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Your ref: NY/2010/065/SCO



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Dear Mr Convery

### **Gas Project near Ebberston/Thorton le Dale – Scoping Opinion**

Thank you for your letter of 11 February 2010, consulting Natural England over the above proposed development. We would like to make the following comments.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development. We are working towards the delivery of four strategic outcomes:

- A healthy natural environment;
- People are inspired to value and conserve the natural environment;
- Sustainable use of the natural environment;
- A secure environmental future.

#### **Ecology**

The scoping report correctly identifies that there are no statutory designated sites on or directly adjacent to the proposed route of the pipeline or the processing plant. However, there are SSSI sites within around 1km of the proposed pipeline routes. We are pleased to see that the potential impact of the proposal on these sites will be assessed.

Protected species surveys are proposed, along with a Phase 1 Habitat Survey which will extend beyond the red line boundary. The proposed protected species surveys are considered to be suitable to assess the impact of the proposal on the species likely to be encountered in this area, and the Phase 1 Survey methodology is considered sufficient to identify any additional protected species survey requirements. **Hedgerows surveys should consider the potential presence of dormice. The dormouse is a protected species which has been successfully reintroduced at a number of sites in North Yorkshire in recent years.**

#### **Landscape**

The scoping report identifies that the proposal site does not lie within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, however there is no specific reference within the landscape section of the report to fact that the proposed pipeline route and the processing plant fall either within or directly adjacent to the North York Moors National Park boundary.

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We are pleased that a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment will be conducted and **would advise that the applicants discuss the selection of suitable viewpoints with the relevant persons within North Yorkshire County Council and the North York Moors National Park Authority.**

Viewpoints selected for inclusion in the LVIA should include established lookout points within the National Park, as well as public footpaths and scheduled monuments within the zone of visual influence.

**Natural England would expect to see an assessment of the impact of the proposals on the National Park itself, but also on the setting of the National Park, and on views from within the park looking out over the surrounding landscape.**

### **Air Quality**

We are pleased to see that the potential for the proposal to impact on the nearby SSSI's in relation to issues of air quality will be assessed as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment. The closest SSSI, Troutdale and Rosekirkdale Fens supports some particularly rare habitat types which are likely to be very sensitive to air quality.

### **Lighting**

Inspection of aerial photograph indicates that the proposed pipeline route passes close to the woodland edge habitat associated with areas of plantation woodland. **Natural England advises that the impact of the lighting requirements of the proposal on the local bat population, which may utilise the woodland edge habitat, should be assessed during both the construction and operational phases.**

### **Agriculture/Soils**

The scoping report describes in considerable detail the assessment of the potential impacts of the proposal on soils and agricultural interests. Our records indicate that a large part of the area surrounding the proposed pipeline route is grade 3 land under the Agricultural Land Classification. This grade is subdivided into grades 3a and 3b, with grade 3a soil being classed as "best and most versatile" agricultural land. We are satisfied with the proposed scope of work in relation to agriculture and soils.

If you have any questions regarding the above comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Richard Clarke  
Government Team (West)