



Meeting note

File reference	Richborough Connection Project
Status	Final
Author	Jolyon Wootton
Date	29 th May 2013
Meeting with	National Grid
Venue	The Planning Inspectorate, Bristol
Attendees	Chris White, Case Manager (The Planning Inspectorate) Andrew Luke, Senior EIA Advisor (The Planning Inspectorate) Jill Warren, Senior EIA Advisor (The Planning Inspectorate) Jolyon Wootton, Case Officer (The Planning Inspectorate) Jan Bessell, Examining Inspector (The Planning Inspectorate) Stephen Self, Project Manager (National Grid) Emer McDonnell, Consents Officer (National Grid) Tom Bowden-Green, Communications (National Grid)
Meeting objectives	Introduction to the Richborough Connection Project
Circulation	Attendees; to be published on the planning portal website

Summary of key points discussed and advice given:

Before introductions, National Grid were informed of the Planning Inspectorate's openness policy: that any advice given will be recorded and placed on the Planning Inspectorate's website under Section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) (PA 2008). Such advice, however, does not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) can rely. National Grid was made aware that a note of the meeting would be made available on the 'planning portal' website.

National Grid was also informed that, in accordance with procedures, the pre-application Examining Inspector would not be appointed as the Examining authority should an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) be submitted for 'acceptance'.

Project Overview

National Grid introduced their proposed 'Richborough Connection Project' to the Planning Inspectorate through a Presentation. Stating their need case, National Grid explained that National Grid Nemo Link Limited and the Belgian Elia group is proposing a 1000MW Interconnector (electricity link) between Zeebrugge, in Belgium, to Richborough near Sandwich in Kent, known as 'Nemo Link[®]'.

National Grid's proposed Richborough Connection Project will connect the Nemo Link[®] to the UK's national grid high voltage electricity transmission system. There is no National Grid transmission infrastructure at Richborough and the existing distribution lines in the Richborough area owned by UK Power Networks, do not have the capacity to carry 1000MW. This proposal is therefore intended to provide a new transmission connection between Richborough and the existing transmission system.

The Richborough Connection Project is said to meet the definitions for a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under PA 2008.

Nemo Link[®] has submitted a planning application to Thanet and Dover District Councils for the onshore elements of the interconnector at Richborough including a converter station, substation and (onshore) underground cable through the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). These are to be located within an eight hectare site formally occupied by the Richborough Power Station.

The NSIP application is to include a connection for overhead electric lines between Richborough and Canterbury. National Grid's 'Strategic Options Report' sets out that National Grid seek to take forward the option of a connection between Richborough and Canterbury and to initially look at an overhead line route. This is to form the basis of National Grid's current 'Route Corridor Study' that seeks to identify broad potential corridor options for the electric lines. National Grid will publish their preferred connection option and route corridor following consultation with the public and other stakeholders. In answer to the Planning Inspectorate, National Grid explained that new switchgear at Canterbury would be developed for the substation within the existing footprint of the site and would be classed as permitted development.

Answering the Planning Inspectorate, applications for Marine Licences have been made by Nemo Link[®] to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for the interconnector, National Grid said, but the MMO timescales for designation or consent could not be confirmed at this stage. National Grid presumes the NSIP proposal would be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment, and a Habitats Assessment may be required in accordance with secondary legislation: namely, The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2009 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, (as amended). National Grid intends to address both social and environmental impacts during their pre-application consultation.

Further answering the Planning Inspectorate, National Grid said that each route corridor 'option' would start at Richborough owing to their connection agreement with Nemo Link[®]. 'Options' and the 'area of search' were being defined in consideration of environmental constraints, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to the north of Canterbury, the east coastline, and Ramsar sites.

National Grid commented that the proposal would consist of twin-stringing 400kV conductors (electric lines) using L8c and L12 type lattice pylon designs, or triple-stringing 400kV conductors (electric lines) if T-pylon designs are used. The worst-case scenario on height and width of types of pylons to be used would be covered in the pre-application consultation. Options for 'rationalisation' of the existing network would be examined.

Consultation and Project Timescales

National Grid said the project is at the start of their estimated two-year, pre-application consultation process. This is to comprise both 'non-statutory' consultation

phases as well as a final, 'statutory' consultation phase to be undertaken in compliance with the requirements of Sections 42 - 49 of PA 2008.

The Planning Inspectorate advised that the applicant would need to make clear to the public and other prescribed consultees, within the consultation material, what is meant by 'non-statutory' and 'statutory' phases. This should be detailed in the Consultation Report to be submitted with any application.

Engagement with key statutory consultees, including Local Authorities, on the project and the Strategic Options, Consultation Strategy and Route Corridor Study began in October 2012; with Member of Parliament briefings held in February and March 2013. No comments have been made on the merits of the proposal at this stage but consensus reached on baseline issues and environmental concerns.

National Grid launched their project website in June 2012 and this will be updated with information to support an open and transparent consultation process. Nemo Link is maintaining a separate site for the Nemo Link[®] and held public information sessions in the region in 2012 to discuss the interconnector, this included reference to the required connection to the electricity transmission system.

The Planning Inspectorate asked about the reasoning for limiting the scope of the consultation zone to 1km. National Grid said that the scope was developed in consultation with local planning officers and their own assessments of settlements in regard to the locality of the proposal. It would be unnecessary to include whole settlements, such as Canterbury, given that certain wards would be unaffected, National Grid concluded.

The Planning Inspectorate advised that the 'zone of influence' would need to be carefully considered in consideration of the flat topography of the region in which any visual impacts could apply to settlements or other sensitive receptors outside the developer's 1km limit. An 'opt-in' option should be included for any persons wishing to engage in the pre-application consultation. National Grid said that they were considering these points alongside using local data sources on demographics. The use of media and other means of communication were being considered by National Grid in reaching different population groups, including gypsy and traveller, and tourists.

Consultation with the public (with the provision of feedback forms) would be held for six weeks during the Summer 2013. Accessible venues and suitable times for public events were being considered, National Grid added.

Following public consultation and any feedback received, National Grid intends to publish their 'Preferred Route Corridor' in the Winter of 2013. Further consultation on environmental matters and survey work is expected to be conducted during 2014 – 2015. The 'Preliminary Route Alignment' is expected to be published in the Spring of 2014; with the NSIP application submitted in the Autumn of 2015.

Regarding environmental surveys, National Grid said that bird surveys commenced in 2012, allowing for 2 years for data collection.

If an NSIP application is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination and granted by the relevant Secretary of State, construction would commence in 2017 with the connection commissioned in 2018.

During final questions, National Grid commented that there are no known issues or impacts to the proposed Richborough Peaking Plant or sterilisation to the land.

Persons with Interests in the Land (PILs) were being identified but investigating land interests would continue as the project progresses.

Specific decisions / follow up required

None at this time. National Grid is to contact the Planning Inspectorate when the applicant wishes to have a 'project update' meeting.

The Planning Inspectorate may elect to hold meetings with Local Authorities and key stakeholders, as well as the public through Outreach Events, if necessary (depending on the feedback during pre-application or in consideration of any requests made).