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16 February 2021

For the attention of Hefin Jones

Dear Sir,

Application by AQUIND Limited for an Order granting Development Consent for the AQUIND Interconnector Project: Issue Specific Hearing 4 - Agenda Item 22.2

I'm writing in relation to the Examining Authority's invitation to National Grid Electricity System Operator ("**NGESO**") to speak at Issue Specific Hearing 4 ("**ISH4**"), which is being held as part of the examination of the above-named DCO application and is due to take place on 17 February 2021. NGESO proposes to respond to the Examining Authority's question in writing rather than attending ISH4, due to NGESO's limited ability to assist the Examining Authority in respect of the majority of points listed on the ISH4 agenda.

The only agenda item with which NGESO considers it is in a position to assist the Examining Authority is item 22.1, which reads as follows:

"*Information has been requested and submissions put forward in relation to the consideration of the statutory purposes for which the South Downs National Park was designated during the selection of the Lovedean substation as the grid connection for the Proposed Development. Which party had the statutory responsibility for considering this? In the event, which party, if any, undertook this consideration? What weight was given to it, and where can the Examining Authority and Secretary of State see evidence of it?*"

NGESO has already submitted two responses in writing in respect of the above issue; NGESO's letters dated 30 November 2020 and 25 January 2021 are attached to this letter at Appendix 1.

The CION process, as explained in more detail in NGESO's letter of 30 November 2020, is the process through which the most economic and efficient connection point is identified. As part of this assessment, the CION takes into account various factors such as cost, technical information, and environmental issues.

The parties to the CION process are the developer (AQUIND Ltd), NGESO and National Grid Electricity Transmission ("**NGET**"). It is a collaborative process, where all parties input into the process and are involved in the assessment and decision-making. The output is a connection offer made to the developer (for acceptance, refusal or referral to Ofgem) identifying a connection location.

Through the CION process, the parties considered a variety of environmental factors, including the impact of the potential connection options on the South Downs National Park. The Lovedean location is located outside of the South Downs National Park. As summarised in previous responses, the CION process concluded that the Lovedean location was preferable for reasons including, unlike some other options, it avoids the potential for cables to need to pass through the South Downs National Park. It also minimises cable routes and consequent reinforcements, resulting in less potential for environmental impact.

In terms of the statutory duty under section 11A of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as inserted by section 62 of the Environment Act 1995) to the extent this applies among each of the CION parties, the explanation above demonstrates how the potential impact on South Downs National Park was weighed along with other factors in the identification of the connection point (which was subsequently accepted by the developer in the connection offer).

The developer has also given further consideration to the impact of the potential connection options on the South Downs National Park. In particular, the Supplementary Alternatives Chapter seeks to provide clarity with regard to the considerations that the developer has taken into account in respect of the South Downs National Park in the context of the reasonable alternatives that were considered. As noted by the developer in paragraph 5.4.1.3 of this document, the CION is "*by no means the only determinant of the appropriate connection location, and its completion does not remove the need for the Applicant to fully consider the reasonable alternatives for the grid connection point*."

We trust that this addresses the Examining Authority's questions for the purpose of ISH4 and the examination for the DCO more generally.

If you have any further questions or queries in the please do not hesitate to contact myself or *Alex Curtis on alex.curtis@nationagrideso.com or* [redacted]

Yours faithfully

pp [redacted]

JAMES GREENHALGH
HEAD OF ELECTRICITY CONNECTIONS