



Offshore Wind Farms

EAST ANGLIA ONE NORTH

PINS Ref: EN010077

and

EAST ANGLIA TWO

PINS Ref: EN010078

SEAS comments on THE CHANGING POLICY ENVIRONMENT Deadline 8 – 25 March 2021

by

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SEAS response to THE CHANGING POLICY ENVIRONMENT Deadline 8 – 25 March 2021

SEAS would like to respond at Deadline 8 to **The Changing Policy Environment**

A. Offshore wind targets should not be used as justification for bad environmental practice

1. In the current political climate the pressure on offshore wind power to enable the Government to meet its legally binding commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 is huge. This pressure is intensified because the UK is hosting COP26 this year and will wish to maintain its global leadership in offshore wind.
2. Within this context it is all too easy for developers, examining authorities and the Government to push through wind farm applications at any price.
3. If one reads ScottishPower Renewables (SPR) written submissions, there are frequent references to the Government's offshore wind targets to justify the urgent need for bad practice. Most recently, this can be seen with regard to SPR's dismissal of a 'split decision' ([REP6-054](#)) as advanced by SEAS, SASES and indeed over 60 Written Representations at Deadline 6.

"This approach would not be consistent with the updated policy promoted in the Energy White paper. It supports the acceleration of deployment (page 38) and that this should be in the near term (page 45 first column). Furthermore the Energy White Paper recognises the need to have sufficient projects coming through the planning pipeline to have effective CfD auction rounds. These are considered critical to delivering the acceleration. A project without a grid connection would not be able to participate in an auction round. A critical part of the auction rounds is achieving future delivery dates. In addition a project without a grid connection will not be able to stimulate the supply chain. This is critical to the level of deployment that would be required to deliver the offshore wind targets."



This response is argued **solely** on the basis of the **urgent** need for 'acceleration', 'delivery dates' and 'offshore wind targets'.

4. The Government's commitment to 40 GW of offshore wind by 2030 is commendable and to be aspired to. But let's be clear, this target does not legitimise offshore wind at any price. Indeed this target is advocated **so that** the Government can reach its legally binding commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. Surely if this point is reflected upon then the Government's policy must be one which brings these projects to fruition in a way which minimises their greenhouse gas emissions.

5. The negative carbon impact of onshore radial infrastructure has been covered at page 9 of the SEAS Written Submission, The Planning Balance ([REP5-114](#)), in which we conclude that the proposed onshore developments within these Applications would result in unnecessary carbon emissions. Only if the onshore infrastructure minimised the destruction of plant life by connecting to the grid at a Brownfield site and minimising cable corridors could these projects contribute positively to climate change and support the Government's stated intent in this regard.

6. Let not time and targets become our enemy.

B. The 2030 Offshore Wind Targets cannot be isolated from UK Environmental Targets

7. Boris Johnson cemented the target of 40GW of offshore wind in the UK by 2030 in November 2020 as part of his [10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution](#).

8. As SPR quote in their Written Representation: ([REP3-085](#))

'The first point in the Ten Point Plan relates to “advancing offshore wind”. It states:

“Offshore wind is a critical source of renewable energy for our growing economy, with the UK already leading the world. By 2030 we plan to quadruple our offshore wind capacity so as to generate more power than all our homes use today, backing new

innovations to make the most of this proven technology and investing to bring new jobs and growth to our ports and coastal regions.” The Ten Point Plan emphasises the key role of offshore wind in meeting targets and states that “To offer further commitment to the industry and help further reduce costs, next year, we will aim to deliver up to double the amount of renewables we procure through our next Contract for Difference auction. And by 2030, we aim to produce 40GW of offshore wind”.

9. However, what they fail to quote is that point nine of the Ten Point Plan relates to protecting our natural environment. It states:

"We will protect our natural environment through the creation of new National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). We will start the process for designating more of England's beautiful and iconic landscapes as National Parks and AONBs, safeguarding these areas for future generations and bringing more people within closer reach of nature. These new National Landscapes will play a key role in meeting the Government's commitment to protect and improve 30% of UK land by 2030."

10. As the SEAS 'split decision' outlines ([REP5-114](#)), there is a way to uphold both the offshore wind energy and environmental elements of the Government's Ten Point Plan by bringing offshore wind energy ashore at a Brownfield site. This would indeed advance offshore wind energy in line with current Government policy.

C. Regulatory Change

11. SEAS would like to bring to the attention of the Examining Authority the Prime Minister's response to North Norfolk MP Duncan Baker when he asked the following question at [Prime Minister's Question Time on Wednesday 24th February 2020](#):

"If the UK is to become the Saudi Arabia of wind power, my coast of North Norfolk is surely the capital. But the current piecemeal and environmentally damaging connection method to the national grid is holding us back, as was proven by the Vattenfall judicial review just last week. We need legal and regulatory reform now. Prime Minister, could this be a job for the new Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and

Regulatory Reform to help us to implement the much-needed offshore transmission network and meet our net zero targets?

*"Yes indeed. I congratulate my hon. Friend on his campaign to make his constituency the Riyadh, or possibly the Jeddah, of offshore wind. **I can tell him that we are certainly looking at the issue of the transmission network review and we are developing the necessary regulatory changes.**"*

12. This response, following the high court overturning the Government's granting of development consent for Vattenfall to build Vanguard, seems to show an unprecedented level of support from the Prime Minister for a new environmentally less damaging connection for offshore wind farms to the grid and a confirmation that the necessary regulatory change is being developed NOW.

13. The Prime Minister's answer changes the balance of evidence with regard to the BEIS Review and the imminence of a coordinated approach to offshore transmission.

14. The Applicant has consistently argued that the legal and regulatory structures are not in place to enable EA1N and EA2 to become 'pathway projects'.

*"The Applicants' position **is not that they would not seek pathfinder status.** The position is that on the information that has been released to date it is unlikely that the projects would be suitable. **At the current time the future legal and regulatory structures have not been formulated.**" ([REP3-085](#))*

15. The comments from the Prime Minister suggest that not only is the current regulatory framework changing but also he is supportive of projects coming forward for consent, such as Norfolk Vanugard, EA1N and EA2 to benefit from an offshore transmission network. This would enable these projects to be joined offshore and be connected to the grid at a Brownfield site.

16. [Therese Coffey MP](#) endorses this position when she says:

*"In fact, I think **there is now such a clear direction on this from Government** that I would be inclined to back the proposal from SEAS in*

suggesting a split decision. Approving the offshore works as not to unduly delay the project but with a clear signal that instead of the current spaghetti-like cabling that we could end up within East Suffolk, holding off on an onshore decision until a coordinated proposal is put forward that complies with emerging Government policy. There is already a precedent for this, in which I am thinking of the Triton Knoll wind farm when National Grid re-considered the connection location."

D. Judicial Implications

17. The Norfolk Vanguard judgment makes clear that to comply with the requirements of NPS EN-1, the Secretary of State must examine :

*"all other relevant developments whose **environment or other effects might combine or interact with an applicant's proposed development"**.*

18. The Environmental Statement prepared by SPR has not assessed the cumulative impacts arising from projects, including landscape and visual impacts from the infrastructure proposed at Friston. SPR have clearly not, as is required of them, despite requests from Interested Parties and the Examining Authority, assessed the full environmental effects of the development and associated development. The case of The Hon. Mr Justice Holgate certainly suggests that this is illegal.

19. In this historic case before The Hon. Mr Justice Holgate between Raymond Stephen Pearce vs Secretary of State for BEIS and Norfolk Vanguard Limited the law has clearly shown that green energy needs to ensure that it is done with the environment in mind.

E. Policy shifts in favour of environmental responsibility

20. There are innumerable recent reports that have articulately advocated a more environmentally sound, coordinated transmission network which would respect our precious coastal communities and environments.

21. Most recently, as Dr. Therese Coffey so succinctly states: “*The White Paper even specifically mentions the east coast of England and the need for a more “strategic approach” suggesting the use of hybrid, multi-purpose interconnectors, which are already being explored by developers in the UK and other countries, to get the most from our offshore wind and transmission assets.*”

22. The newly published **Dasgupta Review and the UN Report “Making Peace with Nature”**, both put nature at the **core** of our decision making and set out a path for how nature should be prioritised.

23. Recently, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), of which DEFRA (Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) is a member has published new guidelines: "[Mitigating biodiversity impacts associated with solar and wind energy development](#)", which shows how the transition to renewables can be achieved without an unacceptable cost to nature. According to the guidelines, to minimise biodiversity risks, solar and wind project developers should avoid areas of high environmental significance such as protected areas and conserved areas, World Heritage sites and Key Biodiversity Areas.

"By putting nature at the centre of project decision-making, developers can deliver positive outcomes for people and biodiversity alongside energy that is genuinely green," said Leon Bennun, chief scientist at The Biodiversity Consultancy.

So here we have yet another branch of Government, DEFRA, calling for the Environment to be put at the centre of energy policy.

F. Conclusion

24. In conclusion, the pressing need for renewable energy does not justify the failure to consider the Government's environmental policy. This consistent directive is now echoed within the Executive, the Legislative and the Judicial arms of government.

25. The onshore aspects of these projects, as they currently stand, fly in the face of the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan, the Prime Minister's response to Duncan Baker, the BEIS



Review, the Government Energy White Paper, the Dasgupta Review and nearly every report written on Network Transmission in the last 10 years. It is now irrational to say that the policy environment is not one of greater offshore coordination to protect our environment.

26. The Secretary of State has the **opportunity** to accelerate the full adoption of his own emerging environmental and wind energy policy by ensuring that the onshore infrastructure minimises its environmental damage and connects to the grid at a **brownfield or pre-industrialised site**.

Jenny Wells

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