



Meeting note

Project name	Hynet North West Hydrogen Pipeline
File reference	EN060006
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	25 September 2024
Meeting with	Cadent Gas Limited (the Applicant)
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Update 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.

Project and Programme overview update

The Applicant gave a brief project summary to those in attendance. The Inspectorate queried whether the recent decision on the Keuper Gas Storage non-material change application has impacted on the Applicant's timeframes for this application. The Applicant confirmed that this project is for the transportation of hydrogen gas, rather than storage, so the Keuper decision has not impacted on timescales.

The Applicant provided a pictorial overview of the refinement that had taken place since the last consultation in 2022. There has been number of changes and removal of majority of optionality in the project including removal of Tata Spur and the Heath as well as the removal of St Helens Hydrogen Above Ground Installation (HAGI). The Applicant confirmed that limited optionality currently remains in the project.

The Inspectorate queried whether there could potentially be NSIPs within the NSIP. The Applicant confirmed that while the project is in close proximity to another NSIP (Frodsham Solar Farm), there are no other NSIPs within the Development Consent Order.

The Applicant confirmed that as part of its consultation exercise, it will produce a note to explain its position in terms of Land Use Planning Zones (LUPZ), as LUPZ will be led by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The Applicant confirmed that it is also consulting with HSE on this matter. The Applicant is part of a hydrogen companies group who are liaising with HSE on this matter.

The Inspectorate questioned whether any Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) or equivalent will enable the HSE to be resourced to engage during the Examination stage, or whether the agreement is solely focused on pre-application stage. The Applicant explained that it had submitted an application to HSE for Pipeline Safety Regulations (PSR) which will provide some funding support for engagement regarding the Project. This will enable HSE to review the PSR documents and a HSE Inspector will also be allocated to the Project. The Inspectorate further queried whether HSE is clear on the Applicant's expectations from the separate consenting regimes to which the Applicant clarified that it understands the Inspectorate's concern and plans to discuss further with HSE.

Statutory Consultation

The Applicant confirmed that it will undertake a 5-week statutory consultation period, starting on 14 October 2024 and running until 19 November 2024. The Applicant confirmed that this is a second round of full statutory consultation, rather than a targeted round, and that it would provide the s46 notification on or before the consultation commences. It will then review the responses and have a design freeze by mid December 2024. Draft documents will be provided for review in due course, and the Inspectorate advised the Applicant on the need for dates to be included in the Programme Document to enable resources to be allocated accordingly. The current anticipated DCO application submission date is March 2025.

The Applicant has previously carried out Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) consultation with the local authorities and the SoCC was updated in July 2024. As part of consultation, the Applicant is planning 8 in-person events and 2 virtual events. The Applicant provided a pictorial overview of the consultation area, deposit locations and event locations. The Applicant updated that it has a website to access the consultation documents.

PINS Enhanced Tier

The Applicant highlighted the challenges it faced with including the Adequacy of Consultation Milestone (AoCM) in its Programme Document. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant of the risks in not doing so, as it is a key component of the new pre-application service and is covered in the pre-application guidance. The Applicant confirmed that it will revisit this matter.

The Inspectorate discussed the Applicant's Programme Document (PD), giving background to the purpose of the document, which is set out in the pre-application guidance. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to review the PD and add more detail as to when key parties are likely to need to allocate resource to support engagement, such as draft document reviews and meetings. The Inspectorate reminded the Applicant of the need to publish and maintain the PD on its website.

The Inspectorate asked about the additional components of the enhanced pre-application service that the Applicant seeks to engage. The Applicant confirmed that it would value Inspector support on some of the draft documents and would like to submit documents including draft Development Consent Order (dDCO), Works Plans, chapters of Environmental Statement like major accidents and disasters, climate change, Consultation Report (summary) and draft Planning Statement, etc. The Inspectorate iterated its strong

preference to receive all draft docs at the same time. The review period of 6 weeks was confirmed to the Applicant. The Inspectorate advised of the importance of submitting finalised versions of documents in order to provide more detailed feedback; earlier drafts or incomplete documents will limit the ability of the Inspectorate to provide constructive feedback.

The Inspectorate advised Applicant to demonstrate how it has applied the Mitigation Hierarchy in the application documents, as required by National Policy Statement EN-1, to assist the Examination in due course.

The Applicant asked for any lessons learnt from the H2 Teeside project to which the Inspectorate confirmed that it is unable to share any as the project is currently live. However, the Applicant should follow that project and will see the questions being asked by the Examining Authority that may be relevant to this project in due course.

The Applicant queried about the Advice Notes to which the Inspectorate advised that more advice will be published on linear schemes and good design soon. The Applicant also queried about the payment method and whether there are any terms and conditions that it need to agree to. The Inspectorate confirmed it would provide more detail to the Applicant after the meeting.

The next meeting to be arranged following the close of the statutory consultation, in early December 2024.