



Meeting note

Project name	Hampshire Water Transfer and Water Recycling Facility
File reference	WA010002
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	26 September 2023
Meeting with	Southern Water
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Update Meeting
Circulation	All attendees/ additional contacts to share meeting note

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.

Scoping feedback

The Applicant advised that it had reviewed the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Opinion and presented a summary of how it intended to address the matters raised.

The Applicant confirmed that the phasing of the Proposed Development had been simplified and is now proposed to be delivered in one phase, with a maximum 60 million litres per day (Ml/d) output. The Applicant will set out the different operating phase scenarios and confirm/assess what constitutes a reasonable worst case in the environmental statement (ES).

The Applicant explained that it is considering carefully how to present information about the Proposed Development. To aid understanding, the Applicant may use a Geographic Information System (GIS) tool and/or digital tools to assist interested parties to understand the Proposed Development, including during the statutory consultation process. It is also looking at how to effectively signpost information regarding the consideration of alternatives and scheme development.

The Applicant recognised the importance of considering carefully the management plan hierarchy and will reflect this in the Development Consent Order (DCO) application.

The Applicant is in discussion with Natural England (NE) and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) about the approach to sand eel surveys, and confirmed that it considers there is information to support scoping out of impacts to grey seal. The Applicant will assess hazardous loads in the ES.

The Inspectorate noted that the Applicant's approach to addressing matters raised in the Scoping Opinion appeared to be reasonable.

Scheme development update

The Applicant provided a summary of its responses to the Summer 2022 non-statutory consultation. The Applicant confirmed that the preferred corridor for the pipeline route was presented during the Summer 2022 non-statutory consultation. The Applicant explained they are now refining the Proposed Development having had regard to responses received via the non-statutory consultation and engagement feedback. The preferred route for the pipeline and preferred locations for Above Ground Plants will be presented when undertaking its Statutory Consultation, anticipated in Summer 2024. The Applicant confirmed that it will look to refine any areas of optionality ahead of this consultation.

The Applicant stated that Portsmouth Water had received planning permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 regime in 2021 for an open-cut pipeline between its Bedhampton Springs site and the new Havant Thicket Reservoir, but it was now looking to change that to a tunnelled solution. The Applicant noted that emerging plans for this followed a very similar alignment to Southern Water's proposed tunnelled pipelines between its proposed Water Recycling Plant and Havant Thicket Reservoir, and that both companies had looked at the opportunity to combine the pipelines. The Applicant explained that Portsmouth Water intends to submit a planning application in March 2024 for tunnelled pipelines that could safeguard for Southern Water's use should the Proposed Development receive development consent. The Applicant explained that a combined tunnelled solution with Portsmouth Water would have a number of benefits, including limiting the impacts of constructing two separate tunnels through Havant.

The Applicant explained that a short tunnelled connection would still be required between its proposed water recycling plant and Bedhampton Springs and this formed part of the Proposed Development. If the Proposed Development did not proceed, the tunnelled pipelines would continue to be used by Portsmouth Water as part of the reservoir operation.

The Inspectorate asked if there are potential issues that the Applicant could foresee that could impact on the delivery of the Proposed Development. The Applicant stated that a key risk to project delivery is realising the consenting strategy and explained that local opposition in Havant brings uncertainty to the delivery of the combined tunnelled solution being taken forward by Portsmouth Water.

The Inspectorate queried how any optionality remaining in scheme design would be assessed in the ES. The Applicant confirmed that it would be clear in the ES which options remain and that each option would be assessed.

Programme update

The Applicant confirmed that the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) assessments had commenced. The Applicant stated that the statutory consultation is anticipated to be held in Summer 2024 and that the DCO application is anticipated to be submitted in mid-2025.

The Inspectorate asked for confirmation of when a variation of the section 35 (s35) direction would be sought. The Applicant confirmed that discussions had commenced with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) around the need to vary the current s35 direction. The Applicant explained that it will seek to secure a variation to the s35 direction in advance of Portsmouth Water submitting a planning application for the combined tunnel in March 2024.

RAPID Gate 3 Guidance

The Applicant provided a summary of recent changes to RAPID's Gate 3 guidance, including the requirement to submit a number of environmental strategies and mitigation plans. The Applicant raised concerns over the potential duplication of requirements with the DCO process. The Applicant stated it is engaging with RAPID, and with NE and the Environment Agency (EA) individually, on how these Gate 3 requirements are met, but that a joint meeting with the Inspectorate and RAPID could be helpful to discuss these issues if required.

Engagement update

The Applicant listed various matters that had been raised in consultation and through ongoing stakeholder engagement, which included water recycling technology, construction impacts, water recycling plant (WRP) site selection, project need and alternatives and construction methodologies at water course crossings. The Applicant listed its approach to these matters and stated that the issues are to be addressed systematically as the consenting process progresses. The Applicant noted that the local community has concerns that the Proposed Development will preclude environmental benefits being delivered as part of the new Havant Thicket Reservoir.

The Applicant explained that discussions with NE and the EA had included consideration of the suitability of the selected WRP site and how historic contamination and potential impacts to groundwater in the Havant area would be addressed. The Applicant is committed to trenchless crossings at main rivers but will seek flexibility at other crossing locations and is discussing proposed construction methods with NE and other relevant stakeholders.

The Inspectorate asked about progress with Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) matters. The Applicant advised that the main issues were those raised by NE in its

response to the Scoping Report, i.e. impacts to marine water quality from the reject water and impacts to the chalk stream and groundwater dependent ecosystems. The Applicant is aiming to complete its information to inform appropriate assessment by the time of statutory consultation and had commenced drafting the report.

Water Resources Management Plan 24 (WRMP24) update

The Applicant provided an updated timeline for the WRMP24 and confirmed that some dates had marginally slipped, but that the final document was anticipated to be published a month later than previously expected in August 2024.

AOB

The Applicant asked for an update on the water resources infrastructure Advice Note that it had understood the Inspectorate was planning to issue. The Inspectorate had no update to give since the last meeting but agreed to enquire.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

- Suggested next meeting for early Jan 24
- To organise a meeting with RAPID and PINS