

The Grand Union Canal Transfer

Section 51 Advice Log

Version: 22 July 2026

This document comprises a record of the s51 advice that has been given by the Planning Inspectorate to the applicant (Affinity Water and Severn Trent Water) during the pre-application stage. It will be updated by the Planning Inspectorate after every interaction with the applicant within which s51 advice has been given.

The applicant will always be given the opportunity to comment on the Planning Inspectorate's draft record of the s51 advice given before it is published on the relevant project page on the [Find a National Infrastructure Project website](#).

The role of the advice log at the acceptance stage

Section 55(4) of the PA2008 requires the Planning Inspectorate to consider, amongst other things, the extent to which the applicant has had regard to the s51 advice given by the Planning Inspectorate in connection with the application when deciding if the application can be accepted for examination. Section 51 advice includes:

- advice given about applying for an order granting development consent
- advice given about making representations about an application for an order granting development consent

The applicant will use this advice log as the tool for demonstrating:

- regard to the s51 advice given to the applicant by the Planning Inspectorate
- regard to any s51 advice given to others by the Planning Inspectorate

The applicant will submit a final version of this advice log which demonstrates regard to all s51 given by the Planning Inspectorate at the pre-application stage as part of the application.

The Grand Union Canal Transfer– Applicant meeting index

Date of meeting	Meeting overview
14 February 2025	Inception Meeting Note • Consenting programme and introduction to the pre-application Programme Document • Early engagement with statutory bodies and local authorities, and other stakeholder engagement to date
3 December 2025	• Programme Updates • Pre Application Stakeholder Engagement • Phase 2 Public Consultation • Land Rights Update • Issues for Resolution • AOB
20 July 2026	Email Advice - Planning Infrastructure Act 2025
22 July 2026	• Pre-application Programme • NPS Policy Accordance (ES matters scoped out) • Approach to AI generated responses • Application of NSIP guidance including pre application/acceptance test • Land Rights Update • AOB

The Grand Union Canal Transfer – Log of s51 given to the applicant

Meeting date: 14 February 2025

Topic	s51 advice given	Applicant regard to s51 advice given
Consenting programme and introduction to the pre-application Programme Document	The Inspectorate queried why the Adequacy of Consultation Milestone (AoCM) was missing in the Programme Document, which was not reflected in the pre-application timeline, neither was draft document feedback which takes around three months. The principal points of the scheme are highlighted in the Programme Document. The Inspectorate also advised that it is a requirement to have a front-facing programme document and if there was any ambition of publishing the S35 direction on their project website. The inspectorate also confirmed that the Programme Document should include anticipated dates for any future meetings and where possible in advance on matters to be discussed.	Programme Document amended and resubmitted prior to Project Update Meeting 03/12/25 to address the following points: 1) Adequacy of Consultation Milestone (AoCM). 2) Draft document feedback. 3) Copy of Programme Document provided on project website, February 2026 Resources library - Grand Union Canal Transfer. 4) S35 Direction published on project website via How it will develop - Grand Union Canal Transfer. 5) Programme Document updated to include future pre-application meetings with PINs.
Early engagement with statutory bodies and local authorities, and other stakeholder engagement to date	The Inspectorate expressed interest in the Public Value Working Group and collating Local Impact Reports with not every community wanting to be engaged in	Advice noted, Local Authority Liaison Group established July 2024, used as mechanism to engage with local planning authorities at a strategic level to provide key project information and updates. Local Authority

	the same ways as others. The Inspectorate highlighted the very long linear scheme so getting councils to group together will aid the process substantially.	Liaison Group meetings have been held at key points in the project's development, i.e. prior to and post non statutory and statutory consultation. Point noted regarding Local Impact Report coverage. Local Authority Liaison Group meetings are in addition to individual one-to-one meetings held with individual local authorities.
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The Grand Union Canal Transfer – Log of s51 given to the applicant

Meeting date: 3 December 2025

Topic	s51 advice given	Applicant regard to s51 advice given
Programme Updates	The applicant provided an update on the programme document. The Inspectorate reiterated the advice given in the inception meeting, that it is a requirement to have a front-facing programme document. The Inspectorate advised that this is crucial to avoid confusion amongst parties. The Inspectorate advised the applicant to include key meeting dates with statutory bodies. The applicant stated that it was in the process of discussing key programme elements of the programme document with statutory parties. It stated that it would publish a version of the programme document on its website when the information is finalised.	Programme Document uploaded to project website February 2026 in advance of Phase 2 consultation (11/02/26 to 02/04/26). Programme Document summarises key meeting dates with statutory bodies (Section 4 and 5 of February 2026 document Resources library - Grand Union Canal Transfer). Programme document updated to include timeline for submission of draft documents for review (Table 4.1)

	The Inspectorate queried if the target DCO submission date had changed from November 2026. The applicant confirmed it is now June 2027, due to ongoing design refinement and addressing feedback received as part of the Phase 1 consultation. The Inspectorate advised the applicant to identify a target date for submission of draft documents in the programme document. The applicant confirmed it does not currently have a target date but will consider and update at the next meeting. The Inspectorate advised the draft document review usually takes six to eight weeks and requires suitable notice to resource.	
Pre Application Stakeholder Engagement	The applicant gave an overview of its engagement activity, including with statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency, Historic England, Natural England, and National Highways, as well as other parties such as canal users (through the Canal User Group) and the National Trust. The Inspectorate queried if the applicant was using its engagement with the canal user group to gather baseline data for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The applicant confirmed it was and referred to a trial in Llangollen Canal through which water flow data had been obtained. The applicant noted that the Canal and River Trust are a scheme partner but at this stage are not a joint applicant. The Inspectorate advised that if the applicant's status were to change, the applicant may wish to seek	All points noted by the applicant relating to pre application stakeholder engagement.

	clarity on their section 35 directly to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs.	
Phase 2 Consultation	The applicant gave an overview of Phase 2 consultation which included plans for consultation communications through advertisement and direct consultation as well as wider communication via social media. The applicant confirmed that they have received feedback on the draft Statement of Community Consultation. The Inspectorate advised the applicant to identify priority geographical areas of high engagement, which will assist in identifying suitable venues/locations in the future. Due to the large-scale linear nature of the scheme, multiple hearing locations may be necessary, and locations/venues should begin to be considered at this stage.	The applicant will consider potential locations within the scheme where examination hearings may be required, the need for multiple hearing venues during examination is noted.
Land Rights Update	The Inspectorate enquired whether, in light of the pre-application prospectus November 2025 update, whether the applicant had considered a land and rights negotiation tracker template. The applicant stated they understood this was an established requirement and will discuss the options of the land and rights tracker and consider whether sufficient information is available to populate prior to the next project meeting. The Inspectorate advised that due to the scale of the project the applicant may wish to consider the detailed land and rights negotiation	The applicant notes the advice given in relation to the Land and Rights Negotiation Tracker, which is intended to be completed by the next Project Update Meeting, as agreed at Project Update Meeting 22/07/26.

	tracker as the most appropriate template. The submission of a completed tracker would assist examination, if the project were accepted. The applicant noted this as an action for them to take away. The Inspectorate advised the applicant to look at the Mona Offshore Wind Farm's land and rights negotiation tracker for guidance. The Inspectorate asked if there had been any particular issues with access for survey work. The applicant confirmed that it had used s172 in some instances for survey access alongside voluntary agreements.	
Issues for Resolution	The applicant gave an overview of the identified issues for resolution. The Inspectorate noted that responses to Phase 1 consultation had identified some potential different sites for certain components of the proposed development and queried the applicant's approach to considering these in assessment work. The applicant stated it had considered feedback but was progressing with the selected sites. The Inspectorate advised that a description of the reasonable alternatives considered and a comparison of environmental effects should be provided in the environmental statement (ES).	The applicant notes that the Environmental Statement will need to provide a description of the reasonable alternatives considered and comparison of environmental effects.
AOB	The applicant stated that its consultations are referred to as 'Phase 1 and Phase 2 consultation' due to the changes to consultation in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill; anticipated to receive Royal Assent in late	Advice regarding consultation requirements noted by the applicant. Phase 2 public consultation undertaken as statutory consultation in accordance with Planning Act 2008 as at December 2025.

	2025/early 2026. However, the applicant confirmed its consultation activity is being carried out in line with the current requirements of the Planning Act 2008. The Inspectorate advised that, up until the changes in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill take effect, consultation must be carried out in line with the Planning Act 2008. The applicant stated it does not have a separate issues tracker at this stage but has presented the main issues in a table in the programme document. The Inspectorate advised that the issues tracker should be provided before the next meeting in addition to the land rights' tracker, updated programme document, draft agenda and slides. This is to ensure that the applicant gets the most out of the project update meeting and enables the Inspectorate to anticipate any advice required. The applicant proposed the next project update meeting be in June 2026, after Phase 2 consultation. The Inspectorate advised that the standard tier pre-application service allows six meetings per annum and stated that often a meeting is held prior to the commencement of statutory consultation. The Inspectorate also advised, should the applicant require specific, technical advice, to submit their questions ahead of future meetings to enable a considered response.	Position regarding Land and Rights Negotiation Tracker and Issues tracker to be reviewed prior to next Project Update Meeting (Note: Project Update Meeting 22/07/26 included summary of main issues within submitted programme document). Update on Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker and Issues Tracker provided at Project Update Meeting 22/07/26, both intended to be provided at next Project Update Meeting scheduled 07/10/26. Advice on standard tier pre-application service meeting regularity and content noted by applicant.
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Meeting date: 20 July 2026		
Topic	s51 advice given	Applicant regard to s51 advice given
Email - Planning Infrastructure Act 2025	In light of the amended legal framework which will be introduced from 24 July 2026 by the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, the Planning Inspectorate issued written advice to the applicant on Monday 20 July 2026 requesting for: Evidence within the submitted application in relation to duties under s46 and s48 of the PA2008 to be provided as an appendix to any engagement summary document that the applicant may choose to submit or, where the applicant chooses not to submit such a document, as a discrete document titled 'Section 46 and section 48 information' Evidence within the submitted application in relation to new s55(4)(e) of the PA2008 to be provided in a submission version of this expanded advice log template.	Written s51 advice received 20/07/26 noted by applicant in respect of evidencing duties under s46 and s48 of the Planning Act 2008 and requirement to complete s51 advice log.
Meeting date: 22 July 2026		
Topic	s51 advice given	Applicant regard to s51 advice given
Pre-application Programme	The applicant queried which documents the Inspectorate would expect to receive as part of the draft document review.	Advice regarding draft document review service in respect of which documents are to be submitted for review noted by the applicant. The applicant will seek to confirm its list of draft documents reviewed under

	The Inspectorate advised the applicant to use the draft document review service as they see fit, to gain maximum benefit. The Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application prospectus – review of draft application documents, includes a list of draft documents that the Inspectorate can review under the standard tier of service. Applicants are welcome to submit a selection of those documents or the entire suite. The Inspectorate advised that any documents submitted for review be as complete as possible (not skeleton documents or incomplete drafts) to allow the Inspectorate to provide detailed advice; on the understanding that the documents are not in their final state intended for submission. The applicant is also welcome, with sufficient notice, to request a review of select documents not listed in the Prospectus.	the draft documents review service at the next Project Update Meeting.
Demonstrating NPS policy accordance for matters scoped out of the ES	The applicant queried how best to approach demonstrating National Policy Statement (NPS) accordance in circumstances where a topic has been 'scoped out' of the ES through the completed scoping process. It outlined a suggested approach to explain compliance in a policy compliance table and cross-refer to evidence in the ES explaining why significant effects were not likely. The Inspectorate advised that the applicant's proposed approach is consistent with forthcoming guidance due to be published as part of a new advice page on Pre-application advice on EIA during week commencing 27 July	Advice in respect of policy accordance with Environment Statement matters scoped out and consistency of approach with EIA guidance issued 27/07/26 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Pre-Application Advice on Environmental Impact Assessment - GOV.UK noted by the applicant.

	2026, and would be capable of addressing the requirement to demonstrate compliance with the NPS. The Inspectorate will share the updated advice page with the applicant once it has been published.	
Approach to AI generated responses	The applicant queried how the Inspectorate is approaching the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in submissions from third parties once an application has been accepted into examination. The Planning Inspectorate advised that there is guidance on the use of AI as part of any appeal, application or examination being dealt with by the Planning Inspectorate and referred the applicant to the Rule 6 letter issued for the Norwich to Tilbury application, which contains information on the approach taken for AI submissions during its examination stage. The Inspectorate informed the applicant that it is continuing to review the use of AI in submissions as technology evolves and updated guidance would be issued towards the end of summer 2026.	Advice in relation to third party use of AI noted, applicant will review further guidance when issued.
Application of NSIP guidance including pre application/acceptance test	The applicant queried how the Inspectorate wished for them to demonstrate compliance with the section 51 advice given throughout the pre-application stage. The Inspectorate advised that the applicant's completion of column 3 of the advice log provides an evidence base for the acceptance test and that it is encouraged, where possible,	Advice in relation to compliance with s51 advice noted by applicant, compliance with s51 advice log will be undertaken throughout the pre application stage and submitted with the application. The applicant notes the requirement to 'have regard' to s51 advice throughout the pre-application stage. The applicant notes the advice given in this advice log that the application will be reviewed against the relevant guidance at the time

	the applicant should respond to each record of s51 advice throughout the pre-application stage and submit a completed advice log as part of their application. The Inspectorate advised that there is no requirement for the applicant to follow the advice given but to demonstrate regard to that advice. The applicant queried how its application will be assessed at acceptance for areas where the previous guidance has been adopted, for example when carrying out their Phase 2 consultation. The Inspectorate advised that applications will be reviewed against the current guidance at the time of submission, including any transitional arrangements, such as compliance with s46 of PA2008. Therefore, if the applicant had complied with the legislation current at the time of consultation, they should have met the expected standard when they come to submit.	of submission and written clarification provided to the applicant 31/07/26.
Land Rights Update	The Inspectorate advised that the applicant provides an up-to-date land and rights negotiation tracker prior to the next project update meeting to allow the Inspectorate to understand the issues, review progress and target advice. The Inspectorate advised that templates for the land and rights negotiations tracker as well as further information on what is expected can be found in the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application prospectus – Land and rights	Advice noted by the applicant, Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker to be provided prior to next Project Update Meeting.

	negotiations tracking and that the detailed tracker would be most appropriate.	
AOB	The Inspectorate informed the applicant that there has been an update to the project mapping on the website, which means the project boundary taken from the GIS shapefile submitted at scoping is now displayed on the project website. The Inspectorate requested that the applicant submits an updated shapefile that better reflects the project, as it has evolved since scoping. The Inspectorate asked that the applicant could provide an updated issues tracker prior to the next meeting. It is crucial that the issues tracker is maintained throughout the pre-application stage to allow the Inspectorate to provide detailed advice and the right technical input. The Inspectorate advised that the degree of risk associated with each issue identified in the tracker should be allocated a 'RAG' (red, amber, green) status and that the intention of asking for the issues tracker at pre-application stage is to focus down the issues and address these in pre-application where possible. The issues tracker template can be found in Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application Prospectus - Issues tracker and potential main issues for the examination.	GIS shape file intended to be provided in advance of next Project Update Meeting when design is more developed and spatially mapped. Updated issues tracker to be provided prior to next Project Update Meeting.