

Information

for County Councillors

Sheet Number:
2013-17/86

From:	Alyn Jones, Strategic Manager – Major Programmes
Date:	2 nd June 2014
To:	All County Councillors

National Grid Hinkley Point C Connection

Background

National Grid submitted its Development Consent Order application to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on 28 May 2014. On receipt of an application for Development Consent Order (DCO), the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) must decide whether or not to accept the application and has 28 days to make this decision. A key factor for PINS in making this decision relates to the consultation undertaken by the applicant. The Councils assist PINS decision through the submission of an Adequacy of Consultation Representation.

In accordance with the Planning Act 2008 (The Act) the “Adequacy of Consultation Representation” is a statement about whether the applicant has complied, in relation to the proposed application, with the applicant’s duties as set out in The Act. The Councils’ Adequacy of Consultation Representation must focus whether the consultation was in accordance with National Grid’s own Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC). The ‘test’ of adequacy is not about how National Grid has had regard to responses to its consultation.

Adequacy of Consultation – The Councils’ Assessment

Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, West Somerset Council, North Somerset Council, Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council (‘the Councils’) have been invited by PINS to make representations on the adequacy of consultation carried out by National Grid, in developing its

proposals for Hinkley Point C Connection, and have until 11th June 2014 to submit it. The Councils have agreed to submit a joint response.

The Councils' Representation on Adequacy of Consultation will provide a summary of evidence and an analysis of National Grid's community consultation since September 2009 up to the point of submission of its application.

On the whole, National Grid appropriately carried out the consultation activities as detailed in each of its SoCCs. The Councils' key concerns do not relate to the strict adequacy of consultation tests, but instead relate to the information that was consulted upon, and the absence of justification and detailed evidence on some topics.

A number of significant issues were identified by the Councils at the outset of the consultation. The Councils were of the view that National Grid's consultation was fundamentally flawed as many local people were excluded through a lack of information, lack of access to exhibitions, inability to access electronic means of communication and lack of time to respond to the consultation. The Councils share many of the concerns raised by the community and commented that throughout the process more could have been done to provide information on alternative options and sufficient time should have been allowed for all the complicated issues to be fully explained, justified and aired. Measures were put in place by National Grid to enable these issues to be aired through the consultation.

Next steps

PINS allows only 14 calendar days to respond. A key document we are using to inform our response is National Grid's Consultation Report which we received when the application was submitted and is over 4,000 pages long. Clearly, considering this volume of material within 2 weeks and responding in a robust way is a challenge, so work will continue on the Councils' response right up until the day of the Cabinet Member non key-decision which is scheduled for 9th June 2014.

PINS must confirm whether or not they have accepted the application by the 25th June. If PINS confirm that they accept the application a formal timetable for pre-examination of the application will then be issued. A Member Information Sheet will be issued once the Councils' receive confirmation of this timetable.

ENDS

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