



Preliminary Meeting Note

Application: AQUIND Interconnector

Reference: EN020022

Time and date: 10:00am on Tuesday 18 August 2020

Venue: Virtual meeting online

Please note that this meeting note is not a full transcript of the Preliminary Meeting. It is a summary of the key points discussed. Full digital recordings of the Meeting are available on the project page of the Planning Inspectorate's National Infrastructure website, which is:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/South%20East/AQUIND-Interconnector/>

1. Welcome and Introduction (0:00:35 to 0:20:45)¹

Andrew Mahon (AM) introduced himself as the lead member of the Examining Authority (ExA) appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the application by AQUIND Limited ('the Applicant'), for the AQUIND Interconnector.

Stephen Roscoe (SR) and David Wallis (DW) introduced themselves as Examining Inspectors on the ExA.

AM explained the appointment of the ExA was made under delegation from the Secretary of State for the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) on 12 February 2020.

AM explained that the ExA would examine the application and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State who will decide whether an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed project, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, should be made.

AM introduced members of the Planning Inspectorate case team who were present.

AM set out a summary of what the application was for, and the purpose of the Preliminary Meeting, referring to Annex F to the Rule 6 letter of 3 July 2020. He explained that the purpose of the Preliminary Meeting was to make procedural arrangements for the Examination, and that no evidence would be heard about the project or its merits.

DW explained that a full digital recording of the Preliminary Meeting will be made available in two parts on the project page of the Planning Inspectorate's National Infrastructure website.

¹ The timings shown in brackets relate to the digital recordings of the Preliminary Meeting

DW set out guidelines on the use of the recordings, including reference to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

[Further info relating to the GDPR can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's [Privacy Note](#).]

DW then asked attending participants to introduce themselves.

The ExA confirmed that all documents and submissions received and accepted during the Examination will be published on the project page of the Planning Inspectorate's National Infrastructure website.

2. ExA's remarks about Examination Process (0:20:45 to 0:29:00)

AM briefly explained the process for examining applications for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects under the Planning Act 2008. He referred to the more detailed information set out at Annex F to the Rule 6 letter and encouraged participants to read it.

[Further information can be found in [Advice Note 8.4](#).]

3. Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (0:29:00 to 0:41:45)

The ExA explained the purpose of the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (section 88 of the PA2008), which can be found in [Annex B](#) of the [Rule 6](#) letter of 3 July 2020, and asked for any observations.

Hampshire County Council (HCC), Winchester City Council (WCC), and Portsmouth City Council (PCC) suggested that alternative routes should be made a principal issue, and PCC suggested holding an Issue Specific Hearing on the topic.

The ExA requested that the four authorities adopt an agreed position on the perceived omission of alternatives from the application in writing by Procedural Deadline B (1 September 2020). HCC, WCC, HBC and PCC were happy to provide a coordinated written response.

The ExA noted the Applicant's letter and comments on the applicability of National Policy Statement (NPS) EN-5. The ExA stated that no decision had been made on this and presented a clarified version of the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues. The ExA invited Interested Parties to comment on the relevant policy framework in their Written Representations.

PCC reiterated points made at [Procedural Deadline A](#). The ExA noted these.

4. Draft Examination Timetable (0:41:45 to 0:51:02)

SR introduced [Annex C](#) to the Rule 6 letter (the Draft Timetable for the Examination) and corrected an error with regards to the dates of Hearings, which are proposed for December, not November as had been written.

The ExA acknowledged written requests to amend the draft Examination Timetable and invited further suggestions from the parties in attendance.

The comments were duly noted by the ExA and considerations will be reflected in the Rule 8 Letter in due course.

5. Deadlines for submissions and notifications (0:51:02 to 0:55.38)

DW heard from Mr Turney, on behalf of HCC, regarding resource implications for local authorities in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. He requested that flexibility be built into the Examination Timetable.

PCC elaborated on requests in [Procedural Deadline A](#) to change Deadline 6.

DW confirmed that the ExA would consider comments and suggestions prior to issuing its Rule 8 letter and Examination Timetable, whilst noting the particular 'pinch-point' in the schedule around Christmas and New Year.

6. Dates and Format of Hearings and Site Inspections (0:55.38 to 1:14:52)

DW noted that the ExA's starting point was a fully virtual Examination process and the Examination Timetable assumes this. DW reminded participants to refer to the project page of the Planning Inspectorate's National Infrastructure website for updates on whether this position changes in line with the Government's COVID-19 restrictions.

The ExA clarified the purpose of:

- Issue Specific Hearings;
- Compulsory Acquisition Hearings;
- Open Floor Hearings;
- Accompanied Site Inspections;
- Unaccompanied Site Inspections.

The ExA sought comments on the arrangements for these events. These were duly noted, and the ExA requested that Interested Parties put their suggestions in writing by Deadline 1 on the Examination Timetable.

[Further information relating to hearings and site inspections can be found in [Advice Note 8.5.](#)]

7. Other Procedural Matter questions (1:14:52 to 1:23:50)

Mr Alistair Thompson confirmed concerns raised at [Procedural Deadline A](#) about perceived inadequacies in the Applicant's pre-application consultation process. AM reminded Mr Thompson of an earlier letter from the ExA that noted that the consultation and application acceptance stages preceded the Examination but afforded the Applicant the opportunity to respond. It was agreed that the Applicant and Mr Thompson would liaise over any outstanding points.

The ExA clarified the Procedural Decisions made under section 89(3) of the Planning Act 2008 ([Annex D](#) of the Rule 6 Letter) and asked for any observations.

No comments were made by any of the parties in attendance.

8. Availability of Documents (1:23:50 to 1:25:10)

AM cautioned that the ability to access the Examination documents through public library computer facilities might be affected by public health restrictions, and that facilities should be contacted in advance to check. All documents are available through the project page of the Planning Inspectorate's National Infrastructure website.

9. Any Other Business (1:25:10 to 1:26:09)

No other matters were raised by any party.

10. Preliminary Meeting Part 1 Adjourned (1:26:09 to 1:26:30)

AM thanked everyone for their attendance and engagement and adjourned the Preliminary Meeting at 11:26 hours.

Note of the resumed Preliminary Meeting

Application: AQUIND Interconnector

Reference: EN020022

Time and date: 10:00am on Tuesday 8 September 2020

Venue: Virtual meeting online

1. Resumption of the Preliminary Meeting and Welcome (0:00:05 to 0:07:30)

AM welcomed those present and the members of the ExA reintroduced themselves.

AM gave a very brief summary of the previous introductory remarks and referred parties to the digital recording of the first part of the Preliminary Meeting.

AM explained the appointment of the ExA was made under delegation from the Secretary of State for BEIS on 12 February 2020 and that the ExA would examine the application made by the Applicant before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State who will decide whether an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed project should be made.

DW explained the purpose of the resumed Preliminary Meeting and noted that the Examination will commence after it closes.

The ExA confirmed that all documents and submissions received and accepted during the Examination will be published on the project page of the Planning Inspectorate's National Infrastructure website. The two parts of the digital recording of this Preliminary Meeting will be made available on that website at:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/south-east/aquind-interconnector/?ipcsection=docs&stage=4&filter1=Recording+of+Preliminary+Meeting> and

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN020022/EN020022-001174-Aquind%20PM%20Part%202-8%20September%202020.html>

The ExA explained the Planning Inspectorate's duties under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

[Further info relating to the GDPR can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's [Privacy Note](#).]

2. The Examining Authority's remarks about written submissions received at Procedural Deadline B (0:07:30 to 0:18:15)

SR summarised responses received at Procedural Deadline B. SR heard from Mr Cornwell for WCC regarding the use of a 'deed of covenant' and if information could

be circulated regarding this. SR reminded all parties that discussions should be taking place outside Examination events to progress such matters.

3. Any procedural representations that could not be raised at the previous sitting of the Preliminary Meeting (0:18:15 to 0:18:56)

No comments made by any of the parties in attendance.

4. Any other matters (0:18:56 to 0:19:20)

No comments made by any of the parties in attendance.

5. Close of the Preliminary Meeting Part 2 (0:19:20 to 0:20:10)

AM thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions and closed the Preliminary Meeting at 10:21 hours.