



Department  
for Transport

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Our Ref: TWA/18/APP/02

22 April 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **Rother Valley Transport and Works Act Order (“TWAO”) – Deferral of Public Inquiry**

Under Rule 13(4) of the Transport and Works (Inquiries Procedures Rules) 2004, the Secretary of State for Transport following consultation with the Planning Inspectorate has decided to defer the start date of the Public Inquiry into the Rother Valley TWA Order Application.

This decision has been taken with regard to the current Government advice regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19), not least the restrictions on travel and difficulties associated with gatherings. Under these conditions it would not be possible to conduct the Inquiry as previously planned and there is a great deal of uncertainty as to whether the circumstances are likely to improve sufficiently, between now and the 26 May 2020, to enable the Inquiry to proceed.

The Planning Inspectorate is exploring the extent to which technology could be used to enable inquiry proceedings to take place virtually in consultation with the Planning & Environment Bar Association and a number of industry stakeholders, with the requisite safeguards to ensure openness, fairness and impartiality. However, that work, which is focussing on shorter events in the first instance, has yet to be concluded. Whilst consideration will be given to the extent to which such an approach can be used to facilitate this TWAO Inquiry, as protocols are established, it is unlikely that arrangements could be put in place to enable the Inquiry to proceed on the published start date of 26 May 2020.

Under these circumstances, the Planning Inspectorate also considers that it would be unreasonable for prospective participants to be required to continue working towards the submission date for proofs of evidence by 27 April 2020. Parties will be informed of a new date for submitting proofs of evidence, following further clarification of circumstances.

However, all those who wish to appear at the Inquiry, when it is rescheduled, must still confirm that they wish to do so to the Programme Officer (details below) by 13 May 2020, as previously set out in the Inspector’s published Notes following the Pre-Inquiry

Meeting. This information will be needed to plan the rescheduled Inquiry whether it proceeds as a conventional or digitally based event(s).

Once new dates for the Inquiry have been arranged, the website would be updated and participants notified. In the meantime, if anyone has an urgent enquiry, they should contact the Programme Officer.

Programme Officer

Joanna Vincent

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Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Dunn', written in a cursive style.

**Colin Dunn**