



Meeting note

Project name	Fens Reservoir and Lincolnshire Reservoir
File reference	WA010004/ WA010003
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	9 May 2023
Meeting with	Anglian Water
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Update Meeting
Circulation	All attendees/ Named 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.

Introductions and refresh on projects

Anglian Water (‘the Applicant’) explained that both projects (the Fens Reservoir and Lincolnshire Reservoir) are 50 million cubic metre (m³) reservoirs and will include associated development including water treatment works, treated waters transfers and emergency drawdown channels.

The Applicant provided a reminder of the proposals; outlining that the proposed Fens Reservoir would be located near Chatteris, Cambridgeshire and the proposed Lincolnshire Reservoir would be located near Helpringham, Lincolnshire. The Applicant is working in partnership with Cambridgeshire Water to deliver the Fens Reservoir project. The Lincolnshire Reservoir is being promoted entirely by Anglian Water.

The Applicant confirmed that the need for both schemes is identified in the Anglian Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP), and in the Cambridgeshire Water WRMP in respect of the Fens Reservoir.

First consultation – feedback summary

The Applicant conducted Phase 1 non-statutory consultation from 12 October 2022 until 21 December 2022. This involved five consultation events and two webinars as well as pop-up events. Information was also made available at various community access points. The Lincolnshire Reservoir consultation ran in parallel with the Fens Reservoir consultation.

The Applicant provided an overview of the feedback received for the Fens Reservoir consultation. A total of 552 people attended the events and webinars. There was a total of 349 feedback submissions and 37,000 visitors to the website. The Applicant provided a breakdown of the key themes arising from the consultation feedback:

- Environment – impacts on species and habitats, opportunities for habitat creation, expectation on biodiversity net gain, carbon impacts on peatland;
- Socio-economic – outdoor recreational activities, supporting those living in the area, balancing access to green space, accessibility for all members of the community, balancing access to green space with environmental protection;
- Design – blending with the landscape and the local character, understanding visual impacts of the embankments;
- Engineering and construction – impact of noise, dust, construction traffic, concerns about local flooding;
- Transport and traffic – additional pressures on local roads including the A141, local road conditions, connectivity, and access for communities; and
- General comments – leakage reduction and how the project will be funded.

The Applicant provided an overview of the feedback received from the Lincolnshire Reservoir consultation. A total of 892 people attended the events and webinars. There was a total of 330 feedback submissions and 37,000 visitors to the website. In contrast to the Fens Reservoir feedback, the feedback was more focused on the environmental impact of the project. The key themes discussed were as follows:

- Community and local business – supporting landowners and homeowners in the area, importance of accessibility for everyone, working with farmers and farming organisations;
- Environment – wildlife and habitat protection, biodiversity net gain, and connection with existing corridors;
- Design – blending with the landscape and local character, understanding visual impacts;
- Engineering and construction – impact of noise, flooding concerns, timescales for project;
- Transport and traffic – additional pressure on local roads including the A52, concern for impact on the B1394, local road conditions, connectivity locally and opportunities for public transport; and
- General – reducing leakage, how it will be funded, and the use of images in consultation materials.

The Applicant provided an overview of the general feedback received from a design perspective for both projects. This included connectivity with nearby communities, visual impacts, supporting local industry, access to nature and water, nature protection, and outdoor recreation.

The Applicant confirmed that all feedback received has been shared with their internal project team for consideration to ensure local ideas are considered.

The Inspectorate asked whether the Applicant had received any comments in relation to archaeology as part of the feedback on the proposed Lincolnshire Reservoir, noting that concerns had been raised by Local Authorities around archaeological sensitivities and scope of survey effort in relation to other NSIPs in the Lincolnshire area. The Applicant confirmed that some concerns were raised in relation to archaeology but these were not considered significant at this stage, noting further engagement would continue to inform the scope of the environmental impact assessment on this topic.

The Applicant outlined that the proposed sites for the reservoirs were selected in consultation with the local authorities and other stakeholders, including Natural England and Historic England, taking into account known environmental constraints and that project refinement would also continue to involve input from these statutory bodies

RAPID Gate 2

The Applicant explained that the Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development ("RAPID") process incorporates a series of gates which are used to enable funding into investigations and development of strategic water resource options. The gates are used by the regulators to ensure that the water companies are progressing the appropriate solutions, in line with their Water Resources Management Plans (WRMP) .

The Applicant confirmed that it had passed Gate 2, which included submitting feasibility studies, a programme-level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Water Framework Directive (WFD) studies, environmental appraisal, and costings.

The Applicant explained that both projects are now progressing to Gate 3, which is anticipated in September 2024. Further detail will be submitted at Gate 3 to secure additional ongoing funding. The Fens Reservoir has a conditional review point in January 2024.

The Applicant confirmed that relevant RAPID reports are available online through the RAPID/Ofwat webpages..

Programme update - EIA and surveys, landowners and land access

The Applicant advised they are currently developing the Fens Reservoir and Lincolnshire Reservoir proposals in parallel to the same programme.

The Applicant confirmed they are reviewing changes to the National Policy Statement as presented to Parliament in April 2023 – for example carbon and traffic – and are taking these changes on board.

The Applicant provided an overview of the main activities conducted to date, including looking at optioneering on transfer routes for both untreated water that comes to the reservoir and then the treated water to the delivery points, optioneering for emergency drawdown (a safety requirement), site selection, site layout and master planning, and work on early contractor engagement and financing.

The Applicant explained they are continuing to develop their consenting strategy with both Environment Agency and Natural England to include HRA and WFD matters. They are also progressing the planning performance agreements with four host local authorities for the reservoir sites and are looking at relationships with other consents and permits, for example the abstraction licences.

The Applicant advised they have been working to get the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) team established and have already had discussions with the Environment Agency and Natural England regarding the scope of the EIA. The Applicant confirmed they are looking to commence surveys late in May/ early June 2023.

The Applicant is in discussions with Defra regarding the alternative routes to obtain access in the event it is refused and deemed necessary for the ongoing development of the projects' design.

The Applicant provided an overview of their DCO pre-application activities in the next 12 months which include a further non-statutory consultation ('Consultation 2') likely to take place in spring 2024, with an EIA scoping opinion request submitted to the Inspectorate shortly afterwards. The Applicant explained they are looking at timescales for EIA scoping and Consultation 2 and considering whether to undertake this at the same time. The Inspectorate commented that it recommends, as highlighted in its Advice Note 7, that non-statutory consultation is undertaken in advance of the formal scoping process to avoid any overlap with the Planning Inspectorate's statutory scoping consultation processes. . The Applicant acknowledged this advice and confirmed they will have a more detailed conversation with the Inspectorate as the project design progresses and once dates have been confirmed.

The Applicant explained they are progressing the projects in parallel to respond to the need in the WRMPs and requested the Inspectorate's guidance if it would be desirable to stagger the timing of application submissions. The Inspectorate advised that while the decisions on timing of submission sits with the applicant, during the pre-application stage it is likely to be advantageous to continue to run the projects in parallel in terms of co-ordination but that staggering the projects as they enter the Examination phase may be more desirable. Further discussion on the timing of submissions is welcomed and the optimal approach will depend on multiple factors including resourcing across authorities and statutory bodies. In the meantime, the Inspectorate requested that the Applicant provides regular updates as the projects progress.

Beacon Fen DCO proposals – scoping and consultation

The Applicant explained that part of the Beacon Fen Energy Park (another NSIP) overlaps with land required for the Lincolnshire Reservoir. The Applicant outlined that the reservoir land was identified through rigorous and comprehensive site selection process, involving consultation with a wide range of stakeholders over 24 months. The Applicant explained that the Beacon Fen developer did not formally respond to its non-statutory consultation and noted that the Beacon Fen proposal is currently at EIA scoping stage with the Inspectorate. The Applicant confirmed they have been consulted by the Inspectorate as a

statutory undertaker for the purposes of EIA scoping of the Beacon Fen proposal and will be providing a detailed response.

Peterborough to Grafham Strategic Transfer

The Applicant made the Inspectorate aware of another potential DCO, the 'Peterborough to Grafham Strategic Transfer' being promoted by Anglian Water. The Applicant explained that this was originally being progressed jointly with Affinity Water at Gate 2 and that the project is intended partly to transfer water from the Lincolnshire Reservoir but also to assist in movement of surplus water across the wider region.

The Applicant explained the project is DCO scale in capacity, but not an NSIP in its own right as the water is potable. The Applicant is considering the possibility of seeking a Direction under s35 of the PA2008 from Defra. The Applicant added that an alternative consenting route under consideration is through the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) 1990.

AOB

The Inspectorate confirmed that it is in conversation with OFWAT about the RAPID Gateway process and requested the Applicant provides further updates about the progression with the process for both projects.

The Applicant advised the Inspectorate that they are planning Consultation 2 in early 2024, followed by EIA Scoping and statutory consultation (Consultation 3).

The Applicant confirmed to the Inspectorate they are using the same resource for both projects so intend to continue with joint project update meetings.