



Meeting note

Project name	Nautilus Interconnector
File reference	EN020023
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	02 February 2021
Meeting with	National Grid Ventures
Venue	Microsoft Teams Meeting
Meeting objectives	Project Update
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 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

Project Update

The Applicant advised that in the last 4 to 6 weeks in line with the review of the National Policy Statements (NPS), dialogue had taken place with The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) as to the potential for Multi-purpose Interconnectors (MPI) to be included in any revised policy.

The Applicant advised that changing from an Interconnector to an MPI does not change the function of the project as an interconnector. The principle purpose of the link is to allow for the import and export of electricity between two countries.

The Applicant stated it had undertaken combined meetings with the relevant Local Authorities including East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council along with round table meetings with Natural England and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) on the methodology for the pending Breeding Birds Survey. The Applicant had also conducted contact land referencing for the Breeding Bird surveys which will take place in February 2021. The Applicant explained that they had chosen not to use Statutory powers to access land for the purposes of surveying at this time, as there is significant information available from other projects which can be considered. Where land access hasn't been agreed on a voluntary basis, the Applicant will undertake the surveys from publicly accessible locations.

TEN-E Regulation

The Applicant advised that the project remains a Project of Common Interest (PCI) and therefore the TEN-E Regulation applies to the project. The regulation as it affects Great Britain (GB) has been revoked due to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union (EU). The project partner remains a member state and so the regulation still applies to them. However, the Applicant stated that the project could become a Project of Mutual Interest (PMI) which could mean that the TEN-E Regulation or similar could still apply in EU project partner country so that the status is maintained.

In discussion with the project partner, Elia, the Applicant has mapped out when notifications would need to be submitted in line with the TEN-E Regulation.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant that where the proposal is related to just an NSIP, BEIS has delegated National Competent Authority (NCA) responsibility to the Inspectorate. The Applicant asked whether this responsibility remained in place despite revocation of the relevant Regulations, and what framework may apply in its place.

Engagement with other projects and stakeholders

The Applicant advised that they attend and participate in the Suffolk Energy Meeting hosted by the Local Authorities. This provided an opportunity for information sharing and programme and resource management. The group includes other projects in the area including Five Estuaries and North Falls Offshore Wind projects, EDF Sizewell B and C, National Grid Electricity Transmission (Bramford to Twinstead), and SPR East Anglia projects (EA1N and EA2). The Applicant noted that it had been in discussion with the Crown Estate in relation to its plan level HRA for round 4.

The Applicant stated it is looking at engagement with members at the county and district level through member updates in February and in March engaging with Town and Parish Councils through briefings. Due to the current restrictions these will both be done virtually.

The Applicant advised it is progressing a Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) with Scottish Power Renewables (SPR) as the Applicants for the East Anglia One North and East Anglia 2 applications with a focus on their respective connection agreements with National Grid Electricity System Operator. The Applicant advised it is actively participating in the East Anglia examinations and advised that as well as registering as an interested party in the Sizewell C application, it is in regular contact with EDF as the Applicant for the Sizewell C application.

EIA Scoping

The Applicant anticipates submission of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping report to be sent to the Inspectorate Q1 2022.

The Applicant advised that it was assessing the flexibility within the marine environment at the scoping stage including a traditional point to point interconnector and an MPI. The onshore scoping boundary would include the cable routes, substation, convertor station and additional associated development required. Offshore the scoping boundary would include the cable route from the UK to the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and cover both the options of a point to point and an MPI.

The Applicant advised it would be seeking a scoping opinion on the aspects which are under its control. This includes from the UK substation, a DC cable up to the EEZ and in the case of an MPI it would include a platform. The Applicant confirmed that any connecting AC cable from offshore windfarms, either windfarms in UK or Belgium waters would be under the remit of that application, not the Applicants.

The Inspectorate advised that for terrestrial scoping the greater the level of detail that can be provided in relation to the scheme and its parameters, the greater the ability of the Inspectorate is to scope out matters and provide more proportionate assessments. This same principle applies to the marine environment, however the Inspectorate noted that for a very wide corridor covering different benthic habitats, the assessment requirements might differ. The Applicant should seek to refine the corridor as far as possible. The Inspectorate suggested that further discussion on the definition of the boundary would be beneficial as the Applicant gets closer to scoping submission. The Applicant was advised to review examples of the approach to flexibility granted for existing wind farm proposals within the marine environment. When seeking flexibility, the Applicant must provide reasoned justification and clearly define the parameters and these should be consistent across all documents (Environmental Statement, Development Consent Order, etc).

The Inspectorate noted that work was ongoing in relation to Project Speed, including potential for facilitating data sharing, and that there was potential for future for EIA and HRA reform. The Applicant was advised that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is currently working on the reforms and is also seeking to identify areas of innovation in EIA-HRA (Habitats Regulations Assessment) practice.

Anticipated Submission Date

The Applicant anticipates submission of the DCO application will be Q2 2023.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

- The Inspectorate to consider any impacts of the revocation of TEN-E Regulation
- The Inspectorate to update the Project page on the National Infrastructure Planning Website to reflect the updated submission date from the previous meeting.
- The Applicant to share information regarding who would be the National Competent Authority in Belgium.

