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Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE
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Portsmouth
PO1 2AL

9 November 2020

AQUIND Interconnector

Dear Cllr Vernon-Jackson,

Further to your recent letter to the Planning Inspectorate dated 4th October 2020, I wanted to write to you to discuss and explain some of the matters raised in that correspondence in further detail.

The selection of the location for the proposals for AQUIND Interconnector was determined by an assessment of the reasonable alternatives, which applied a process of staged filtering, increasing knowledge of the individual options, so as to proportionately consider them from a technical, cost and environmental perspective. Key to this exercise was the identification of whether the potential option could proceed and also whether they had a realistic prospect of delivering the same infrastructure capacity (including energy security and climate change benefits) in the same timescale. A proportionate multi-disciplinary approach was taken to the assessment of the reasonable alternatives, taking into account considerations relevant to and specialist input from experts in the field of electrical engineering, cable engineering, the environment, planning and civil engineering in respect of both the onshore and marine environments.

With regard to potential alternative locations, the location of the Converter Station is a factor in determining the location of the landfall and the onshore cable route. Lovedean substation was identified as the preferred connection location for AQUIND Interconnector following the assessment of the reasonable alternative connection locations by AQUIND. This process has taken into account assessments undertaken by National Grid, who have an obligation to develop and maintain an efficient, coordinated and economical electricity transmission network. The assessment undertaken by National Grid considers factors such as National Grid's knowledge of the existing network (including agreed future connections), agreed cost information, environmental considerations and other constraints associated with the Proposed Development, alongside input from AQUIND on the details of the assets to be connected.

Concurrently with the search for a suitable Converter Station site, AQUIND also undertook an assessment of all possible landfall locations. 29 potential landfall sites were identified across the South Coast of England, bounded by West Bay, Dorset in the southwest and Bognor Regis, West Sussex in the southeast. As a result of further investigative works, and confirmation of Lovedean as the grid connection point, this list was narrowed to three locations – Eastney, East Wittering and Hayling Island.

When subject to further scrutiny, studies of Hayling Island deemed that no cable routes from the landfall site would be technically feasible since it was not possible to identify a suitable crossing from Hayling Island to the mainland. Multiple alternative options were considered to utilise Langstone Harbour and Hayling Island to route the submarine cables onto the mainland, however those options were not feasible from an engineering perspective and would have prevented the development from coming forward, carried too high a level of risk in various aspects, and/or were considered likely to result in adverse impacts to the surrounding sensitive and heavily designated environment.

Both Eastney and East Wittering were identified as being deliverable as landfall locations from a cable installation perspective, with neither resulting in significantly different environmental effects. Following the undertaking of studies in relation to the onshore cable corridors to Lovedean from both, it was determined that a cable route from East Wittering to Lovedean was not preferred. The reasons for this, including how the chosen route from Eastney and the route from East Wittering were considered against one another, are clearly explained at section 7 to the Supplementary Alternatives Chapter included as part of the ES Addendum¹.

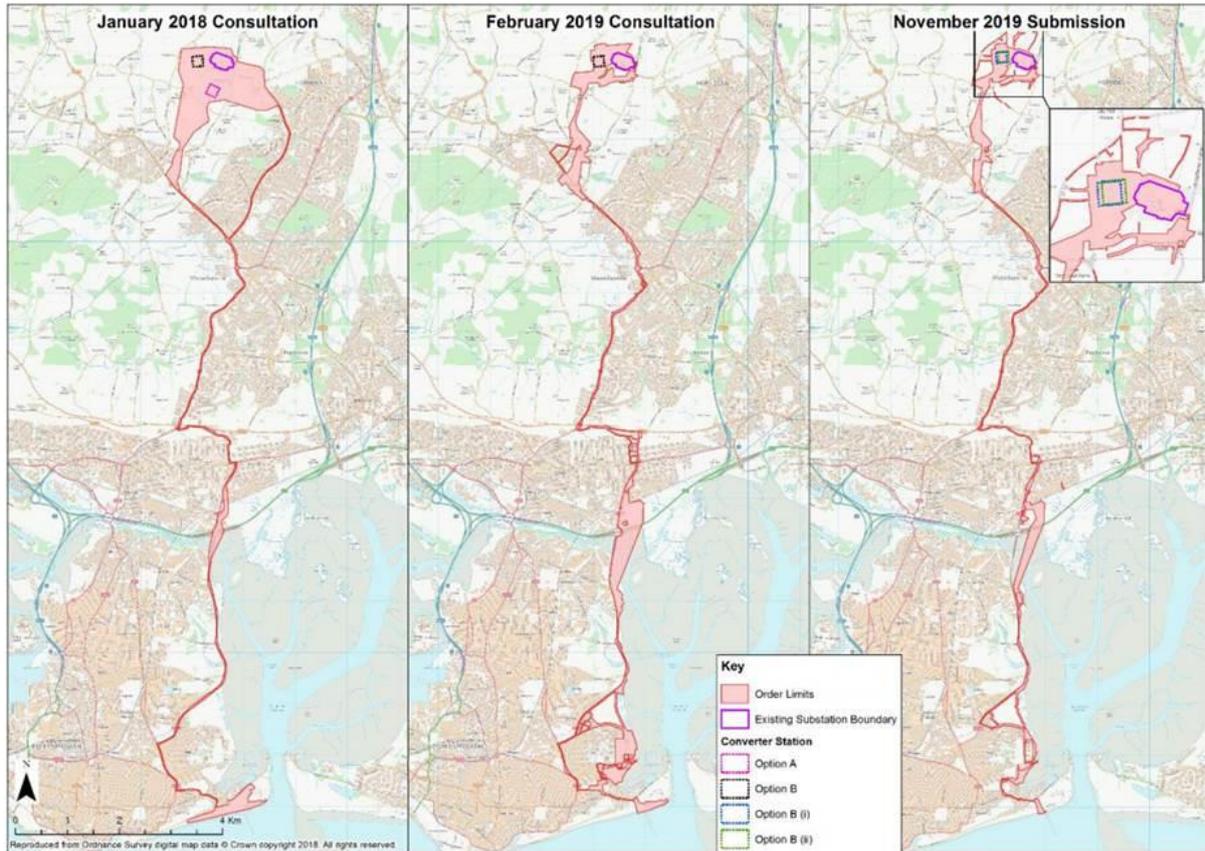
Further information on the consideration of the reasonable alternatives studied by AQUIND for the connection locations, the location of the landfall and for the onshore cable route can be found in the 'Alternatives' chapter of the Environmental Statement (ES)² and the Supplementary Alternatives chapter included as part of the ES Addendum.

With regard to your comments concerning the impacts of the proposals on highways, it is important to note that, through the public consultations undertaken, AQUIND has given particular consideration to feedback received relating to the temporary impacts on highways and traffic flows. Following feedback received from stakeholders since introducing them to the proposals in early 2017 and from the local communities during the public consultations undertaken before submitting the application for a Development Consent Order (DCO), many of the more sensitive locations of the cable corridor were either significantly reduced or removed altogether.

To lessen the impact on highways and traffic flows part of the A2030 Eastern Road and all of the A2030 Velder Avenue and A288 Milton Road were removed from the cable corridor following feedback from the local community, local authorities and other stakeholders, through the utilisation of verges and proposals for a route through Milton Common. These changes were clearly communicated to all interested parties via our [Acceptance Update Newsletter](#), and can also be seen on the map below, which compares the initial 2018 cable route to the Order limits as submitted with the Application in November 2019.

¹ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN020022/EN020022-001488-7.8.1.3%20ES%20Addendum%20-%20Appendix%203%20Supplementary%20Alternatives%20Chapter.pdf>

² <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN020022/EN020022-000570-6.1.2%20ES%20-%20Vol%201%20-%20Chapter%202%20Consideration%20of%20Alternatives.pdf>



Please note that since the submission of the Application in November 2019 changes have been proposed to reduce the Order limits, including areas of highway in the administrative boundary of Portsmouth City Council, in response to further feedback received. The Order limits as proposed in the recent submission to the ExA can be seen on the updated Site Location Plan³.

Although temporary traffic management measures will be required during the installation of the cables, road closures will be avoided save for in very limited instances where construction cannot take place safely while accommodating traffic flow, and access to homes and businesses will be maintained throughout the construction phase.

In addition, a Framework Traffic Management Strategy⁴ (FTMS) was submitted with the DCO application which contains a range of proposed mitigation measures and an indicative construction programme that accounts for environmental constraints, major public events, school term times and other restrictions to minimise the impact. Such mitigation includes overnight working in specific areas, including along sections of A2030 Eastern Road, to minimise the duration of the installation period and in turn the period of disruption in this area.

³ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN020022/EN020022-001510-2.1%20Site%20Location%20Plan%20Rev02.pdf>

⁴ https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN020022/EN020022-001567-6.3.22.1A%20ES%20-%20Vol%203%20-%20Framework%20Traffic%20Management%20Strategy%20Rev002_clean.pdf



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In respect of the Milton Allotments, **no allotment plots will be affected by the construction or operation of AQUIND Interconnector. At no point has it been proposed to “clear” any allotments.**

Cables are to be installed under the allotments and Milton Locks Nature Reserve via a process known as Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD), which will take place between the car park located west of the Thatched House Pub and the grassed area east of Kingsley Road. This approach allows cables to be installed deep underground with no impact at surface level. To allow for inspections during construction and operation, AQUIND is seeking access rights only over some existing paths and internal roads of the allotments site only.

In your letter you make reference to AQUIND seeking access rights over parts of the allotments to enable maintenance of the underground cables to take place. This is indeed the case; however, as set out below, the maintenance activities will not result in any impact to the allotments.

The types of maintenance can be classified into two categories; scheduled maintenance and unscheduled maintenance.

Scheduled Maintenance – This would consist of walk over inspections of the cable route to ensure activities are not taking place above the cable route which could impact its operation (e.g. deep excavation or piling). The frequency of the walk over surveys would typically be once per quarter. In the allotments, this would consist of a short walk over the existing paths to undertake a visual inspection of the areas which will sit above the cables. Other scheduled maintenance activities in relation to the cable route include taking readings from a number of underground link boxes and above ground link pillars which will be installed adjacent to a number of the joint bays. However, no such infrastructure will be installed on the allotments, with this being located at the joint bays off the allotments at either end of the drill.

Unscheduled Maintenance – This would consist of repairing a cable in the extremely rare event of a cable fault and would involve removing the section of cable in which the fault was present and replacing it with a new section of cable. In areas where HDD is used to install cables, the replacement would take place by removing the section of cable between the two joint bays either side of the section of cable in question. Then a new section of cable would be pulled through the underground duct already installed and the new section of cable would be jointed to the existing cables at the two joint bays in question. This means that, in the very unlikely event there was a cable fault along the section of cables to be installed under the allotments, the repair of that section would be undertaken from joint bays located off the allotments and no unscheduled maintenance activities would take place on the allotments.

We have recently been in touch with the Eastney and Milton Allotment Holders Association to clarify the above points and are committed to engaging with representatives of the Allotment Holders Association, and other stakeholders, throughout the Examination process. A copy of the correspondence recently issued to the Chairman of the Allotment Holders Association is enclosed for your information and also available on the Planning Inspectorate's [website](#).



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In the meantime, if you would like to get in touch with the project team, please contact us via our freephone information line on 01962 893869, or via email at aquindconsultation@becg.com and we will be happy to discuss further.

For the purposes of transparency, a copy of this letter will also be provided to the Planning Inspectorate.

Yours sincerely,

James Wood – AQUIND Community Engagement Team