



Grand Union Canal Transfer

Bringing water from the
Midlands to the Southeast

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Deputy Director, Water Sector Delivery
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
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Our Ref:

AFF/1902/AMB/LD/2024 09 05

Your Ref:

Project No:

AFF/1902

By Email Only

5th September 2024

Dear Mr Woolhead

Grand Union Canal Transfer Project – Request for a Direction under Section 35 (1) of the Planning Act 2008

On behalf of the Applicants, Affinity Water Limited (AfW), Severn Trent Water Limited (ST) and the Canal & River Trust (the Trust) charity, this letter encloses a ‘qualifying request’ under Section 35 of the 2008 Act for the Grand Union Canal Transfer Project (the Project).

The Project is a central component of both the Water Resources in the South East (WRSE) Regional Plan and AfW’s revised draft Water Resources Management Plan 2024 (WRMP24) supplying water resilience for AfW customers in Hertfordshire and North West London. It is also part of the Regulators’ Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development’s (RAPID) programme of Strategic Resource Options (SROs) to help meet the water needs set out in the Environment Agency’s National Framework, that will benefit customers and wider society, and help to protect and enhance the environment.

The Project will transfer surplus water from ST’s supply area via up to 131km length of canal across up to ten local authority areas to areas of water deficit in AfW’s supply area. From a new Advanced Water Treatment Plant (AWTP) to the East of Birmingham, a new pipeline and existing canals will convey a source of raw water which will then be abstracted, stored and treated in Bedfordshire or Buckinghamshire, prior to its distribution to AfW customers.

The Project is a significant infrastructure scheme of substantial size and complexity. The Project will comprise extensive and large-scale water supply infrastructure and pipelines, including modification and the introduction of new infrastructure adjacent to and within the canal network. It will interface with multiple land interests, designations, sites of ecological, landscape and historic interest and other major infrastructure, stretching across multiple local authority and decision-making boundaries and requiring an extensive range of consents, power, licences and permits, whilst potentially having a range of temporary and permanent effects.

Consideration of the Project through the DCO consenting route and determined in accordance with the Water Resources Infrastructure NPS will minimise and manage planning and consenting risks that could otherwise result in significant potential delays to the consenting of the Project thereby delaying the delivery of a resilient water supply for AfW's customers and the Government's planned significant growth for Cambridge.

Fundamentally, the certainty of timely delivery and the largely single authorisation of consents enabled by the 2008 Act regime, within a clear national policy context of the Water Resources Infrastructure NPS, are considered to be critical to ensure that the Project is delivered and operational on programme by 2032 as identified by the Revised Draft WRSE Regional Plan and AfW's revised draft WRMP24.

The enclosed qualifying request confirms that the Project is within the field of water and would be located wholly within England. The information within the request explains why the conditions in section 35(2)(a) and (b) of the 2008 Act are met in relation to the development, and why the Project is considered to be of national significance. The request therefore meets the requirements for a 'qualifying request' within the meaning of section 35ZA(11) of the 2008 Act to enable the Secretary of State to give a direction for the Project under section 35(1).

For the reasons set out in full within the qualifying request, the Applicants request that the Secretary of State gives a direction under section 35 of the 2008 Act for the 'principal' elements of the Project to be treated as development for which development consent is required.

Further information

Should any further information or clarification be requested, please contact Andy Blaxland at Adams Hendry Consulting Ltd, DCO Planning Consultants to the Applicants on 07919 486420 or at a.blaxland@adamshendry.co.uk

Yours sincerely



Andy Blaxland
Director, Adams Hendry Consulting Ltd

For and on behalf of Affinity Water Limited, Severn Trent Water Limited, and the Canal & River Trust charity

Enc: Grand Union Canal Transfer Project – Section 35 Direction Qualifying Request (Sept 2024)