

Lion Link Pre-consultation Report and Scoping Document
For consideration by the WPC at its meeting on 18 March 2024

National Grid Ventures has now published its pre-consultation report. To the great disappointment of the WPC, Suffolk County Council (SCC), East Suffolk Council (ESC) and the over 1000 people who commented at the pre-consultation stage, the developers of Lionlink have kept their original vision broadly unchanged, ignoring local views and arguments. Their current proposal is to go forward with all land-based development (as opposed to considering off-shore), to reject consideration of existing brownfield sites, to refuse to co-locate Lionlink with other proposed cables and to identify Southwold and Walberswick green-field locations as their two preferred landing sites. Long cable routes across the countryside to large substations in Saxmunden and Friston remain. The full report is available on the Lionlink website.

Following their report, Lionlink has applied for the next step in the process which is to ask the National Planning Inspectorate for its opinion on the scope of its Environmental Statement which Lionlink must undertake prior to applying for development consent. The Planning Inspectorate, for its part, has subsequently reached out to several local bodies as statutory consultees (including SCC, ESC, WPC and Southwold Town Council and town/village councils that would have the sub-stations and those along the proposed cable routes) to provide input into the Scoping Opinion. The deadline for submission is 4 April 2024.

The response requested from the local authorities, including WPC, is very specific to the Scoping Document, “Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report” provided by Lionlink. The Planning Inspectorate will not consider any views or input that are not specifically related to the proposed scope contained in the Report which runs to several hundred pages plus appendices.

Per the earlier decisions of the WPC, it is proposed that Cllr Bassinette be delegated to draft the WPC response. Given that the deadlines are not aligned with WPC meetings, Cllr Bassinette will complete the response and, with the support of the Chair, submit the document through the Clerk to meet the 4 April hard deadline. The response will be published on the village website. Whilst the planning departments and legal support available to SCC and ESC should make their responses more complete and robust, WPC will aim to highlight that full assessments will be necessary on: the impact on the environment, including Walberswick’s European and Nationally protected areas, the marine environment and the economic and amenity impact of constructing the landing site in the heart of the Village rather than away from settled areas. Cllr Bassinette is grateful to members of the Walberswick community, especially WALL, who have special skills and areas of expertise for their help with input. Groups and individuals are free to provide their own input to the Planning Inspectorate albeit not as Statutory Consultees. Those interested to do so should check the Planning Inspectorate website where they can find all the related documents and instructions keeping in mind the 4 April deadline.

This step is still one of earliest in the full process. The fact of responding to the Scoping Opinion in no way indicates that WPC (or the other authorities) agree with or have accepted Lionlink’s preferences for the development. WPC will continue to vehemently object to the development, to oppose any landing site or cabling route in the village and will work with other local authorities and the local community to do all we can to convince Government and others involved in the decision-making and financing of this proposed project that offshore and brown-field approaches, as proven elsewhere, are the best future not only for Walberswick and the Suffolk Coast, but for the nation.

11 March 2024
JBassinette