



Inception Meeting note

Project name	Humber Hydrogen Pipeline
Case reference	EN0710006
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date of meeting	18 March 2025
Meeting with	Meeting with Humber Hydrogen Transmission System Ltd
Venue	Microsoft Teams
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 (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 inception meeting note could be delayed by up to 6 months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted, if requested by an applicant for commercial reasons.

The proposed development

The proposed Humber Hydrogen Pipeline development is a joint venture by Equinor, SSE Thermal and Centrica Energy Storage+, under the umbrella of Humber Hydrogen Transmission System Ltd. The proposed development consists of a hydrogen pipeline to be constructed in the Humber, linking the production of hydrogen at Saltend and Easington, to the proposed storage site at Aldborough. The proposed development includes a connection under the River Humber, to northern Lincolnshire.

Detailed description of the proposed development

- The Humber Hydrogen Pipeline will have a maximum diameter of 900mm and a maximum allowable operating pressure of 80 bar.
- Estimated pipeline length of 54km, including the Humber crossing. The proposed development does not intend to divert any existing pipelines already in place.
- Up to four Hydrogen Above Ground Installations (HAGIs) are anticipated along the pipeline route, excluding termination points, similar in size to most HAGIs (with an maximum footprint of 50m x 50m).

- Aldbrough is envisioned to be used for hydrogen storage, with expected local and wider demand.
- The hydrogen above-ground installations will be similar in size to most Above Ground Installations on other pipelines, with their engineers suggesting a maximum footprint of 50m x 50m.
- The Saltend production facility had planning permission granted approximately two years ago.
- Production at Easington is anticipated to be authorised via the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 process. A public consultation was held in the week commencing 10 March 2025.
- The project timeline is likely to be affected by government policy and funding .

The applicant has assessed various route options and is taking forward the preferred route as set out in more detail below. Within the preferred route, there remains some potential options in certain areas and these may be taken forward through the DCO process:

Engineering;

- Building proximity for safety reasons
- Number of crossings
- Length of pipeline

Environment;

- Designated nature conservation sites
- Known archaeology/ scheduled monuments
- Proximity of sensitive social receptors
- Other areas of sensitive ecology

In view of this, the following route options were explored;

Option 1 (preferred) – Saltend to Easington with a spur from Burstwick to Aldbrough

Option 2 – Saltend to Aldbrough and Aldborough to Easington

Option 3 – Saltend to Aldbrough and Saltend to Easington

Option 4 – Saltend to Easington with a spur from Patrington to Aldbrough

Consenting programme and introduction to the pre-application programme document

The consenting programme is as follows:

- **Quarter 1 2025 (between January and March):** Introductory meetings with Host Authorities, the Inspectorate, and other stakeholders.
- **Quarter 2 2025 (between April and June):** Non-statutory consultation.
- **Quarter 2 2026 (between January and March):** Submission of the request for Scoping Opinion.
- **Quarter 2 2026 (between April and June):** Publication of Scoping Opinion.
- **Quarter 2/3 2026 (between April and September):** Preparation of Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC), SoCC consultation, and review feedback.
- **Quarter 1 2027 (between January and March):** Statutory consultation in accordance with Sections 42 and 47 of the PA2008 (including notifications under Sections 48 and 46).
- **Quarter 2 2027 (between April and June):** Preparation of draft Development Consent Order (DCO) documents and submission to the Inspectorate for review.
- **Quarter 4 2027 (between October and December):** DCO application submission.

Early engagement with statutory bodies and local authorities, and other stakeholder engagement to date

Introductory meetings have been held with the East Riding of Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire local authorities. Letters have also been distributed to landowners, Parish Councils and Councillors.

The applicant intends to enter into planning performance agreements (PPA) with Local Planning Authorities. The Inspectorate advised that it should be considered whether the PPAs include later stages of the DCO process to ensure resources are available.

The applicant plans to engage with the Single Conversation Group in April 2025 and explained that they are a group of statutory organisations in the Humber region that meet quarterly to discuss moderately sized developments. The applicant considers it important to effectively engage with this group.

The applicant is aware of various other projects in the region and the Inspectorate advised to track local developments to ensure co-ordination. The project website is under development and will host the programme document once launched.

The Inspectorate will launch the project page on the Find a National Infrastructure Project website once the applicant's website is live.

The applicant confirmed that it is considering whether a deemed marine licence will be required for geotechnical works associated with the Humber crossing, and discussions will take place with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) in due course. A marine licence for the Humber Crossing itself is not anticipated given that the works will be underneath the river bed.

Environmental constraints and issues

The applicant identified constraints in proximity to the route, including designated nature conservation sites, known archaeological resource, scheduled monuments, sensitive social receptors, and other areas of ecological sensitivity.

The project area has existing pipelines, which have been factored into routing assessments and archaeological information from previous pipeline projects has been taken into account.

The route corridor has been refined from 1km to approximately 400m, expanding in areas with known archaeological resource. The applicant noted that there is a good amount of baseline information available on archaeology in the area.

The applicant advised that there are more designated nature conservation sites, aside from those associated with the River Humber, where the route approaches the coast. The applicant noted that the proposed method of crossing under the River Humber will be a key consideration for the assessment under the Habitats Regulations.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping and environmental surveys

The applicant confirmed that the project description was in its initial draft and other chapters of the Scoping Report will be progressed in early 2026 with submission planned for Q2 2026. The Inspectorate advised the applicant to set up charging schedules with relevant bodies prior to scoping.

Wintering bird surveys commenced in Quarter 3 2024 and are due to be completed in April 2025. Further wintering bird surveys are being scoped and are expected to progress in 2026 subject to discussions with Natural England

The Inspectorate advised the applicant to engage early with Natural England to work towards agreement on the scope and extent of the wintering bird surveys.

Other environmental surveys are planned for 2026.

Land and rights: Scope of compulsory acquisition etc powers sought and potential constraints and issues

The land rights strategy is not finalised, but the draft DCO is expected to include compulsory acquisition powers.

The applicant has identified approximately 100 landowners along the preferred pipeline route. The applicant does not expect to use powers under Section 53 of the PA2008 for access to land for surveys but is considering powers under Section 172 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016, if required. The applicant confirmed it will keep the Inspectorate informed at the earliest opportunity should it transpire that any Section 53 applications are likely to be required.

The applicant is considering whether elements of the scheme require a Direction under Section 35 of the PA2008 from the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ); no discussions have taken place with DESNZ in relation to this matter as yet.

The applicant confirmed that there is Crown Land within the proposed Order Limits and the Inspectorate advised on the importance of early engagement with The Crown Estate relating to this matter.

Consultation (statutory and non-statutory)

The Applicant has undertaken and planned multiple consultations, including early engagement with key stakeholders and a planned non-statutory consultation in Spring 2025, with statutory consultation in early 2027.

The Inspectorate advised careful use of terminology (e.g. "preferred route" instead of "selected route") when consulting with communities.

The pre-application service offer

The service tier requested by the applicant, including justification

The applicant intends to use the Basic tier service from April 2025 to March 2026, transitioning to the Standard tier service from April 2026. **Post Meeting Note:** The Inspectorate confirmed that the project will follow the basic service.

Next steps

- The applicant to confirm the website launch and notify the Inspectorate.