

Digital exhibition, live chat and meet the team video session

To replicate the experience of attending a physical consultation event, the project developed a digital exhibition (open for the duration of the consultation), that was complemented by the live chat function at certain times and dates. This allowed participants to review the digital exhibition boards and ask questions to the project team in a similar way to how they could at a physical event. Any questions that we were unable to answer on the chat were answered via email following the live chat session.



The public consultation digital exhibition

To ensure that the live chat feature was accessible to as many people as possible, the project held the live sessions over four four-hour timeslots across four days at different times. In total, eight consultees took part in the live chat sessions, which took place on:

- **Tuesday 25 May 08:00 – 12:00**
- **Thursday 27 May 16:00 – 20:00**
- **Monday 7 June 16:00 – 20:00**
- **Wednesday 9 June 12:00 – 16:00**

The project also held meet the team video drop-in sessions, where consultees had the opportunity to speak to a member of the team directly. Consultees could book a half hour session in advance at select times on Tuesday 15 June or Thursday 17 June.

In total, 13 individuals registered for a meet the team session, with one attending. Five consultees who registered for the sessions were landowners with specific questions for the project's lands team. Due to the potential sensitive and complex nature of these discussions, the community relations team arranged for the lands team to contact them directly.

The individuals who weren't landowners and didn't attend the video sessions were followed up with via email and telephone to answer any of their questions.

Briefings with stakeholders

Durham County Council - Durham Local Council Planning officers and Durham local councillors attended a briefing on 24 May 2021. These councillors included:

- Cllr. David Hall - Sherburn
- Cllr. Chris Hood - South Hetton, Haswell & Shotton Colliery
- Cllr. Louise Fenwick - Peterlee West.

Seaham Town Council - An initial video briefing to Seaham Town Council's Planning Committee took place 8 June 2021 and an in-person briefing was subsequently arranged.

South Hetton Parish Council - An in-person briefing with South Hetton Parish Council took place in person on 14 June 2021.

Durham County Council - A second briefing with Durham Council took place on 17 June 2021, via video call. The following councillors were in attendance:

- Mark Wilkes - Framwellgate and Newton Hall, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change

Durham County Council - A third briefing with Durham County Council took place on 22 June 2021, via video call. The following councillors were in attendance:

- Cllr. Julie Griffiths - Murton
- Cllr. Robert Adcock-Forster - Murton
- Cllr. David McKenna - Seaham.

Seaham Town Council - The project team presented the proposals, in-person, at the Environment and Planning committee on 6 July 2021.

Murton Parish Council - An in-person briefing with Murton Parish Council took place on 7 July 2021.



5. PIEE engagement process

The engagement process for the PIEEs mirrored that of the proceeding public consultation, although the focus of that phase was to show more detailed project plans and answer questions from communities and stakeholders. The exhibition went live on the PIEE website on Monday 7 February 2022, with online events taking place over a two-week period, from Monday 7 February to Sunday 20 February 2022.

Those people with no access to the internet were encouraged to call the 0800 line to arrange for their questions to be answered, the mailing out of hard copies of the materials (such as the newsletter if they are outside the mailout zone) or to arrange a one-to-one call with the project team.

The website and digital exhibition remain live following the completion of the PIEEs, albeit in a reworded form to reflect the end of the two-week period. Similarly, the 0800 number and project email address remain open and those contacting the project will receive a response.

Unique page views*	2,350
Participant breakdown	
Live chat session participants	3 (129 people were viewing website materials during live chat sessions)
Webinar participants	6 (12 people signed up to attend)
Participants raising questions (individuals and organisations)	6
One-on-one calls requested	0
Total hours of engagement sessions run by project team	17
Email enquiries received	0
Letters received	0
Telephone enquiries received	0
Requests for help as no access to internet	0
Stakeholder organisation briefings	1 - Seaham Town Council (a briefing with Seaton with Slingley Parish Council has been arranged for mid-May)

*Unique page views indicate the number of unique users that have viewed a web page and counts only one visit per unique user account.

Digital exhibition, live chat sessions, webinar and one-to-one calls

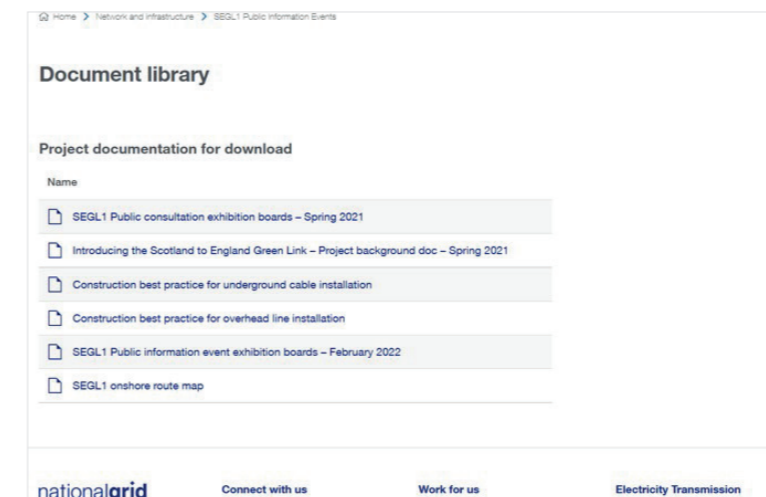
Similar to the public consultations, the project replicated the experience of attending physical events through the hosting of a digital exhibition, project document library, live chat sessions and a webinar on the project's dedicated website, as well as a dedicated page for landowners. Altogether, there were 17 hours of engagement sessions open to people interested in the project.

The PIEE website saw 2,350 unique page views, an increase of 791 people when compared with the public consultation. This increase can be attributed to wider knowledge of the project in the local area and our focused social media campaign.

We ensured that the rationale for the public information events was communicated prominently and made it clear that any formal feedback should be directed at Durham City Council's planning portals when the formal consultation stage begins following the submission of the outline planning application.



The PIEE digital exhibition



The PIEE project document library

To ensure that the live chat feature was accessible to as many people as possible, the project held the live sessions over two six-hour timeslots and one four-hour timeslot across three days at different times, including the weekend. In total, three participants actively engaged with the project team during live chat sessions, although 129 people actively viewed the digital exhibition during sessions. The sessions took place on:

- **Tuesday 8 February 10:00 – 14:00**
- **Thursday 10 February 14:00 – 20:00**
- **Saturday 19 February 11:00 – 17:00**

In addition to live chat sessions, on Wednesday 16 February, 18:30 – 19:30, the project held a webinar that included a presentation on the project and addressed points that were raised in the public consultation (see pages 19 to 28 for more detail). People were required to pre-register to attend via a simple form on the website and they were able to ask the project team questions via a chat function, with us answering via video call. In total, 12 people registered to attend the SEGL1 webinar, with six attending on the evening. Their questions and comments are captured on pages 29 and 30.

In addition to the webinar and the live chat sessions, we offered one-to-one calls with a range of specialists in the project team (engineering, lands, marine consents, etc). These ad-hoc sessions catered for those people who are either unable (or unwilling) to take part in the online sessions or would have liked to speak in confidence with a member or members of the project team. These calls could have taken place over Microsoft Teams or telephone. There was no interest from the public or stakeholders.

Telephone and email engagement

Over the course of the consultation, the project received no enquiries via the project’s freephone number and project email.

Briefings with stakeholders

Seaham Town Council – The project team presented the proposals, in-person, at the Environment and Planning committee on 8 March 2022.

Seaton and Slingley Parish Council – An in-person briefing with the Parish Council is scheduled for mid-May.



6. Feedback from the public consultation

The objective of the public consultation phase was to present SEGL1 to communities and stakeholders and request feedback on the project. This feedback is presented below.

All consultees who submitted feedback or questions received a response from the project team.

In contrast, the objective of the PIEEs was to brief residents, community groups and stakeholders, on the content of the planning applications, as well as answer any questions. However, topics of interest raised in the PIEEs are outlined in the next chapter.

Telephone and email

In summary, the project received six telephone and email enquires over the course of the public consultation period. The two telephone enquiries were received from Seaham Town Council and a landowner, both looking to participate in the consultation events. Consequently, a one-to-one briefing was set up with a councillor and a video-drop-in session with a landowner.

The project received emails from a resident and landowner who wanted to participate in the consultation events or had already participated in an event and followed up with detailed questions on the proposals. A local councillor enquired about the proposals on behalf of their residents. We also received a query from a landowner, concerned about the impact the development would have on their views and the surrounding area. Once callers were identified as a landowner, their contact details were shared with the project’s lands team to handle directly.

Feedback forms

The feedback below was collated via an easy to follow and clearly signposted survey form on the consultation website and was received over the consultation period. In the feedback form, consultees were asked a number of questions relating to their views on the project. The form consisted of a set of yes/no questions, an issues league table and sections for freeform writing. Any visitors to the consultation website encountered multiple prompts to fill out the feedback form.

Out of the 10 feedback forms completed, two were from landowners, one was from a statutory body (The National Trust completed from Newcastle and also sent a letter), six were from residents (one of which was responding from an IP address in Florida but left a Seaham postcode, so we assume they are an overseas resident) and one from a councillor at Murton Parish Council. Below are the results:

How supportive are you of National Grid developing new infrastructure in your area that will enable the country to achieve Net Zero by 2050?

Strongly support	Support	Unsure	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
0	3	0	0	6

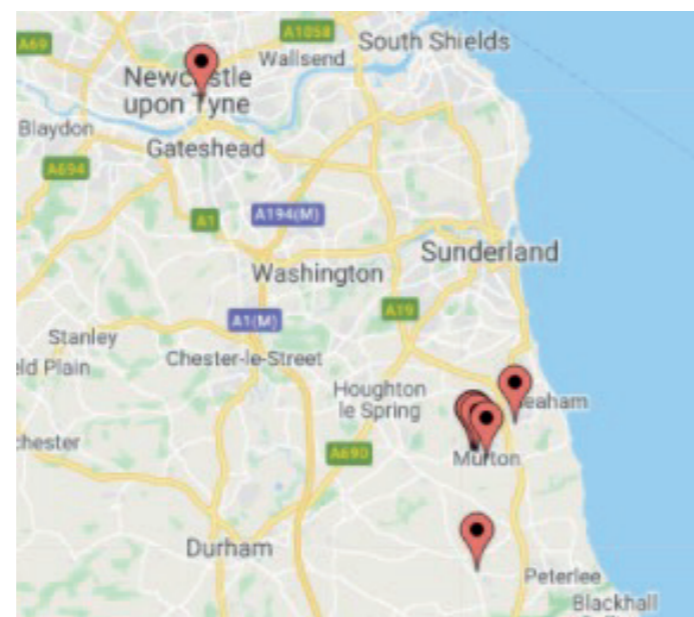
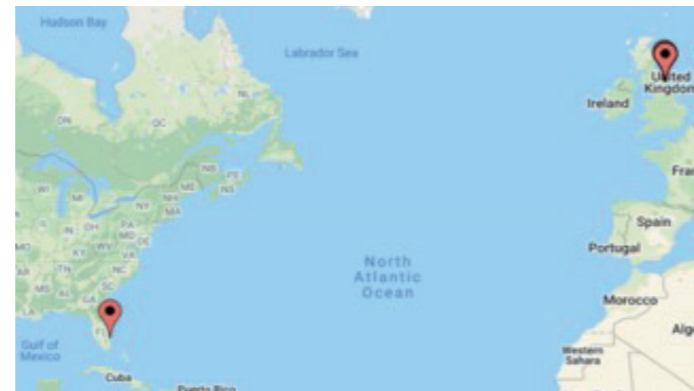
How was your experience of the public consultation taking place online?

Excellent	Good	Unsure	Poor	Very Poor
0	3	0	4	3

The issues league table

Issues	AVERAGE Score (out of 5)	Importance
Landscape and visual impacts	5	Most important
Ecology	4.8	
Heritage	4.8	
Noise impacts	4.5	
Air quality	4.3	
Materials and waste	4	
Greenhouse gas emissions	3.8	
Socioeconomics	3.7	
Transport	3.4	
Ground conditions	3.3	
Offshore water impacts	3.1	
Onshore water impacts	2.6	
Other	1.4	Least important

Location of feedback form entries



Stakeholder feedback

Over the course of the public consultation, the project received several letters and emails containing feedback from statutory bodies and local elected members, as well as holding briefings. These are listed below. Responses addressing the feedback are included in a table on pages 26 to 28.

Durham County Council – three briefings – neutral/slightly supportive

Three meetings with Durham County Council took place, where the project team presented the proposals to councillors and officers and answered any questions they may have had. The councillors raised a number of questions centred around the socio-economic benefits of the project for the local area and the UK. They wanted to better understand the direct benefits the project would have on the local area and for their residents. The councillors were concerned that the development may affect views and walking and cycling routes but felt reassured that these would not be affected after the sessions. Overall, the councillors appeared to be supportive of the project. The councillors who attended were:

- Cllr. David Hall - Sherburn
- Cllr. Chris Hood - South Hetton, Haswell & Shotton Colliery
- Cllr. Louise Fenwick - Peterlee West
- Mark Wilkes - Framwellgate and Newton Hall, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change
- Cllr. Julie Griffiths - Murton
- Cllr. Robert Adcock-Forster – Murton
- Cllr. David McKenna – Seaham.

Seaham Town Council – video and in-person briefings – Slightly unsupportive

The project team presented the proposals at two Environment and Planning committees, one in-person and one virtually. The sentiment of the two meetings was mixed, with councillors generally supporting the principle of development, but with some reservations over the size and height of the buildings, the impact of the project on marine ecology and the suitability of the local geology. The councillors asked whether the project has considered a route immediately south of the Seaham (known as the old mineral line). Some members of the public at the meeting were openly unsupportive of the proposed project.

South Hetton Parish Council – in-person briefing – neutral/slightly supportive

The in-person briefing with South Hetton Parish Council was generally positive, with the councillors explaining that although they were not ‘thrilled’ with the converter station being next to the village they understood the needs case.

The councillors also raised concerns about restrictions to the various public rights of way in the area and stated that they were very interested in National Grid’s community grant funding for community projects.

Murton Parish Council – in-person briefing – slightly supportive

The meeting took place virtually and it was generally positive, with majority of the questions aimed at establishing the facts of the route from the rumours that had been circulating amongst some local residents. Councillors wanted to share correct information with residents to dispel any misunderstanding.

Councillors explained that there were currently five planning applications in the area, which meant residents were getting confused between the various applications. The councillors raised a number of questions, including whether a shorter route had been considered and how landowners had responded to the consultation.

The National Trust – via letter – neutral/slightly supportive

The National Trust stated that it supported the project in principle but provided several comments relating to the impact of the project, particularly on the marine environment. These include:

- it wanted to register its interest in being included in the consultation stages for the MMO
- it looks after significant coastal and offshore property interests in the project area, including the Northumberland Coast, Farne Islands and Durham Coast
- that the onshore element of the project does not appear to raise direct impacts for the National Trust
- that there is an opportunity for National Grid to be aspirational in the biodiversity net gain for marine environments, complementing the net gain on the onshore element of the project
- the Environmental Appraisal Scoping report does not appear to include assessment of some marine features (such as intertidal mudflats and large shallow inlets), the monitoring of impacts on cetaceans and sea birds, and there is very little mention of the impact on grey seals
- if there are any ‘direct and significant’ impacts on marine environments, then what mitigation measures and net gain will be put in place by the project
- what impact the project will have on seabed archaeology.

The Wildlife Trusts and Durham Wildlife Trust – neutral

The Wildlife Trusts and Durham Wildlife Trust's joint response was neutral and stated that they welcomed the projects ambitions and aims. The Trust wanted further information on whether the route passed through Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and the impact of underwater noise impacts on marine mammals. The Trusts also ask for the project to consider implementing a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and whether the project will be following a pre-application evidence plan.

Analysis of public consultation feedback

In total, the project received 1,559 unique page views of the consultation website during the consultation period. The vast majority of consultees did not provide feedback or raise any questions on the project through the methods outlined on the website. Of the 31 total responses the project did receive over the course of the consultation, only 10 were explicit feedback via the dedicated project feedback form, which was clearly signposted the digital exhibition and website.

This suggests that the vast majority of visitors to the website viewed the information about the proposed scheme but did not feel strongly enough to comment on the proposed scheme.

The proposed project has attracted some opposition, notably from residents in Murton and Seaham. From the feedback forms and from in-person meetings, we encountered opposition to the proposal, mainly regarding the potential for visual and land/marine environmental impact. However, we understand that some of the opposition from residents in Murton was probably aggravated by proposals for a third-party solar farm close to Murton. This understanding is evidenced by feedback and conversations with Murton residents and Parish Council, as well as explicit feedback from our feedback form.

From the explicit feedback we did receive, three responses were supportive of the project, versus six that strongly opposed the proposed scheme. Interestingly, 100% of respondents stated that combatting climate change was important to them, although 60% then stated that they did not support National Grid developing new infrastructure in their area that will enable the country to achieve Net Zero by 2050. When viewed as a whole, the rest of the feedback was broadly neutral, including that from stakeholders that provided responses via letter (i.e. The Wildlife Trusts) and those that accepted briefings from the project team, with the exception of Seaham Town Council. **When all this feedback is viewed together, it gives a neutral/slightly negative sentiment for the project from consultees who appear to be generally accepting of the project and its rationale, but not its specific location.**

The feedback was also concerned with a wide range of elements of the project. This included questions and concerns on the offshore cable route, the onshore cable route, and the converter station/substation. This specific feedback is explored below.

Primary concerns/interests of feedback

Visual impact of converter station and substation

The visual impact of the converter station, and substation to a lesser extent, have featured highly in consultees’ feedback and the main source of opposition to the project. Feedback form respondents ranked landscape and visual impact as their number one issue in our issues league table.

The majority of respondents were concerned about the height of the converter station and how it would be integrated into the surrounding landscape. As the design for the converter station is still to be confirmed, some consultees asked for more detail on its appearance. In addition, some consultees asked what measures could be put in place to mitigate the visual impact of the converter station, including if the converter station could be buried.

Residents from Murton, in particular those living in houses that have views towards Hawthorn Pit, were concerned about potential visual impact and the associated reduction in house prices. The issue has also been aggravated due to an unrelated proposed solar farm in the farmland between Hawthorn Pit and Murton seeking planning permission.

Respondents were also concerned about the possibility of additional 400kV pylons being installed as part of the works.

Alternative onshore cable routing South of Seaham

A number of local consultees separately asked whether the project had considered an alternative route for the cable by making landfall at Nose’s Point, south of Seaham harbour, and following the old mineral line. They stated that this would be a shorter and less disruptive route to take.

Why another North East port area wasn’t chosen

Many consultees asked why the project was making landfall at Seaham and joining the transmission network at Hawthorn Pit. Instead, consultees suggested that port areas Tyneside, Teesside or Sunderland would be more suitable as opposed to ‘industrialising the countryside’.



Impact on marine and land environments

The potential of the project to impact upon the environment featured prominently in the feedback, with ecology being ranked highly by feedback form respondents. Specific environmental concerns included:

- protecting great crested newts, ‘ancient’ woodland and ponds near to the proposed converter station and substation site
- damage to hedgerows and woodland during the installation of the cables
- disruption to marine habitats off the coast of Seaham, including marine mammals such as dolphins, which are residents in the area
- the use of a greenfield site for the converter station site, rather than the brownfield site on Jade Business Park.

More strategic comments about the environment came from The Wildlife Trusts and the National Trust, who asked for reassurance that measures would be taken to limit the impact of the project onshore and offshore. The Wildlife Trusts asked for the project to consider implementing a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and whether the project will be following a pre-application evidence plan. The National Trust requested detail on marine mitigation and biodiversity net gain measures, and queried omissions in the Environmental Scoping Appraisal report.

Recreational access to the project area

The project area runs near to and across several well-used public rights of way, including bridleways, footpaths and the Sustrans NCR 1. Many consultees, in particular parish councils, were concerned about the project’s disruption of these routes.

Secondary concerns/interests of feedback

- **Electromagnetic Fields (EMFs)**
One respondent was concerned about the health impacts of the cable’s electromagnetic field.
- **Suitability of local geology**
Two consultees stated that the cliffs north of Seaham were unstable and therefore unsuitable for landfall. They also questioned if the project was aware of geological faults that crossed the project area.
- **Impact on job creation**
One respondent objected, stating that the project would take up land from Jade Business Park, therefore reducing the ability of the Business Park to grow and create new jobs.
- **Traffic disruption during construction**
One respondent raised concerns about the disruption to the local road network and asked what National Grid would do to mitigate any issues.



Feedback on public consultation methods

The feedback that the project received for the online consultation was slightly negative as demonstrated by the below data. From the responses, 70% of consultees who viewed the public consultation online had a negative experience, this appears to be related to the fact that 60% of consultees who filled out the form stated that they could not find all of the information they needed on the website.

However, anecdotally it appears that some respondents to the feedback form simply did not attempt to attend the live chat Q&A or meet the team sessions to have their questions answered in real time.

Interestingly, 50% of consultees still said that they would be happy for future consultations to take place online, suggesting that a hybrid, in-person/online approach would be appropriate for future consultations.

The project did not take feedback on engagement methods during the PIEEs. However, the feedback from the public consultation was addressed in the development of the PIEEs.

How was your experience of the public consultation taking place online?

Excellent	Good	Unsure	Poor	Very Poor
0	3	0	4	3

Did you find all the information you needed on the website and digital exhibition boards?

Yes	Unsure	No
3	1	6

If we were to hold this consultation again, after the Covid pandemic restrictions on events have lifted, would you be happy for the consultation to take place online?

Yes	Unsure	No
5	1	4

Constructive/negative feedback examples

- “Limited opportunity to talk to a member of the team.”
- “Did not communicate it widely. Doing this during a national lockdown, local people are not aware.”
- “More detailed information should be available early on which may alleviate concerns before they are even raised with you.”

How feedback from public consultation will be incorporated

Feedback from landowners, residents, stakeholders, and elected members from the public consultation provided insight on how the project could develop the design of its proposed scheme and address consultees' concerns on a variety of issues, as well as shaping the subsequent PIEEs.

Please note, all consultees who submitted feedback or questions received a response from the project team.

You said		Our response to feedback
Topic	Feedback	
SEGL1 proposal		
Visual impact of converter station and substation	1. Concerns about how the buildings will be integrated into their surroundings.	1. We will develop building design and appearance (colours and materials) and a detailed landscape planting and screening plan, in consultation with Durham County Council.
	2. Concerns whether additional pylons would be installed as part of the works.	2. Due to the proposed configuration of the new substation, we will connect into the existing substation by an underground cable and so will remove two pylons that are no longer required.
Alternative onshore and offshore cable routing	1. Suggestions by several consultees that a route via the Old Mineral Line and Nose's Point would be a more direct and less disruptive route.	1. Following the local insight provided by the consultees, the project deployed additional resource into conducting further investigations (following already extensive original routeing investigations) into the suggested routes and evaluated them against the project's preferred cable routeing. We found that our preferred cable route north of Seaham was still the optimal route.
	2. Queries as to why SEGL1 is making landfall near Seaham, rather than the ports of Tyne, Wear and Tees.	2. The project team provided the consultees with a detailed explanation as to why Seaham, rather than other areas on the North East coast, is the optimal location for the cable landfall.

You said		Our response to feedback
Topic	Feedback	
SEGL1 proposal		
Environmental impact	1. Request from The Wildlife Trusts/Durham Wildlife Trust for a Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SEA) and a pre-application evidence plan.	1. SEA is for plans and programmes. This proposed development is a single project and therefore SEA doesn't apply. Outline planning permission for the project is sought under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and not through a Development Consent Order (DCO) under the Planning Act 2008, and therefore an evidence plan is not required as part of the planning application.
	2. The National Trust's comments on: A. Inclusion in the consultation stages in the MMO; B. Including marine features and monitoring of marine environment in Environmental Appraisal Scoping report; C. Details of marine mitigation and biodiversity net gain measures; D. Impact on marine archaeology.	2. We have engaged with the National Trust on consultation with the MMO. The marine features and monitoring raised by the National Trust were included in an Appendix which the National Trust had not seen. Marine biodiversity net gain is in early development as a concept compared to terrestrial net gain which is now enshrined in law. National Grid is working with government and other stakeholders (including The Wildlife Trusts) on marine net gain to develop this. We have met with the National Trust and taken its specialist staff through our approach to marine archaeology and have committed to sharing our survey results with the Trust.
	3. Request and concerns from several consultees on the protection afforded to onshore and offshore environments.	3. The onshore and offshore elements of the project are deemed by Durham County Council and the MMO not to be 'EIA development'. Nonetheless we have chosen to follow the EIA Regulations and have produced a thorough Environmental Appraisal Report for the onshore and offshore parts of the project which identify potential environmental effects and set out proposed mitigation measures.
Disruption to PRowS	1. Concerns were raised about the impact of the converter station, substation and cable installation on PRowS in the area.	1. Public rights of way will be kept open during the construction works, either by active management or temporary diversions if necessary. The PIEEs digital exhibition included a section on how SEGL1 could affect PRow access. Four detailed maps showed how both National Grid, and Durham County Council's plans, could improve informal paths and public rights of way in the Hawthorn Pit area if all of the proposed plans are approved.
EMFs	1. Concerns were raised about impact of EMFs in the area located near to the cable.	1. Although addressed in the public consultation, this issue was included in the PIEE FAQs, complete with a dedicated National Grid EMF helpline to reassure interested consultees. Project-specific detailed information on AC and DC EMFs, including background levels, has been produced and will be submitted as part of the outline planning application

You said		Our response to feedback
Topic	Feedback	
SEGL1 proposal		
Suitability of local geology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The cliffs north of Seaham are unstable and therefore unsuitable for landfall. There are geological faults that cross the project area. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The cables will come ashore using horizontal directional drilling (HDD) techniques which will not involve any construction activity on the beach or cliffs at Seaham. The location of all the faults intersecting the project area have been identified and the project has been designed with due consideration of these constraints.
Impact on job creation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The project will take up land from Jade Business Park, therefore reducing the ability of the business park to grow and create jobs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The project's footprint does not overlap with the employment site allocated for Phase 1 or Phase 2 of Jade Business Park.
Traffic during construction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns were raised about the disruption to the local road network and what National Grid would do to mitigate any issues. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The topic of traffic associated with the works was explored in the subsequent PIEEs, as more detailed information became available. This information included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the location and method of road crossings for the cable a rough indication of which roads works traffic will follow procedure around the transportation of abnormal loads expected working times and dates number of personnel expected to be working onsite.
Consultation methods		
Finding information easier	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Some respondents stated that they did not find everything they wanted to know in consultation materials. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Although there was only outline detail on the project available during the public consultation, we ensured that the subsequent PIEEs included as much detail as possible at that stage in the project. This included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> detailed mapping that included site compounds, road crossing information and a refined route corridor a selection of CGIs of the site, from various locations and angles a dedicated FAQ page a dedicated page for those with land interests, which includes an FAQ a document library page 17 hours of potential engagement with the project team over three live chat sessions and a webinar the offer of one-to-one calls with members of the project team.

7. Topics of interest from PIEEs

The objective of the PIEEs was to brief residents, community groups, and stakeholders, on the content of the planning applications, as well as answer any questions, rather than accept feedback on the proposals. Over the course of the PIEEs, we received questions and comments from six members of the public and two town/parish councils. These topics of interest were shared with the wider project team to aid the further development of the project, where relevant.

The topics are outlined below by theme.

Impact on landowner property

- A resident of Murton asked if their property was going to be directly impacted by the project. The team informed shared maps demonstrating that the resident's property was not impacted.
- Seaham Town Council asked whether landowners have been engaged by the project team. The project team confirmed that they were.

Type of information shared in the planning application

- A resident of Murton asked whether the planning application would have specific information on road or path diversions, as the resident wanted to know how the Sustrans 1 route immediately west of Murton would be diverted.

We informed the resident that any temporary diversions will be publicised, and rights of way will remain open. This is because although the outline planning application won't include specific information on any temporary diversions of rights of way, because the detail won't be known at that stage.

The impact of EMFs on people and animals

- A member of the public asked whether the buried DC cables would produce magnetic fields and what the impact would be on human and animal navigation onshore and offshore.

We responded and shared information on the EMFs (electric and magnetic fields). Furthermore, a detailed project-specific information sheet has been produced and confirms that all of the equipment proposed for the SEGL1 connection complies with independent safety guidelines set to protect us all against EMF exposure.

Design of SEGL1

- Seaham Town Council asked whether the height and footprint of the converter station has changed since the public consultation.

The Council was informed that the converter station maximum height has not changed but it will be built on a -4m balanced cut and fill platform, so it will be set down by 4m from the Jade roundabout level. In addition, we have been able to reduce the converter station height from being up to 30m high to being up to 26m high. This will have the effect of it being up to 22m above the level of the Jade roundabout, noting that the proposed Jade Business Park Phase 2 scheme is proposed to be up to 20m high. Outline planning permission is being sought and the detailed design will be developed should outline planning permission be granted.

- A resident asked if the design of SEGL1 will allow electricity to be sent both ways. We confirmed that it can be.

Local job creation associated with the project

- Seaham Town Council asked if the project would lead to new jobs and apprenticeships for people in the local area.

We stated that it is too early in the project to state any figures, but that National Grid's research suggests that 400,000 new jobs will be created in the UK in the drive to net zero.

Impact of the project on marine environments and vessels

- A member of the public asked if the cable will be present a danger to sea trawlers.

We informed the member of the public that we will seek to bury the cable in the seabed or protect it with rock armouring to avoid cable strike by other sea users. The position of the cable will be shown on nautical charts.

- Seaham Town Council asked for reassurance on the impact of the project on the marine environment, particularly whether the project would cause noise that will disrupt marine mammals, such as dolphins.

We informed the Town Council that detailed ecological surveys have been undertaken, and will continue to be undertaken, and we will work closely with the regulators, including Natural England and the Marine Management Organisation, to avoid impacts on cetaceans.

Commercial opportunities

- During the webinar, two individuals involved professionally in planning and infrastructure asked what the budget cost for the project is and when a main works contractor will be appointed.

Works on A19/Murton junction

- Seaham Town Council made the project aware of road works planned by DCC at the Murton/A19 junction. The Council added that it could cause significant traffic congestion if works vehicles also used the junction as the works took place.

We informed the Council that works on SEGL1 are expected to take place after works at the junction have been completed.



8. Conclusion

If approved, SEGL1, along with its sister project, SEGL2, will have a transformative impact on the UK's energy supply. It will give people and businesses more access to secure, UK-produced renewable energy, helping the country meet its ambitious net zero carbon target.

The project's public consultation comprised an introduction to the project and a relatively detailed overview. By consulting predominantly online, via a dedicated website, we also overcame the challenges associated with COVID-19 restrictions.

The main objective of this consultation was to engage with landowners, residents, and stakeholders who live along the 10km proposed cable route and around the Hawthorn Pit area, where National Grid is proposing to build a new converter station and substation. We wanted consultees to learn about the proposed scheme at an early stage, understand their views and concerns and collate their feedback. Therefore, we utilised several communication methods to reach as many people as reasonably possible, from targeted social media to a newsletter sent to landowners and people in settlements closest to the project. For those unable or unwilling to use our website, we had a freephone number and email address that came direct to the public consultation team. We also approached 59 stakeholders directly to introduce the project and inform them of the consultation.

Our public consultation website saw 1,559 unique page views, representing a strong interest in the project from local people. Although we received a range of neutral to negative feedback from landowners, residents, and stakeholders, this was a small fraction of the consultees that reviewed the project plans via our consultation website. This, coupled with the nature of the feedback, leads to the conclusion that a significant number of consultees did not feel strongly about SEGL1 and received adequate information through the consultation materials. Moreover, when analysing the sentiment of all responses and engagement over the course of the consultation we arrive at a neutral/slightly negative sentiment.

The project's PIEEs, which came eight months after the public consultation, complemented the public consultation by providing local communities and stakeholders with a host of easily available detailed information on the project, and its likely impact on them. As demonstrated in the How feedback from public consultation will be incorporated section (pages 26 to 28), the project took great care in exploring and addressing people's feedback on the project.

Considering that the PIEEs website saw 2,350 unique page views (791 more than the public consultation), the fact that the project team received only several questions and no objections, reinforces the conclusion that a significant number of consultees did not feel strongly about SEGL1 and received adequate information through the wealth of materials made available by the project.

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