

NIPA Insights Research Project: Flexibility Vs Detail - What is the optimum balance? Progress Report.

Since it was first agreed to undertake this research at our AGM in May this year, we have been making steady progress towards the commencement of this project. Following initial discussions with DCLG, we prepared a brief for the work, issued it to five potential tenderers and invited two for interview. **After some deliberation over two high quality submissions, it was decided to appoint the Bartlett School of Planning at University College London to undertake the work.** We have now held an inception meeting, and the project is up and running.

We are very keen that NIPA Members play an integral role in this research. The NIPA membership provides a valuable pool of knowledge and experience of the DCO process, and we hope that many of you will be involved in some way, perhaps through interviews, focus groups or workshops. The basic outline of the research proposed is as follows:

- **Stage 1A, September 2016:** A desktop review of the issues to determine current policy and practice. Issues to be considered include the level of detail in EIA and DCO applications generally, examination practice, and in the DCO itself; as well as impacts for the project in terms of flexibility, scope for innovation, cost, construction and operational effects. This will inform proposals for stakeholder consultation to be undertaken in Stage 1B.
- **Interim Report, October 2016:** A report on Stage 1A, summarising the issues identified in Stage 1A and the issues to be considered during Stage 1B, will be prepared by the beginning of October 2016.
- **Stage 1B, October/ November 2016:** Consultation with stakeholders based on an interviews and focus groups, to determine their experiences and consequences for projects of which they have experience. Stakeholders should include Government Departments (which would be coordinated by DCLG), Promoters, Advisers, Contractors, Local Authorities, Statutory Consultees, and Community Representatives.
- **Preliminary Report, December 2016:** A draft Preliminary Report on the principal issues and impacts, (eg social & economic effects, skills and capacity within each stakeholder group, as well as risk, cost and programme for project outcomes), arising from the desktop review and stakeholder consultation to be prepared by the beginning of December 2016. Consideration may also be given to any differences between industry sectors within the scope of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects as defined in the Planning Act, including commercial and business schemes. A final Preliminary Report will be completed by the end of December 2016.
- **Stage 2, January / February 2017:** Engagement with stakeholders about the findings of the Preliminary Report, including the principal issues and impacts identified. Three NIPA Roundtables with Members and wider stakeholder groups, and meetings with DCLG and PINS are proposed to explore opportunities and constraints to future changes in policy or practice, and potential changes which could lead to a more optimal balance between detail, flexibility and project outcomes.
- **Final Report, March 2017:** Following engagement with stakeholders about preliminary findings, a draft Final Report will be prepared by the end of February 2017. The Final Report will summarise the evidence reviewed, identify the principal issues and impacts, summarise stakeholder views following consultation, and identify recommendations aimed at achieving an optimum balance between detail, flexibility, process, decision-making and project outcomes, by the end of March 2016.

As part of our ambition to put NIPA members at the heart of this work, we proposed the formation of a Member Stakeholder Group to act as a sounding board for the research team, to hear conclusions at key stages of the project, and to influence the direction of its outcomes.

Following an invitation to the membership issued in July, we have now confirmed that the following people will be part of this group:

Member Stakeholder Group: NIPA Insights: Flexibility Vs Detail	
Name	Organisation
Alex Herbert	Tidal Lagoon Power
Anna Pickering	Highways England
Ben Lewis	Billfinger GVA
Chris Girdham	Ballymore
Helen Walker	Scottish Power Renewables
Jan Bessell	Pinsent Masons
Julian Boswell	Burgess Salmon
Stephanie Wray	President: IEEMA
Karen Wilson	Amec Foster Wheeler
Claire Hennessey	WSP/ PB
Keith Farley	Keith Farley Ltd
To be confirmed	Local Authority
Greg Tomlinson	MMO
Tony Burton	Big Lottery Fund, Consultant
RTPI	Stakeholder Organisation
Major Projects Association	Stakeholder Organisation
DCLG	Observers and co-ordination across Government Departments

We are extremely grateful to all who put themselves forward to be part of this group. It is a great sign of the enthusiasm of the membership for this topic that so many people were willing to give up some of their time to support this work. We were aiming to provide good cross sectoral/ stakeholder representation on this group, and were unfortunately unable to accommodate everyone without making the group unwieldy. Apologies to those who were not asked to participate, but we hope that you will find other ways to express your thoughts and influence the project in due course.

To ensure that this project gains the full benefits from the insights of NIPA members, it has also decided to appoint Hannah Hickman to act on behalf of NIPA to act as co-ordinator and critical friend. Hannah is an experienced freelance town planner and researcher, is a visiting fellow at the University of West of England, and was involved in the preparation of the recent report into the inclusion of large scale housing within the NSIP regime. Hannah will be helping us to ensure consistency, timeliness and effectiveness of member engagement and project outcomes.

Anyone who wishes to provide a contribution which they think will be of benefit to the project team should send an e-mail to Hannah at insights@nipa-org.uk who will make sure that this is fed through as appropriate to the client and project team. **At this stage, any thoughts about**



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relevant literature, projects or people that might be of help to the project team would be very welcome.

The first opportunity for wider engagement will be a NIPA Roundtable event which is now being planned for the end of October. This will provide an opportunity for the project team to present their initial thoughts, and to seek feedback about what members see as being the principal issues for the project to tackle. More details will follow - we hope to see many of you there.

With thanks

NIPA Insights Client Team

Keith Mitchell, Robbie Owen, and Michael Wilks.