

INTRODUCTION

It's been a few months since our previous public consultation on the Morocco-UK Power Project.

We've been busy since then considering feedback from the consultation, continuing our environmental assessments, and developing our plans in more detail.

This newsletter includes an update on what we've been doing since the consultation. It also has an important update on how and when we will be seeking planning permission for the project.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO?

We'd like to thank the many members of the local community who attended our last set of public information days in Huntshaw, Alverdiscott, East-the-Water, and at Caddsdwn in April and May.

It was a pleasure to update participants on our proposals, including the relocation of the converter station site closer to the existing National Grid substation, an alternative underground cable route to avoid Abbotsham village, and further detail regarding the construction and transport routes to be employed by the project.

Since then, we have carefully considered all feedback from the consultation, as well as completing archaeological and ecological survey work and continuing technical work to support our landscape and transport strategies.

UPDATE ON THE PLANNING PROCESS

You may remember that we had originally planned to seek planning permission from Torridge District Council for the project. After careful consideration, we have come to the conclusion that it would be more appropriate to apply to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero for a Development Consent Order (DCO).

This is because we believe the project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). This is a type of project that needs a special type of planning permission through the DCO process.

This reflects the major contribution that the project will make to the country's climate commitments and energy security. The planning process for projects of this type is set in law by the Planning Act 2008. This provides certainty and clarity for everyone involved in the process.

WHAT IS THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS?

NSIPs are major developments which require development consent to be granted by the relevant Secretary of State through a DCO. This is a process established by the Planning Act 2008.

Unlike local planning applications, which are considered by local authorities, DCO applications are made to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). PINS administers the application process on behalf of the Secretary of State. In this case, the relevant government department is the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

This process includes an independent examination of the application, which results in a recommendation to the Secretary of State on whether to grant a DCO or not. Before submitting a DCO application, project promoters are required by the Planning Act 2008 to consult with local authorities, statutory bodies, land interests and the community. Further information is available at: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

The consultation we have carried out to date has been really important in shaping our plans. We will include a full record of it with our application for a DCO. Consultation is also a legal requirement for NSIPs. This means we must conduct a further round of consultation, before we submit our DCO application.

As part of this, we will consult with the community, local authorities, statutory bodies and people with a legal interest in land affected by the project. While the decision on the application will not be made by your local council, it still has a really important role in the process. We must consult with Torridge District Council and Devon County Council on our approach to consultation, as well as our plans.

When we submit our DCO application, PINS will ask these councils to confirm whether we have met the legal requirements for consultation. If they feel our consultation has not been adequate, or we haven't properly considered consultation responses, our application will not progress to the next stage of the process.

**Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping**

We will seek PINS' views on the issues that are to be considered in our EIA.

**Statutory consultation**

We will consult in line with the requirements of the Planning Act 2008.

**Submission of the DCO application**

We will have regard to all consultation responses, continue our EIA and finalise our DCO application.

**Acceptance**

PINS will have 28 days to decide whether to accept our DCO application. It will consider whether we have complied with pre-application requirements, including for consultation.

**Pre-Examination**

There will be an opportunity to register as an Interested Party and take part in the examination.

**Examination**

This is a fixed process with statutory timescales. The DCO application will be scrutinised by an independent Examining Authority.

**Decision**

The Examining Authority will make a recommendation on whether our DCO application should be granted. The relevant Secretary of State will make the final decision.

**Construction**

Once we have the required consents, we will be able to begin construction.



Next steps

We have written to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero to ask them to confirm that the project can be considered as a NSIP.

This is known as a section 35 request. Our application to be considered as a NSIP is supported by Torridge District Council.

The Secretary of State will have 28 days to decide whether to grant our request. Once we have a decision, we will update you.

We will then carry out further consultation on our proposals with the local community – not only is it a requirement under the Planning Act 2008, but we believe it is the right thing to do. We will be back in touch with further details on this later in the year.

FAQs

Why the change?

The Morocco-UK Power Project holds significant potential to contribute to the country's net-zero goals, making the reliability of project delivery and timelines crucial.

The proposed change in planning process recognises this. It will mean that the project enters a regulatory regime with fixed, statutory processes set in law by the Planning Act 2008.

Isn't this just a way of taking the decision out of local hands and reducing our ability to influence it?

No. Under the Planning Act 2008, we will carry out further consultation with the local community, as well as local authorities, regulatory bodies and service providers. We also need to carry out technical and environmental assessments of our proposals and to undertake an EIA which will be reported in an Environmental Statement that will accompany our DCO application.

As part of our application, we will show how we have considered feedback from the consultation and will produce a consultation report. Our application will not be accepted for examination if PINS judges we have not adequately considered consultation feedback. If our DCO application is accepted, there will be an opportunity for local people to register to take part in the examination.

What about the community's feedback and engagement to date? Is that all wasted?

No. The comments we have received to date, both from local residents and stakeholders, have been carefully reviewed by the project team. Where appropriate, they will be reflected in our proposals moving forward that will be the subject of future consultation.

What does this mean for your timescales?

There is a fixed legal process for applying for a DCO, which comes with set timescales. We need to hold another round of consultation before we can submit our DCO application.

We expect to hold that consultation in early 2024 and to submit our DCO application later in the year.



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