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Draft National Policy Statement for Gas Supply Infrastructure and Gas and Oil Pipelines (EN-4)

This draft National Policy Statement (NPS), together with the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy EN-1, is the primary decision-making guidance document for the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) when considering development consent applications for the construction of gas and oil supply infrastructure in England and Wales. It is part of a suite of NPS issued in draft by the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change on 2nd November 2009. Consultation on the documents will run until 22 February 2010.

Responsibility for decision making on this infrastructure will not all fall to the IPC, but will vary across England, Wales and Scotland and also between onshore and offshore schemes. The IPC will not determine applications in Northern Ireland.

The NPS is applicable to :

- Underground gas storage in natural porous strata and caverns and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facilities capable of receiving, storing and re-gasifying LNG if the storage capacity is expected to be at least 43 million standard cubic metres (Mcm) of gas or higher; or with a projected delivery flow rate of at least 4.5 million standard cubic metres of gas per day (Mcm/d);
- An alteration to an underground gas storage facility or an LNG facility if it increases the storage capacity or the maximum flow rate of the facility by the above volumes;
- Gas reception facilities with a projected maximum flow rate of at least 4.5 million standard cubic metres of gas per day (Mcm/d);
- An alteration to a gas reception facility if it increases the maximum flow rate by the above volume;
- Gas Transporter Pipelines which are (a)

expected to be more than 800mm in diameter and more than 40 kilometres in length or (b) likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The design operating pressure must be expected to be more than 7 bar gauge and the pipeline must be expected to convey gas for supply to at least 50,000 potential customers;

- Pipelines over 16.093km (10 miles) long which would otherwise require consent under s.1 of the Pipe-lines Act 1962 together with diversions to such pipelines regardless of length.

The NPS does not cover pipelines carrying anything other than gas or oil.

In the light of the Government's conclusion that there is a significant need for new major energy infrastructure, the NPS states that the IPC should start its assessment of applications for infrastructure covered by this NPS on the basis that need has been demonstrated. The Government does not seek to direct applicants to particular sites for gas supply infrastructure and oil and gas pipelines.

Applicants should set out how their proposal would be resilient to climate change, including:

- increased risk of flooding (from all sources including surface water and rising sea levels) to LNG facilities and gas reception facilities and pipelines;
- damage from increase in wind and storms to LNG facilities and gas reception facilities and their above ground installations;
- higher temperatures affecting the storage, processing or re-gasification of liquefied natural gas at LNG import facilities;
- increased risk of earth movement or subsidence from increased risk of flooding and drought affecting pipelines; and
- any other increased risks identified in the applicant's assessment.

The IPC acts as the Hazardous Substances Authority for energy infrastructure applications it receives. It will consult the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for its advice before deciding whether to make an

order directing that hazardous substances consent shall be deemed to be granted alongside making an order granting development consent.

Gas storage and supply infrastructure sites are subject to stringent safety standards under the Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations 1999. The IPC will need to satisfy itself that applicants have contacted the Competent Authority, and made an assessment of the risks to safety and how these will be controlled or mitigated during the design, construction, operation and decommissioning of sites.

Underground Natural Gas Storage

There are very strong seasonal and daily variations in gas demand. To respond sufficiently quickly to the daily demand pattern, gas needs to be capable of entering the transmission system at strategic points. A mix of short range and medium range storage could respond to this need. Long range storage, some distance from where the gas is needed in the form of a large underground storage facility, provides seasonal endurance capacity.

The location of underground storage sites is restricted to relatively few areas where suitable geological conditions exist. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate the suitability of the geology for any of the above types of underground gas storage when making an application to the IPC.

The NPS includes specific guidance on:

- noise and vibration;
- water quality and resources;
- disposal of brine.

LNG Import Facilities

LNG import facilities receive chilled methane from tanker ships. They are major installations with unloading facilities (including a jetty), onshore storage and regasification plant.

The primary technical siting considerations for a conventional LNG terminal will be the combination of a deepwater jetty for berthing LNG carriers and the availability of a suitably large site for industrial development. Safety considerations and proximity to dwellings, workplaces and other buildings and facilities used by the public, will be relevant factors, as will pipeline access from the LNG terminal to the National Transmission System.

The NPS includes specific guidance on:

- noise and vibration;
- landscape and visual;
- dredging.

Gas Reception Facilities

Onshore gas reception facilities currently receive gas in gaseous form by pipeline from fields on the UK Continental Shelf and from continental Europe.

Gas reception facilities are critically linked to the wider network of onshore and offshore gas supply infrastructure and this places limits and requirements on their location.

Because of their function, gas reception facilities are best sited near the source of incoming natural gas needing to be processed. Factors which may therefore be relevant to their location include the location of new and existing producing fields, offshore natural gas storage facilities and LNG tanker routes. Access to the National Transmission System by pipeline will be a further factor. Developers may therefore be faced with a limited set of options for sites.

The NPS includes specific guidance on noise and vibration.

Gas and Oil Pipelines

The gas and oil pipeline networks extend between storage and distribution facilities, and provide an important transport mechanism for natural gas, petrol, gas oil, heating oil, diesel and aviation fuel.

The IPC will seek advice from HSE about safety issues when considering an application.

Factors influencing site selection include :

- below surface usage, historic or current;
- contaminated land;
- underground cavities;
- utilities.

The NPS includes specific guidance on :

- noise and vibration;
- landscape and visual;
- water quality and resources;
- soil geology

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