



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

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Dear Andrew,

REQUEST FOR SCREENING OPINION BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF REGULATIONS 3, 4 AND 6 OF THE PUBLIC GAS TRANSPORTER PIPELINE WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 1999 (AS AMENDED).

National Grid - Western Gas Network Upgrade Project – Request for an Environmental Determination.

Thank you for your letter of 21st September 2020, in which you requested an environmental determination by the Secretary of State in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Public Gas Transporter Pipeline Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1999 (as amended) (“the 1999 Regulations”). This letter was supplemented with an Environmental Determination Report which supports the request and details the work to be undertaken and the mitigations to be put in place.

Project background:

The request for a determination under the 1999 Regulations has been made following the receipt in 2018 by National Grid of a competent Planning and Advanced Reservation of Capacity Agreement (PARCA) application from South Hook Gas Company Limited, in accordance with their Gas Transporter Licence. South Hook have requested additional gas flow onto the National Transmission System from the South Hook Liquefied Natural Gas Terminal at Milford Haven.

The Environmental Determination Report details the options appraisal process which was used to determine the best strategic proposal to deliver the project. 71 potential strategic options were identified and 11 were shortlisted for options appraisal.

It is noted that, after the completion of the options appraisal process (which considered technical, environmental and socio-economic topics) the preferred Strategic Proposal was identified and comprised of the following:

- Pressure uprating (with maximum operating pressure below equipment class limit) of the existing Feeder 28 pipeline between Milford Haven and Three Cocks.
- Installing pipeline protection works north west of Pontlliw to ensure that, after uprating, safety standards continue to be as low risk as reasonably practicable.
- Construct approximately 9km of new pipeline between Wormington Compressor Site and Honeybourne AGI and approximately 2km of new pipeline between Churchover Compressor Site and Churchover Multi-junction.
- Related works at several existing Above Ground Insulation (AGI) sites to facilitate the pressure uprating, connection of new pipelines and effective compression at existing stations.

It is noted that the construction period for the project will last for ten months and that a non-statutory Environmental Assessment Report will be prepared for the project which will identify mitigation needed during this period. The mitigation detailed in the report will be supported by a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) which will detail the necessary environmental control plans required.

Local Planning Authorities response:

The Western Gas Network upgrade project affects seven appropriate Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) or County Councils, they are: Gloucestershire County Council, Rugby Borough Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council, Warwickshire County Council, Worcestershire County Council and Wychavon and Cotswold District Councils. Each of these LPAs were contacted directly, as per Regulation 6 subsections (2) (b), to express their opinions and provide evidence to support the Secretary of State's decision. Due to the number of LPAs involved their comments have been captured separately and can be found at **Annex A**. The overall conclusion from all LPAs is that this is not EIA development for which an environmental impact assessment needs to be carried out.

Secretary of State considerations and decision:

The Secretary of State has considered the information you have submitted, including the Environmental Determination Report and consulted with the appropriate LPAs as mentioned above.

The proposed pipeline project does not meet the criteria in Part 1 of Schedule 3 to the 1999 Regulations. However, the operational design pressure for this pipeline will exceed 7 bar gauge and therefore fall under Part 2 of Schedule 3 to the 1999 Regulations. Therefore, an environmental determination is required from the Secretary of State as to whether the proposed works constitute EIA development under the 1999 Regulations.

It is noted that the following work – regarded as the project for determination – will be undertaken:

- Approximately 9km of new National Transmission System (NTS) pipeline between Wormington Compressor Site and Honeybourne AGI which is expected to be 1220mm in diameter.

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- Approximately 2km of new NTS pipeline between Churchover Compressor Site and Churchover Multi-junction which is expected to be 900mm in diameter.
- The new sections of pipeline would operate at high pressures. Pressures vary across the NTS with safe upper operating pressures being in the order of 102Barg depending on the specific equipment installed.
- The new gas pipes are expected to operate at approximately 75Barg.
- A temporary Main Works Compound to facilitate the construction of a new pipeline between Wormington Compressor Site and Honeybourne AGI.
- Permanent and temporary infrastructure associated with the tie-in works to Wormington Compressor Site, Honeybourne AGI, Churchover Compressor Site, Churchover Tee and Churchover Multi-junction.
- Temporary construction compounds will be required at Wormington Compressor Site, Honeybourne AGI, Churchover Compressor Site, Churchover Tee and Churchover Multi-junction together with smaller satellite compounds at watercourse and road crossings.

In considering the application and whether the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on the environment, the Secretary of State has had regard to the matters contained in Schedule 2 of the 1999 Regulations. The Secretary of State's conclusion is that the proposed gas pipeline works to facilitate Western Gas Network upgrade project **is not** EIA development under the 1999 Regulations due to the evidence that the proposed development would be unlikely to have significant effects on the environment. In particular, the Secretary of State has noted the following matters.

There are no Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Ramsar sites, Site of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves, Local Nature Reserves or areas of ancient woodland within the proposed works.

A solar farm is located to the north-east of Badsey Lane, Willersey, however all LPAs agree that the combination of both projects should not have any environmental impacts. The Secretary of State acknowledges this assessment.

It is noted that a CEMP will be used to mitigate any potential issues including noise, localised dust generation and watercourse crossings. No significant effects are anticipated in regards to the use of natural resources and production of waste. A TMP will also be in place and will include detailed arrangements for traffic diversions including duration as well as ensuring swept paths are carried out to ensure routes are suitable for HGV access and the frequency of HGV movements given the constraints of rural lanes.

It is noted from Warwickshire County Council that their 10% threshold on the number of HGVs using their roads is likely to be exceeded on Churchover Lane and possibly also on the secondary route Lutterworth Road. The TMP will be used to mitigate any potential issues and signs will be put in place to notify affected residents. Three Public Rights of Way (PROW) will be impacted and temporary diversions or closures will need to be agreed with Warwickshire County Council's PROW Team. No further issues regarding PROWs were raised by the other LPAs.

Regarding densely populated areas, Warwickshire County Council observe that many of the properties adjacent to Churchover are accessed from the routes identified as HGV routes. The rural roads where users by necessity are 'on-carriageway' should be considered sensitive and appropriate measures need to be included in the TMP.

The Secretary of State notes Warwickshire County Council's comments regarding construction traffic on the nearby strategic routes of the A5 and A426 and how this could potentially impact on existing congestion levels. To address this, Warwickshire County Council has suggested

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early engagement with interested parties, such as the County Councillor, the Ward Councillor, the Parish Council, Warwickshire County Council's Streetworks Team and the County Highways' Locality Officer. The Secretary of State is supportive of this approach and also encourages the use of the TMP to mitigate this issue.

Both the CEMP and the TMP will be prepared in consultation with the relevant LPAs, Highways Authority and Statutory Environmental Bodies.

The pipeline will be permanently buried beneath ground level and LPAs expect that affected land will regenerate over time. The Secretary of State sees no reason to disagree with this conclusion. It is noted from Wychavon and Cotswold District Councils, that Brook watercourses will need to be crossed by the proposed pipeline, including the Tributaries LWS. The majority of works will be carried out in agricultural fields with all land and hedgerows being reinstated after completion. With adherence to the CEMP, relevant licences from Natural England and ecological and protected species surveys, there will be no significant impacts on ecology. Local areas of flood risk are unlikely to have discernible effects on construction.

It is noted in the Environmental Determination Report that the completion of required archaeological investigations (undertaken in consultation with the County Archaeologist (or equivalent)) prior to and during construction would ensure no likely significant effects on archaeological resources as a result of temporary construction compounds, the new pipeline and AGI modifications/tie-in works. The CEMP would also provide any mitigation measures required.

Subject to all necessary ecological and associated species surveys being carried out and appropriate mitigation measures implemented, no issues were raised regarding the absorption capacity of the natural environment.

Taking account of the above-mentioned factors, the Secretary of State concludes that the documents provided with your letter of 21st September 2020 and the evidence supplied by the relevant LPAs, are sufficient and that he can confirm that the proposed gas pipeline works are not an EIA development as they are unlikely to have significant effects on the environment.

A copy of this letter is being sent to the following:

Gloucestershire County Council: Simon Excell
Rugby Borough Council: Maxine Simmons
Tewkesbury Borough Council: Catherine Ashby
Warwickshire County Council: Joanne Archer
Worcestershire County Council: Steven Aldridge
Wychavon District Council: Holly Jones
Cotswold District Council: Martin Perks

Yours sincerely,

John McKenna

John McKenna
Head of Networks and Policy
Energy Infrastructure Planning
Energy Development and Resilience Directorate