



Anaerobic Digestion Plant

Meeting purpose: Initial meeting

Date: Wednesday 29 July
Meeting with BlueSkyBio
Temple Quay House

Author: John Pingstone

Attendees:

<u>BlueSkyBio (BSB)</u> Nick Bartlett Jamie McIvor	<u>Planning Inspectorate</u> Ken Taylor (Infrastructure Planning Lead) Kathryn Dunne (Infrastructure Planning Lead) Frances Russell (EIA Manager) John Pingstone (Case Officer)
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Welcome and introductions (all)

Summary of key points discussed and advice given:

The Planning Inspectorate explained that a note of the meeting would be produced and published as advice under s51 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA 2008). It was explained that any advice given at the pre-application stage is made available on the website. Draft documents may be submitted for the Inspectorate's comments, and although our advice is published the documents themselves are not.

1. Overarching Key Issues

The Inspectorate provided a presentation setting out the stages of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) process. It was emphasized that at the pre-application stage the developer is in control and must use this time to consult as effectively as possible and shape their project based on feedback. When submitted the project should be as complete as possible and ready for examination. After submission the statutory timetable begins, which is a relatively short timeframe for the consideration of very large projects. Any deficiency in the quality of the documents increases the possibility of either non-acceptance or a refusal.

Strong working relationships with key stakeholders are essential, which will allow important issues to be resolved at pre-application rather than at the examination stage. BSB stated that they had been in talks with various stakeholders including

Natural England, Cefas, the MMO, Crown Estate, DECC, and Local Councils. The Inspectorate pointed out that the early formation of Statements of Common Ground is an important element of the process, as it allows the Examining Authority (ExA) to more easily understand areas of agreement and disagreement.

The Inspectorate also set out the process for EIA consultation and notification, including the timescales for scoping. BSB have initiated contact with relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (although to date their role has been in assisting with the development of the project rather than commenting in their regulatory role) and considered the need for environmental survey work.

2. The Project

BSB provided the Inspectorate with information on the project. At present it is in the early stages of development, but is likely to consist of an anaerobic generating station utilizing seaweed as feedstock. Due to innovative processes this technology will allow for greater efficiency and greater generation capacity than existing digestion plants. The Inspectorate queried whether any other organic feedstock could be used, BSB were of the view that seaweed would be the only viable option for the process under consideration.

A number of options are being considered with regards to the nature of the output (whether gas, electricity or both) and how that output would be delivered to the national supply (whether connecting to an existing generating station or by the construction of a dedicated generating station).

The Inspectorate pointed out that certain options presented may not fall under the thresholds set out in the PA2008, or may not fall under the definition of a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) set out in s14. It was suggested that it would be helpful if BSB could set out in writing why they consider their project to meet the NSIP criteria and that advice could be given.

BSB enquired about whether the seaweed farm could be included within the DCO, in order that the farm and the generating station are considered together by the Inspectorate. The Inspectorate suggested that BSB should set out their justification for this in writing and that advice would be provided.