



Meeting note

Project name	Xlinks Morocco – UK Power Project
File reference	EN010164
Status	FINAL
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	15 January 2024
Meeting with	Xlinks 1 Limited
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Update 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.

Programme Update

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate of the updated project programme:

- EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) Scoping request shapefile to the Inspectorate– 15th January 2024.
- Scoping request submitted to the Inspectorate – week commencing 29 January 2024.
- Publish Statement of Community Consultation – April 2024.
- Six-week Statutory consultation – May/June 2024.
- Development Consent Order (DCO) Submission – Autumn 2024.

The Inspectorate enquired about the relationship between the Applicant and Local Authorities (LAs). The Applicant confirmed it was starting to engage directly with LAs and it had developed a positive relationship with Torridge District Council and Devon County Council

Scoping Update

The Applicant explained that it is applying a Rochdale Envelope approach to the Proposed Development to allow for a degree of optionality both for the onshore and offshore components. This would involve showing limits of deviation and indicative parameters for the converter stations on any relevant plans produced. The Applicant explained that Scoping boundary details may change as the DCO develops and confirmed it was incorporating more land than needed in the limits of deviation to incorporate flexibility. The Applicant is conscious of the National Policy Statement on good design.

The Inspectorate queried when the parameters would be refined after Scoping, and the Applicant confirmed that while the parameters set out in Scoping were more than likely to be the parameters set out in consultation, the optionality would be narrowed down following consultation and for DCO Application.

The Inspectorate recommended the Applicant look at [Advice Note 7](#) on the National Infrastructure website for instructions regarding the forthcoming scoping opinion request, including the required format for the GIS shapefile submission, and [Advice Note 12](#) for highlighting any likely significant transboundary effects in the Applicant's Scoping Report.

The Inspectorate recommended being conscious of cumulative impacts and ensuring the Scoping Report provides a rationale for the approach to the Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA). The Applicant confirmed it would be incorporating possible future projects into the CEA as well as inter-project cumulative impacts and transboundary impacts.

Update on agreements, consents and other regimes

Onshore

The Applicant confirmed it had pre-application agreements in place with both Natural England and the Environment Agency. The Applicant highlighted the importance of Devon County Council as a stakeholder in the Proposed Development, in particular regarding watercourses and highways.

The Applicant advised it was developing the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) strategy document for the Proposed Development.

Offshore

The Applicant confirmed it was actively engaging with The Crown Estate regarding the seabed lease requirements for the Proposed Development. It is also engaging with the Marine Management Organisation in respect of a deemed Marine Licence.

The Applicant confirmed that reconnaissance surveys of the offshore corridor and geophysical and geotechnical surveys in the UK were complete, while all other surveys of the route within the waters of other countries would commence in 2024. The Applicant advised that WSP/APEM had been appointed to support offshore consents and associated EIA.

The Applicant confirmed that non-UK assessments would not be completed by submission of the DCO application, and this would be acknowledged in the DCO application. The Applicant would develop a more informed position on other assessments throughout the DCO process. The Inspectorate recommended that the Applicant be prepared to provide updates of ongoing assessments throughout the process as may be required.

Landowner Update/land access issues

The Applicant had made progress on land option agreements and was continuing to engage with landowners on outstanding agreements.

Two s172/174 notices had been issued under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 for survey access, with one s172/174 notice pending and one voluntary agreement in place for surveys whilst another was pending.

The Inspectorate enquired on the Applicants position regarding Compulsory Acquisition (CA) of land and that this will likely be a matter to revisit throughout pre-application as the understanding of project requirements develops.

AOB

The Applicant confirmed its position that the Proposed Development is a single Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project for the converter stations, while the rest of the Proposed Development is considered to be associated development.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

- The Applicant is to submit the EIA Scoping Request in the week commencing 29 January.
- The Applicant to trial a file transfer before submission of documents and Scoping Request.
- The Applicant and Inspectorate to meet in March 2024, prior to Statutory consultation