

RESPONSE TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO'S REQUEST FOR INFORMATION AND UPDATES (DATED 3/3/23) FROM VIOLA LANGLEY (INTERESTED PARTY IN THE MATTER OF THE AQUIND INTERCONNECTOR DCO PROPOSAL), SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF LET'S STOP AQUIND.

NOTE TO THE PLANNING INSPECTORATE – THIS IS ALL NEW INFORMATION AND RESEARCH NOT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED

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INTRODUCTION: LET'S STOP AQUIND

Let's Stop Aquind (LSA) is a grassroots action group formed in 2019 by Viola Langley and Paula Ann Savage to protect Portsmouth and the South Downs from the threat of the Aquind Interconnector.

LSA campaigns on [Facebook](#) (where it has 4100 followers), [REDACTED] (900 users pm), [Instagram](#) (800 followers) and [Twitter](#) (600 followers). It is recognised as the leading community opposition to the Aquind Interconnector by local and national media, all the MP's affected by the route as well as Portsmouth City Council, Winchester City Council and other local authorities. LSA membership across all channels, and involvement with our campaigns, continues to grow as we raise awareness of the dangers of the Aquind Interconnector.

LSA has liaised with its French counterpart [Non A Aquind](#), to research this submission.

FRENCH LICENCES AND CONSENTS

Refusal of the Project by the Prefet of Seine Maritime

As of today, it seems that Aquind has received neither licences nor consents to start the process of a DCO (or equivalent) in France - on the contrary, France has clearly rejected the application.

The Prefet of Seine Maritime came to the conclusion that Aquind did not meet the necessary standards and conditions such a project would require. Considering the damage this project would cause in the French countryside and the effects it would have on the residents, the Prefet found there were too many negative concerns. A document by Non A Aquind, a non-profit organisation set up in January 2019, fully recognised as an interlocuter between the mayors, deputes, senators, specialised organisations as well as the French government via the Prefet, is set out below. This document explains clearly the devastation this project would have on their local environment and its residents. The 15 mayors of the affected areas are united in their opposition to this project. (from: <https://www.non-a-aquind.org/a-propos>).

The [statement confirming the refusal of this project by the Prefet in 2021 can be downloaded here](#). According to the Secretary of the Prefet, as of March 2023, Aquind had not launched any appeal. Therefore, this decision is up to date and Aquind has not got a licence nor a consent for the Aquind Interconnector in France.

Loss of PCI status

Europe refused to renew Aquind's status as an EU "Project of Common Interest" in 2021 and 2023, even though Aquind appealed against this decision. A judge at the EU Court of General Justice has dismissed Aquind's challenge to keep the interconnector plan on the list of PCI's.

(from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:62020TJ0295> which is summarised here: <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2023-02/cp230023en.pdf>)

A new law “Zero Net Artificialization” would not support the construction of the Aquind Interconnector

The objective of “Zero Net Artificialization” is to suspend any net increase in the total amount of artificial surfaces at a time of ecological emergency, protecting biodiversity and the natural soil. It stresses the importance of protecting large rural areas, together with their biodiversity and wild life habitats.

Environmental damage in France

The Aquind Interconnector threatens to damage the beach of Pourville sur Mer. The cables would then continue along roads for 30 km, passing through 15 villages near schools, homes, campsites, shops or sensitive buildings. All the works/amenities carried out by the municipalities along the roads over several years could be destroyed. The 320 000 Volt cables would be laid 1.20 m deep in sand, representing a health threat to the population, fauna and flora. The 15 mayors involved are firmly against this project. At the end of the route (30 kms), Aquind wants to build two enormous Converter Halls, each measuring 70 meters long, 50 m wide and 22 m high, on a plot of 12 to 15 hectares of agricultural land as well as siting electrical equipment of substantial size. These would be constructed near homes in the villages of Varneville-Bretteville and Bertrimont. This would be connected to the Barnabos substation, which was built in the 1960s and 1970s to receive electrical output from the Penly and Paluel nuclear power stations, which already cause disturbance to local residents.

The socio-economic effects of Aquind in France

The communities are extremely concerned about the effects this project would have for them during and after construction. Non A Aquind, a local officially recognised group set up in 2019, represents the concerns of the residents of the area affected by this project. Non a Aquind has worked and corresponded with local and national governmental representatives to point out the harmful effects of this project. This proposal has already put enormous stress on their mental and physical health.

Interconnectors already in place in France

France has already 3 existing Interconnectors connected with the UK:

1. IFA - 2 GW
2. IFA 2 – 1 GW
3. Eleclink – 1GW

A further two interconnectors have been approved:

1. Gridlink -1.4 GW
2. FAB link – 1.4GW

(from <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/energy-policy-and-regulation/policy-and-regulatory-programmes/interconnectors>)

France also has interconnectors with Belgium (IFB), Germany (IFD), Italy (IFI), Spain (IFE) and Switzerland (IFS)

(from: <https://www.services-rte.com/en/learn-more-about-our-services/access-to-french-interconnections.html#:~:text=France%20is%20interconnected%20with%206%20European%20countries>)

A further interconnector between Ireland and France, capacity 700Megawatts and a Project of Common Interest, has been confirmed between French energy regulator CRE and their Irish counterpart CRU. (10.11.2022)

(from: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/electricity/news/france-to-expand-electricity-interconnections-with-ireland-italy/>)

Considering the existing and planned future interconnectors, the question arises if the Aquind Interconnector is needed in France's energy supply.

- Would the Aquind Interconnector threaten the cost /benefit balance of the other interconnectors?
- What is the public benefit of the Aquind Interconnector, run by a privately owned company, not having the status of Project of Common Interest?
- The harms and benefits of this project have to be carefully considered, particularly taking into account climate emergency and biodiversity loss. Do the harms of this project to the local environment (30 km inland) outweigh the benefits (energy supply for a relatively short period of time in human history)?
- Is this approach not very short-sighted long term especially if there are various interconnectors currently under construction?