

# Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	AQUIND interconnector
<b>File reference</b>	EN020022
<b>Status</b>	FINAL
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	18 December 2018
<b>Meeting with</b>	AQUIND Limited
<b>Venue</b>	Temple Quay House
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	Project update/post scoping meeting
<b>Circulation</b>	All attendees

## **Summary of key points discussed and advice given**

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

## **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping**

The Inspectorate explained that in some cases there was insufficient information in the Scoping Report to enable agreement to scope aspect/ matters out. The Inspectorate advised that the Scoping Opinion does not prevent the Applicant from subsequently agreeing with relevant consultation bodies to scope aspects/ matters out of the ES, where further evidence has been provided to justify this approach. The Developer should explain the reasoning for scoping them out in the Environmental Statement (ES) and justify the approach taken. It is helpful to include in the ES/DCO application documents correspondence from the relevant conservation bodies confirming that they agree to scope out certain aspect/ matters.

## **Transboundary**

The Inspectorate is currently undertaking a transboundary screening process for the Proposed Development. This should be complete by early/mid-January 2019. The completed transboundary screening proforma will be published on the National Infrastructure Planning webpage for the AQUIND Interconnector. The Inspectorate will inform the Developer of the outcome of the screening process and send a link to the published proforma.

## **Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Water Framework Directive (WFD)**

The Developer described that they may produce two sets of information to inform HRA reports for the onshore and offshore areas, but that a single WFD assessment report would be produced to cover the onshore, marine and coastal areas (but this is subject to further review and confirmation). The Inspectorate explained that it is for the Applicant to determine the preferred format of their application documents but queried whether there could be potential for overlap/ duplication of assessment between the two HRA

reports in the event that both onshore and offshore elements were considered to give rise to likely significant effects on the same European site. It was advised that the Developer ensure they make clear where the HRA information is presented. The Inspectorate advised that they can review and comment on draft HRA report documents in advance of any DCO application.

## **Project Update**

The applicant is proposing to undertake statutory consultation in early February 2019. Non-statutory engagement on the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) has been undertaken by the Developer and local authorities and on 12 December the Developer submitted the SoCC to the local authorities for comment in accordance with the Planning Act 2008.

The Developer is currently considering whether to include the works to the National Grid Substation in the DCO application. The Developer is meeting with National Grid in early 2019 to discuss this.

The Developer is aiming for submission of their DCO application in Q3 2019. The position with regard to the submission of draft documents to the Inspectorate is to be further considered by the Developer, with the Inspectorate making clear and the Developer acknowledging that adequate time would need to be given for the Inspectorate to review draft documentation prior to the submission of the DCO application.

## **TEN-E**

As certain tasks under the TEN-E Regulation have been delegated to the Inspectorate to act as the National Competent Authority (NCA), the Inspectorate will produce a schedule of the permit granting process, in consultation with the French NCA. The permit granting process does not begin until both NCA's have acknowledged notification of the project, and therefore no formal action will be undertaken on the draft schedule until the French authorities acknowledge the scheme, which to date they have not done.

## **Post meeting note**

The Developer queried why the scoping opinion was issued on behalf of the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as opposed to Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The Inspectorate confirms that scoping opinions issued by the Planning Inspectorate at the pre-application stage are done so on behalf of the Secretary of State for MHCLG and in accordance with relevant delegations.