



Meeting note

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| Project name | EuroLink Multi-Purpose Interconnector |
| File reference | |
| Status | Draft |
| Author | The Planning Inspectorate |
| Date | 19 April 2023 |
| Meeting with | National Grid Ventures (the Applicant) |
| Venue | Microsoft Teams |
| Meeting objectives | Applicant update |
| Circulation | 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.

Project Overview

The Applicant listed the National Grid Ventures (NGV) personnel / project team and gave an overview of NGV. NGV currently have four projects registered with the Inspectorate (three interconnectors and the Humber Low Carbon Pipelines project).

The applicant explained that the project name would be changed from EuroLink to LionLink, with this to be announced at the WindEurope conference. The applicant then gave a summary of the multi-purpose interconnector (MPI), stating that the project will provide a connection to the Netherlands from the UK, supply up to 1.8 GW of electricity and provide power for approximately 1.8 million homes. The applicant explained the project would improve energy affordability to consumers, contribute to national energy security, support the UK's climate and energy goals, and boost competition in the energy market. NGV works alongside Tennet, the Dutch Transmission System Operator, and is exploring opportunities to coordinate with other projects in the area including the National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) Sea Link project.

The applicant explained how an MPI differed from a traditional interconnector and explained how the project would provide a connection between the UK and the Netherlands whilst also providing grid connection for an offshore wind development, which in this case is likely to be in Dutch waters.

Non-Statutory Consultations

The Applicant summarised the non-statutory public consultations held between 24 October 2022 and 18 December 2022 (eight weeks). The consultations focused on five key components: the assumption of the connection agreement into the proposed NGET Friston Substation; the four potential converter station sites; the four potential landfall sites; potential HVDC cable corridors from landfall locations and converter stations; and potential HVAC cable corridor from converter station to NGET Friston Substation.

The Applicant gave an overview of the options presented during the non-statutory consultation. Four landfall locations were included as options within the non-statutory consultation along with four proposed converter station sites. The focus for the converter station sites was their proximity to the Friston Substation (within a 5km radius). This is for reasons of efficiency because of AC cables (between the converter stations and the Friston Substation) having a greater transmission loss than the DC cable routes used between landfall sites and converter stations.

The applicant summarised the results from responses received to the non-statutory consultation. Key themes centred around the use of brownfield sites, cumulative impacts and coordination, concerns about archaeology and heritage (particularly around Dunwich), traffic and access, local ecology and biodiversity, and climate change and policy. The applicant stated they will be publishing a non-statutory consultation feedback report, which will be finalised and published once the pre-election period has ended.

Timelines and Other Matters

The applicant is still in the process of refining its options in preparation for submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping request in June 2023. It believes having a single preferred option for the converter station and landfall site at scoping stage is unlikely due to timeframes and expect to have two or three options for the scoping submission. After refining the landfall options, the current programme is to commence the seabed survey in Q4 of 2023. Statutory consultation is expected to then be undertaken in Q1 of 2024, with an aim to submit the DCO application in 2025. The final DCO decision and final investment decision would then be anticipated in 2026, with the project being operational by mid-2030.

Regarding submission of the EIA scoping request, the Inspectorate directed the Applicant to Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 7, which contains information about the procedures for scoping, including the technical specifications for the GIS shapefile, which is required 10 working days in advance of the scoping request. The Inspectorate confirmed it would offer a post-scoping meeting if the Applicant had any clarification points it wished to discuss. The Inspectorate also queried how the potential for coordination with other projects, including Sea Link would be addressed in the EIA scoping request. The Applicant noted that the advice provided in the Sea Link Scoping Opinion would be considered.

The Applicant summarised cable routes and challenging area-designations onshore and offshore that needed to be considered and worked around (such as the coastline AONB and location of shipwrecks) and stressed the importance of these in their efforts to refine the options.

The Inspectorate enquired as to what extent engagement had been made with statutory consultation bodies. The Applicant stated engagement with the main statutory consultation bodies had been made during the non-statutory consultation process and that they intended to hold more detailed discussions after options had been refined. The applicant advised that they were in the process of setting up discretionary advisory service (DAS) agreements with several the statutory consultation bodies for when the options had been refined. The Applicant was seeking to agree the scope of onshore surveys with Natural England through the DAS. The Applicant is also holding regular meetings with East Suffolk Council.

The Applicant advised they have commenced engagement for land access in batches, serving soft letters for gaining voluntary agreement. Whilst there have been some local concerns around granting land access, the applicant has been in discussions with Scottish Power Renewables and Sea Link with regards to finding possible solutions. The applicant is looking to secure land access to support ecological surveys towards the end of May and early June where such access is available. Phase 1 of the habitat surveys will inform detailed habitat surveys.

The Inspectorate asked as to how the change in name from EuroLink to LionLink will be managed in consultations and advertisements and noted that it may also be necessary for the Inspectorate to update its website. The applicant stated that several press releases would support the announcement at the WindEurope conference and contact would be made with the local MP. They intended to make it clear the project remained the same. The non-statutory consultation report will also feature an explanation of the change in name.

The Inspectorate requested notification of publication of the non-statutory consultation report, once it becomes available.

The Inspectorate asked whether a similar consent process was being conducted for the Netherlands. The applicant stated that they have a partnership with a Dutch equivalent of NGV, who were handling this matter.

Follow up

The next meeting was agreed for the end of May with an intention for NGV to produce a draft contact plan in advance of the meeting, updates on preferred options, a non-statutory consultation report, and the progress made on scoping