



Inception Meeting note

Project name	The Trelavour Lithium Project
Case reference	BC0310001
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date of meeting	27 March 2025
Meeting with	Meeting with Cornish Lithium G5 Limited
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed, and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the inception meeting note could be delayed by up to 6 months (if requested by an applicant for commercial reasons), or until a formal scoping request had been submitted.

1. The proposed development

- **Detailed description of the proposed development**

The applicant provided an overview to the project and advised that the purpose of the project is to repurpose a former china clay pit to allow for the mining and extraction of lithium.

The applicant advised the Inspectorate that lithium has been identified as critical mineral by the British Geological Survey and is a strategically important industrial mineral in the United Kingdom's (UK) Critical Minerals Strategy (2022). The Inspectorate was advised that global demand for lithium is set to grow as a result of increased renewable energy production, electric vehicles and battery power storage and that currently there is no commercial scale production of lithium within the UK.

The Inspectorate was advised that lithium can either be present in hard rock or geothermal waters. Cornish Lithium G5 Limited informed the Inspectorate that it is active in both fields where lithium is present and the company obtained planning permission in March 2025 for a commercial scale geothermal waters lithium production facility in Cornwall, 15 miles from the proposed development. In respect of its hard rock project, the applicant advised that a

scoping stage study had been undertaken and the resource had been identified as being present within the site and that a feasibility study remains on-going.

The applicant provided an overview of the technical background regarding the extraction and processing that is proposed to be undertaken as part of the project. The applicant advised that the process which will be undertaken on the site is a patented process for which the applicant holds a license. The Inspectorate was informed that the aim of the site is to produce approximately 10,000 tonnes per year of lithium hydroxide monohydrate and that by 2035 the UK is projected to need 50,000 tonnes.

The applicant advised that the nearest properties to the site and processing areas are approximately 100 metres (m) and are separated by a public road and a screening bund. The applicant informed the Inspectorate that the site is close to the village of St Dennis which lies between St Austell and Newquay. The site is well connected to transport links including a connection to the A30 and links to existing mineral rail networks which link into the wider rail network at St Austell. The applicant advised that as part of the project improvement work will be undertaken on the railway line with approximately 80m of track to be relayed.

The applicant advised that the project will seek to backfill two former china clay pits with mine waste and restore the landscape. The applicant advised that the structure of the restoration has not yet been confirmed and the Inspectorate advised that this had been a contentious issue on previous mineral projects.

The applicant advised that the site working hours would reflect similar actions to the mining that was previously undertaken on the site at the china clay pit which continued until 2016/17. The applicant advised that existing planning permission which has been granted on the site provides a framework that can be worked upon to manage the expectations of stakeholders.

The applicant informed the Inspectorate that a demonstration plant had been developed on the site that is used to generate samples to provide to battery producers to test and validate future use of the lithium found on site. The applicant advised that the demonstration plant will be relocated to develop the full plant however the applicant will continue to maintain the demonstration plant to provide training opportunities and potential for testing other developers products and continued evaluation of the sites products. The applicant informed the Inspectorate that the demonstration centre provides a visitor centre to allow groups to view the site and understand the process. The Inspectorate advised that the use of the demonstration plant during consultation would be a useful tool to assist stakeholder understanding.

The applicant advised that a section 35 (s35) direction had been received for the project in September 2024 as a business and commercial project. The applicant advised that there are currently no National Policy Statements (NPS) relevant to the project so policy will focus upon the policies established by Cornwall Council which provide an acknowledgment of the importance of lithium to the region. The applicant informed the Inspectorate that other NPSs may be relevant to the project as the design and understanding of the project develops.

The applicant informed the Inspectorate that the project is still in the early stages and that the definition of the operational side of the project needs to be established before the DCO

requirements can be refined. The Inspectorate advised that a DCO is not an outline planning permission so it is important to understand the journey of the project as the project travels through the pre-application process.

The applicant advised that there are a number of public rights of way (PRoW) that cross the site. The applicant advised that at this time it is not currently known whether the PRoW will need to be diverted however the general nature of the site does not encourage the use of the footpath network around the site.

- **Consenting programme and introduction to the pre-application programme document**

The applicant advised that it is currently working with the Environment Agency to understand what other permits will be required for the project along with the timescales for obtaining the required permits and how these timescales will work alongside the DCO consenting regime.

- **Environmental constraints and issues**

The applicant advised that as an existing pit site there is a strong environmental understanding and that site selection was established around environmental indicators as well as engineering constraints and concerns. The applicant informed the Inspectorate that details on designated sites along with their value and current status had been established in detail ahead of work beginning on developing the proposals. The applicant advised that surveys are being undertaken to support existing understanding.

The applicant advised that they had been in discussion with the Environment Agency regarding waste classification for the site. The Inspectorate was advised that it was the applicant's intention to have the approach confirmed ahead of the DCO submission. The Inspectorate advised that a schedule of other consents would assist understanding of what is needed from other bodies and projected timescales.

- **EIA scoping**

The Inspectorate was informed that the preparation of the scoping report is at an advanced stage. The applicant advised that a review of the project and baseline information is being undertaken and all EIA topics are currently under consideration but scopes will be proportionate and focussed on likely significant effects.

The applicant advised that it is anticipated that the scoping request will be submitted in May 2025. The Inspectorate advised the applicant that they should seek to avoid running non statutory consultation alongside the Inspectorate's scoping so as not to cause confusion to consultation bodies. The Inspectorate advised that no work will begin on the scoping opinion until the first pre-application payment has been received by the Inspectorate.

The Inspectorate further advised that the Environment Agency, Natural England and others are entitled to charge for their statutory duties during the pre-application stage and that Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) have issued preliminary guidance on PM 2.5 and providing a different approach to assessing it while the Environment Agency has updated flooding and coastal erosion data.

- **Environmental surveys**

The applicant advised that surveys for some areas of the site have been ongoing for a significant period of time and that the remaining surveys are planned for 2025/26. The applicant informed the Inspectorate that the survey programme will be kept under review and will be updated as necessary as the design and EIA processes progress.

- **Land and rights: Scope of compulsory acquisition etc powers sought and potential constraints and issues**

The applicant advised that Cornish Lithium G5 Limited already holds the land interests it requires in most of the main works area and processing site with the other land required being mostly owned by a single landowner with whom discussions are positive and ongoing. The applicant advised that the order limits may vary from what is currently presented due to the requirements for ancillary land such as for utility corridors and discharge points which will be refined as the design of the project evolves.

The applicant advised the Inspectorate that they anticipate requiring compulsory acquisition and temporary possession powers to be included within the DCO. The applicant advised that the mine waste facilities are owned by the china clay producer Imerys however negotiations remain ongoing to reach a suitable agreement.

The Inspectorate advised that they will require regular updates throughout the pre-application stage regarding the scope of compulsory acquisition powers to be sought.

- **Consultation (statutory and non-statutory)**

The applicant provided an overview of engagement that had been undertaken to date including with the Environment Agency, DEFRA and Cornwall council. The applicant advised that the community are aware of the project through the formation of a Community Liaison Group with regular communication through a variety of events.

The applicant advised that Cornwall Council had been aware of the project from an early stage including prior to the s35 Direction Request and work was ongoing to secure a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA). The Inspectorate advised that there are a series of advice pages to assist councils and planning authorities with understanding NSIP process.

The Inspectorate was advised that the applicant had begun engagement with Natural England regarding gaining an understanding of the protected sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.

The Inspectorate advised that AoCM should be submitted once applicant is satisfied that no further consultation will be required for the project to allow the Inspectorate to fully review the project consultation rather than a conditioned response if consultation is ongoing.

- **Submission date**

The applicant informed the Inspectorate that the current anticipated submission for the DCO application is quarter 3 2026.