

## **DIRECTION BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO (“THE SECRETARY OF STATE”) UNDER SECTION 35 OF THE PLANNING ACT 2008 RELATING TO THE XLINKS MOROCCO – UK POWER PROJECT**

By letter to the Secretary of State received on 30 August 2023, Xlinks 1 Ltd (“the Applicant”) formally requested that the Secretary of State exercise the power vested in her under section 35(1) of the Planning Act 2008 to direct that the two proposed UK onshore converter stations for the Xlinks Morocco – UK Power Project, as set out in the Direction request, be treated as development for which development consent under the Planning Act 2008 is required.

The Secretary of State notes that the Direction request of 30 August 2023 relates to—

- The construction and operation of the two converter stations in the UK to convert and supply the electricity to the GB grid forms the development for which development consent should be required (“the Proposed Development”); and
- Associated development, which may include the onshore High Voltage Direct Current (“HVDC”) cables from the Transition Joint Bay to the converter stations; the offshore HVDC cables and/or works to install the cables within the UK inshore territorial waters; and other works to facilitate the connection of the project to the UK National Grid.

Together the elements for which development consent should be required and its associated development comprise the “Proposed Project”. The Secretary of State concludes that the Proposed Project is an energy project within the scope of section 35 of the Planning Act 2008.

Noting the above, and further that Torridge District Council supports the request, the Secretary of State is satisfied that—

- The Proposed Project sits within one of qualifying infrastructure fields listed in section 35(2)(a)(i) (energy) and that the Proposed Project will be wholly within England, waters adjacent to England up to the seaward limits of the territorial sea or the Renewable Energy Zone (in relation to which the Scottish Ministers do not have functions);
- The Proposed Project does not fall within the existing definition of a “nationally significant infrastructure project” and therefore it is appropriate to consider use of the power in section 35(1) of the Planning Act 2008; and
- The Applicant’s request constitutes a “qualifying request” in accordance with section 35ZA(11) of the Planning Act 2008.

Having considered the details of the Applicant’s proposals as set out in their letter of 30 August 2023 the Secretary of State concludes that the Proposed Project is nationally significant, for the reasons set out in the Annex below.

The Secretary of State considers that if the details of the Proposed Project change, before submitting any application to the Planning Inspectorate, the Applicant may wish to seek confirmation from the Secretary of State that the development that is the subject of the proposed application is the same as that for which the Direction is hereby given.

The Secretary of State has taken the decision within the conditions as required by sections 35A(2) and (5) of the Planning Act 2008, and issues this Direction accordingly under sections 35(1) and 35ZA of the Planning Act 2008.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE DIRECTS that the Proposed Development is to be treated as development for which development consent is required.

This Direction is given without prejudice to the Secretary of State's consideration of any application for development consent which is made in relation to the proposed Development.

Signed by

John Wheadon  
Head of Energy Infrastructure Planning  
For and on behalf of the Secretary of State for Energy Security & Net Zero

26 September 2023

## **ANNEX**

### **REASONS FOR THE DECISION TO ISSUE THE DIRECTION**

The Secretary of State is of the opinion that the Direction should be issued because—

- The Proposed Project is of national significance, taking into account that it forms part of a generation project which is comprised of 11.5GW of renewable power in Morocco, which is intended to deliver 3.6 Gigawatts (GW) of low carbon electricity to the UK's grid and could improve the security and diversity of the UK's electricity supply.
- The Proposed Project could play an important role in enabling an energy system that meets the UK's commitment to reduce carbon emissions and the Government's objectives to create a secure, reliable and affordable energy supply for consumers.
- Progressing the development through the Planning Act 2008 development consent process, to the extent that the Proposed Project is within that process, would provide the certainty of a single, unified consenting process and fixed timescales.