

Meeting Note

File reference	EN020001 – Hinkley to Seabank Connection
Status	Final
Author	Robert Ranger

Meeting with	National Grid
Meeting date	29 February 2012
Attendees (IPC)	Kathrine Haddrell (Case Leader) Jan Bessell (Pre-application Commissioner) Rob Ranger (Case Officer)
Attendees (non IPC)	Peter Bryant (National Grid - Senior Project Manager) Ivan Stone (National Grid - Project Communications) Richard Walsh (National Grid - Consents Officer)
Location	IPC Offices, Temple Quay House

Meeting purpose	Project update and EIA progress and approach
------------------------	--

Summary of outcomes	<p>Introductions</p> <p>IPC advised on its openness policy, that any advice given will be recorded and placed on the IPC's website under s.51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the act) and also to note that any advice given under s.51 does not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) can rely.</p> <p>IPC explained that Jan Bessell has been appointed as pre-application Commissioner, to support the case team and provide advice, and explained that she will not be the Commissioner who ultimately will examine or make a recommendation on the application.</p> <p>NG Noted that the IET Electricity Transmission Costing Study has now been published, and National Grid has provided a link to it on their website. They are pleased with the report, and they have been giving presentations on it to stakeholder groups.</p> <p>They feel it supports the conclusion that an overground solution with some undergrounding where appropriate remains the best proposal. They will undertake a back-checking review of their conclusions based on the IET data and have been updating key stakeholders such as the</p>
----------------------------	--

local authorities and the local communities. A specially convened 'Strategic Community Forum' was held last night (28 Feb) in order to step through the issues raised by the IET report and how it related to the Hinkley project.

IPC Asked whether or not that review would be publicly available, and what approach would be taken to it.

NG Confirmed that it would include a brief synopsis of the IET report and its effects on the Hinkley project as an appendix to the Strategic Optioneering Report (SOR).

IPC Asked whether or not this would amount to a re-evaluation of the options based on the new costings.

NG Confirmed that they would be applying the new costings and re-evaluating. The back-checking review will be clear and simple.

NG Asked whether the IPC felt the IET report was fit for its purpose.

IPC Had no views but welcomed anything that could contribute to greater common ground between parties and explained that any examining authority will have the opportunity to consider any properly made submission to an examination, including the report if it is submitted.

NG Set out their agenda for the meeting:

- An update on thematic groups
- An update on Community Forums,
- A discussion of Land Rights issues.

Thematic Groups

NG Explained that the first meetings of the thematic groups have now taken place. Three groups have been established:

- Historic Environment
- Landscape and Views
- Ecology and Biodiversity

Each group includes key statutory bodies with responsibility for that topic area, local authorities officers and key non-statutory organisations with particular professional relevance e.g. Avon Wildlife Trust and the RSPB.

The area of the project has been broken down into study areas based on landscape character.

IPC Asked who had defined the character zones, and whether or not recognised methodologies had been used.

NG Confirmed that NG had defined the landscape character zones using established methodologies and guidance from organisations such as the Landscape Institute,.

Felt that a key function of the groups was to present and receive feedback on their methodology for the assessment of environmental issues. Whilst NG hoped that the methodologies would be adopted as a framework for the capture and consideration of environmental issues it recognised that the methodologies would continue to develop with the project and have regard to comments received.

They felt that valuable contributions had already been made. Local authorities had requested a “Schedule of Responses” be produced, which they would share with all parties.

In order to help depoliticise the thematic groups, NG did not expect that they would be asked to make any decisions on the form of the proposal or methods of assessment. They will contribute professional expertise to inform NG’s decisions.

IPC Enquired about the timetable for the submission of a request for a scoping opinion to the IPC.

NG Anticipate that they will begin high level scoping in May to June, and will submit a formal request for a scoping opinion to the IPC in October to November this year.

Community Forums

NG Currently, a single strategic forum for the entire route exists. Matters discussed are high level, policy issues.

It is intended to constitute local community forums to give local communities the opportunity to engage with the proposal as it affects their local area. These forums will be in sync with the thematic groups.

The Strategic forum has recently met and received the IET report. The forum is well attended, including by local authorities. The presentation raised many questions from members; NG’s written response to those questions will be published on their website. The Strategic forum welcomed the decision to start the local forums.

The Strategic form will next meet on 15 May 2012. Local forums will meet on 26, 27 and 28 of March.

IPC Asked about the areas of local forums and their terms of reference.

NG Local forums have been developed to allow the discussion of issues of local concern and although not directly aligned to the study areas will broadly follow the areas of landscape character that guide the discussions of the thematic groups. The Strategic Forum has agreed the terms of reference of the local forums, and once constituted, the local forums themselves will have the opportunity to appoint coordinators. NG proposed to discuss the provision of local Chairswith the Planning Inspectorate.

IPC Noted that any decision the Planning Inspectorate makes about their level of involvement would have be made having regard to the fact that they will soon take on the functions of the IPC.

Suggested NG may wish to approach RTPI, National Planning forum or other professional bodies or groups for similar guidance.

NG Noted the suggestion. Shared that local elected representatives were also engaging with the project, both inside and outside the community forums. Tessa Munt MP appointed Dr M Gregory to act as an observer to the Thematic Groups,.

IPC Invited NG to provide an update on their proposed timescales for statutory consultation.

NG Explained that they were considering their approach to statutory consultation in consultation with local authorities, which they anticipated would lead to an updated Statement of Community Consultation. They hope to adopt a Consultation and Engagement strategy document shortly following extensive consultation with local authority officers.

The updated SoCC will be published later this year. Formal consultation requires preliminary environmental information, and NG is seeking access to land to complete the necessary environmental surveys. Formal consultation will probably take place in summer 2013.

IPC Noted the update, and advised the NG should be very clear in their eventual submission about what statutory consultation was undertaken, on what basis, and when.

Land Rights

NG Wished to provide an update on land rights issues. Land agents have been appointed, who are approaching landowners and occupiers in the area of the proposal with the hope of securing access to land to undertake surveys.

IPC Confirmed that they had received queries regarding the land rights aspects of the Planning Act 2008 process, particularly the powers in sections 52 and 53 to require information and access over land. The IPC had given advice in response to these queries, which is published on the IPC website.

NG Were aware of that correspondence and advice, and understood that some had criticised their approach. NG believed they had acted with integrity throughout the process but obviously took any accusation seriously and would investigate to establish the validity of any complaints.

They explained that they would continue to work closely with locally elected representatives and other organisations such as the NFU and CLA to ensure landowner concerns were a key consideration.

IPC Welcomed any efforts to address concerns. Explained that the IPC considered S52 and 53 powers to be powers of last resort, and those making the decision at the time would be unlikely to grant authorisation for compulsory access over land or provision of information without evidence of sincere attempts to secure it by negotiation and agreement

Other Business

NG Described an investigation into an alternative route corridor parallel to the M5, which had been suggested by a local MP. That investigation will lead to a report which will be published in due course.

IPC Invited NG to ask any questions they might have about the abolition of the IPC and transitional arrangements, and directed them to information on the IPC's website.

NG Explained that they were carefully considering the pylon design that would accompany the proposals; the "T Pylon" was being actively explored, but there are engineering challenges to overcome before it can be recommended as a practical design.

	<p>IPC Advised that a degree of clarity about the built form of the proposals would be likely to be needed to properly assess the environmental impacts. Where there is a need for flexibility in the proposals, the “worst case scenario” approach (the Rochdale Envelope) can be used, and the IPC has published advice on that approach.</p>
--	--

Circulation List	Attendees
-------------------------	-----------