



Application by National Highways for an Order Granting Development Consent for the Lower Thames Crossing

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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This FAQ document aims to assist all parties involved in the Examination who may have questions about the Pre-examination stage, the Examination itself, procedures and arrangements for the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) Examination.

It may be updated from time to time at the discretion of the Examining Authority (ExA). Please note that, for this reason, question numbers may change on future versions.

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Pre-examination

1- What happens now the Application has been accepted?

In due course, the Applicant will notify those required by legislation (eg, Affected Persons¹, Statutory Bodies² etc), as well as arranging press notices to notify more widely, that the Application has been accepted.

The notification will include information on how to register to participate in the forthcoming examination and submit initial comments on the scheme, known as Relevant Representations, and the dates between which these can be submitted. The Applicant is required to give a period of at least 30 calendar days to register. Registration will be done via a form on the [National Infrastructure Planning website for the project](#) once the Relevant Representations period starts. We encourage use of the electronic form but a paper form is available on request.

2- Why should I submit a Relevant Representation?

This is the first time that comments and views on the application can be sent directly to the Planning Inspectorate to be taken into account by the Examining Authority. Once an individual or group has successfully submitted their Relevant Representation then they will have an official status in the Examination, be allocated a personal reference number and receive communication issued by the Inspectorate throughout the Examination and be able to fully participate; submitting representations at deadlines as well as attending, and speaking at, hearings.

3- I belong to a group, can we submit a joint Relevant Representation?

We encourage anyone who is interested to register during this period to enable them to be able to actively participate in the Examination if they wish. However, there is no requirement for each individual to register where there is a shared interest. We encourage individuals with similar views to team up and register as a group. If you are part of a community, family or other group with the same views you can join together to submit one Relevant Representation in the group name, eg, '[Place Name] Community Group' or 'The Smith Family'. In this case, please allocate one person and contact address to advocate on behalf of the group. Our experience has seen that this enables clearer, more directive representations to be compiled setting out evidence to substantiate views.

The consideration of issues is not based on the number of times a matter is raised but instead the evidence provided to the Examining Authority to enable them to explore an issue and therefore, one representation from a group carries the same weight as a number of individual responses containing the same argument(s).

4- What do I say in my Relevant Representation?

Your Relevant Representation should relate to the application. It must include a summary of points which you agree and/or disagree with about the application, highlighting what you consider to be the main issues and impacts. You will get a chance

¹ An Affected Person is a person who holds an interest in land to which a Compulsory Acquisition request relates and is named in the [Book of Refence](#). A person who holds Affected Person status at the time of the Preliminary Meeting is automatically an Interested Party for the purposes of an Examination.

² Statutory Bodies are those named in Statutory Instruments as those who have to be kept notified, eg, local and national bodies.

to submit fuller representations during the Examination so your Relevant Representation should be an 'introduction' to your points and enable the Examining Authority to identify the main issues of the proposed project before the Examination starts.

If you submit a form with little or no information about your representations included in it, your form may be rejected as invalid. Unless you submit a valid form before the close of the Relevant Representation period then you may not be granted formal Interested Person status in the Examination.

5- What if I don't submit a Relevant Representation but I want to be involved?

If you are an Affected Person you will have a status in the Examination and be able to become involved even if you don't submit a Relevant Representation. If you are not and you do not submit a Relevant Representation then you will have no formal status in the Examination. You will only be able to submit representations and speak at hearings at the discretion of the Examining Authority. You will still be able to follow the progress of the Examination through the deadline documents, viewing hearings and receiving updates via the project webpage (see question 14-).

6- I want to make sure my views are known, can I write in now?

You should not write in about anything during the Pre-examination period unless you are making a Relevant Representation or are specifically asked to do so by the Examining Authority. The Examining Authority may ask the Applicant and certain persons to prepare or revise and submit documents to help everybody to prepare for the Examination in due course.

Before the Preliminary Meeting, the Examining Authority will ask persons who want to make procedural points for consideration at the meeting to write in summarising their points, this is usually known as Procedural Deadline A. These contributions should only respond to the Examining Authority's requests and relate to the Examination process. They should not address the merits of the Application or set out your views: there will be plenty of time to set your views out during the Examination stage.

If you write in with comments that the Examining Authority has not asked you to submit during the Pre-examination period, especially if these comments relate to the merits of the Application, the Examining Authority can decline to accept your submissions. You will need to submit your comments again at the correct time during the Examination.

7- How long will it be before the Preliminary Meeting is held and the Examination starts?

The Preliminary Meeting is the start of the Examination. The period between Acceptance and the Preliminary Meeting is known as the Pre-examination stage. Typically, the Preliminary Meeting takes place between three and five months after the acceptance of the application. In larger scale projects, such as the Lower Thames Crossing, a longer Pre-examination period may take place.

8- Do I need to attend the Preliminary Meeting to take part in the Examination?

No, the Preliminary Meeting will not be concerned with the merits of the scheme but it is for discussion of the procedure for examining it, eg dates for events, deadline submissions etc. The draft timetable for comments will be issued in the 'Rule 6'³ letter before the Preliminary Meeting and the final timetable will be issued in the 'Rule 8'⁴ letter following the Preliminary Meeting.

If you have any comments on the suggested procedure or draft timetable once issued these can be submitted in writing, or you can register to attend and speak at the Preliminary Meeting, by deadlines which will be set out in the Rule 6 letter.

9- I've never spoken at a meeting or hearing like this before, how will I know what to do?

The first thing to know is that there is no requirement to speak at a meeting or hearing. The NSIP process is primarily a written one, with Examination hearings held to aid the Examining Authority's understanding. Written submissions carry as much weight as oral submissions. However, if you do want to speak, there is no need to be intimidated by the process of appearing at a hearing. Our Inspectors and case staff are used to guiding those who have little or no experience at such events.

The Preliminary Meeting and subsequent hearings will be notified giving parties approximately 28-days' notice of the exact date, time and location (and/or virtual nature⁵). You will be given a deadline by which you will need to let us know if you want to attend or actively participate. Agendas will be published ahead of the event. You may also be asked which agenda item you wish to speak on. Come to the hearing prepared with the points that you wish to raise orally. If you speak, you will be asked to submit a written version of your oral submission at the exam deadline following the hearing.

All meetings and hearings are live streamed and recorded so you can watch at your convenience if you are not able to attend.

[Information videos](#) are available on our website to help you get familiar with the process. Please note, these videos were made pre-pandemic when all hearings were in person only.

You may find it helpful to review recordings of hearings held on other projects to become familiar with the set up and process. Some recent examples are below and others can be found on the [National Infrastructure Planning](#) website:

- [Longfield Solar Farm – Preliminary Meeting \(virtual only\)](#)
- [A66 Northern Trans-Pennine – Preliminary Meeting \(blended\)](#)
- [Awel y Mor Offshore Wind Farm – Issue Specific Hearing \(blended\)](#)

³ This refers to Rule 6 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. The Rule 6 letter includes an Invitation to the Preliminary Meeting and a draft Examination Timetable.

⁴ This refers to Rule 8 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. The Rule 8 letter includes the final Examination Timetable.

⁵ Hearings may be either fully virtual or 'blended', which is a mix of in-person and virtual. The decision as to which type to use for each event is made by the Examining Authority.

Please note that only those with a formal Interested Party status⁶ in the examination have a right to speak at hearings. Those who have no formal status may only speak at the discretion of the Examining Authority; this may not be possible if hearings are highly subscribed or there are complex matters that Interested Parties have already requested to raise. In the event that the number of attendees exceeds the space provided for a physical hearing, priority will be given to Interested Parties. Because all events are live-streamed and recorded, you will always be able to watch, even if you can't be in the venue in person.

10- How will I take part if the Examination includes virtual hearings?

We understand that not everyone will be familiar with participating in virtual events. Although we will endeavour to make sure as many events as possible are available to attend in person there is also likely to be a virtual element, eg to enable those who are unable to attend in person to participate.

If you want or need to attend virtually but are unsure how to do this please let the PINS case team know (see question 15-) and we can arrange for virtual familiarisation sessions nearer the time.

11- How do I find and refer to particular documents?

The project [Examination Library](#) will be kept updated throughout the Examination and will include all documents accepted into the Examination. Documents are allocated a unique reference number and we ask that you use this number, alongside the document name, when referring to a document. This ensures that everyone is clear about which document(s) you are referring to.

We endeavour throughout the examination to ensure clarity as to when documents have been updated and the Applicant will be asked to do the same.

12- Should I approach PINS or the Applicant if I have comments or questions?

Questions on the NSIP process and procedures not covered by this FAQ or the advice notes and guidance (see question 13-) should be addressed to the PINS case team using the contact details at question 15-).

Comments and views on the merits of the application and the information provided by the Applicant and others as the examination progresses should be addressed to PINS at the stipulated deadlines. Further details will follow in the Rule 6 letter ahead of the Preliminary Meeting.

Questions on the application, for example, where to find a particular piece of information in the application documents or the effect of the proposed project on a specific plot of land, should continue to be addressed to the Applicant, who is best placed to answer such questions.

⁶ Interested Parties are those allocated an 'IP reference number' by PINS. They include Affected Persons, Statutory Bodies, and those who successfully submitted a valid Relevant Representation.

General NSIP information

13- Where can I find out general information about the NSIP process?

More information can be found on our website, in particular:

- [Advice notes⁷](#)
- [How to register to participate in an Examination](#)
- [Explanation and videos explaining the NSIP process](#)
- [A video explaining how to participate](#)
- [General Frequently Asked Question about the NSIP process](#)
- [Glossary of Terms.](#)

General LTC information

14- How can I keep up to date with the latest news about the LTC Examination?

Please visit the [PINS project website](#) regularly for updates.

The project website also has a facility for you to sign up to receive [auto updates by email](#) when the page is updated and to alert you to when information is published or documents are issued by the Examining Authority. We encourage you to sign up for this if you have not already done so.

If you successfully submit a valid Relevant Representation, are an Affected Person or a Statutory Body you will be notified by PINS at certain points of the process, as required by legislation. The first of these will be the issue of the Rule 6 letter ahead of the Preliminary Meeting.

15- How do I contact the Planning Inspectorate's LTC case team?

You can contact the PINS case team the following ways:

- by email to LowerThamesCrossing@planninginspectorate.gov.uk
- by telephone via 0303 444 5000.

⁷ Of particular interest may be *Advice Note Eight: Overview of the nationally significant infrastructure planning process for members of the public and others* and its annexes.