



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and National Infrastructure Projects 19 July 2021

From 19 July, England will be in Stage 4 of the Government's roadmap out of lockdown. Most legal restrictions to control COVID-19 will be lifted at step 4, however, Government guidance will be in place which aims to limit the spread of infections.

Taking account of [Government Guidance](#) to control the spread of COVID-19, from 13 September we will be exploring opportunities to hold examinations that include both online and in person elements. Any in person attendance is likely to be limited in number by the safe operation of venues, in accordance with the new Guidance on safety measures. In person attendance at an event is likely to be focused on those who want to speak and are not able to participate online. As the situation evolves this will be reviewed.

If it becomes clear that it would not be safe to hold planned events that include in person participation, then an Examining Authority can notify Interested Parties that it will be held wholly online instead. An Examining Authority can also make a procedural decision to make a change to the examination timetable, to defer any in person participation to a later date in the examination where that is feasible within the statutory timescale.

Details on each project will be updated via the relevant project links on the [National Infrastructure home page](#).

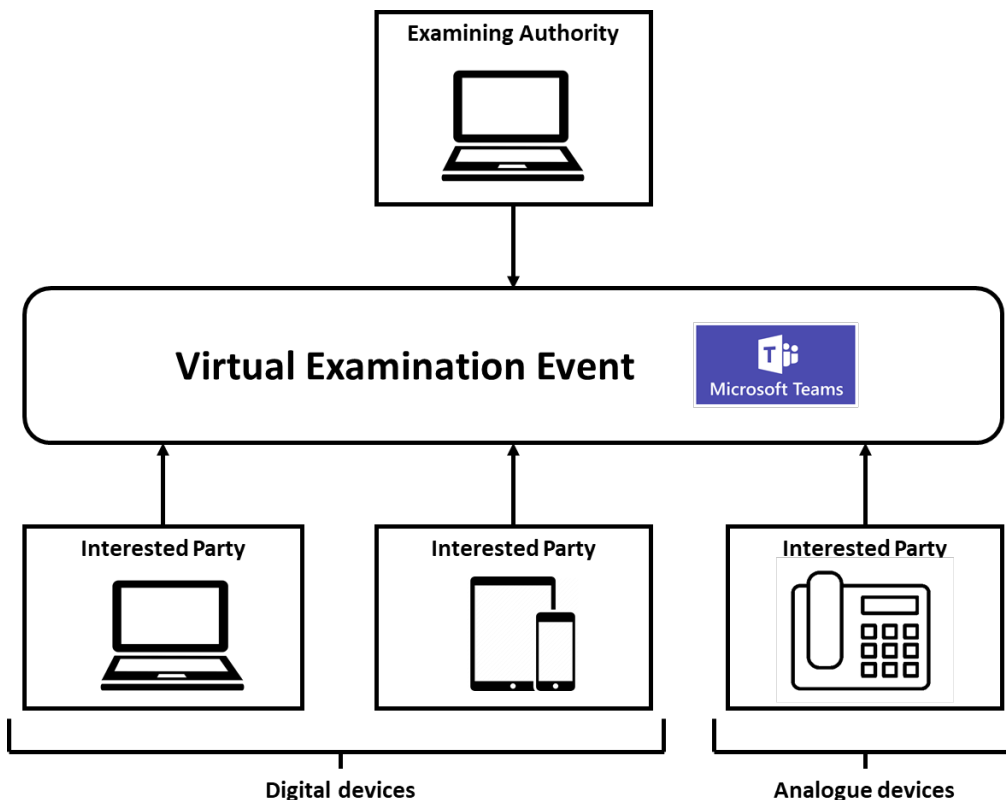
From 19 July 2021 staff will be returning to work in the Inspectorate's offices at Temple Quay House on a managed basis. Access to visitors is likely to remain limited and by appointment only. Telephone calls and emails can still be handled.

Submissions sent by post may be subject to some delay as staff numbers remain limited in the office during this managed return, therefore, please use the project specific webpage and email submissions wherever possible. If you have access to email but have not yet arranged to communicate electronically with the Planning Inspectorate, please email the Case Team to provide them with your consent to communicate with you by email (@ address is on the letter sent to you as an Interested Party or on the project specific webpage).

Advice Note on Participating in Examinations

Examinations are continuing via written/email submissions and the publication of documents online and we will continue to conduct events via telephone and videoconference, with the option to include in person participation into new and existing examinations, where it is safe to do so. This will be notified in advance and special arrangements will be made for any such event.

[Advice Note 8.6](#) is available on our [Advice and Guidance tab](#) to explain in detail how examinations including Preliminary Meetings are held virtually. Below is a short summary but please see Advice Note 8.6 for detailed explanations and diagrams.



The project specific webpage continues to be the main point of reference for notifications about each Examination. We will consider information submitted to Examinations and encourage other parties to continue to have relevant discussions and prepare information and written submissions where it is possible and safe to do so. The Examination process is primarily a written one and cases have continued to make good progress.

The Examining Authority will work through all material received and where relevant will issue additional written questions or procedural decisions to facilitate progress.

The Inspectorate continues to operate largely online and we are always mindful of the need to ensure fairness and open access to all parties. You can see the progress of examinations and pre-examination updates on the main National Infrastructure projects webpage. <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/>

Site Inspections:

The Examining Authority will make use of written submissions on matters which they should view and consider, so please continue to make written submissions which may support the examination of evidence via an Unaccompanied Site Inspection or respond to a request for evidence which may relate to an alternative to an Accompanied Site Inspection in the future. Unaccompanied Site Inspections can take place following the changes in Government Guidance and notes from these inspections will be published on the project page after the visit.

Where the Examining Authority considers it necessary on a specific project that an Accompanied Site Inspection needs to be held, and where it can be undertaken in line with the Government's guidance on Covid-19, then it will be notified accordingly and published on the project specific webpage. Existing examination timetables may

be updated to take account of the most recent guidance and will be shown on the project page.

Thank you for your co-operation with all these arrangements. We continue to make best use of time to review relevant evidence and to enable progress to be made on all submitted applications for nationally significant infrastructure projects in the interest of all parties. We continue to provide pre application advice to applicants, members of the public and other stakeholders.

Please review the project specific webpage on a regular basis for updates.