

15 February 2021

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The Planning Inspectorate  
By email: [aquind@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:aquind@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

Our ref: MR/TAL/L153

Dear Sirs

### **AQUIND INTERCONNECTOR**

I refer the above planning proposal which includes the associated roadworks in the Portsmouth and Waterlooville areas.

My concerns to these works are raised by First Hampshire & Dorset Limited (FirstBus), but also on behalf of SHBOA (South Hampshire Bus Operators' Association), of which I am chairman.

FirstBus operates 155 buses in the area from two main depots in Fareham and Portsmouth and Stagecoach operates 76 buses from their Portsmouth depot. We are very concerned with the nature of these works and the impact it will have on our bus services. FirstBus alone carries around 13 million passenger journeys per year with Stagecoach also carrying significant passenger numbers. The bus services provided by all operators are an integral part of the community and help drive local economic growth.

The works on both the Eastern Road in Portsmouth and the A3, are highly likely to cause major disruption to our networks. Our customers' top priority is always the punctuality and reliability of the bus service, and therefore, we believe there will be a considerable impact to bus services. It is recognised that Aquind have reported upon the effect of their works, however, as an experienced bus operator we believe they are probably understated.

One of the areas where works are planned to take place is on the A3 corridor, which has already been recognised as a major bus flow, due to £35m being invested on the corridor, some 11 years ago, for bus priority measures to help tackle traffic congestion. Furthermore, the wider area has also recently been awarded funds from the Government's Transforming Cities Fund to introduce and enhance bus priority measures and in turn reduce bus journey times.

Portsmouth itself is a very compact city and Portsea Island can only be accessed by just 3 roads coming into/out of Portsmouth. Our experience shows that when there is disruption to one of these three key routes, this causes significant traffic congestion on the remaining two access roads into the city. We believe the works which are planned for the Eastern Road will cause major disruption and have a knock-on effect of causing delays and congestion to bus services across the whole of Portsea Island.

As bus operators we have proposed mitigating measures to allow us to try and provide a reliable and punctual bus service. These measures are around providing suitable funds to assist with deploying additional buses into the bus network to retain the current frequency of bus services, however, this will still entail bus journeys being of a longer duration. To this end, a further mitigation is for a marketing exercise to be deployed, post works, to try and encourage people back to using buses, as longer journey times while the works take place, will usually result in people choosing different modes of travel.

We are working Aquind, and our local authority partners, Hampshire County Council and Portsmouth City Council, in trying to finalise these mitigations.

Yours faithfully



Marc Reddy  
Managing Director First Hampshire, Dorset & Berkshire  
Chairman of South Hampshire Bus Operators' Association