



Eastern Link 1

Northern Point of Connection

Converter Station and Cables
Pre-Application Consultation Report
April 2022

Introduction

This Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report has been prepared by SP Energy Networks in support of an application for Planning Permission in Principle (PPP) submitted under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) and an application for a marine licence submitted under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.

Despite Covid restrictions being in place throughout the pre-application consultation period, we have sought to engage with local communities, fishers and stakeholder groups through both online and face to face means.

The pre-application consultation took place from 31st January through to 28th February. This included:

- Public information boards located at all major harbours
- An open exhibition located at Innerwick Village Hall
- A letter, feedback form and leaflet distribution to all households in the area
- Leaflet distribution from ASDA in Dunbar
- Online boards
- Phone one-on-one sessions
- A dedicated phone number

The pre-application consultation resulted in 87 public responses, largely via postal consultation response forms. In this report, we explain our approach to community engagement and consultation, summarise the feedback received and highlight the key issues raised and how that has influenced our approach going forward.

Background on project

Meeting UK and Scotland government Net Zero targets for 2050 and 2045 respectively is reliant on the decarbonisation of our energy through the delivery of greener energy to homes and businesses across the UK. The change in energy generation is expected to support some 60,000 jobs across the energy sector.

By 2030, the Government's target is for 40GW of offshore wind to be delivered - enough to power every home in the UK. To facilitate this, there is a critical need to increase power flow capacity and flexibility of our network between Scotland and England to ensure that power generated at one geographical location can be used in another where it is needed.

To support this requirement SP Energy Networks is working with National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) to develop Eastern Link 1; proposed as one of the highest capacity underwater HVDC links in the world.

The new energy link will run from Torness area in East Lothian to Hawthorn Pit in County Durham a total distance of some 193 kms comprising of 176 km of offshore cabling and 13kms of onshore cabling.

This HVDC link will play a vital role in facilitating the growth of renewable generation and achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

Project requirements

While most of the UK's electricity system uses AC (alternating current) but using DC (Direct Current) technology this enables more efficient and stable transfer of electricity over longer distances at higher voltages.

The use of DC technology requires the construction of converter stations at each end to enable energy to be converted between AC and DC technologies before being connected to the existing AC networks at respective ends and then onwards across the existing UK transmission network.

Our plans include building a new AC-DC converter station near Torness (replicated at Hawthorn Pit) along with new AC and DC underground cables that will link both the project to the existing AC electrical infrastructure at a new substation at Branxton, East Lothian and connect to offshore DC cables between the two converter stations .

This document sets out the pre-application consultation for the converter station, underground cables and marine cables undertaken in January/February 2022.

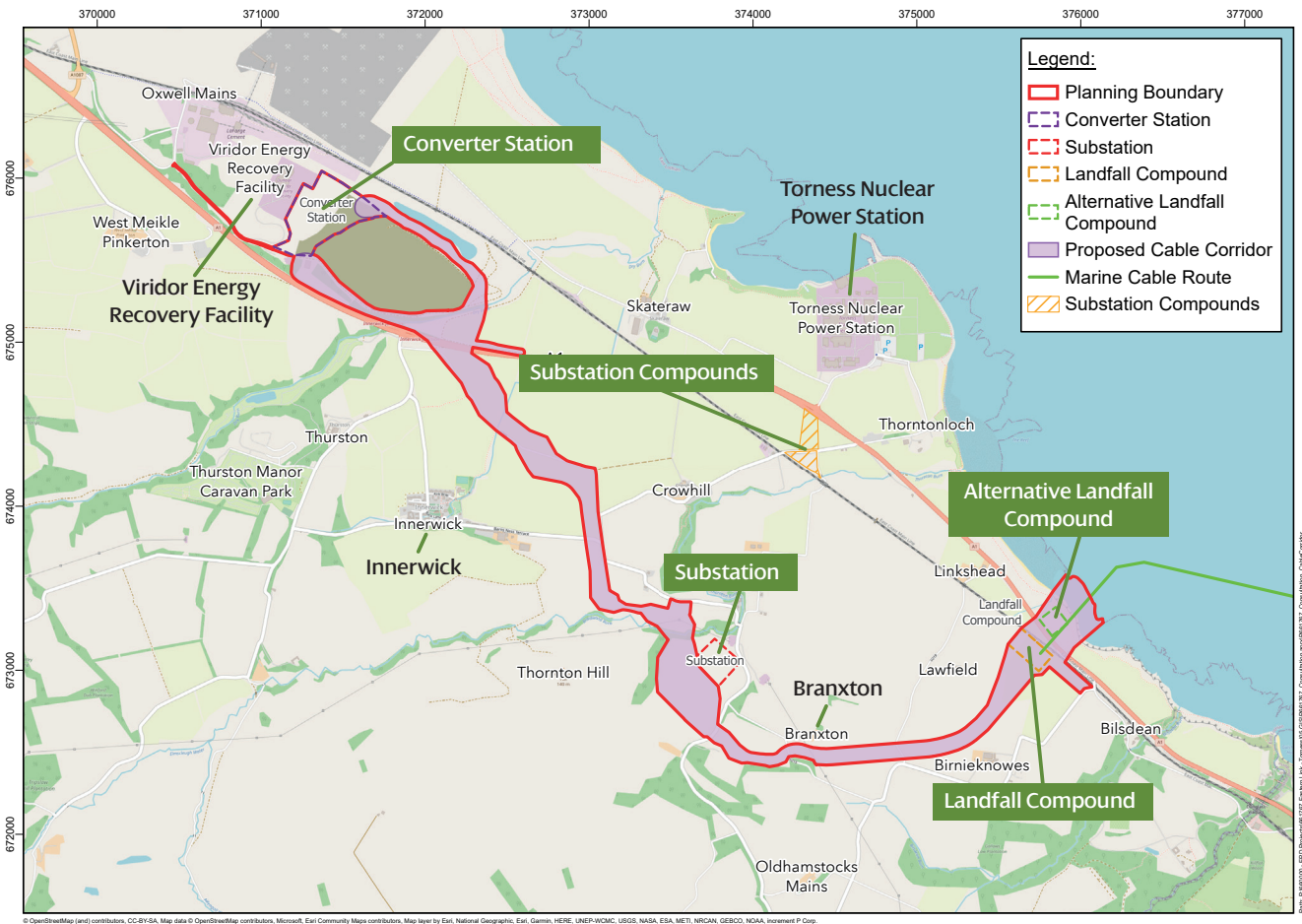
Consultation schedule

SP Energy Networks has engaged with the local community and stakeholders through three distinct phases:

- **Phase 1:** non-statutory project consultation in August 2021
- **Phase 2:** pre-application consultation for the Branxton substation in October 2021
- **Phase 3:** pre-application consultation for the marine cables, underground cables and converter station in February 2022

Each one of these consultations has built on the last and ensured consistent information about the project as a whole.

The first non-statutory consultation in August 2021 aimed at informing residents about the project and providing an overview of the proposals, including basic details of the proposed substation at Branxton, cabling routes and the



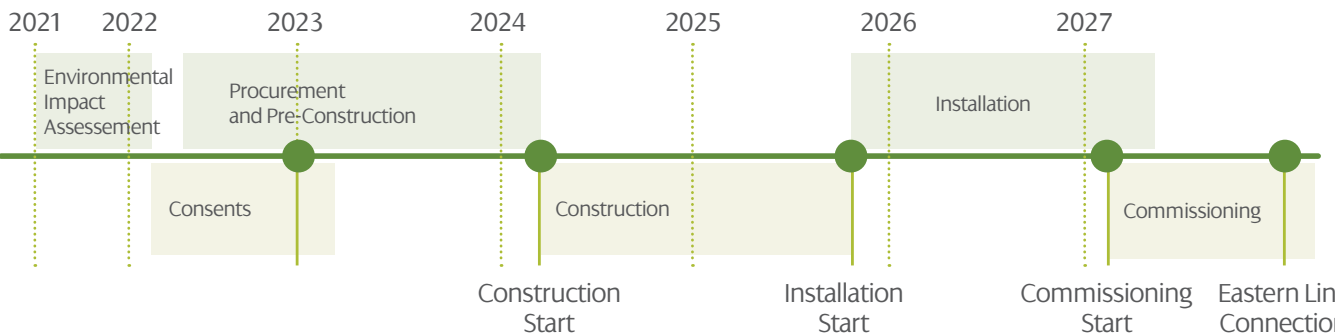
converter station. This enabled local residents an opportunity to express any concerns about the project as a whole.

The second consultation, the Branxton statutory pre-application consultation, took place October 2021 and provided detailed information about the Branxton Substation, along with a detailed drawing and information about proposed cable routes and the haul route for the removal of soil. SP Energy Networks took on board concerns expressed about the haul route and the potential impact of lorry movements on the local population and will consider these as part of the project development and will look to seek mitigation measures for any potential impacts as the project develops.

The third round of consultation, the converter station,

underground cables and marine cables pre-application consultation, took place in February 2022 provided further detailed information about the location and purpose of the converter station as well as the offshore marine cabling, with a particular focus on targeting those impacted, such as fishers and local residents.

In addition to public and stakeholder consultation SP Energy Networks undertook screening and scoping consultation with relevant authorities and organisations to shape the environmental impact assessment (EIA) and marine environmental appraisal undertaken as part of the project. Information regarding these consultations is covered in detailed in the onshore EIA Report and Marine Environmental Appraisal Report but summarised also in this report.



Consultation approach for Converter Station and Marine Cable

Our Approach

Our approach to the pre-application process was to be as informative, inclusive and accessible as possible despite the Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time. Our goal from the outset was to inform the local residents of our proposals and encourage feedback.

SP Energy Networks attaches great importance to the effect that its work may have on the environment and on local communities. In seeking to achieve 'least disturbance', SP Energy Networks was keen to engage with key stakeholders, including local communities and others who had an interest in the project. This engagement process with stakeholders and the local community began at the early stages of the project's development and will continue throughout the life cycle of the project.

The Eastern Link pre-application consultations took place during COVID-19 restrictions, which meant that face to face meetings were not possible and public buildings were not accessible for large gatherings and meetings with the public. Under The Town and Country Planning (Miscellaneous Temporary Modifications) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 the need for public events in pre-application consultation suspended, however, we were determined throughout the process to engage as fully and effectively as possible with the local community through online and written communication.

SP Energy Networks adopted a similar approach to the offshore pre-application consultation. The Marine Works and Marine Licensing (Miscellaneous Temporary Modifications) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 directed that where a pre-application consultation event must be held, this was now to be held online, with a public notice reflecting this. To facilitate our online consultation, SP Energy Networks invested in video and online chat functions to enable the public and stakeholders to make their views known and for the public to experience online exhibition materials and 3-D models in much the same way as they would in a physical setting. In addition, banners and maps were placed in accessible public buildings to enable those with limited digital connectivity to view the proposals and respond in writing via a Freepost service.

SP Energy Networks delivered appointments for online or phone one to ones sessions, which could be booked on our website, allowing local residents and stakeholders to speak to the team and comment directly on the ongoing project process.

What we consulted on

The purpose of the pre-application consultation was to consult on three key elements of the project:

- The location of the proposed converter station at Oxwell Mains.
- The proposed route of the underground onshore cables running from the Converter Station at Oxwell Mains to the Branxton Substation and to the landfall site. This included the proposed location of construction work compounds.
- The proposed route, landfall and delivery methods for the proposed subsea cable through Scottish inshore waters.

Where we consulted

SP Energy Networks identified three key community areas that would be affected by the proposals. These would form the centre of public and fisher engagement throughout the pre-application process:

Dunbar

Our focus within the Dunbar area was to share information relating to the converter station and the route of the underground cables. Given the importance of Dunbar Harbour, we also identified the local marine and fisheries community as an important audience for the marine licence application. We also recognised the importance of Dunbar as a local centre for the wider community and identified the ASDA supermarket as a suitable venue for the distribution of consultation materials, as well as ensuring posters were displayed in wider community centres, such as the leisure centre and library.

Innerwick

Due to the proximity of the Innerwick community to the cable corridor, SP Energy Networks identified the village hall as a site for a public exhibition to be available throughout the consultation period.

Eyemouth

The fishing community in Eyemouth was identified as a key location to engage with on the route of the marine cables. Information panels and meetings were therefore scheduled to highlight the marine surveys undertaken, the location of the marine cables, installation methods and environmental work carried out to date.

Converter Station Consultation strategy

The public consultation ran from Monday, 31st of January 2022 for four weeks to Monday the 28th of February 2022. A full engagement process informed and engaged local stakeholders about the proposed converter station onshore and the marine cabling offshore in and around East Lothian. The focus of activity was on engaging stakeholders representing the coastal communities, including those representing the local fishing community and impacted local residents.

We sought to capture both qualitative and quantitative data throughout the consultation period. This included information about respondents' general perceptions of the project; how the plans could affect them and their homes or businesses, as well as any concerns they had about the impact on the local economic or social aspects of the area.

We engaged with the following stakeholders:

- Community Councils covering the area.
- Local ward representatives from East Lothian Council and neighbouring ward representatives in Scottish Borders Council.

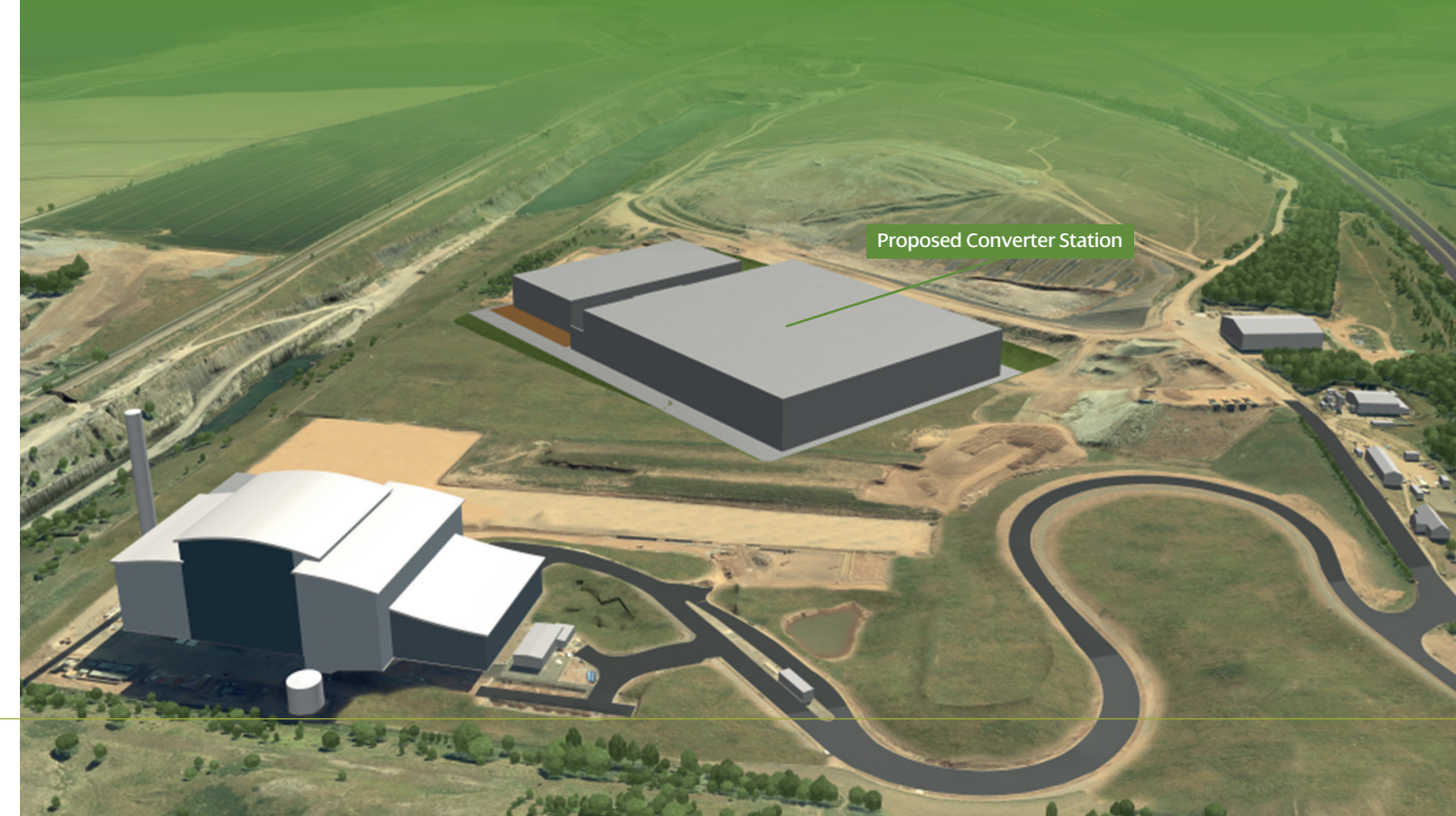
- Constituency MSP, Paul McLennan.
- Regional MSPs covering South Scotland Region.
- Local key opinion formers and local community organisations which represent local community, environmental, or heritage issues.
- Local fishing community and marine organisations.
- Local media

During the consultation period, SP Energy Networks had bookable one-to-one sessions via online video or phone available at the following times:

- Thursday 3rd February (10am-2pm)
- Thursday 10th February (10am-1pm)
- Thursday 10th February (2pm-5pm)
- Tuesday 15th February (3pm-7pm)
- Thursday 17th February (4pm-9pm)
- Thursday 24th February (4pm-9pm)

An additional meeting with a local resident was conducted out of the consultation period at the request of the resident:

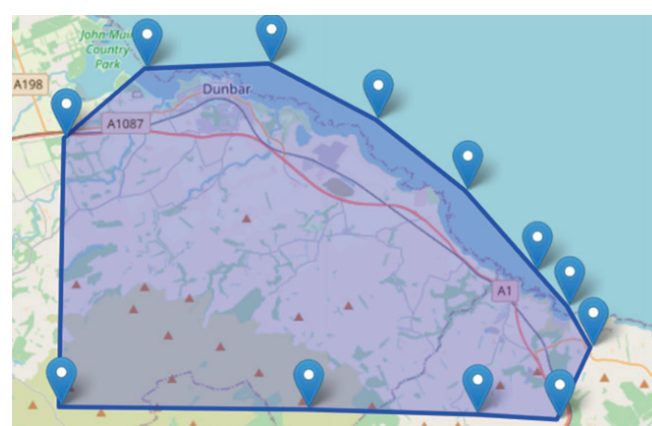
- Monday 4th March (2pm-2:30pm)



Engagement methods for the onshore cables and converter station

During the consultation we used the following range of methods to engage with the local residents in Dunbar and Innerwick:

A) Mailout: 6,284 residents in the Dunbar and Innerwick area received an introductory letter detailing the project, as well as an information leaflet, feedback form and freepost envelope.



B) Stakeholder meetings: online meetings with stakeholders were held about the potential impact of the cable landfall, onshore cable routeing and converter station siting. This included direct communication with local ward councillors, local MSPs and community councils. Presentations were made providing details about the project and the consultation process.

Meetings were specifically held with local community councils, including:

1. Cockburnspath & Cove Community Council (12th January)
2. East Lammermuir Community Council (17th January)
3. Dunbar Community Council (21st February)

C) Media activity: Distribution of a press release to inform local stakeholders of activity, including potential photo opportunities.

D) Adverts: Adverts in the local media (East Lothian Courier and The Southern Reporter) at least one week in advance to inform local stakeholders of key events, milestones and statutory notices.

E) Posters: Posters were displayed at public buildings in Dunbar, including a local supermarket, Dunbar Library and Dunbar Leisure Centre.

F) Website: The website included further information detailing the project proposal, the consultation process as well as project banners. There were also 3D visualisations available, allowing viewers to look at the proposals from different angles.

G) Local engagement opportunities:

- Banners, information leaflets and feedback forms were available at Innerwick Village Hall, Dunbar.
- Two information sessions were held in Asda Dunbar during the consultation period on the 15th and 23rd of February between 10am and 2pm.

Respondents were given a variety of means to respond to the consultation, including:

- Email (info@tornesseasternlink.com)
- Phone: 0800 093 1664
- Online feedback form
- Freepost envelope
- Face to face video calls
- Statutory consultees and elected representatives were also contacted directly and residents had an opportunity to feed comments back via community organisations and representatives.

Marine Cable Consultation Strategy

Specific information was also aimed at the fisheries and marine community, with stakeholder meetings arranged with the local fisheries and marine community.

Local engagement opportunities, including banners and leaflets were available at:

- McArthur Stores, Cromwell Harbour, Dunbar
- The Fishermen's Mutual Association, Samsons Yard Harbour Rd, Eyemouth.

These were in place for the duration of the consultation period from the 31st of January to the 28th of February. Adverts were placed in the local media (East Lothian Courier and The Southern Reporter) specifically to highlight the fisheries and marine licence application to inform local stakeholders of key events, milestones and statutory notices.

The following organisations were directly notified of the consultation:

- The Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses
- The Maritime and Coastguard Agency
- The Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage)

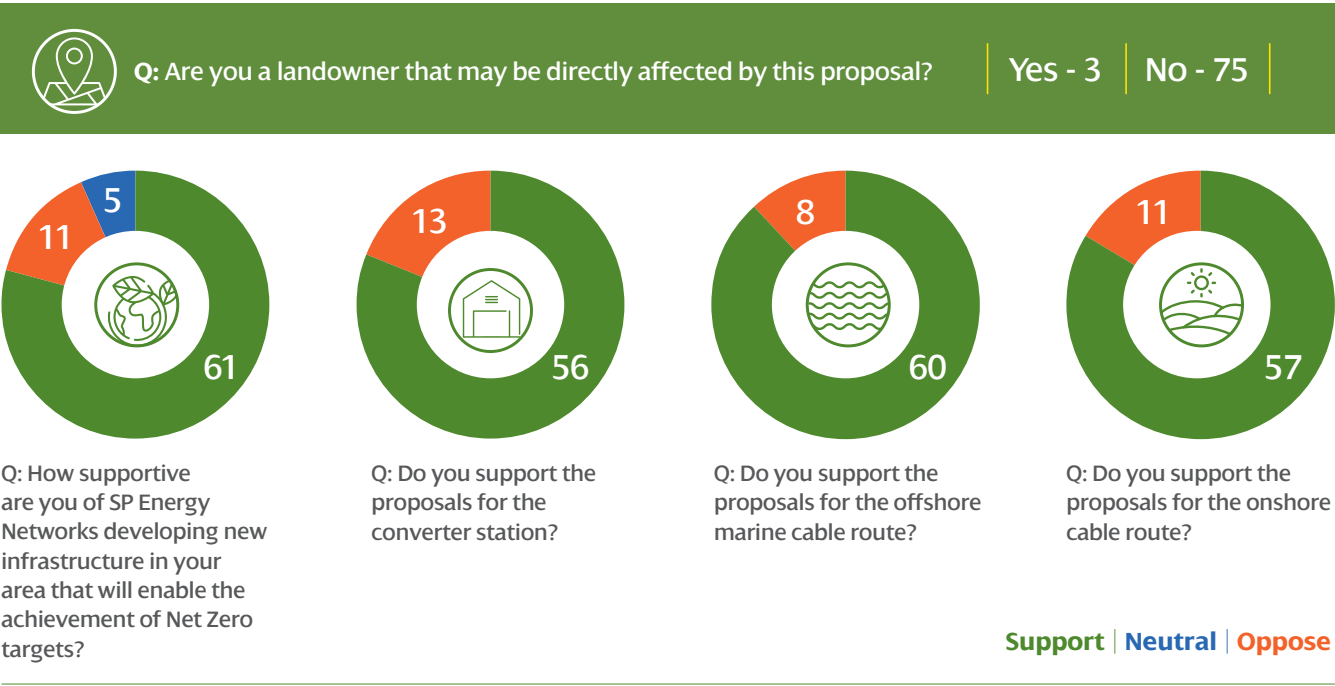
SP Energy Networks fisheries liaison officer also notified a number of fishing industry representatives (FIRs), local fisheries stakeholders and the following fisheries organisations:

- Scottish Fisheries Federation
- North and East Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group
- Scottish Creel Fishermens Federation
- Communities Inshore Fisheries Alliance
- Cockenzie and Port Seaton Fishermen's Association

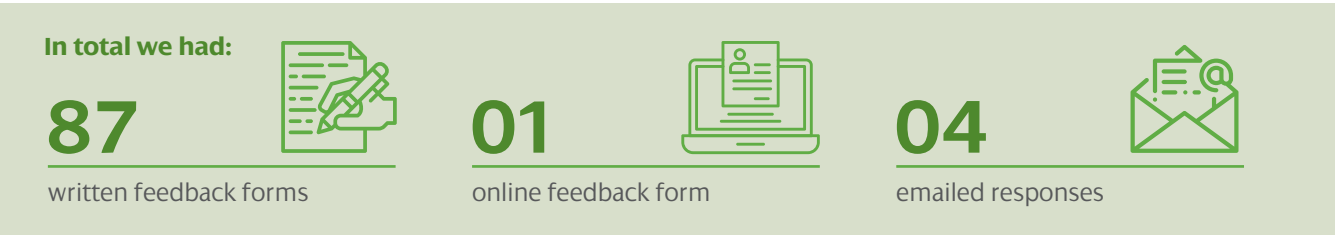
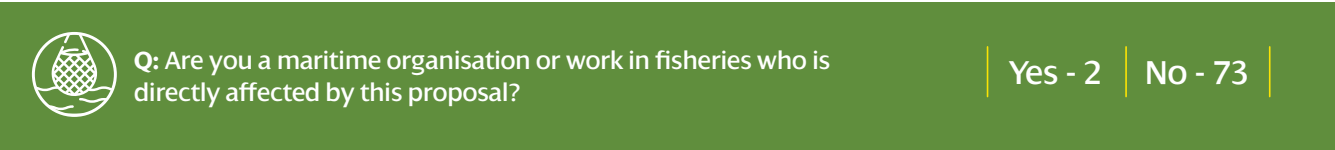


Main findings

Local residents were given the opportunity to provide information in the feedback forms about the impact of the project and if they agreed or disagreed with certain statements. In total we received 87 feedback forms, the results of which are recorded below. Please note that some residents chose not to answer all, or any of the questions, which is reflected in the table below.



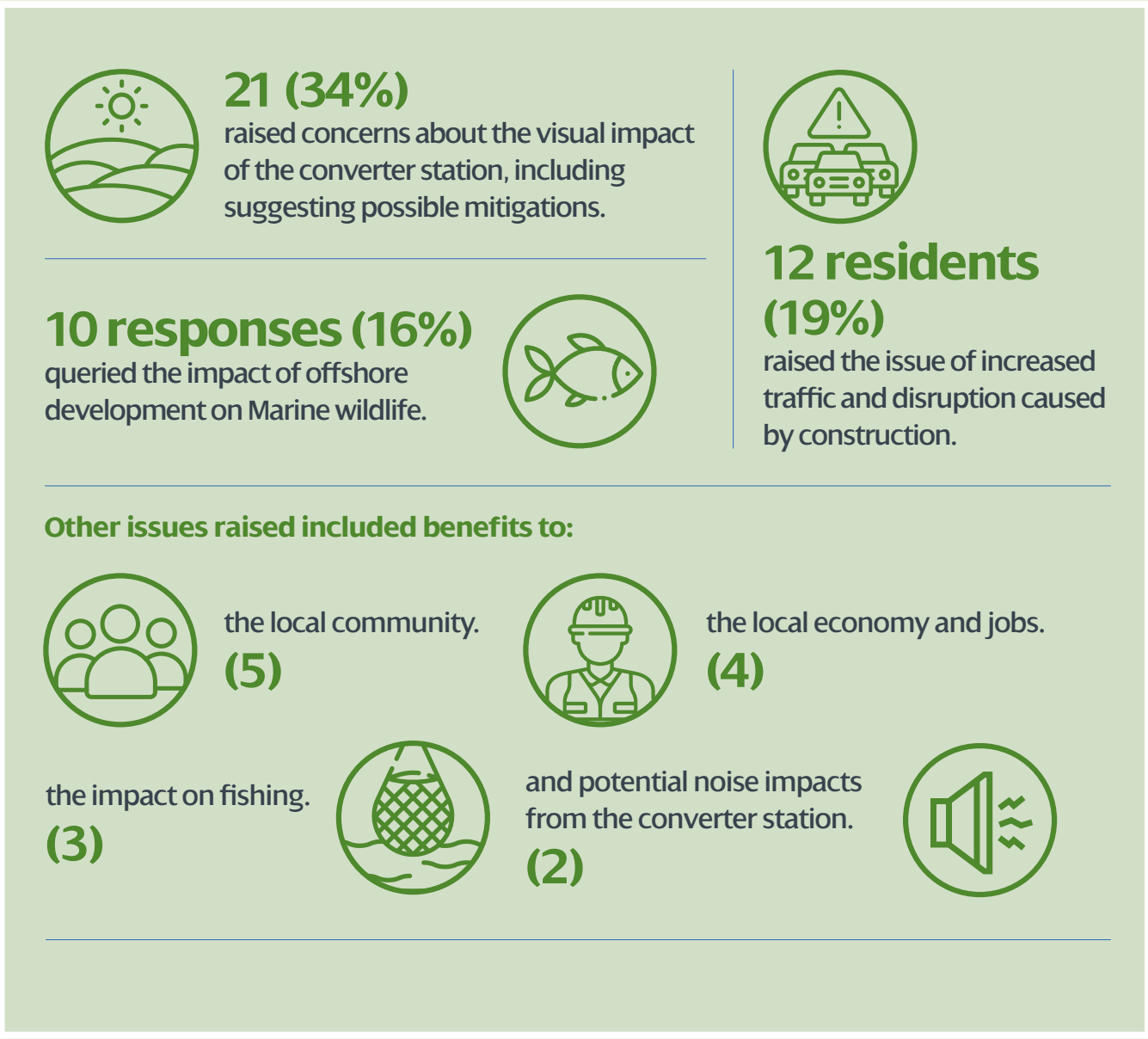
A small number of written responses were received from the fisheries and maritime community. Fisheries consultants, Brown & May undertook detailed discussions with the local fisher community as part of the Marine Environmental Appraisal. Further information on the detailed fisheries engagement is presented in the Marine Environmental Appraisal Chapter 14 and in the supporting Appendix 14.1 Report on Baseline Consultation with Fisheries.



Feedback analysis

We received varied feedback from the community through our returned written response forms. Of the **87 returned forms** we received, **62 residents** gave a written, detailed response, highlighting key issues for the project going forward.

These included those key, recurring themes below. A full, detail response to these can be found in Appendix B.



Supermarket Engagement Summary

Two information sessions were held at ASDA Dunbar, Spott Rd, Dunbar EH42 1LE. The key points from those sessions are as follows:

- Over both sessions, SP Energy Networks engaged with about 80 local residents.
- Approximately 20 residents took information leaflets, with the majority recognising the project and stating that they had received the mail out copy.
- Most interactions were positive about the project, with the key issues discussed being:
 - Construction – Where? When? What will the impact be? Residents were given information about construction timescales and details of the location of the proposed converter station and cables.
 - Clearing confusion about SSER's plans for Berwick Bank and ongoing projects in the area. Residents were clearly informed by the team about which proposals related to which project.
 - Clearing confusion about the function and purpose of the project. The team informed residents about the purpose of both the converter station and the associated cabling and why they were required.
 - Providing information about the planning process and further opportunities for residents to make themselves heard, including how to access the website and where to view display boards.



Website Data

Between the 31st of January and the 28th of February 2022 there was a total of 203 page views (141 unique), comprising of:

81

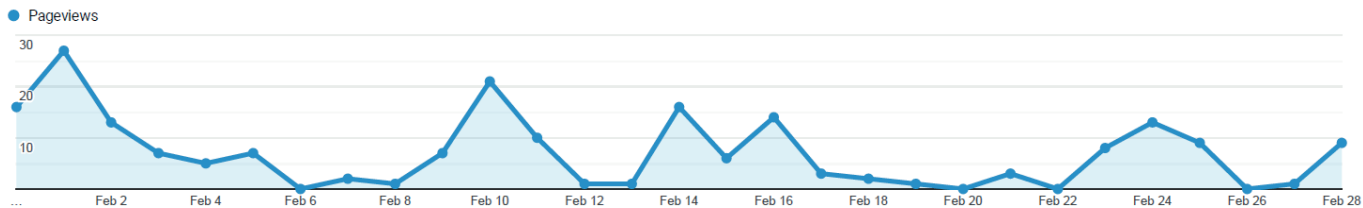
views of the Project Overview
(62 unique page views)

75

accessed the Project Proposal
(56 unique page views)

52

views of the consultation materials
(35 unique page views)



Conclusion

In conclusion, we engaged with over 150 local residents throughout the consultation process through our written consultation feedback, supermarket information sessions and one to one calls. Through our feedback forms, we also saw that 79% of respondents were supportive of our proposals, with only 6% opposing.

The responses we received has given great insight into both the what the community is supportive of and what they are concerned about. The consultation has raised a wide range of matters which we will now review and consider as the project continues to develop.

A common theme throughout the consultation process was that local residents were understanding of the need for the project, as well as being mostly in support of infrastructure to support renewable energy.

In addition the concerns raised through the consultation process will allows us to factor in potential mitigation measures and solutions prior to construction and we are committed to maintaining an ongoing dialogue with the community and associated key stakeholders.

Through conversations with local residents, we have also been made aware of sites of geological interest, the concerns of local surfers that use the beach, as well as potential disruption to cycle and walking routes in the area. These concerns have been taken into account by the team and will be furthered in our plans for the project moving forward.

Next Steps

Our next steps will be to submit this report for planning application, which is due for submission in May 2022. If consented the Eastern Link project will commence construction in 2024 and will complete by 2027. Following a period for commissioning the link will be connected by the end of 2027.

SP Energy Networks also intends to keep relationships open with the community, having developed relationships with local residents who have taken an interest in the project. We will continue to liaise with local government authorities to facilitate communication and cooperation between differing projects in the area.

We also intend to keep engaging with the local residents with a Summer engagement event planned in order to show more of the project and give the local community an opportunity to keep feeding into ongoing plans for the Eastern Link project.

Appendix A: Material and Media: Includes details of the material provided during the consultation and the adverts placed in the press.

Appendix B - Consultation Feedback and Engagement: This appendix sets out in detail the comments received and SP Energy Networks response.

