



THE PLANNING ACT 2008

THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (EXAMINATION PROCEDURE) RULES

2010

East Anglia ONE North Offshore Wind Farm

**Appendix F6 to the Natural England Deadline 2 Submission**

**NE Comments on Habitats Regulations Assessment – Appendix 2 – Information to Support AA Report – Screening Matrices [REP1-017]**

For:

The construction and operation of East Anglia One North Offshore Windfarm, a 800MW windfarm which could consist of up to 67 turbines, generators and associated infrastructure, located 36km from Lowestoft and 42km from Southwold.

Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN010077

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17<sup>th</sup> November 2020



## **Natural England's comments on Habitat Regulations Assessment Appendix 2 – Information to Support AA Report - Screening Matrices Submitted at Deadline 1 [REP1-017]**

This document is applicable to both the East Anglia ONE North and East Anglia TWO applications, and therefore is endorsed with the yellow and blue icon used to identify materially identical documentation in accordance with the Examining Authority's (ExA) procedural decisions on document management of 23rd December 2019. Whilst for completeness of the record this document has been submitted to both Examinations, if it is read for one project submission there is no need to read it again for the other project.

### **Summary**

In providing this response Natural England has reviewed the Habitat Regulations Assessment Appendix 2 – Information to Support AA Report - Screening Matrices Submitted at Deadline 1 [REP1-017] and has no **further comments in relation to terrestrial designated sites**.

However, Natural England wishes to highlight that some features for Offshore Special Protected Areas (SPAs) are incorrect which we have set out in our detailed comments below.

In addition, we wish to reserve the right to make further comments on the screening matrices relating to marine SACs once we have completed our full assessment of the 'Information to Support Appropriate Assessment - Addendum for Marine Mammals' [REP1-038] document submitted at Deadline 1.

### **Detailed Comments**

1. **Aide-Ore Estuary SPA/Ramsar:** Natural England notes that a seabird assemblage is not a qualifying feature of the SPA. We suggest that the SPA features and the Ramsar features are listed separately.
2. **Coquet Island SPA:** Natural England notes that in addition to Roseate tern, Arctic tern, common tern and Sandwich tern a seabird assemblage is also a qualifying feature of this site and should be considered, see:  
<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/MarineSiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=UK9006031&SiteName=coquet&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAAarea=&HasCA=1&NumMarineSeasonality=4&SiteNameDisplay=Coquet%20Island%20SPA>



With regard to the seabird assemblage feature (which includes puffin) we would advise that there is an impact pathway in the non-breeding season (even if there is no impact pathway in the breeding season), due to the potential for all three auks to winter in the North Sea. Although Natural England has not challenged the Applicant's decision to screen out this SPA, we recognise that an argument could be made to screen this feature in for further assessment.

3. **Farne Islands SPA:** We note that in addition to Arctic tern, common tern and Sandwich tern, the following are also qualifying features of this site and should be included in the screening matrix table for this site: Roseate tern, guillemot and a seabird assemblage – see:

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/MarineSiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=UK9006021&SiteName=farne&SiteNameDisplay=Farne Islands SPA&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAArea=&NumMarineSeasonality=5&HasCA=1>

With regard to the auk features of this site (guillemot and the seabird assemblage feature, which includes razorbill and puffin) we would advise that there is an impact pathway in the non-breeding season (even if there is no impact pathway in the breeding season), due to the potential for all three auks to winter in the North Sea. Although Natural England has not challenged the Applicant's decision to screen out this SPA, we recognise that an argument could be made to screen this feature in for further assessment.

4. **Flamborough and Filey Coast SPA:** We note that puffin is not a qualifying feature of this site in its own right, but is a named component of the seabird assemblage, which is a qualifying feature of the site and should be assessed. As a Likely Significant Effect (LSE) cannot be ruled out for collision or displacement impacts alone or in-combination for the other qualifying features (which are also components of the assemblage (kittiwake and gannet for collision; gannet, guillemot and razorbill) it follows that an LSE cannot be ruled out for the assemblage feature also.
5. **Northumbria Coast SPA/Ramsar:** We note that Arctic tern is also a qualifying feature of this SPA and needs to be considered by the Applicant. We agree that none of the qualifying features of this SPA and Ramsar are screened in for any impacts due to East Anglia One North alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.



6. **Outer Thames Estuary SPA:** Whilst we agree with the overall conclusions to screen in Outer Thames Estuary SPA for further assessment, we advise that the text should be revised to reflect that there is an impact as a result of the close proximity of the array to the SPA, in addition to any LSE from activities and operations within the cable corridor.

Point b) states “...*Disturbance to red-throated diver is possible, especially during export cable installation.*” This does not reflect the fact that disturbance and displacement is also likely to be from the East Anglia One North array itself, even though the array is not within the SPA boundary. Therefore, we advise that the text is amended to reflect the fact that the impacts from both the cable route and the array need to be assessed.

Natural England also disagree with the statement: “... *the Project will make little difference to the existing baseline and therefore the potential for LSE is considered to be negligible.*” As stated in our Relevant Representations [RR-059], when a full and robust assessment is undertaken, considering impacts from the East Anglia One North array, Natural England advises that impacts are significant.

Natural England strongly disagrees with point e) “*The predicted effect attributable to East Anglia ONE North is so small that it would not significantly contribute to or alter the overall in-combination assessment for these features at Outer Thames Estuary SPA*”. As outlined in our Relevant Representations [RR-059] (and in [REP1-172]) we advise that due to displacement caused by the close proximity of East Anglia One North to the SPA boundary, there is an adverse effect on integrity (AEoI) from East Anglia One North alone and therefore it cannot be ruled out. We also advise that there is likely to be a significant contribution to an in-combination total that is already at a level where an AEoI in-combination cannot be ruled out.