

Chapter 5: Consultation and Engagement

Table of Contents

5.	Consultation and Engagement	1
5.1	Introduction	1
5.2	Phase One Public Consultation	2
5.3	EIA Scoping	3
5.4	Other consultation and engagement.....	7
5.5	Expectations for the Phase Two Public Consultation	10
5.6	References	11

Tables

Table 5-1: Non-topic specific comments from the EIA Scoping Opinion	4
---	---

5. Consultation and Engagement

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI) Report chapter outlines the stakeholder engagement undertaken to date for the Grand Union Canal Transfer (GUCT) project (the 'Proposed Development') and sets out the process for the planned Phase Two Public Consultation. It summarises how stakeholder engagement to date has informed the Proposed Development and the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and explains how the Phase Two Public Consultation will seek further feedback on the Proposed Development and preliminary environmental assessment presented in this PEI Report.
- 5.1.2 Effective stakeholder engagement and consultation is intrinsic to the Planning Act 2008 (Ref. 1) and is important to the development of a comprehensive and balanced Environmental Statement (ES). The views of statutory and non-statutory consultees serve to focus the environmental studies and to identify specific issues that require further investigation. Consultation is an ongoing process, which considers the views of all consultees as part of the Proposed Development's design and development, enabling measures to be incorporated to mitigate adverse effects and enhance environmental benefits. Moreover, the National Policy Statement for Water Resources Infrastructure (NPSWRI) (Ref. 2) is clear that effective engagement is key to good design and that applicants should provide sufficient information in an application to demonstrate how stakeholder engagement has been conducted.
- 5.1.3 Stakeholder engagement for the Proposed Development is based on the following principles:
- a. Early and ongoing engagement to inform and influence the design process;
 - b. Seeking feedback on the iterative design process and taking this feedback into consideration;
 - c. Building of long-term relationships with key stakeholders throughout the different stages of the Proposed Development to help better understand their views;
 - d. Where possible and practicable, ensuring concerns are addressed; and
 - e. Ensuring appropriate statutory consultation is undertaken in compliance with requirements of the Planning Act 2008, The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)

Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the 'EIA Regulations') (Ref. 3) and associated guidance.

5.1.4 This chapter is supported by the following appendices in **Volume 4** of the PEI Report:

- a. **Appendix 5-PD-1: EIA Scoping Report;** and
- b. **Appendix 5-PD-2: EIA Scoping Opinion.**

5.1.5 Details of all consultation currently undertaken for the Proposed Development will be provided in the Phase One Public Consultation Report which forms part of the Phase Two Public Consultation material.

5.1.6 There are no supporting figures for this chapter.

5.2 Phase One Public Consultation

5.2.1 The Phase One Public Consultation was undertaken between 11 September and 25 October 2024. The purpose of the of this consultation was to gain feedback from technical consultees and from landowners, interest groups and members of the public that might be affected by the Proposed Development or wish to express an interest in its design and evolution. As well as feedback on the Proposed Development in general, the Applicants also requested feedback on a number of potential development sites and pipeline corridors.

5.2.2 The Phase One Public Consultation was advertised via:

- a. 13,000+ postcards to local residents;
- b. Posters across local communities;
- c. Press releases through local and trade media;
- d. Emails to 250 stakeholders; and
- e. Contact with 7,000+ boating customers.

5.2.3 Additionally, the Grand Union Canal Transfer website (Ref. 4), launched on 13 June 2024, served as the central information hub and was updated at the start of the consultation.

5.2.4 The Applicants held a series of public consultation events during the consultation period between 21 September and 5 October 2024. The events consisted of both village hall events and pop-up events and were attended by 780 people.

5.2.5 Nine public drop-in events were held in various village and community halls within towns and villages close to the Proposed Development. These provided attendees with the opportunity to learn more about the proposals, meet the project team, view large scale maps and provide feedback.

- 5.2.6 A series of six smaller pop-up events were held canal-side at various locations along the Proposed Development route. These allowed attendees to ask members of the project team questions and take away materials. The locations of each pop-up event correlated with the location of proposed infrastructure (e.g. pumping stations or gravity bypasses) and where high footfall was anticipated.
- 5.2.7 The feedback received on the site and route options presented in the Phase One Public Consultation is summarised in **Chapter 4: Consideration of Alternatives** in PEI Report **Volume 2**.
- 5.2.8 Further detail on the engagement carried out as part of the Phase One Public Consultation is available in the Phase One Public Consultation Report, which is provided on the Planning Inspectorate's (PINS) project website (Ref. 5).

Key themes and feedback

- 5.2.9 Feedback received throughout the Phase One Public Consultation was gathered and analysed following the conclusion of the consultation period. Further details on this feedback are available in the Phase One Public Consultation Report which will be published as part of the Phase Two Public Consultation material.
- 5.2.10 Topic-specific comments, and how these have been taken into account in the EIA, are set out within **Chapters 7-22** in PEI Report **Volume 2**.

5.3 EIA Scoping

EIA Scoping Report

- 5.3.1 A request for an EIA Scoping Opinion was submitted to the PINS on behalf of the Applicants on 28 March 2025 in accordance with Regulation 10 of the EIA Regulations (Ref. 3). Requesting a Scoping Opinion allows an applicant to agree the scope and level of detail of the subsequent PEI Report and ES with the relevant authority, in this case, PINS (acting on behalf of the Secretary of State [SoS]). This request for an EIA Scoping Opinion was accompanied by an EIA Scoping Report (see **Appendix 5-PD-1** in PEI Report **Volume 4**). The report outlined the proposed scope and methodology for the EIA, including baseline data collection, assessment parameters, and topic-specific approaches. It also identified potential environmental effects and proposed early mitigation strategies, associated with the anticipated construction and operation phases of the Proposed Development.

EIA Scoping Opinion

- 5.3.2 Upon receipt of the EIA Scoping Opinion request, PINS (acting on behalf of the SoS) undertook a formal consultation with prescribed consultees, under

Regulation 10(6) of the EIA Regulations (Ref. 3). Consultation with statutory consultation bodies, including environmental bodies (such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England) and relevant planning authorities (including the ten host local planning authorities) was conducted.

- 5.3.3 Feedback received during this consultation was reviewed and incorporated by PINS before adopting an EIA Scoping Opinion (see **Appendix 5-PD-2** in PEI Report **Volume 4**), which was issued on 08 May 2025.
- 5.3.4 The EIA Scoping Opinion confirms the matters to be included within the scope of the EIA, the contents of which has been taken account of in preparing this PEI Report.
- 5.3.5 **Table 5-1** outlines the non-topic-specific comments made by PINS and explains how each point has currently been addressed. Topic-specific comments, and how these have been taken into account, are set out within **Chapters 7-22** in PEI Report **Volume 2**.

Table 5-1: Non-topic specific comments from the EIA Scoping Opinion

Summary of comment	How comment has been addressed
PINS notes that several elements of the proposed development are still under consideration, including the locations of the outfall, abstraction points (Sites B and H), and whether a wetland area will be used to settle out solids. They advise the applicant to narrow the range of options and clearly explain in the ES which elements remain unfinalised.	Chapter 4: Consideration of Alternatives in PEI Report Volume 2 , outlines the optioneering and design development work undertaken since the EIA Scoping Report was prepared. This explains that there is now a preferred outfall location and abstraction, storage and treatment site (Site B, now called 'Galley Water Treatment Works' [WTW]). It also explains why a wetland is not included as part of the Minworth Advanced Water Treatment Plant (AWTP) (i.e. Part 1a). Remaining areas of optionality or uncertainty are described in Chapter 3: The Proposed Development in PEI Report Volume 2 .
PINS expects that while a 'Rochdale Envelope' approach will be applied, the application will still provide sufficient detail on the design, size, capacity, and locations of all elements, or clearly state the assumptions where details remain unknown. Where flexibility is sought, the ES should justify and clearly set	Chapter 3: The Proposed Development in PEI Report Volume 2 explains where uncertainty remains or flexibility is sought and sets out the assumptions and design parameters that have been adopted for the purpose of the preliminary assessments. These parameters have been adopted and form the basis for the assessment of significant effects in this PEI Report. It is

Summary of comment	How comment has been addressed
out the maximum design parameters for each option and explain how these parameters have been used to inform the assessment.	expected that some areas of uncertainty will be reduced post Phase Two Public Consultation.
PINS advises that the ES should include details on the number, location, and dimensions of construction compounds, clarifying whether they are temporary or permanent. Information should also be provided on any reinstatement works, with cross-references to relevant assessments such as air quality and landscape.	Chapter 3: The Proposed Development in PEI Report Volume 2 presents indicative details of the construction techniques. Further detail will be provided in the ES, and details of any necessary reinstatement works and associated likely impacts will be reported in the ES.
PINS requests clearer presentation of all parts of the proposed development in the ES, ensuring figures show what is proposed for each area within the red line boundary, with cross-references in the main text to aid understanding.	Chapter 3: The Proposed Development in PEI Report Volume 2 presents a detailed description of the Proposed Development and is accompanied by a series of Figures (provided in PEI Report Volume 4) that show the indicative locations of the proposed temporary and permanent works. It is expected that the ES will refer to the Works Plans and associated works descriptions that will form part of the Draft Development Consent Order (DCO).
PINS notes that Gate 4 will be developed alongside the DCO application and submitted after the application is accepted for examination (anticipated May 2027). The ES must ensure that any relied-upon information is robust, up to date, and consistent with Gate 4 outputs.	Gate 4 of the Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development's (RAPID) programme represents a checkpoint for solutions approximately 56 calendar days after the date when the DCO application has been submitted to PINS. The Gate 4 submission will not introduce materially different environmental information beyond that included in the ES.
PINS requests that the ES include details of any demolition required as part of the proposed development, along with cross-references to relevant assessment chapters such	Chapter 3: The Proposed Development in PEI Report Volume 2 presents a description of currently known demolition activities. This will be updated for the ES. Where relevant, an assessment of demolition impacts is included within the

Summary of comment	How comment has been addressed
as air quality and materials and waste.	'Construction Effects' section of Chapters 7-22 in PEI Report Volume 2 .
PINS advises that the ES should use the latest flood and coastal erosion risk data, incorporating updates from Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs' (Defra) Data Services Platform, and liaise with the Environment Agency where relevant to assess implications for project design and assessment scope.	The latest flood and coastal erosion risk data, incorporating updates from Defra's Data Services Platform, has been used to inform the preliminary environmental assessment and will be used to inform the ES. The Applicant continues to liaise regularly with the Environment Agency's National Appraisal Unit (NAU) and National Infrastructure Team (NIT) on the scope and outcomes of the assessment work and relevant elements of the Proposed Development's design.
PINS notes that several 'other assessments' (non-EIA assessments) are planned (e.g., Habitats Regulations Assessment [HRA], Water Framework Directive [WFD] Compliance, Flood Risk Assessment [FRA], Biodiversity / Environmental Net Gain [BNG / ENG], Equality Impact Assessment) and advises that the ES should clearly reference linkages between these and relevant EIA topics such as biodiversity, communities, and water resources.	The approach to these 'other assessments' is described in Chapter 6: Environmental Impact Assessment Methodology in PEI Report Volume 2 . Cross-reference to these 'other assessments' is included where appropriate within relevant topic chapter (Chapters 7-22 in PEI Report Volume 2). The same approach to referencing will be adopted in the ES.
PINS notes that the scoping report relies on RAPID modelling and references documents in Appendix 12-1 that are not included, making it unclear how the modelling supports the assessment. The ES should include all relied-upon RAPID information to ensure transparency.	The assessments reported in PEI Report include, where necessary, details of relied-upon RAPID information. The same approach will be adopted in the ES.
PINS notes that the scoping report commits to consulting host authorities on the list of sites for the cumulative effects assessment (CEA). The ES should ensure this	A long list of other developments for the cumulative effects assessment has been prepared and agreed with the host authorities. This has been used to create the shortlist presented in Appendix 23-PD-1 in PEI Report Volume 4 . An updated

Summary of comment	How comment has been addressed
list is updated close to submission and agreed with the host authorities.	short list will be agreed with the relevant local planning authorities for the assessment to be reported in the ES.

5.4 Other consultation and engagement

- 5.4.1 In addition to the Phase One Public Consultation events, a programme of targeted technical and non-technical stakeholder engagement has been undertaken. This has included structured dialogue with statutory consultees, host local authorities, canal users, and other interest groups, with the aim of shaping the scope of environmental assessments, identifying potential design refinements, and ensuring that emerging proposals are responsive to stakeholder priorities. These activities complement the wider consultation strategy and provide a mechanism for early input on specific environmental, operational, and community-related matters.

Local Authority Liaison Group

- 5.4.2 A forum of the ten host local authorities referred to as the Local Authority Liaison Group (LALG) has been established to enable the Applicants to provide project updates and receive feedback on the emerging proposals.
- 5.4.3 Some of the host authorities have extensive experience of the DCO process (including experience of the water infrastructure sector) while other host authorities have no experience of the DCO process, so this group not only aims to align requirements across the authorities but also share learning. Meetings are currently held quarterly.

Environment Agency

- 5.4.4 The Applicant is consulting with the Environment Agency's NAU which was established to provide pan area co-ordination where the water resource projects straddle the remit of several local area teams, and the NIT, which is an interdisciplinary team managing the EA's response to developments of national significance.
- 5.4.5 Engagement on the emerging proposals for the Minworth and GUC Strategic Resource Options (SRO) began in 2020 and continued through RAPID Gates 1, 2 and 3. This has included the preparation of an extensive body of technical work which is available on the Affinity Water website (Ref. 6). The technical assessments completed and consulted on through the RAPID process have assisted in defining the Proposed Development and some of the requirements for mitigation.
- 5.4.6 Engagement with the Environment Agency's NAU has been undertaken throughout the RAPID process and has included bi-monthly meetings to

provide comprehensive updates and receive feedback on environmental assessments and monitoring. Engagement with the NAU is ongoing and has informed the preliminary assessments.

- 5.4.7 In addition to the bi-monthly meetings referenced above, the NAU is engaged through the Minworth Pilot Plant and Permitting Steering Group, which meets monthly to review pilot plant progress and the implications for the permitting strategy. These meetings focus on analysis results to support the discharge application for the outfall to the Coventry Canal at Atherstone and on aligning timescales to enable the permit application to be submitted in advance of the DCO application.

Natural England

- 5.4.8 Natural England were engaged through RAPID Gates 1, 2 and 3 alongside the Environment Agency coordinated by the NAU (see above). They provided feedback on reports up to Gate 3 submission on matters including water vole surveys, licensing and mitigation licensing (for which bespoke water vole meetings have continued approximately quarterly with Natural England and the Environment Agency), and the approach to HRA through early engagement through the gated process.
- 5.4.9 Natural England are now engaged independently of the NAU for the purposes of the EIA and bespoke sessions have been set up to update them on the ongoing environmental assessments. General update meetings have been held, along with specific meetings to discuss the approach to water vole assessment and mitigation, and Natural England have also been consulted on the approach to District Level Licensing for great crested newt to inform the scope of assessment. Further engagement is planned to discuss wildlife licensing considerations for bats, great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*), and badger (*Meles meles*).
- 5.4.10 Feedback received from Natural England through the EIA Scoping Opinion (**Appendix 5-PD-2** in PEI Report **Volume 4**) has informed the ongoing assessment of designated sites, habitats and species within the EIA.

Historic England

- 5.4.11 Engagement with Historic England was undertaken through the EIA Scoping process and assisted with defining the scope of the heritage assessment. Ongoing engagement has been undertaken to provide project updates and to discuss specific heritage matters emerging through the design development and preliminary environmental assessment process. The outcomes of the consultation to date are presented in **Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage** in PEI Report **Volume 2**.

Canal User Working Group

- 5.4.12 The objectives of the Canal User Working Group are to engage local users on canal specific topic areas in more detail, discuss design matters, gather ongoing input beyond formal consultations, identify effective communication methods, and identify opportunities for social benefits gains.
- 5.4.13 The Applicants have identified that a key group of stakeholders for the Proposed Development are those who use the canal (and its towpaths), including for recreational, leisure, and business use. As well as people who live on or adjacent to the canals. In 2022, two Canal User Working Group workshops (January and July) were held, attended by representatives of boating, fishing, canoeing, and wider environmental groups. The workshops outlined the work underway, captured stakeholders' concerns, and explained planned engagement activities.
- 5.4.14 Key issues raised included:
- a. Potential changes in fish species due to altered flows, affecting local angling clubs;
 - b. Impacts on invasive non-native species; and
 - c. Increased bank scouring (all of which are discussed further under **Chapter 12: Ecology – Aquatic** in PEI Report **Volume 2**).
- 5.4.15 The Canal User Working Group was re-established in late 2024 to support the Phase One Public Consultation and a wider range of stakeholders were engaged to ensure representation across the four key groups:
- a. Water users (e.g. canoeists and boaters, including those who live on the canal);
 - b. Canal businesses (e.g. marinas, boat services and pubs);
 - c. Other towpath users (e.g. cyclists and dog walkers); and
 - d. Canal wider interest (e.g. restoration groups, societies and angling clubs).
- 5.4.16 Engagement with the Canal Users Working Group has been ongoing during 2025, with three meetings held throughout 2025.
- 5.4.17 Engagement with canal users has also helped inform the identification of potential impacts and further shaped the scope of assessments presented in this PEI Report. It will continue to guide ongoing refinement of the Proposed Development.

Parish / Town Council Engagement

- 5.4.18 The Applicants continue to actively engage with Parish / Town Councils, particularly those in close proximity to key elements of the Proposed

Development. The Applicants have attended local Parish / Town Council meetings both ahead of and following the Phase One Public Consultation, as well as following the announcement of the site and route selection decisions ahead of the Phase Two Public Consultation. Feedback from this engagement has been incorporated, where relevant, within the preliminary assessments. Updates have also been provided to all Parish / Town Councils near the scheme via email, including directly sharing the regular project Community Update newsletters.

5.5 Expectations for the Phase Two Public Consultation

- 5.5.1 The Phase Two Public Consultation for the Proposed Development is taking place between 11 February and 3 April 2025, which is in excess of the 28 day statutory minimum requirement set out in the Act¹ (Ref. 1) and the 30 day statutory minimum requirement set out in the EIA Regulations² (Ref. 3).
- 5.5.2 The aims of this consultation are to provide the local community, prescribed consultees, landowners and other key stakeholders with the opportunity to review and provide comments on the updated proposals, to help shape the Proposed Development's design as this is developed further.
- 5.5.3 A Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) has been prepared in line with Section 47(1) of the Act. The SoCC is a public facing document which outlines how the Applicant will consult with the local community about the Proposed Development, in accordance with Regulation 12 of the EIA Regulations, and how it intends to publicise and consult on the PEI Report.
- 5.5.4 This PEI Report is being consulted on as part of the Phase Two Public Consultation, and members of the public are invited to provide comments on any identified likely significant environmental impacts and proposed mitigation measures as presented within the PEI Report. Any feedback received will be considered when preparing the ES which will be submitted as part of the DCO application.
- 5.5.5 In addition to consultation with the local community, consultation is also being undertaken with prescribed consultation bodies in accordance with Sections 42 1(a) and (b), and Section 48 of the Act, and Regulation 13 of the EIA Regulations, as well as affected landowners in accordance with Section 42 1(d) of the Act.
- 5.5.6 All feedback received during the Phase Two Public Consultation will be carefully considered and the Applicants will have due regard to this in the development of the Proposed Development design in accordance with

¹ As set out in Part 5, Chapter 2, section 45, paragraph (2).

² As set out in Regulation 22, Part 3(x).

Section 49 of the Act. Under Section 37 3(c) of the Act, the DCO application must include a consultation report, which will provide details of any feedback received and how the Applicants have had regard to this, and how this has influenced the Proposed Development.

- 5.5.7 The consultation report will also demonstrate how the Applicants have complied with the consultation requirements of the Act and the EIA Regulations. This report will be considered by the Secretary of State when determining whether to accept the DCO application, and then in examining the DCO application.

5.6 References

- Ref. 1 Planning Act 2008. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/contents> [Accessed 12/11/2025].
- Ref. 2 Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) (2025) National Policy Statement for Water Resources Infrastructure. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-policy-statement-water-resources-infrastructure> [Accessed 19/12/2025].
- Ref. 3 The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/572/contents> [Accessed 12/11/2025].
- Ref. 4 Affinity Water, Severn Trent and Canal & River Trust (2026) Grand Union Canal Transfer project website. Available: [Home - Grand Union Canal Transfer](#) [Accessed 12/11/2025].
- Ref. 5 Planning Inspectorate (PINS) (2026) The Grand Union Canal Transfer: Project information. Available: <https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/WA0210001> [Accessed 12/11/2025].
- Ref. 6 Affinity Water (2026) AfW Website Strategic Resource Options.