



## Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	HyNet North West Hydrogen Pipeline
<b>File reference</b>	EN060006
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	31 March 2023
<b>Meeting with</b>	Cadent Gas Limited
<b>Venue</b>	Microsoft Teams
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	Project Update Meeting
<b>Circulation</b>	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

Submission of the application has been delayed until Autumn 2023. The Applicant is engaging with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prior to further targeted consultation. An overview of the project was provided, and discussion took place with regard to the Applicant's intention to blend hydrogen into domestic network and reduce carbon emissions from industrial customers in the region. The southern element of the scheme was connected with the Keuper Gas Storage project non-material change application, to store Hydrogen.

### Statutory Consultation Response

The Applicant provided an overview of feedback received during the statutory consultation. Concerns were raised about potential hazards in areas of high pressure pipelines, and appropriate zoning for land use restrictions. Other concerns were raised regarding environmental impacts, traffic, the interface with other developments and access to property. Route changes had been requested at specific points in the pipeline corridors. These were either being considered or design changes were being made. The Warrington area of the east corridor raised concern from the landowners and stakeholders during consultation, including impacts on a housing allocation. Options for this area would be included in the targeted consultation. The Applicant was working with the Canal and River Trust to understand previous canal breaches, risks of potential future breaches and ongoing work in the Eaton Lane area of the south pipeline corridor. Design changes were also being considered due to land stability issues linked with salt mining, and salt/ brine risk assessments were being undertaken. Land owners had raised concerns regarding

Hydrogen Above Ground Installations (HAGI)/ block valve sites and property values, landscape and visual impacts and commercial concerns.

### **Further Targeted Consultation**

Further targeted consultation was planned for Summer 2023. This would focus on changes within landowner plots outside the red line boundary in the Fiddlers Ferry area of Warrington, changes to the Runcorn HAGI and pipeline routes due to contaminated land and other minor changes within landowners land.

### **Health and Safety Executive (HSE) approach**

Regular discussions with HSE were taking place and a collaboration agreement was being discussed. A Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) was drafted to set out the roles and responsibilities of the Applicant and HSE for stakeholders. The Applicant noted that previously established land use planning zones (LPZ) related to non-hydrogen projects, there is currently uncertainty around LPZ for a project of this nature, and when this data will become available. When the required assessments are completed, the Applicant will look to formally engage with the HSE so that an Inspector can be appointed to the project. An appendix to the planning statement was intended to set out the work of the Applicant and HSE to ensure the project was independently assessed as safe. The Applicant would provide a draft safety case to HSE for review before the pipeline becomes operational. The Inspectorate advised of the importance of HSE's engagement with the Examination.

### **Environmental survey update**

The survey scope was described as vast due to the linear aspects of the scheme. Surveys were progressing throughout 2022/ 2023. These include ecological surveys, flood monitoring and noise surveys (primarily at HAGI sites). The majority of phase 1 habitat surveys were completed, with National Vegetation Classification surveys to follow.

Surveys in relation to landscape and visual effects, traffic, peat and agricultural land classification were due to commence. The Applicant noted that a targeted survey approach is proposed in relation to peat and agricultural land, primarily focussing on the potential loss of best and most versatile (BMV) land at HAGI and block valve locations, and areas of potential deep peat locations. Discussions were continuing with statutory consultees, including on the subjects of water supplies, source protection and targeted hydrological risk assessments. The Applicant stated that noise surveys would mostly focus on construction impacts, but it would review the scope of the noise assessments to identify if operational impacts required inclusion.

The Inspectorate advised that the Environmental Statement (ES) should clearly explain the approach taken to baseline studies and assessment of impacts in relation to any new areas of land take or changes to the Proposed Development made subsequent to adoption of the Scoping Opinion. The Applicant confirmed the majority of changes were encompassed within the wider red line boundary presented at scoping stage, which was now more refined.

## **Land rights strategy**

The Applicant has sought voluntary agreements for deeds of easement, utilising s172 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 notices in some cases. Heads of terms would be issued after the completion of targeted consultation and the final route confirmed. For the HAGI and block valve sites purchase agreements would be sought. The Applicant planned to utilise existing statutory powers within the Gas Act regarding under street pipelines. It estimated 5000 affected plots of land, including approximately 600 highway land plots, 50 special category land plots (including allotments) and two crown estate and duchy plots (relating to river crossing points). The Inspectorate highlighted the protections for fuel allotments as set out under s131 and s132 of the Planning Act 2008. It also signposted the Applicant to review the AQUIND Interconnector project regarding identifying individual allotment holders for the service of notices.

The Applicant was attempting to engage with third party undertakers regarding Protective Provisions, with a view to reducing outstanding matters during Examination. Access to land was predominantly being facilitated through the use of s172 provisions. The Inspectorate requested an update at each subsequent meeting regarding Compulsory Acquisition (CA) due to the potential complexity of the nature of CA. The Applicant noted that discussions had commenced with the Crown Estate (CE) regarding the Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) below the river within Crown land. The Inspectorate highlighted that time to reach agreement with CE should be factored into its programming.

## **Draft Documentation Review**

The Inspectorate advised that draft documentation review would take approximately six to eight weeks, dependent on the documentation supplied. As much notice as possible should be provided. It advised that a draft Development Consent Order, Explanatory Memorandum, sample plans, Book of Reference, a well progressed Consultation Report, Habitats Regulations Assessment report and ES Project Description chapter should be considered. The Applicant should also highlight any novel drafting or specific parts of the documentation for review. The Consultation Report would need to cover both the main and targeted consultation, however if the targeted consultation would not be included, an overview of the overall approach should be provided. The Inspectorate confirmed it could review early drafts of the SoCG with the HSE, so it had an understanding of the principal areas of disagreement moving into Examination, however it may not be able to provide feedback on the document.

## **Enhanced PINS application service**

The Inspectorate confirmed that programmes for submission between September 2023 and March 2024 could be suitable for the early adopters programme, which aimed to look for efficiencies or improvements in the application/examination process. The Applicant should email the project mailbox with a request for further information, if interested in participating. The Inspectorate advised that due to the novel technology, the scale and maturity of the project, there could be limits to efficiency savings for this particular case. It was noted that enhanced pre-application service could provide useful input when managing interactions with statutory bodies.

## **AOB**

The Applicant agreed to contact the Inspectorate to arrange the next meeting once the programme for targeted consultation and draft documentation review was more progressed.