



Meeting note

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| Project name | Solent CO2 Pipeline Project |
| File reference | EN0710004 |
| Status | Final |
| Author | The Planning Inspectorate |
| Date | 04 July 2024 |
| Meeting with | ExxonMobil (with the Applicant being Esso Petroleum Company Limited) |
| Venue | Microsoft Teams |
| Meeting objectives | Project Inception Meeting |
| 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.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, if required by the developer for commercial confidentiality/ sensitivity reasons, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted.

Proposed development

The Applicant provided an overview of the Proposed Development outlining that the project would focus upon the transportation of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the Fawley Manufacturing Complex near Southampton to a secure sub-seabed storage area located under the English Channel. The Applicant outlined that the pipeline would be an underground asset with isolation valves and other maintenance infrastructure for the pipeline forming the above ground infrastructure. The Applicant advised that all of the proposed corridors cross the New Forest National Park and two of the proposed pipeline corridors cross the Isle of Wight, meaning the project would also pass through the Isle of Wight National Landscape.

The Applicant advised that the scope of the project is seeking to install an underground pipeline in addition to the equipment required to safely operate the pipeline. The Applicant stated that the pipeline is currently estimated to be 30km in length and approximately 60 cm in diameter. The Applicant stated that the marine section of the pipeline to transport the CO₂ is separately consented by North Sea Transition Authority (NSTA) under a Pipeline Works Authorisation. The Applicant confirmed that CO₂ storage is also not part of the project and is separately consented by the NSTA.

The Applicant advised that it has undertaken work on the potential routing of the pipeline with two identified fixed points; Fawley Manufacturing Complex and the sub-sea infrastructure off Christchurch Bay. The Applicant stated that the Development Consent Order (DCO) will cover the inland waters which includes bays and any crossing of the Solent. The Applicant stated that it is currently participating in a bidding process to acquire acreage following a licence request being granted.

The Applicant advised that the delivery of low carbon solutions to generate the CO₂, both at their current site in Fawley and across the Solent region, are not forming part of the project. Connections required from other sources are not anticipated as part of the pipeline's DCO application.

Project Timeline

The Applicant advised that consultation regarding very broad corridors had taken place in April 2024. Consultation focused on Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), National Parks along with key landowners such as the National Trust and the Crown Estate. The Applicant advised that consultation materials had focused upon the business case of the project.

The Applicant stated that the non-statutory consultation will begin in July 2024 for a period of 8 weeks, which sets out pipeline corridors proposals, typically 500m wide. Post non-statutory consultation responses received and work undertaken to date will be reviewed to establish a selected pipeline corridor.

Statutory consultation is anticipated to commence in Spring/Summer 2025 and will be based on a 50m wide working width route that includes areas required for construction and access. The Applicant outlined that a preferred route announcement is currently expected in Autumn 2025 ahead of a DCO submission in early 2026.

Consultation and Engagement

The Applicant provided an overview of the proposed engagement with the Inspectorate. The Applicant set out an expectation of submission of a scoping request in Spring 2025 following the preferred corridor / route announcement. In addition, the Applicant advised that it will be seeking draft document review by the Inspectorate in due course.

The Inspectorate outlined the focus that the National Policy Statements and recent examinations have had around design principles and ensuring good design. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant that early in the process it should be recording the design story in all documentation to make sure that there is a clear line through documents that can be understood. The Inspectorate raised the recommendation to include a design champion on the project board.

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that they are aware that consultation with the Health and Safety Executive is required and will be undertaken. The Applicant further advised that environmental surveys have begun particularly around the Fawley area due to an existing relationship with the landowners and all routes requiring land within this location. The Applicant advised that draft planning performance agreements and similar agreements had been sent to LPAs and other statutory bodies.

The Applicant explained that the non-statutory consultation is intentionally taking place during the summer period to include the leisure and tourism elements within the project area. The Applicant outlined that this will allow for both residents and visitors to the area to provide responses. The Applicant stated that the non-statutory consultation would continue through until 12 September 2024 to allow for responses following the school holidays.