



Meeting note

File reference	EN020009
Status	Final
Author	Hannah Barry
Date	15 July 2014
Meeting with	National Grid
Venue	The Planning Inspectorate Offices, Bristol
Attendees	Will Bridges – Senior Consents Officer (National Grid) Brian Smethurst – Senior Project Manager (National Grid) Kath Powell – Infrastructure Planning Lead (The Planning Inspectorate) Helen Lancaster – Senior EIA Advisor (The Planning Inspectorate) Hannah Barry – Assistant Case Officer (The Planning Inspectorate)
Meeting objectives	North London (Electricity Line) Reinforcement feedback session following the Secretary of State's decision
Circulation	Attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given:

National Grid was familiar with the Planning Inspectorate's statutory duty, under section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 as amended (PA 2008), to record the advice that is given in relation to an application or a potential application and to make this publicly available. National Grid was also aware that any advice given by the Planning Inspectorate does not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) can rely.

The Planning Inspectorate welcomes National Grid's opinions on the Development Consent Order (DCO) process under the PA 2008 regime.

Acceptance

National Grid stated that they have learnt from the North London Reinforcement application, to complete the Planning Inspectorate's Section 55 (PA 2008) Acceptance of Applications checklist themselves before submitting an application to the Planning Inspectorate. National Grid stated that the Planning Inspectorate dealt with the acceptance issues within the application pragmatically. National Grid said that as a company, they feel that they have moved on a great deal, and have worked well with the Planning Inspectorate, for example in the pre-



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application stage of their most recent application; the Yorkshire and Humber Cross Country Pipeline.

The Planning Inspectorate highlighted the importance of providing full copies of draft documents for comment. The Inspectorate also noted the applicant's use of Table 1 within the Consultation Report, commenting that this was a clear summary as advised in Advice Note 14, however it did include incorrect information. National Grid said that the table is now being used as an example internally for future applications.

The Inspectorate found the Schedule included at the end of the Book of Reference (outside of parts 1 to 5) confusing and unnecessary. The Inspectorate advised that there was a need to be clear when preparing the Book of Reference as there was some uncertainty at the acceptance stage. It is for the applicant to identify and justify who should or should not be included in certain parts of the Book of Reference.

National Grid confirmed that they are open to receiving advice from the Planning Inspectorate, and the duty to publish does not prevent them from requesting advice.

The Inspectorate explained that responses to the consultation were requested in accordance with Regulation 5(5) of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009. It is not the aim to request the responses for each project, but if there are any uncertainties or lack of clarity on who was consulted and the content of the responses, this is the only power that can be used at this stage to request such evidence.

National Grid found the feedback meeting held following the acceptance decision very useful. National Grid said that they have learnt from the acceptance stages of their first two proposals and noted that the Inspectorate dealt with the situation in a fair way.

The Inspectorate emphasised the importance of applicants providing justification as to why certain parties are/are not consulted. The Inspectorate explained that if applicants are unsure as to whether certain parties should be consulted, they should take a precautionary approach.

Section 56

National Grid explained that their failure to notify all relevant persons of the accepted application and the opportunity to make a relevant representation, was due to human error. National Grid informed the Planning Inspectorate that they now ensure that the list of persons is thoroughly checked prior to undertaking pre-application consultation and the notification in accordance with section 56. National Grid stated that that the Inspectorate dealt with the section 56 problem effectively.

Design Changes



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National Grid said that they were very nervous about announcing the design changes once the examination had commenced, and that the Inspectorate dealt with the situation very well. The Inspectorate advised that a design freeze should take place before submitting an application, however, if design changes have to occur (after submission) in future applications they should be raised at the Preliminary Meeting. The Inspectorate also advised that applicants should explain thoroughly if they consider the changes to be 'material' and applicants can be asked to undertake their own consultation on any changes, parallel to the examination process and timetable. Applicants should clearly explain how proposed changes are assessed within the Environmental Statement.

Examination

The Inspectorate advised that sufficient time should be given to consultants to thoroughly complete the Environmental Statement prior to submission of the application, to ensure that it is not rushed. Changes to phrasing within the Environmental Statement may have prevented the Examining Authority having to ask so many questions on the Environmental Statement during the first round of written questions. The Inspectorate advised that during the first round of written questions the applicant should give as much detail as possible to help prevent future rounds of questions.

National Grid said that the examination was carried out in a fair way, particularly complimenting the way in which the Examining Authority enabled discussions to be held between the applicant and others during breaks in the hearings.

Section 106

National Grid said that it has been agreed with the relevant parties that the money within the Section 106 agreement will be honoured when National Grid carry out the majority of the work (see 'post decision/JR period' below for more information). National Grid stated that the difference between mitigation and enhancement is not always clear, and suggested that more advice could be given by the Inspectorate on this matter; as it says in EN1 (the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy) that they aren't to simply mitigate, they must also enhance.

Recommendation/decision

National Grid said that the Examining Authority's report was very clear.

Post Decision/JR period

Following the Secretary of State's decision and at the end of the JR period, the applicant informed the Planning Inspectorate that the programme for delivering this project had been set back. The Planning Inspectorate stressed the importance of providing up to date and reliable information during examination. National Grid acknowledged this point and reiterated that the information regarding the delay in the delivery of the proposal only became apparent after the examination stage.



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National Grid complimented the Inspectorate on the way in which applications are handled, particularly on the availability of staff to give advice and build strong working relationships.