



Stephen
Morgan MP
House of Commons

Planning Inspectorate
The Square
Temple Quay
Room 3 O/P
Temple Quay House
Bristol BS1 6PN

Sent via email

30 March 2023

Dear Planning Inspectorate

AQUIND - objecting to proposals affecting Portsmouth South

I write to raise again my strong objection to the planning application for the AQUIND interconnector affecting Portsmouth, following action I have been taking on behalf of constituents since 2018, including through oral evidence to the Planning Inspectorate in December 2020, and in representatives made in Parliament and directly to Ministers.

I agree with the large number of constituents who have got in touch with me as their Member of Parliament to voice concerns and object to the plans.

Our concerns include:

Process and Procurement Concerns

- Poor quality communication and consultation with residents, key stakeholders, local businesses and community groups. Considering the scale of this national infrastructure project, the engagement with relevant parties has been insufficient and inadequate.
- Inconsistency in plans and no clear rationale for the development. This has caused stress and uncertainty to residents and local land owners. For example, proposals involving the inclusion of the Eastney and Milton Allotments off Locksway Road in my constituency has alarmed residents - many of whom have a longstanding family connections with the allotment spaces - with limited information being made available to date for those affected.
- Lack of adequate consideration of alternative routes.

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London SW1A 0AA

72 Albert Road
Southsea PO5 2SL

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Project Company Concerns

- The project company has concerningly opaque structure and finances, with little information available about where its money is coming from, who is providing it, or whether similar complex financial structures are being used to hide this.
- The BBC and Guardian have reported that documents in the Pandora papers suggest that AQUIND's part-owner Viktor Fedotov benefited from a \$4bn alleged fraud in Russia. This seems to have been achieved through a complex scheme that funnelled government cash through layers of shell companies that were ultimately owned by Mr Fedotov.
- AQUIND's public face, Alexander Temerko, has also conducted a coordinated and concerted effort to influence British political figures. Since the project started, Temerko has donated over £700,000 to the Conservative Party. In addition to this, research done by the BBC has revealed that Mr Fedotov's businesses have donated a further £700,000 to 34 MPs and their local parties.

Environmental Concerns

- Impacting on the city's precious environment. I share the concerns of residents who have raised with me the risk to local wildlife. In particular, Milton Common is a place for breeding, wintering and passage birds along with water voles and Great Crested Newts and countless other vulnerable species. With the climate emergency we now face, it falls on all our shoulders to ensure that these vital wildlife assets are safeguarded and our local natural environment protected.
- Increased air pollution caused by, or as a consequence of the works.
- Loss of open recreational space at Milton Common, Farlington Playing Fields.
- Loss of playing pitches at Farlington, Baffins and University of Portsmouth (Langstone Village).

National Security Concerns

- I have also documented my concerns about the potential risk to national security from a fibre optic communication bundle being laid alongside the electricity link.
- The data pipe will hold 180 fibre-optic pairs, many of which will be available for hire by third-party clients, raising similar concerns to the UK's 5G network and Huawei.

Disruption and Economic Concerns

- The construction of the proposed interconnector would take up to seven years and will cause untold damage and disruption to people and businesses in Portsmouth, particularly given the density of the city.
- The proposed corridor where digging and cabling would be undertaken is a major aspect of the city's transport infrastructure and risks impacting on the lives of residents and the local economy, including unnecessary noise, congestion and traffic.

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- The negative impact on both Portsmouth's local economy and the local authority's essential income over the period of the works.
- Permanent loss of parking spaces at Fort Cumberland car park for the ORS buildings and fenced space.
- This disruption will impact a wide-ranging area from Farlington Avenue in the north, down to Fort Cumberland Road, as well as knock on effects within Hampshire.

It is the view of many of my constituents that insufficient attention has been given to other alternative locations for the proposed works which may have a more reduced impact on communities and the environment.

The planning applicant has also been unable to demonstrate to local residents and elected representatives any positive benefit the scheme would bring to the city of Portsmouth, which causes those who I have heard from alarm.

On behalf of residents across Portsmouth South, I would therefore like to record with you my objection to this application at this stage of the planning process.

The government was right to finally arrive at the correct decision last year to not approve the AQUIND interconnector project.

I would urge you to ensure that these views are given strong consideration and that their objections are heard loud and clear.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Morgan MP

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