



Meeting note

Project name	Aldbrough Hydrogen Storage Project
File reference	EN030003
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	17 November 2022
Meeting with	Equinor New Energy Limited ('The Applicant')
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Inception Meeting
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.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted (if requested by an Applicant for commercial sensitivity reasons).

The Proposed Development

The Project will act as a hydrogen storage facility intended to connect into a proposed regional pipeline network and is a joint project between Equinor and SSE Thermal.

The Applicant team outlined the required infrastructure, the new build element will be the underground salt caverns that will be at a depth of circa 1.8km underground. An above ground "Central Processing Area" will also be needed for the injection and withdrawal processes. A wellhead compound will also be utilised, this will be a separate facility where the wells would be drilled. The Applicant also pointed to the need for seawater abstraction and brine discharge infrastructure and a circa 10km pipeline to connect to the proposed National Grid Carbon Humber Low Carbon Pipelines project. The site has an existing planning consent for 9 additional gas caverns for the storage of natural gas.

The Applicant confirmed that due to the required marine abstraction and brine discharge infrastructure, a deemed Marine Licence will be incorporated in the Development Consent Order (DCO).

Construction is scheduled to start in 2026 and operation in 2029, although this is subject to the DCO and the Final Investment Decision (FID). The Applicant confirmed the timeline was influenced by the project being a part of the overall East Coast Cluster programme. The team is in dialogue with the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and have an established a mutual agreement regarding the need for storage facilities to support the growing Hydrogen economy.



Aldborough Hydrogen storage

The Applicant explained the history of the site and that an extant planning permission for natural gas storage exists. The Applicant explained that the landscaped area (which was formed pursuant to the extant planning permission) will host both the above ground facilities. It was noted that the landscaping scheme benefits from 10 years of established planting.

The Applicant confirmed that there is also a need for two additional pipelines to the coast, one to take seawater into the facility and another to take brine back out to the North Sea. It was established that circa 500 meters from the shore would be a suitable discharge point for the used brine. The Inspectorate queried if the used brine could be recycled. The Applicant confirmed that although brine has been used in the chemical industry in Cheshire, there is no equivalent potential user in the Humber. The Applicant also noted their focus on the protection of the Holderness Coast and pointed out it is rapidly eroding; the project will take into consideration that no construction work should exacerbate this, and any permanent structures do not harm the coast. In terms of designated sites, the team will also take into consideration the Greater Wash Special Protection Area and the Inner Holderness Marine Conservation Zone.

Scoping Boundary

The Applicant set out a red line boundary envelope that is currently larger than the project requires. The Applicant confirmed that this would be narrowed down when the design has been refined, in terms of the marine elements the discharge point and the onshore salt caverns' location have yet to be finalised. The scoping boundary also includes the North Sea marine works and potential corridors to connect the new facility to the proposed Humber Low Carbon Pipelines project.

With regard to the pipeline corridor to connect the underground storage caverns to the proposed Humber Low Carbon Pipelines project, the Applicant outlined that currently, there are three potential proposed routes that the Applicant intends to scope on, with the green route preferred. The Inspectorate expressed a preference for scoping to be on a single option, to avoid unnecessary consultation but stated that the degree of optionality was for the Applicant to determine, subject to satisfying the requirements of Regulation 10 of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. In terms of the timeline for submission of these documents, the Applicant confirmed that the Scoping Report is intended to be submitted in Q1 2023.

Proposed NSIP

The Applicant explained its reasoning as to why it considered the project falls within the Planning Act 2008 criteria. This is because the hydrogen storage exceeds the thresholds set out in section 17 of the Planning Act 2008, in both working capacity and maximum flow rate. The Applicant pointed out marine works, the pipeline and other associated development will also be included in the DCO.

The Applicant also confirmed it considered that s.235 of the Planning Act 2008 supports hydrogen as a "gas" on the basis that the definition includes natural gas, but is not listed



as being exhaustive. The Inspectorate confirmed that it could not provide a legal opinion or legislative interpretation and suggested the Applicant discussed the matter directly with BEIS.

In view of this, the Applicant is satisfied that the project constitutes a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and that a s35 Direction from BEIS is not required for any aspect of the Proposed Development.

Activities to date

The engineering design team, Atkins, in Q3 2022 began the process of pipeline route optioneering with help from Environment Resources Management (ERM) and will be moving on to feasibility study along with a pre-feed study in 2023 to provide sufficient design. ERM have been working on consenting and environmental issues, looking at environment constraints mapping, ecology site surveys (including wintering bird surveys) throughout 2022 and continuing into next year. Archaeological assessments have been completed and walk over surveys/trial trenching are proposed. The EIA Scoping Report is currently under review. Dalcour Maclaren, the land agent, has begun land referencing for the site, and has been arranging access to land for site surveys. Due to the scale of the project, there is a limited amount of landowners and there is no affected Crown Land, aside from the foreshore and seabed elements. The Applicant is using CMS as external legal advisors who has provided the team with consenting advice regarding possible consenting options, including the Town and Country Planning (1990) (as amended) and the Planning Act 2008 (as amended).

Consenting Programme

The Applicant confirmed that the Scoping Report would be submitted in Q1 2023 with ongoing environmental surveys continuing throughout the winter and into the New Year, to cover different seasonal habitats. In terms of consultation, phase one non-statutory consultation will take place in Q1 2023 and a Statement of Community Consultation is currently being worked on by the team. The Applicant explained the timing of the non-statutory consultation faced constraints due to the Christmas period, local elections in May and other projects in the area running consultation at the same time. The statutory consultation (Phase 2) will be carried out in Q4 2023 and will run the same time as the PEIR. The first non-statutory consultation will be blended (with virtual and face to face events) and run for four weeks; the in-person events will be based at five locations across the scoping boundary. The Applicant also confirmed that the DCO application is proposed to be submitted in 2024.

Stakeholder Engagement & Consultation

The project has been in the public domain since August 2021 and regular engagement with the local community has taken place since September 2021. The consultation process has involved the well-established Aldbrough Community Liaison Group and includes Local Parish Councils, schools, and churches. However, it was pointed out that this group does not include communities along the pipeline, and they will be new to the consultation process. The Inspectorate asked if there are any initial Planning Performance Agreements



The Planning Inspectorate

(PPA) with local authorities; the Applicant confirmed initial dialogue had begun with East Riding of Yorkshire, however no PPA has been prepared yet.