



SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT - LET'S STOP AQUIND CORRECTS CLAIMS MADE BY AQUIND LIMITED'S PR REPRESENTATIVE ON GB NEWS TV THIS MORNING

Portsmouth, Hampshire
Friday 18 August 2023

Further to Aquind Limited's PR representative Johnny Stonborough appearing on GB News this morning, Let's Stop Aquind (LSA) feels that it is necessary to rectify the statements he made.

Firstly, he referred (at 8 seconds [in the clip on X, formerly Twitter](#)) to the "unbelievable" amount of electricity that the Aquind interconnector would apparently bring to the UK. The nominal net capacity of the Aquind interconnector is 2000MW. For context, the existing interconnector capacity between the UK and France is 4000MW (IFA, IFA2 & ElecLink) [with a further 2800MW already approved to go live in the next 2 years](#)¹ (GridLink & FAB Link). By the time the Aquind interconnector is planned to be completed, the energy market between France and the UK alone would be saturated with capacity from 5 other providers.

Mr Stonborough confirms the interconnector route as making landfall in France near Dieppe and crossing the English Channel to Portsmouth, which while factually correct by the Aquind's latest published plans, makes no sense in terms of an efficient cable length, when other considerably shorter route options exist such as to Ninfield in East Sussex. LSA has repeatedly questioned Aquind's insistence on trenching through Portsmouth, the most densely populated city in the UK outside of the capital, and its refusal to examine more logical landfall options further east.

He slyly refers to the interconnector connecting to a "substation just behind Portsmouth" (at 26 seconds in the clip on X) when it is planned to join the national grid at Lovedean in the South Downs which is 13 miles from the landfall point at Eastney. Hardly "just behind" when it would require trenching a substantial distance to connect it.

The GB News presenter, Stonborough himself and even the screen caption "NIMBY NIGHTMARE" all portray those speaking out against Aquind as NIMBY's, in an attempt to simplify the debate as being only about a desire to protect local property. LSA considers this to be a baseless slur as it has consistently made its case against the environmental damage that would be caused by the trench works to our migrating birds and shoreline wildlife; the threat to the health of the citizens of Portsmouth and surrounding towns from the air pollution caused by the buildings works; the traffic chaos caused by digging up the key road corridor into the eastern side of the city that would damage local businesses (such as Portsmouth FC) and could grid lock the city; the menace of the asbestos and heavy metals buried along the route that could be disturbed by the trenching and the [loss of public amenities](#) such as several football pitches, a skatepark, a car park and cycle lanes for the duration of the project and beyond.

As Mr Stonborough knows very well, the opposition goes far beyond local issues as it also questions the suitability of Aquind Limited, a company with no trading income and no experience of such a project, to manage a 5+ year long, £1.3 billion scheme.



Questions have also been asked about the motives of the company and its directors in donating [£1.6 million to the Conservative Party](#) and [34 sitting and 4 former MPs and Lords](#) over the last 10 years, and the [connections of the Soviet-born owners](#) of the company.

Mr Stonborough then belittles the opposition as "a small group of people". This is truly insulting to the broad cross-party coalition in Portsmouth and beyond that has stood up to the oligarchs funding this unwanted and unneeded project, which threatens the precious green spaces that remain in the city and into the South Downs. This so-called "small group" includes Steve Pitt, leader of Portsmouth City Council (PCC), Penny Mordaunt, the high-profile Conservative MP for Portsmouth North, Stephen Morgan, the popular Labour MP for Portsmouth South (who has [raised the matter on numerous occasions in Parliament](#)) and Flick Drummond, Conservative MP for Meon Valley, whose constituency is threatened by the cable route.

The project is unanimously opposed by every city councillor in Portsmouth regardless of party, and is vehemently opposed by [PCC itself](#) and other Local Authorities along the route such as [Winchester City Council](#), [Havant Borough Council](#) and [East Hampshire District Council](#). Several thousand citizens have expressed their opposition by [online](#) and [in-person petitions](#) and by signing an [open letter to Grant Shapps and Rishi Sunak](#), and hundreds have [attended local events](#) in Portsmouth and [along the route](#).

Furthermore, it is opposed by the UK government which ruled against allowing Aquind Development Consent for the project in January 2022. It is only under consideration again as Aquind Limited successfully brought a Judicial Review against that decision in November 2022. Likewise, the French government does not support the Aquind interconnector, removing [Project of Common Interest status](#) from the Aquind interconnector in 2022 and questioning the likely over-capacity of interconnection in future. **In fact, Aquind Limited has frequently underestimated the strength of the opposition to the project, and judging by Mr Stonborough's comment it continues to do so.**

Mr Stonborough also makes a bizarre claim that "we have to treble the amount of electricity that's coming in to this country in the next 7 years" which is a gross exaggeration and entirely at odds with the trend in demand and government policy. UK Government data shows that electricity demand in the UK has been trending downward for more than 10 years, and has [declined year-on-year since 2015](#) apart from a slight increase following the Covid slowdown in 2021. The stated target for [interconnector capacity is to reach 18GW by 2030](#), compared to the current capacity of 8.4 GW. However, that is nowhere near "treble the amount" and will be achieved with projects that have already been approved as well as the new generation of "multi-purpose" interconnectors that distribute power from offshore wind farms, a source of green energy [supported by the current government and for which it has legislated to deliver](#). In this context, the Aquind Interconnector is fundamentally unnecessary.

His final claims are that interconnectors are needed to provide a "base load" of power at night and on less windy days as "we have switched off all the power stations", which is a laughable suggestion that should have been challenged by the presenters. There are [55 gas power plants currently producing electricity, 8 nuclear plants etc](#). Equally tidal power is not affected by daylight or wind conditions, and it is generally accepted that [wind power output is higher at night](#) and [in winter when less solar power is available](#).

Community action to stop the AQUIND interconnector

www.stopaquind.com



It is entirely possible to exceed our energy requirements around the clock with a combination of truly green, renewable energy sources without the Aquind interconnector.

By its representative making a number of highly questionable statements in public, and misleadingly characterising the broad and strong opposition to Aquind in the UK and France, it seems that Aquind Limited is making a last-minute attempt to "throw some shade" on its detractors and the many arguments against the project and its backers. **We trust that Secretary of State Grant Shapps will see through these tactics and throw out this ill-conceived plan once and for all and STOP AQUIND.**

Viola Langley and Paula Ann Savage
Co-founders, Let's Stop Aquind

Let's Stop Aquind can be found on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and at stopaquind.com.
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