

# **Aquind Interconnector**

## **Local Impact Report**



**October 2020**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Local Impact Report (LIR) relates to the proposed Aquind Interconnector Project, as it relates to the administrative area of the South Downs National Park. The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is the organisation responsible for promoting the statutory purposes of the National Park (see section 3 of this report) and the interests of the people who live and work in it. SDNPA is the Local Planning Authority for the National Park.
- 1.2 The proposed development is not within the South Downs National Park but the Interconnector access is adjacent to the National Park boundary whilst the buildings associated with the Converter station are proximate with the National Park boundary to the north, east and west. At points these buildings are approximately 180m from the National Park.
- 1.3 In preparing this document the SDNPA have had regard to the purpose of LIRs as set out in Section 60(3) of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and the guidance given in the Planning Inspectorate's Advice Note One: *Local Impact Reports*, published in 2012. The SDNPA are aware that, as set out in this Advice Note, a LIR should not seek to balance or weigh the impacts upon the National Park but should clearly set out positive, neutral and negative impacts.
- 1.4 This LIR's main purpose is to identify Local Plan policies relevant to the proposed development and the extent to which the proposed development accords, or does not accord, with these policies. This report does this under topic based headings addressing the impacts of the scheme, identifying key issues for the local community and the SDNPA followed by providing commentary on the extent to which the proposed Development Consent Order (DCO) addresses these issues.

## **2. The Proposal**

- 2.1 The applicant's Environmental Statement, at chapter 3, details the proposal. Key points considered to be of particular relevance to the National Park are set out below.

### Converter Station Area

- 2.2 The proposed Converter Station area footprint is 200 m x 200 m (4 ha), and will be located within a securely fenced compound around 180m from the boundary of the South Downs National Park. Two buildings (the Converter Buildings) will be constructed to contain much of the equipment. These Converter Buildings are sizeable with each being approximately 90m in length, 50m in width and up to 26m in height.
- 2.3 The precise siting of the Converter Station Compound is yet to be confirmed, but will be located west of the existing Lovedean Substation with two potential options put forward in the development proposal:
- Option B(i)
  - Option B(ii)
- 2.4 These two options are close to each other and whilst option B(ii) is located to the north east of option B(i) the areas of both options overlap to a significant extent. The applicant proposes that the final siting would be confirmed following the Order being made.
- 2.5 Within each option, zones are identified where the buildings and electrical equipment may be located which are subject to maximum height restrictions. The buildings and

electrical equipment that may be located in each of the identified zones are included within a requirement in the Order, with each type of building or equipment subject to maximum parameters regarding its size.

- 2.6 A Control Building would be located between the two Converter Buildings comprising a two-storey building covered in cladding to match the adjacent buildings with a maximum overall height of 15 m. A further spare parts building will comprise a maximum 15m high single storey structure.
- 2.7 Due to the sloping nature of the site earthworks would be required to create a level platform to accommodate the Converter Station.
- 2.8 Lightning masts would surround the converter station area and would be up to 4m taller than the tallest building. Although narrow structures they are described as having wiring strung between them to shield the equipment from direct lightning strikes.
- 2.9 The Converter Station will be lit, when necessary, to allow for maintenance. Lighting columns, up to 15 m high are proposed to illuminate the outdoor areas during emergency situations, such as an intruder or unplanned maintenance work. The lights are not intended to be used during normal operation.
- 2.10 Cooling systems will be required to remove heat generated within the Converter Building. Part of these systems, including the fans, will be located outside the Converter Building.
- 2.11 The Converter Station is designed for a minimum service life of 40 years.

#### Landscaping

- 2.12 Landscaping (including reprofiling) is proposed around the perimeter of the Converter Station compound and at other locations to mitigate against the landscape and visual amenity impacts of the proposal. This consists of areas of hedgerows, woodland planting and grassland creation.
- 2.13 Within the landscape setting two attenuation ponds are proposed, one to the south side of the proposed Converter Station to collect run-off from the Converter Station and one to the northwest of the proposed access road to collect run-off from the main access road through drainage ditch alongside of the Access Road.

#### Access Road

- 2.14 The proposed access to the Converter Station for construction and operation will be taken from Broadway Lane. It will run a distance of about 1.2km to the south of the existing substation and the proposed Converter Station. The access road will be up to 7.3m in width.

#### Construction compound

- 2.15 A temporary construction compound would be located within the Converter Station Area for the duration of the construction (approximately 3 years). It would have facilities for mess, welfare and approximately 150 car parking spaces. Temporary fencing will be used to secure the areas under construction during the construction works.
- 2.16 The construction compound would have a total footprint of approximately 4 – 5 ha. Vegetation would be removed in some areas and earthworks may be required to create a level platform, which will be covered with crushed stone. At the peak of construction, up to 86 HGV movements per day are envisaged, with up to 20 telescopic cranes and approximately 150 personnel on site.

#### Onshore cable corridor

- 2.17 An underground onshore cable corridor will run from the Converter Station in a broadly southerly direction to where it meets the coast at Eastney. As this onshore cable is outside of the National Park, is underground and has limited above ground infrastructure associated with it the SDNPA has no comments to make in respect of the onshore cable corridor.

### **3. The South Downs National Park**

#### Site Description

- 3.1 The South Downs National Park bounds the proposed location of the Converter Station on three sides and in places it is just 180-200m from the proposed buildings. Although not close to any communities within the National Park, there are a small number of residents who live within the National Park and in close proximity to the site to the north and east.
- 3.2 The site and environs are of a predominantly rural character (despite some existing utilities infrastructure) and form part of the dip slope of the South Downs. The countryside is, broadly, a farmed landscape with intervening woodland (including Ancient Woodland). Hedged lanes and tree belts are also a key characteristic of this countryside, as are, within the National Park, scattered settlements and a low population density.
- 3.3 The land affected by the Converter Station is mostly in agricultural use, a key sector for the local economy. Also of importance is tourism, largely associated with the natural beauty of the area and the extensive public right of way network.
- 3.4 The Monarchs Way runs to the north and northeast of the Converter Station Area linking Hambledon and Horndean. The Monarch's Way is a long-distance footpath tracing the route of King Charles II after his escape from defeat at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. It finishes in Shoreham, West Sussex.

#### Designation of the South Downs National Park (SDNP)

- 3.5 The South Downs National Park was established as a National Park in 2010 and the SDNPA became the Planning Authority for the National Park on 1 April 2011. The South Downs National Park contains over 1,600 sq km of England's most iconic and valued lowland landscapes, stretching from Winchester in the west to Eastbourne in the east.

#### Statutory Purposes and Duty

- 3.6 The National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949, as amended by the Environment Act 1995, sets the following statutory purposes and duty for National Parks:
1. To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area; and
  2. To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park by the public.
- 3.7 The SDNPA also has a duty when carrying out these statutory purposes:  
To seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the local communities

within the National Park

- 3.8 In addition, Section 62 of the Environment Act 1995 also requires all relevant authorities, including statutory undertakers and other public bodies (such as the Planning Inspectorate) to have regard to these purposes. This ensures that relevant authorities take account of these purposes when coming to decisions or carrying out their activities relating to or affecting land within these areas. It recognises that a wide range of bodies have a direct influence over the future of National Parks in terms of policy, project implementation, casework decisions, land ownership and management. It also acknowledges that the fulfilment of National Parks' statutory purposes rests not only with those bodies directly responsible for their management but that it also relies on effective collaborative working.
- 3.9 Where there is an irreconcilable conflict between the statutory purposes, statute (Section 11A(2) of the 1949 Act (inserted by section 62 of the 1995 Act)) requires any relevant authority, when exercising or performing functions which relate to or affect land in a National Park, to attach greater weight to the purpose of 'conserving and enhancing' if it appears that there is a conflict between the two National Park purposes. Giving priority to the first purpose of the National Park is known as the *Sandford Principle*.

#### Highest Status of Protection

- 3.10 National Parks have been confirmed by the Government as having the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty (Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1), 2011, paragraph 5.9.9 and NPPF, 2019, paragraph 172).
- 3.11 The Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) states at paragraph 5.9.12 that the duty to have regard to the purposes of nationally designated areas, such as National Parks, also applies when considering applications for projects outside the boundaries of these areas which may have impacts within them. Paragraph 5.9.12 states that the aim should be to avoid compromising the purposes of the designation and that development proposals should be designed sensitively given the various siting, operational and other relevant constraints.

#### English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010

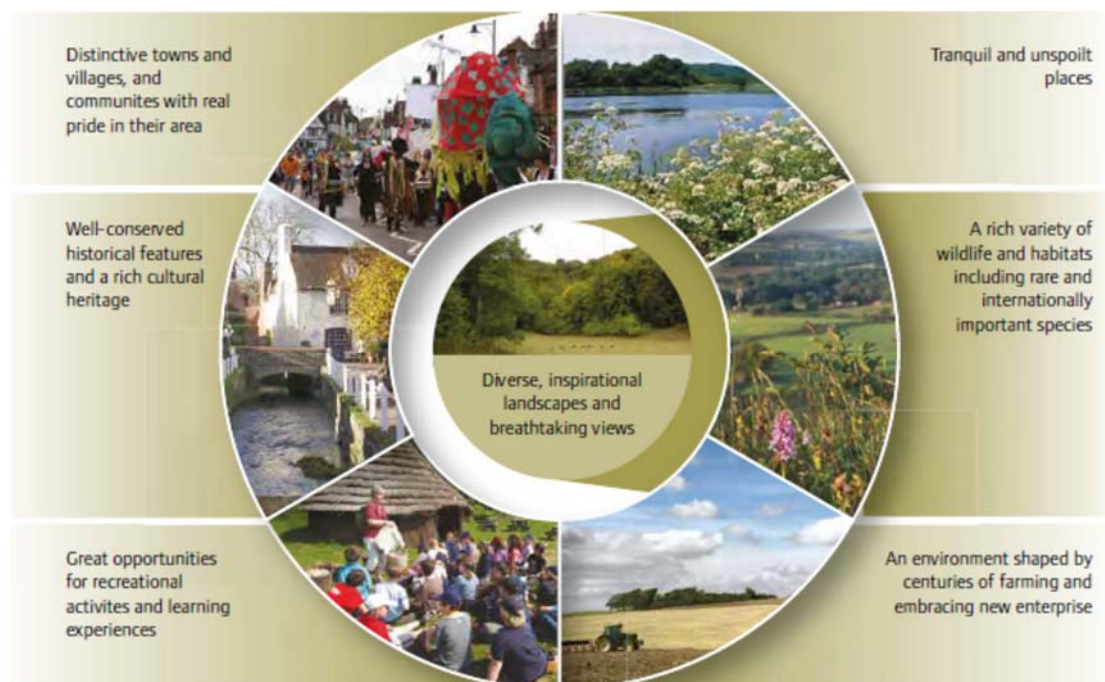
- 3.12 This DEFRA Circular sets out a vision for the English National Parks for 2030 and guidance on the key statutory duties of the National Park Authorities and how they should be taken forward, together with the contributions needed from others. The Circular recognises that whilst the lead role in the achievement of National Park purposes rests with National Park Authorities, the active support and co-operation of all Government and public bodies and statutory undertakers whose activities affect the Parks is also vital to the achievement of Park purposes. The Circular notes that many of these will be 'relevant authorities' with obligations under section 11A of the 1949 Act to have regard to the relevant Park purposes when coming to decisions or carrying out their activities relating to or affecting land within the Parks. The Circular states that the Government expects those bodies affected to give due weight to their obligations under this legislation.

#### Special Qualities

- 3.13 A crucial starting point for managing change in the future is capturing the essence of what makes the National Park important now – its special qualities. Every National Park has developed a list of the things that make it special, both as a baseline for

measuring changes over time and to hold the National Park Authority - and its partners - to account for their contributions to its future. Documenting the Park's special qualities is required by paragraph 21 of the *English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010*.

- 3.14 The 7 special qualities of the South Downs National Park are given below in Figure One. The special qualities do not sit in isolation, rather, they are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Landscape is the key to all of the other special qualities and is therefore shown at the centre of Figure One. In SDNPA's view the aim behind National Park designation must be to conserve and enhance all seven special qualities together.



**Figure One** – The Special Qualities of the South Downs National Park

#### **4. South Downs Local Plan and Other Relevant Local Policy**

##### South Downs Local Plan

- 4.1 The SDNPA is the Local Planning Authority for the National Park and the statutory development plan for the National Park is the South Downs Local Plan. This was adopted in July 2019 and sets out how the SDNPA will manage development to 2033. This Local Plan is the first to plan for the South Downs National Park as a single entity.
- 4.2 Given that the development proposal is located outside of the National Park the South Downs Local Plan is not the statutory development plan that applies to the development site. However, the impacts of the development proposal do not end at the site boundaries and certain key policies from the South Downs Local Plan are relevant here and set out in Section 5 of this document. This report also sets out the extent to which the proposed development accords, or does not accord, with these relevant policies.

### Other Relevant Local Policy

#### The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan 2020-2025

- 4.1 The Environment Act 1995 requires National Parks to produce a Management Plan setting out strategic management objectives to deliver the National Park Purposes and Duty. The Partnership Management Plan sets out the overarching five-year strategy for the management of the South Downs National Park. It brings together and coordinates the aspirations of many different partners who help contribute towards the purposes for which the National Park was designated.
- 4.2 The Plan consists of a vision of where the National Park Authority would like get to by 2050, with 10 overarching outcomes and 21 priorities (within those outcomes) for the next five years. The outcomes and priorities work together and have equal importance.

#### South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.3 The South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (SDILCA) was last updated in 2011. It is an aid to decision making, helping us to understand the landscape, what is important and special about it, and how it may change in the future. As a document it is intended to guide change and development so that it does not damage the characteristics or value of the landscape. It also helps us to identify ways that we can maintain and improve the character of a place. SDNPA uses the SDILCA to help understand the landscape character of the National Park and ensure that development proposals conserve and enhance landscape character within the National Park. The SDNPA considers it of key relevance to the assessment of this proposed development.
- 4.4 SDILCA defines 18 general landscape types within the National Park as well as 49 more place-specific 'character areas'. The proposed Converter Station is within the Downland Mosaic Landscape Type and the D2a (Enclosed) Hambledon to Clanfield Mosaic Landscape Character Area.
- 4.5 The SDILCA helps inform the assessment of impacts on landscape character that would be caused by the development proposal. In the case of character area D2a, it specifically identifies that the strong rural, secluded character of the landscape may be threatened by expansion of settlements / development that abut the National Park's southern edge. In addition, it identifies key landscape management and development considerations, such as the diversification of land use leading to the degradation of landscape features (including poorly managed hedgerows) and monitoring the incremental changes on the edge of Horndean to prevent urban spill so as to maintain the tranquil, rural character.

#### Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies (2018)

- 4.6 The South Downs National Park is an International Dark Sky Reserve, designated in May 2016. This technical advice note sets out guidance on the SDNPA's approach to lighting design and the protection and enhancement of dark skies. Its aim is to provide developers and planners with the necessary information to submit and assess lighting schemes which are appropriate to the landscape.

#### Supplementary Planning Documents

- 4.7 The SDNPA has no Supplementary Planning Documents that relate to this Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project.



## 5. Planning Issues and Relevant Policies and Guidance

- 5.1 As stated above the development proposal is not within the National Park, but adjacent to it. In this section planning considerations are covered where there is, or where there is the potential to be, impacts on the National Park or its residents. Planning considerations with a largely site specific focus (such as contamination, waste management and archaeology) are not covered as these will be picked up by the host local planning authorities.

### Landscape

- 5.2 South Downs Local Plan Policy SD1 explains that planning permission will be refused where development proposals fail to conserve the landscape or natural beauty of the National Park, unless, exceptionally, the benefits of the proposal demonstrably outweigh the great weight to be attached to these interests. Policy SD4 states that development proposals will only be permitted where they conserve and enhance landscape character by demonstrating that, for example, proposals are informed by that landscape character, reflecting the context and type of landscape in which the development is located. The design, layout and scale of proposals should conserve and enhance existing landscape character features which contribute to the distinctive character, pattern and evolution of the landscape.
- 5.3 Local Plan Policy SD5 requires a landscape led approach to design that makes a positive contribution to the overall character and appearance of the area. Local Plan Policy SD42 states that development proposals for new or improved infrastructure will only be permitted where the design minimises the impact on the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.
- 5.4 The SDNPA consider that the development proposed (namely the Converter Station and associated above ground development) would cause significant harm to the setting of the National Park and views to and from the National Park. The principal issues of concern relate to:
- 5.4.1 The impact from siting buildings of the large size and scale proposed so close to the National Park. The proposed Converter station buildings are significant both in terms of footprint and height.
  - 5.4.2 The functional and utilitarian appearance of the buildings will be prominent and will have the effect of changing the character of the landscape and the perception of it when viewed from the SDNP from one with an essentially rural character to one which is far more industrial.
  - 5.4.3 The Converter Station will be visible in both close range views and those from higher locations within the National Park looking towards Portsmouth and the South Coast. The Converter Station will harm local views out of the National Park, including from Monarchs Way (a long distance trail).
  - 5.4.4 The long access track (1.2km long and up to 7.3m wide) will widen the extent of the land impacted by the development beyond the immediate confines of the proposed buildings (including providing a further urbanising access to Broadway Lane, which is currently rural in character).
  - 5.4.5 Adverse impact of the Converter Stations on the tranquillity of the National Park (one of its special qualities)
  - 5.4.6 A lack of information about the design and appearance of the Converter Stations, leaving much of this to post approval consideration.

- 5.4.7 Concerns about the landscaping strategy proposed, including that not all of the proposed mitigation areas appear to be in the applicant's control, the lack of a strategy to deal with Ash die back and the need to use a bigger range of planting sizes to help provide screening at an earlier stage.
- 5.5 The SDNPA considers that an appropriate S106 planning obligation is required to mitigate and offset the harm the development would cause to landscape character by delivering agreed and significant landscape enhancements within the local area. In the current absence of such agreed obligations the proposal is considered to cause significant harm to the setting of the National Park.

#### Biodiversity

- 5.6 The SDNPA defers to Natural England, as the Government's advisor for the natural environment, and the host local planning authorities on the biodiversity impacts of the proposed scheme. However, in terms of impacts on the ecology of the National Park, there are no issues of significance identified.
- 5.7 Although disappointing that the applicant has chosen not to deliver biodiversity net gain the SDNPA are broadly supportive of the approach taken by the applicant to biodiversity matters. However, the proposed development will result in the loss of trees and hedgerows, of which some of the hedgerows have been categorised as important under the Hedgerow Regulations and which are therefore also priority habitat under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.
- 5.8 The SDNPA supports proposed DCO Requirement number 9 that requires a written biodiversity management strategy to be submitted and approved by relevant local planning authorities as this will secure suitable and appropriate mitigation measures.

#### Heritage

- 5.9 There are no high value heritage assets within the Order Limits but there are listed buildings within the National Park within 1km and 2km of the proposed Convertor Station buildings. The applicant's Environmental Statement has described and assessed the impact of the proposed Convertor station buildings on surrounding above ground heritage assets in the National Park as negligible or, in the case of Scotland Cottage to the north, minor adverse. However the SDNPA is currently undertaking site visits to a number of heritage assets in the National Park to see if it agrees with this analysis.

#### Highways

- 5.10 The SDNPA notes that Hampshire County Council, as Highways Authority, will be making representations regarding the highways impacts of the proposed pipeline through the examination process. The SDNPA wishes to make just two comments at this stage:
- i) The SDNPA is generally content with the construction traffic routing strategy put forward in the Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan (examination reference APP-450). This sees construction traffic accessing the site from the A3 to the east and largely avoiding the National Park. However, the SDNP should be identified in the Framework STMP (which it is not currently) as a sensitive receptor and it should be identified as a specific issue and constraint (e.g in table 5 of the Framework CTMP). This is because tranquillity is one of the special qualities of the South Downs National Park and it should be explicitly referenced and taken into account.

- ii) The SDNPA supports the inclusion of proposed DCO Requirement number 17 that requires the submission and approval of a Construction Traffic Management Plan. The SDNPA does, however, respectfully request that this document be submitted to and approved by the relevant Local Planning Authority (after consultation with the SDNPA in respect of the Converter Station Area), rather than the relevant Highway Authority. Construction Traffic Management Plans give rise to local planning considerations (such as tranquillity and impacts on residents) and Local Planning Authorities are best placed and used to handling such documents, not least because they are ordinarily determined by them.

### Dark Night Skies

- 5.11 The South Downs National Park is an International Dark Sky Reserve, designated in May 2016. The quality of dark night skies is also influenced by what takes place beyond the National Park boundary. The SDNPA has worked with many Local Authorities to try to reduce light pollution in locations surrounding the National Park.
- 5.12 Within the South Downs National Park planning policies are in place that seek to conserve and enhance the intrinsic quality of dark night skies. Local Plan Policy SD8 states that development proposals will be permitted where they conserve and enhance the intrinsic quality of dark night skies. It also requires that development proposals must demonstrate that all opportunities to reduce light pollution have been taken and that the measured and observed sky quality in the surrounding area is not negatively affected, having due regard to the following hierarchy:
  - a) That the installation of lighting is avoided; and
  - b) If lighting cannot be avoided, it is demonstrated to be necessary and appropriate, for its intended purpose or use:
    - i) Any adverse impacts are avoided; or
    - ii) If that is not achievable, then adverse impacts are mitigated to the greatest reasonable extent.
- 5.13 Whilst permanent lighting is proposed as part of the scheme the applicant has explained that this will only be used in exceptional circumstances as a result of security needs or for unplanned maintenance. Up to 40 lighting columns are proposed (page 37 of the draft DCO, examination library reference APP-019) for the finished converter station whilst lighting will also presumably be needed for its construction. Both the construction and operational lighting has the potential, unless appropriately mitigated, to harm Dark Night Skies and the SDNPA are currently in discussions with the applicant on this point.
- 5.14 The SDNPA welcomes proposed DCO Requirement 16 which controls external construction lighting. Proposed DCO Requirement 23 is helpful but should also be expanded in a similar way to Requirement 16 to require written details of any external, permanent lighting to be installed in connection with the Converter Station to, after consultation with the SDNPA, be submitted and approved by the relevant local planning authority. This would enable the SDNPA to review and comment on both construction and operational lighting to ensure that it does not harm Dark Night Skies.

### Tranquillity

- 5.15 Local Plan Policy SD7 states that development proposals in the National Park will only be permitted where they conserve and enhance relative tranquillity.
- 5.16 Tranquillity is considered to be a state of calm and quietude and is associated with a

feeling of peace. It relates to quality of life, and there is good scientific evidence that it also helps to promote health and well-being. It is a perceptual quality of the landscape, and is influenced by things that people can both see and hear in the landscape around them. It is one of the National Park's special qualities.

- 5.17 The South Downs National Park Tranquillity Study (2017) sets out relative tranquillity across the National Park. The area of the proposed Converter Station and surroundings is in an area of generally moderate tranquillity, broadly increasing slightly as you pass into the National Park. This is to be expected given that this area is generally rural in character.
- 5.18 There will be temporary, and significant, localised impacts on tranquillity when the Converter Station is being constructed. This will be in the form of movement of plant and vehicles, the presence of a construction compound and temporary fencing and from stockpiled soils and materials. It is acknowledged that this harm would be temporary but it is considered contrary to the requirements of Local Plan Policy SD7.
- 5.19 Once the Converter Station has been constructed the presence of large, utilitarian buildings will detract from the tranquillity of this otherwise generally rural area.
- 5.20 The SDNPA welcomes proposed DCO requirement 20 that requires submission of a Noise Management Plan in respect of the Converter Station building. This will be important to ensure that the ongoing operation of the proposed development is not audible within the National Park. However the SDNPA request that this requirement is discharged, in respect of Work Area 2, after consultation with the SDNPA because of the potential tranquillity impacts. Such an approach and wording is already taken and used with proposed Requirements 6 (design), 7 (landscaping) and 16 (external construction lighting).

#### Residential Amenity

- 5.21 During construction it is inevitable that the works will give rise to localised disturbance to amenity. This needs to be considered carefully, including any potential impacts on the pitches for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople to the north and west, some of which consist of mobile homes and caravans. It is likely that making any enhancements to the homes to reduce any impacts of noise will be harder to achieve successfully than in bricks and mortar properties and the impacts may be disproportionately larger on these residents as a result.
- 5.22 However, it is acknowledged that to some extent the separation from residents in the National Park helps mitigate the noise impact, as do the mitigation measures set out in the applicant's Environmental Statement. Of biggest concern to the SDNPA is the potential noise impact of the operation of the Converter Station on residents. In this respect, and as noted in the paragraph above, the SDNPA welcomes proposed DCO requirement 20 that requires submission of a Noise Management Plan.
- 5.23 To help secure acceptable mitigation measures to protect residential amenity the SDNPA also supports the need for proposed DCO Requirements 15 and 17 which require, respectively, submission and approval of a Construction Environmental Management Plan and a Construction Traffic Management Plan.

#### Socio-economic

- 5.24 The SDNPA has a statutory duty to "foster the economic and social well-being of communities living within the National Park".
- 5.25 With regards to tourism businesses it is difficult to assess the impacts that the loss of

visual amenity and tranquillity during construction and operation of the convertor station will have. Overall, the impact is considered to be negative, but it is acknowledged that given the area of the National Park effected (in the context of the size and offering of the overall National Park) the effect on tourism will not be significant.

- 5.26 Outside of tourism the socio-economic impacts of the scheme are also considered to be limited and the Authority raises no objection in this regard.

#### Agricultural land

- 5.27 The SDNPA notes that the majority of land to be taken for the convertor station is not classified as good agricultural land. However, SDNPA wishes to ensure that the agricultural parcels of land that remain around the convertor station are of a size and shape sufficient to support agricultural use. This is because otherwise they may come under pressure for more intensive uses that would cause further harm to the setting of the National Park.

#### Air Quality

- 5.28 The SDNPA notes that there are no appreciable air quality implications of the proposal when in operation. During construction there may be impacts, particularly associated with plant and with the temporary construction compound. However, these impacts will be temporary and there is no evidence that there will be significant or harmful air quality impacts. This is not therefore a matter of concern to the SDNPA.

#### Flood Risk

- 5.29 Having reviewed the applicant's Flood Risk Assessment and Environmental Statement the SDNPA are satisfied that, with the mitigation proposed, there will no increase in the risk of flooding off site.

#### Decommissioning

- 5.30 The SDNPA note that should the proposal receive consent the convertor station would, as stated in the applicant's Environmental Statement, have a lifetime of approximately 40 years. The SDNPA request that if the proposal ceased to be in use that the convertor station associated with the Aquind Interconnector be removed and the land restored to its previous state within 12 months of the use ceasing. The SDNPA respectfully requests that a DCO requirement be imposed to ensure this.

### **SDNPA Comments on the draft Development Consent Order** (examination reference APP-019)

- 5.31 Comments on the proposed DCO Requirements (Schedule 2 of the DCO) have been made under the topic specific headings above. However, the SDNPA also wishes to make the following observations. The remarks are set out in table format for ease of reference.

Section / Article	Page	Detail	Comment / Query
Part 2, Section 9	12	Defence in respect of statutory nuisance	A statutory nuisance by its very definition is harmful. We do not consider that a defence against this should be written into the DCO. Rather the emphasis should be on managing and controlling such matters so as to ensure that a statutory nuisance does not arise.
Numerous references, including at: Part 3, Section 13 (8) Part 3, Section 14 (2) Part 3, Section 16 (3) Part 4, Section 17 (5) Part 4, Section 19 (6)		Gives Local Planning Authorities (or Local Highways Authorities as appropriate) 20 working days to notify the applicant of its decision.	It is considered that all such references should be changed to 40 working days, as of course is the general situation with the discharge of planning conditions in England.  This comment is particularly important to those where the details may have an impact on the setting of the National Park.  It is our view that 20 days is insufficient in any case, but particularly as it does not allow the time, where needed, for the relevant Local Planning Authority to consult SDNPA and for us to review and formulate a response.
Part 4, Section 30 (1) (b) and (c)	26	Allowing the undertaker to remove any buildings and vegetation (b), and constructing temporary works (c)	These are rather arbitrary powers that conflict with the assurances and commitments given elsewhere in the development proposal (for example around the retention of vegetation).  It is unclear why these powers would be required when the applicant has already assessed the vegetation it needs to remove within the Order limits and has made provision for a sizeable temporary construction compound.
Part 7, Section 41	31	Felling or lopping of trees and removal of hedgerows	This gives the applicant the ability to lop or fell any tree within or overhanging the Order limits. It also gives the applicant the ability to remove any hedgerows within the Order limits (including important hedgerows).  This is a blanket power without any real constraint on its use. Given the rather arbitrary nature of this power it makes it difficult to understand and assess the actual tree and hedgerow loss associated with the

			development.
Part 7, Section 42	31	Felling or lopping of any subject to TPO	See comments immediately above.
Schedule 1 Work No. 2	37	Works to construct the convertor station and associated equipment.	It would be helpful if this list identified which pieces of equipment would be within the Convertor Station and which would be outside as this helps in any assessment of the likely landscape impact. The SDNPA's intention would be to minimise as far as it possible the sense of 'clutter' in the landscape caused by considerable amounts of equipment being present in the open air. As the terminology is necessarily technical and there are limited sites with which to compare this, clarity is essential in order to assess impact.
Schedule 1 Work No. 2	37	(p) allows up to 8 lightning masts and (q) up to 40 lighting columns	We are concerned about the number of such columns which do not appear on the indicative elevations and which could have a significant negative impact depending on design and location. The design strategy appears to be one of simplicity, but the addition of these columns will break up that appearance. They are a permanent feature which will only be used in emergencies and we question whether this approach is necessary.
Schedule 2, I (4)	44	Parameters for a building do not include any external projections such as telecoms, plant, guttering etc etc	The SDNPA objects to this. The parameters given by the applicant are already sizeable and should contain the entirety of the development proposal. To do otherwise would give the SDNPA and other LPAs no idea of what height and form such external projections may take. This is unacceptable in this rural area and adjacent to the setting of a National Park.
Schedule 2 Requirement 5	45	Table WN2	We query why various measurements are omitted from this table.