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Let's Stop Aquind Refutes Aquind's Grossly Misleading Claims About Public Support for Its Unwanted Interconnector Project

PORTSMOUTH, HAMPSHIRE 10.7.24

With regulators on both sides of the English Channel¹ minded to reject the Aquind Interconnector² and the Ministry of Defence preparing to submit evidence of its "significant national security concerns" around the project³, Aquind Limited yesterday made grossly misleading claims about the level of public support for the Aquind Interconnector in Portsmouth.

These claims are being rejected in the strongest possible terms by grassroots community group Let's Stop Aquind (LSA), which has campaigned for nearly 4 years to stop the damage that the Aquind Interconnector would cause to the environment and economy of Portsmouth and the South Downs, and the health of the residents in the affected area.

Aquind yesterday published the results of a survey carried out by market research business Savanta under the headline "Portsmouth Voices Strong Support for Aquind's Interconnector Link"⁴, and its spokesperson went onto claim that the community was "supportive of progressive energy solutions like AQUIND Interconnector". Both of these claims are grossly misleading as:

1. Aquind was never once mentioned in the survey questions⁵. With concerns about its ownership, obscure sources of funding, longstanding campaign of political donations and now the national security issues raised by the MoD, its brand is so tarnished in the city and beyond that it could not be named. Consequently neither Savanta nor Aquind are able to truthfully claim that the Aquind Interconnector specifically has any level of public support.
2. The proposed Aquind Interconnector cable route runs between Normandy and Lovedean, 25km inland from the landing site at Eastney in Portsmouth. This renders the question "Would you support a new transmission link between Portsmouth and Normandy?" meaningless as it implies that the "link" would terminate in Portsmouth, avoiding any reference to the risks posed to the environment of the South Downs, the shoreline wildlife

¹ "GetLink is RTE's preferred project" CRE Public consultation no.2024-01 p.25

² "We are minded to not offer a cap and floor regime to AQUIND." Ofgem Initial Project Assessment of the Third Cap and Floor Window for Electricity Interconnectors 31/3/24

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/IPA%20Window%203%20FINAL.pdf>

³ "MOD has significant national security concerns about the project" AQUIND Application for Development Consent Order in respect of electricity interconnector - MOD letter to DESNZ 7/3/24

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/projects/EN020022/EN020022-005221-019%20MOD%20Letter%20to%20DESNZ%20and%20HSF%20-%207%20March%202024.pdf>

⁴ "Portsmouth Voices Strong Support for Aquind's Interconnector Link" Aquind Limited 9/7/24

<https://aquind.co.uk/news/savanta/>

⁵ Luminare: Portsmouth Study Analysis Report Savanta, retrieved 10/7/24 <https://aquind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Portsmouth-Study-Analysis-Report.pdf>

Community action to stop the AQUIND interconnector

www.stopaquind.com



of Farlington Marshes Nature Reserve or the loss of precious green space and public amenities along the real Aquind interconnector route to the edge of the South Downs National Park.

3. Local people have spoken clearly in last week's general election, choosing candidates who stand firmly against and publicly against the Aquind Interconnector such as Stephen Morgan⁶, Suella Braverman⁷ and the new Labour MP for Portsmouth North Amanda Martin⁸. Equally, in the Portsmouth City Council elections in May, not a single candidate stood on a platform of support for the Aquind interconnector. So in the only polls that count, Portsmouth is united against Aquind.

The survey was conducted at least partly online, but it is not revealed how the recipients were chosen or incentivised, or what proportion was interviewed face to face. Nor is it known if the survey was conducted before or after the MOD intervention. A total of 478 people were surveyed, a derisory amount compared to the many thousands who have signed petitions against Aquind.

Co-founder of Let's Stop Aquind Viola Langley responded to the claims made by the company: ***"Aquind's brand is so toxic in Portsmouth that it was left out of the survey altogether, which must have been deliberate. Asking fewer than 500 people about their preferences for cleaner and cheaper energy and then implying that these would both be fulfilled by an anonymous "link" from France to Portsmouth is entirely misleading. The Aquind interconnector offers only marginal savings at a huge cost to the environment, with no benefit to the consumer as the Lovedean substation it is planned to connect to was chosen for the access it gives Aquind to sell UK power generated in the North of England as much as for importing French nuclear power. Regardless of the responses to Aquind's loaded questions, the people have already spoken at the ballot box in national and local elections - they don't want a cable laid in a trench at least 9 metres wide, dug 25 kilometres into the South Downs which would destroy our environment, paralyse our city and choke our citizens in the process, all for the private profit of oligarchs. This project would turn the area into a building site for 5 years, a period that barely relates to the "temporary" disruption referred to in the questions, which yet again show Aquind's tendency to greenwash their scheme by couching it in terms of environmental benefits and cost savings while hiding the true level of damage caused to our city. Even in these terms, the survey respondents were strongly against nuclear power and the cost savings claimed by the company of £3.15 per household per year⁹ are frankly pitiful in comparison to the harms of the project."***

⁶ Portsmouth MP grills Ministers on delays on disastrous AQUIND project decision 28.11.23

⁷ AQUIND Update: Suella Objects to Controversial Interconnector Proposal in Hampshire 11.1.24

⁸ "Aquind is a living campaign in our city and one we've been trying to stop" Amanda Louise Martin on X 7/6/24

⁹ AQUIND – Connecting the UK and French electric power grids *Benefits – Reducing energy prices* Aquind Limited (retrieved 19/4/24) <https://aquindconsultation.co.uk>



These latest claims are consistent with a number of misleading comments previously made by Aquind's PR team. For example, an Aquind spokesperson claimed on the BBC that the project was merely "a ditch"¹⁰ that would last "a few months" and wrote in Business Age that the broad-based local campaign to stop Aquind was only supported by a "teaspoon of analogue activists"¹¹.

Aquind Limited is deluded if it thinks it has "overwhelming" support for its proposals in Portsmouth. These claims feel like the last throw of the dice for the company, which is now more than £50 million in debt to its owners¹², of which £500,000 has been spent on donations to the Conservative Party, on top of £1.2 million donated by current or former directors and associated companies¹³.

LSA representatives, through our MP's, have called for a meeting with new Labour Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Ed Miliband to ask him to bring this unwanted, unneeded and potentially dangerous scheme to an end for good... and finally #stopAQUIND.

Viola Langley and Paula Ann Savage
Co-founders Let's Stop Aquind

Let's Stop Aquind can be found on [REDACTED] and at [REDACTED]
Contact co-founder Viola Langley by email to [REDACTED]

¹⁰ "The Aquind interconnector is a ditch, it's going to be in front of people's houses for a few months... and it will be gone" Johnny Stonborough BBC Politics South 24/9/23

¹¹ Let's defeat the NIMBYs! Britain needs the Aquind electricity interconnector by Johnny Stonborough Business Age 15/8/23 [REDACTED]

¹² Aquind Limited Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2022 - Companies House Retrieved 8/3/24

¹³ National security concerns raised over firm linked to £1.7m in Tory donations inews 27/3/24 [REDACTED]