

INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS SCHLÜTER, PROJECT MANAGER OF SUEDLINK

MR SCHLÜTER, SUEDLINK IS SEEN AS THE KEY INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT OF THE ENERGY TRANSITION. OUR QUESTION FOR YOU, AS PROJECT MANAGER OF SUEDLINK FOR TRANSNET BW, IS: WHAT PHASE OF THIS HIGH-PERFORMING ENERGY HIGHWAY ARE YOU NOW WORKING ON?

SuedLink is **more than 700 kilometres** long, traverses **five federal states** and will be laid in accordance with German law as **underground cables**. **This is a major, large-scale project and it affects many people** so the planning and consent procedures are very precise and very extensive.

In April 2017 we submitted the necessary documentation to the Federal Planning Office within the German Federal Network Agency. We are currently at the point of starting to plan the routes. Our environmental planners have come up with a so-called line corridor network and we are now in close contact with the public, local citizens and municipal authorities to help us fine-tune our planning.

Progress on planning for SuedLink can be viewed at any time via the SuedLink Project website, where we have installed an **interactive planning tool**. Details of regional features like the 1000-year-old oak can be entered here, which we naturally assess and respond to.

WHAT ROLE DOES COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC PLAY WHEN IT COMES TO A GRID EXPANSION PROJECT OF THE SIZE OF SUEDLINK?

Communication with the public is naturally a vital key to the success of the entire project. It was always our intention to keep people informed from a very early stage in our planning of SuedLink, so we could involve local citizens and municipal authorities in the process from the very beginning and keep them updated on the latest developments. With our online planning tool, we have set new benchmarks for public consultation. Every municipality and every citizen can enter information via this tool and this has already happened to a very substantial degree. We have received more than 7000 tip-offs, which we also assess and then use to inform our planning.

I am particularly proud of the fact that every informant receives a response and also finds out what we have done with their tip-off and how we assess it in environmental planning terms. In some cases, the information received has been really helpful in improving our planning of SuedLink at key points of the route.

HOW HAVE YOU APPROACHED THE TASK OF COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE ABOUT SUEDLINK? HOW EFFECTIVELY ARE YOU REACHING AND PICKING UP THE CONCERNS OF THE VERY MANY DIFFERENT INTEREST GROUPS?

It was very important to us to engage with local citizens even before the actual consent process began. We did this via an informal dialogue process, by visiting many local authorities and speaking to local citizens at many public information events. We presented the SuedLink project to them, from both a technical and an environmental planning perspective, to show people how we ended up with the proposed line corridors.

We receive great support with this from our Grid Construction Dialogue team "Dialog Netzbau". They are cable experts, underground construction experts and environmental planners who are able to explain how we ultimately decided on the current plans. Naturally they also support us with the specific process of engaging with concerned citizens, maintaining contact with municipal authorities and picking up on information and tip-offs, which we can then take into account in our planning.