



Meeting note

Project name	AQUIND Interconnector
File reference	EN020022
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	18 June 2019
Meeting with	AQUIND Limited
Venue	Temple Quay House, Bristol
Meeting objectives	Project update meeting
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given

Introduction

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 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely. It was explained that names of attendees (personal data) would not be published, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Project update

The Applicant explained that work is still ongoing with regard to dredging and spoil disposal, hence the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) contained limited information in respect to this.

The Applicant briefed the Inspectorate on the approach to be used at landfall and the use of horizontal directional drilling beneath a caravan site (Southsea Holiday Home, Lodge & Leisure Park) owned freehold by Portsmouth City Council.

The Applicant confirmed that it is taking a parameters approach to the Converter Station, with detail to be agreed through requirements in the Development Consent Order (DCO).

It was the intention of the Applicant not to include multiple options for the proposed routing of the interconnector cable within the application, although there currently remains the possibility of some optionality depending on the outcome of further work.

Statutory Consultation

The Statutory Consultation period under the PA2008 ran between 27 February 2019 and 29 April 2019. This included consultation on various options in relation to the cable route and cable installation methods at specific locations.

The Applicant explained that the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) was publicised during the statutory consultation period. A mailing to approximately 17,000 addresses took place within what the Applicant has designated as the 'primary consultation zone' and the consultation documents were available at ten deposit locations and nine consultation events were held.

155 responses to the consultation were received. The Applicant explained that topics on which feedback was received included: cable routing options; impacts on traffic using the highway; construction and operational noise; visual impacts of the converter station; and the phasing of works.

The Applicant explained that attempts have been made to contact leaseholders/occupiers of the Southsea Holiday Home, Lodge & Leisure Park above the proposed underground cable route to make them aware of the proposal and fulfil their statutory duty under s42. Currently it is unclear who the occupiers of the caravans are and what ownership interests they have. The Applicant has been denied access so has been unable to serve notices on individual owners/occupiers. The Applicant, in addition to their efforts to post notices and consultation information to the individual caravans, placed copies of the SoCC notices at the entrance to the caravan site in an attempt to make occupiers aware of the proposals and to inform them where they could find more information on the proposals.

The Applicant is currently holding meetings with navigational stakeholders as they did not receive responses from them during the statutory consultation.

Following the Inspectorate's transboundary screening notification/consultation under Regulation 32 of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations), to date only Spain have informed the Inspectorate that they would like to be involved in the process with respect to the proposed application. Germany and Denmark have confirmed they do not intend to participate in the process. France, Belgium and the Netherlands, being the other EEA States contacted, have not responded to the screening notification/consultation letter.

The Applicant confirmed that they will be seeking a response from France in respect to transboundary matters in connection with any specific identified impacts. The Inspectorate advised that the Applicant should continue to seek to engage with France and any other relevant EEA States and stakeholders. The Inspectorate advised that the duties on the Secretary of State (including the Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State) under Regulation 32 are continuous throughout all stages of the DCO application and directed the Applicant to the Inspectorate's Advice Note 12.

Statements of Common Ground

The Applicant confirmed that there will be around twenty Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) produced and that work is progressing with relevant parties. The Applicant explained that, where possible, completed SoCGs will be submitted with the DCO application.

Draft Documents

The Applicant confirmed that it intends to submit a suite of draft documents to the Inspectorate for review and comment.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to provide three weeks' notice ahead of submitting draft documents for review and, as noted in the Inspectorate's Pre-application prospectus, the review period could take from six weeks to three months. The Inspectorate advised that it would be helpful to have all draft documents at the same time to assist with cross-checking and to also avoid submitting revised documents during the review period.

The Applicant advised that the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) report may not be complete before the start of the draft document review but would liaise with the Inspectorate on progress. The HRA report will comprise a single report but will contain separate onshore and offshore sections.

Submission Date

The Applicant confirmed that the DCO application would be submitted in Quarter 4 2019.

In combination and Cumulative Effects

The Applicant advised that within the PEIR they have undertaken the first stage of cumulative assessment and wanted to know when would be the best time to update and review the projects in relation to in combination effects and cumulative effects.

The Inspectorate advised that there was no formal cut-off date for assessing other projects. The Applicant should however clearly specify the cut-off date applied to the assessment in their Environmental Statement (ES)/application documents. The Applicant should be aware that other proposals may come to light following this date and that the Examining Authority may request additional information in relation to effects arising from any such development during the Examination. It is acknowledged that Applicants do need to stop assessment work at a point in time in order to be able to finalise and submit an application. It is for the developer to determine the reasonable cut-off date for their assessment.

The Regulation on guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure EU 347/2013 (TEN-E Regulation) Concept for Public Participation

The Inspectorate received a revised draft CfPP from the Applicant in April and advised that the term 'informal' (relating to consultation) was still used throughout the document, which can be confusing to those wishing to understand which consultation was undertaken in relation to the TEN-E Regulation and the PA 2008. Regarding the information leaflet (required by the TEN-E Regulation), some detail is provided under the Table in Section 9.1; however, Appendices were missing from the CfPP document.

Other Matters

Another meeting was proposed to discuss any advice given following the proposed review of draft documents. A date will be confirmed nearer the time.