

Date: 14 November 2019



Planning Inspectorate

BY EMAIL ONLY

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Dear Planning Inspectorate,

Application by Esso Petroleum Company, Limited for the Southampton to London Pipeline Project
The Examining Authority's written questions and requests for information (ExQ1)
Issued on Wednesday 16 October 2019

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Please find below Natural England's response to a number of Examiners written questions and requests for information.

- **BIO 1.7** – Natural England are still awaiting sight of the Environmental Investment Programme Report. It is something we are interested in working with Esso upon further.
- **BIO 1.20** – Natural England would like to draw the Examiners attention to a recently circulated document by Esso. Technical Note – Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees dated October 2019. Following a further meeting between ourselves, Esso and Forestry Commission, Natural England are now satisfied on this matter. This document answers all of our previous concerns on the matter. We have subsequently signed a Statement of Common Ground with Esso which also addresses this.
- **BIO 1.27** – Natural England would like to draw the Examiners attention to a recently circulated document by Esso. Technical Note – Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees dated October 2019. Following a further meeting between ourselves, Esso and Forestry Commission, Natural England are now satisfied on this matter. This document answers all of our previous concerns on the matter. We have subsequently signed a Statement of Common Ground with Esso which also addresses this.
- **BIO 1.28** – Natural England have previously reached agreement with Esso on how they were going to address the issue of responding to finding bats and the trees that house them along the route. It was agreed that a Letter of No Impediment (LoNI) was not required, as the formal citing of the route had not been finalised and it was not confirmed that any bats would be harmed in the completion of this project. We agreed that project level licences and works would be applied for, upon decision of the route.

So in answer to the Examiners question, Natural England are of the opinion a LoNI is not currently necessary. That said it could be quite easy for Esso to obtain one, upon the

provision of various evidence of route alignment and likely harm to result upon the local bat populous. However we couldn't provide one currently, with the level of evidence we have.

- **BIO 1.38** – Natural England confirm agreement with the assessment and conclusions in the Habitats Regulations Assessment
- **BIO 1.40** – Natural England confirm that the issues currently ongoing with regard the Solent and Nutrients are not applicable in this case. This issue should not hinder the assessment of this scheme by the Examiner.
- **BIO 1.41** – Natural England confirm agreement with the assessment and conclusions in the Habitats Regulations Assessment
- **BIO 1.42** – Natural England confirm agreement with the assessment and conclusions in the Habitats Regulations Assessment
- **BIO 1.56** – Natural England confirm agreement with the assessment and conclusions in the Habitats Regulations Assessment
- **TH 1.8** – Natural England can confirm that there is no written advice report with regard Sand Lizards and the route of the Esso Pipeline. Natural England held a series of pre application discussions with Esso that are documented within the Statement of Common Ground. These were site visits with verbal discussions. As per our role we gave advice along the length of the route, in particular those areas that run through designated sites. We outlined to Esso the risks around each of these designations and left them to make business decisions, within the legislative framework. For example we did not tell them they had to directionally drill under parts of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, or under the River Thames and Dumsey Meadow SSSI. Likewise at Turf Hill we discussed the matters important to the legislation here, ground nesting birds and Sand Lizards and left all decisions to Esso.
- **TH 1.9** – This again was a site visit, with no further report or evidence to submit. My colleague Paul Edgar our Senior Specialist for Amphibians and Reptiles visited the site with Esso's Ecology Team. He gave advice as I did above and left all decisions to be made by Esso.
- **TH 1.10** – I'm afraid Natural England have limited knowledge on this reintroduction. I contacted Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, who very kindly sent me through all the answers to the Examiners questions.

Local Weald race Sand Lizards were reintroduced to Turf Hill between 2007 and 2010. 50 captive reared juveniles were released in September 2007, 64 in September 2008, 50 in September 2009 and 42 in September 2010. All this would have been with appropriate licencing.

The reintroduction site is marked on the attached Google aerial. The associated bare sand scrapes are for egg laying and will roughly define the population centre although after 10 years they will have spread out a little particularly along sandy path edges. We recorded successful breeding activity in 2017 on these sand scrapes.

I have discussed the matter with one of the Thames Basin Heaths Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) officers. He confirmed to me that juvenile lizards were present at Turf Hill in 2019. So they are still there and are successfully breeding.

Yours sincerely,

Marc Turner
Senior Planning Adviser
Thames Solent Team

