



Meeting note

File reference	EN020016
Status	Final
Author	Steffan Jones
Date	4 September 2014
Meeting with	Western Power Distribution (WPD)
Venue	Rivergate, Bristol
Attendees	Kathryn Powell - The Planning Inspectorate Nicholas Coombes - The Planning Inspectorate Steffan Jones - The Planning Inspectorate Jill Warren - The Planning Inspectorate Richard Kent - The Planning Inspectorate David Kenyon - AMEC Geraint Griffith - WPD Victoria Robinson - RSK Jason Pacey - Copper Consultancy Neil Bromwich - Osborne Clark Kirsten Davies - Osborne Clark
Meeting objectives	Project update meeting on the proposed Brechfa Forest Connection
Circulation	All

The developer was made aware of the Planning Inspectorate's openness policy (that any advice given will be recorded and placed on the Planning Inspectorate's website under s51 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA 2008), as amended). Any advice given does not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) can rely.

Actions from previous meeting

The Planning Inspectorate is confirming details with an officer from Welsh Government to establish a point of contact for developers to seek comments on draft Development Consent Orders (DCO). Once a contact has been confirmed, the Planning Inspectorate will notify the developer.

The developer is currently having on-going internal discussions on what aspects of the proposals it considers to be integral to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), as developers are unable to apply for 'associated development' within their NSIP applications for projects in Wales (except for certain works in relation to

underground gas storage facilities). The developer is confident that underground cables are integral to the project, and therefore will be part of the NSIP application.

Project Update

The developer has recently publicly announced its Preferred Route Alignment in advance of its statutory consultation later this year.

A draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) has been provided to the host local authority; however the developer resubmitted its draft SoCC after a request by the local authority to do so. This was done to allow time for the draft SoCC to go through the committee meeting which takes place on 11 September 2014. The developer will receive a formal response from the local authority following this meeting.

On the 20 August 2014 the developer published a consultation document on its project website following stage 2 non-statutory consultation. A Route Alignment Report will be published shortly, which will explain the reasons for the developer choosing its preferred route alignment. The preferred route alignment will also identify parts of the route in which the developer intends to underground its connection; proposed undergrounding accounts for approximately 20% of the proposed route alignment. In order to assist the developer's decision on its route alignment it has been working on a concept design throughout the summer. It has been attempting to establish what a potential overhead line would look like in the proposed route alignments and the potential environmental effects of any alignment.

The developer asked the Planning Inspectorate whether these process documents should be submitted with the application. The Planning Inspectorate advised the developer to ensure that its Consultation Report fully described the process undertaken and captures the responses received during its non-statutory consultation, showing the account taken of these responses. The developer may also wish to produce summary documents which could be helpful to the reader.

The developer explained its intention to mount the overhead line on ~15m single pole structures, with underground cables in visually sensitive sections. It presented the route options consulted upon and explained the reasons for their preferred route. In doing so, it described the potential environmental impact of the options, and the technical feasibility of construction. In particular, some sections of the potential corridor in the Brechfa forest were considered unviable owing to problems accessing the pole sites for erection and maintenance. The preferred corridor also presented some technical challenges for undergrounding across the River Cothi.

Discussions with Natural Resources Wales have been on-going in relation to the location of areas of peat; Natural Resources Wales have expressed a desire for the developer to avoid undergrounding in this area and restrict development to an overhead line. The developer is now considering the location of pole placement in the area.

The developer questioned whether it would be useful to start the process of creating Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Evidence Plans. The Planning Inspectorate informed the developer that these would only be applicable to proposals wholly in England or in England and Wales. The Planning Inspectorate advised that whilst following the general evidence plan approach could be beneficial, any such process in

respect of the proposed development could not be referenced or described as being an Evidence Plan.

It was asked whether the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change was identified as the competent authority in relation to the HRA for projects in Wales; the Planning Inspectorate will confirm this. The Planning Inspectorate also confirmed it can comment on a draft HRA should the developer wish for it to do so.

The developer and the Planning Inspectorate discussed a list of the intended application documents. The developer was advised to carefully name the documents so that they can be easily understood by members of the public. They were also advised to use (and later provided with) a copy of the electronic file index with which the application should be submitted.

The developer asked a general question about the need for separate plans and reports to accompany the application (with reference to Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 6). The developer suggested that many such required plans and reports would normally form part of the suite of EIA documents, and therefore sought clarity on the requirement for them to be provided separately. The Planning Inspectorate advised that the developer need not necessarily provide duplicate application documents if they propose to present them as part of the ES (an example being a flood risk assessment). The Planning Inspectorate advised that the developer's application form should make clear reference to where the relevant information can be found within the suite of application documents to demonstrate compliance with the regulations.

The developer asked whether it could include in their application a 3D modelling tool used in public consultation events, which enable the user to view the proposed route alignments. The Planning Inspectorate advised the developer that, although this is a useful tool to use at consultation events with members of the public, it could not be included within the application documents as potential interested parties would need specialist computer software to use such a tool.

Examining Authorities have begun to ask developers to provide schedules of those landowners where voluntary agreements have been reached. The developer should consider the production of such a schedule as soon as possible to aid any potential examination of the application. It was mentioned that around 250 landowners are affected in total.

The developer intends to translate its Executive Summary, Non-Technical Summary and Consultation Report into Welsh. Prior to its statutory phase of consultation, the developer will also provide a translated SoCC and s48 notice.

The Planning Inspectorate reminded the developer of its duty under s49 of the PA 2008, to have regard to responses to its statutory consultation. Statutory Consultation is due to commence in November 2014.