

Offshore Wind Farms

EAST ANGLIA ONE NORTH

PINS Ref: EN010077

and

EAST ANGLIA TWO

PINS Ref: EN010078

**SEAS Additional Submission
The Changing Policy Environment - The
Government's Environmental Policy and
EA1N and EA2**

Deadline 13 – 5 July 2021

The final Deadline before the nine month examination
closes at midday 6 July 2021

by

SEAS (Suffolk Energy Action Solutions)

Unique Ref. No. EA1(N): 2002 4494

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“Humanity faces an urgent choice. Continuing down our current path – where our demands on Nature far exceed its capacity to supply – presents extreme risks and uncertainty for our economies.”¹

A. Tackling UK's Offshore wind targets and biodiversity together

1. In SEAS's previous submission [[REP8-235](#)], we outlined our position that:

“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.”

As the Rt Hon Therese Coffey said in her previous submission, *“The pressing need for renewable energy does not justify the failure to consider the government's environmental policy”*

“...renewable energy targets cannot be isolated from the government's policy on protecting our natural environment”.

2. In fact, there is a growing volume of policy documents emanating from different levels and departments of government for nature to be at the heart of policy and development. This includes major infrastructure projects such as offshore wind developments where it is clear that the government believes that environmental and biodiversity issues need to be rethought and better balanced against the demands of

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review>

offshore wind farm infrastructure. New government policies show that EA1N and EA2 not only need to tackle climate change but **also** play a vital role in nature recovery. In this way offshore wind projects are not divorced from environmental policy and the decline of biodiversity and do not lead to the needless destruction of habitats and biodiversity.

B. The 25 Year Environment Plan

3. The government's key environmental policy paper, The 25 Year Environment Plan², aims to conserve and enhance the beauty of our natural environment, and make sure it can be enjoyed, used by and cared for by everyone. We will do this by:

“safeguarding and enhancing the beauty of our natural scenery and improving its environmental value while being sensitive to considerations of its heritage”.

4. This policy document celebrates Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as

“a patchwork of stunning, and protected, landscapes.”

“We will make sure they continue to be conserved and enhanced, while recognising that they are living landscapes that support rural communities.”

“While development is not prohibited in National Parks or AONBs, major development should take place only in exceptional circumstances.”

5. Clearly gouging a motorway sized corridor straight through the Suffolk AONB, and to repeat this every time a new project is connected to the grid at Friston contravenes the government's 25 Year Environment Plan.

6. Positioning the onshore infrastructure for these projects within the Suffolk Heritage Coast and in a position which causes an AONB to be split in two is not in line with the government's environmental policy when there are alternative brownfield or

² [Policy Paper: 25 Year Environment Plan: A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#), January 2018

industrialised sites which can avoid this destructive option. These are not 'exceptional circumstances'.

C. Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution

7. The Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, published in November 2020³ sets out the key role that designating more of England's landscapes as AONBs will play in meeting the Government's commitment to protect and improve 30% of UK land by 2030.

"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."

8. Yet EA1N and EA2 will lead to the repeated gouging through of the Suffolk AONB and show a complete disregard for the government's environmental policy.

9. There is a way to uphold both the offshore wind energy targets AND the environmental targets of the government's Ten Point Plan by recommending to the Secretary of State a 'split decision'⁴ and bringing offshore wind energy ashore at an alternative brownfield or pre-industrialised site. This would indeed advance offshore wind energy in line with current Government policy.

D. The Energy White Paper: Powering Our Net Zero Future

10. The following words in the Energy White Paper stand in stark contrast to the devastation inflicted if the current onshore plans for EA1N and EA2 are consented.

³ [Government policy paper: The ten point plan for a green industrial revolution](#), November 2020

⁴ [The split decision \[REP5-114\]](#), Suffolk Energy Action Solutions, February 2021

"We will safeguard our cherished landscapes, restore habitats for wildlife in order to combat biodiversity loss and adapt to climate change, all whilst creating green jobs"

*"Action on energy will be consistent with our wider environmental commitments, as we balance new technologies and the need for new infrastructure with protecting the environment ..."*⁵

11. Any onshore substation and cable corridor will have an adverse impact on biodiversity but the current plans to connect EA1N and EA2 to the Grid are excessively destructive, gouging 9 km inland through the Thorpeness Cliffs, Suffolk Coastal Path, the Suffolk Sandlings and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to arrive at the substation site of Friston in the midst of untouched countryside.

12. If consented, this destruction will be replicated and exacerbated for Nautilus, Eurolink, Galloper Extension, Greater Gabbard Extension, SCD1 and SCD2. This could result in eight expansions to the cable trenches.

13. There is a real and tangible risk of further destabilisation at Thorpeness Cliffs as a consequence of drilling. In addition, the fragile Coralline Crag is threatened from subsea cable work.

14. This degree of damage to an environmentally sensitive, diverse and legally protected landscape brimming with biodiversity, is unmitigable, unacceptable and given the availability of better alternative brownfield sites either on the coast or using existing cable routes, indefensible.

E. The Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Offshore Transmission Network Review (OTNR)

15. The objectives of the OTNR speaks for themselves:

⁵ [The Energy White Paper: Powering Our Net Zero Future](#), December 2020

“To ensure that the transmission connections for offshore wind generation are delivered in the most appropriate way, considering the increased ambition for offshore wind to achieve net zero. This will be done with a view to finding the appropriate balance between environmental, social and economic costs.”

16. As Huub den Rooijen, Director of Energy, Minerals and Infrastructure at The Crown Estate, said about this Review:

“The huge potential of UK offshore wind can only be unlocked if it delivers for the economy, for the environment and for people and communities.”

17. The environmental onshore impact is acknowledged within the terms of reference of this Review:

“ ... in the context of increasingly ambitious targets for offshore wind, constructing individual point to point connections for each offshore wind farm may not provide the most efficient approach and could become a major barrier to delivery given the considerable environmental and local impacts, particularly from the associated onshore infrastructure required to connect to the national transmission network.⁶”

F. The Government’s Response to The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review

18. The Government’s Response to the Dasgupta Review⁷ both supports and builds on the Government’s 25 year Environment Plan and the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution.

“The Government agrees with the Dasgupta Review’s fundamental conclusion: nature, and the biodiversity that underpins it, ultimately sustains our economies, livelihoods and well-being, and so our decisions must take into account the true value of the goods and services we derive from it.”

⁶ [Offshore Transmission Network Review: Terms of Reference](#), August 2020

⁷ [The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review Government Response](#), June 2021

“In line with this ambition, and in response to the Review, the Government commits to:

*(1) delivering a ‘nature positive’ future, in which we leave the environment in a better state than we found it, and reverse biodiversity loss globally by 2030; and
(2) ensuring economic and financial decision-making, and the systems and institutions that underpin it, supports the delivery of that nature positive future.”*

19. The government’s Response to the Dasgupta Review further strengthens their policy commitment to protected areas:

“Designation of protected areas alone will not be sufficient to conserve or enhance the nature within them, which is why our ‘30by30’ commitment includes driving up the value for biodiversity of protected areas, and why the Government is committed through the 25 Year Environment Plan to restore 75% of protected sites on land in England to ‘favourable’ condition by 2042. Achieving this will ensure that protected sites’ habitats and features are in a healthy state and are being conserved by appropriate management.”

20. The Government concludes:

“The actions the Government is taking in response to the Review underscore its commitment to protecting and enhancing the natural environment, both at home and abroad. These actions build on the significant steps the Government is already taking to leave the environment in a better state than we found it and ensure citizens across the UK are best-placed to take advantage of the benefits of a nature positive future “

21. If the government upholds its own environmental policy, then the onshore aspects of these projects cannot be consented.

G. The Environment Bill

22. Biodiversity Net Gain for NSIPs The Treasury, in its response to the Dasgupta Review on the economics of biodiversity, revealed that the government,

“will legislate to introduce biodiversity net gain for new nationally significant infrastructure projects in England through an amendment to the Environment Bill.”⁸

23. NSIPs such as EA1N and EA2 will be required to deliver 10% net biodiversity gain and require the creation of a biodiversity gain statement (BGS). The BGS would be deemed to be part of the national policy statement relating to the development.

24. Under the Environment Bill’s biodiversity net gain provisions, developers would have to submit biodiversity net gain plans alongside planning applications, setting out the biodiversity value of on-site habitat value before and after development, and steps to be taken to minimise adverse effects and how the gains will be achieved.

25. The government Response to the Dasgupta Review goes on to say that this amendment would embed a:

“nature positive approach” to the development of many of England’s largest new infrastructure projects

26. Species Abundance Targets The government has also announced a new world-leading target on species abundance for 2030, aimed at halting species decline.

“The Environment Bill is a key mechanism in driving forward our ambition on biodiversity and delivering our commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). We have tabled an amendment to the Bill to require a new, historic legally binding target on species abundance in England for 2030, aiming to halt the decline of nature”⁹.

*“To support a greater abundance of species, we need good quality **connected** (SEAS emphasis) habitats. “*

27. The destruction of huge swathes of protected Suffolk countryside which would result if these projects are consented runs contrary, not only to the government’s emerging Environment Policy but in the case of the 25 Year Environment Plan and the

⁸ [The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review Government Response](#), June 2021

⁹ [The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review Government Response](#), June 2021

Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, to the Government's Policy **that is already in place.**

H. Natural England's Approach to Offshore Wind: Our Ambitions, aims and objectives,

28. Most recently, Natural England's Approach to Offshore Wind¹⁰ sets out the role offshore wind has to play in nature recovery **as well as** tackle climate change.

29. Natural England said it will seek to ensure that new projects enhance nature and protect the natural environment from the pressures presented by each new offshore wind development.

30. As Martin Spain, chief executive of Natural England, said,

"Offshore wind energy provides much-needed clean energy to millions of homes and businesses. Natural England is committed to playing its part in enabling it to happen, but we are also committed to making sure that nature is not forgotten."

31. The objectives in the Approach to Wind include setting an aim for each development to leave nature in a better state than before and avoid any irreparable damage to the environment.

I. Norfolk Vanguard and the Environment

32. 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".

¹⁰ [Natural England's Approach to Offshore Wind: Our Ambitions, aims and objectives](#), 16 June 2021

33. 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 has 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.

34. 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.

J. UN Environment Programme Report

“Biodiversity loss and climate change are both driven by human economic activities and mutually reinforce each other. Neither will be successfully resolved unless both are tackled together.”¹¹

35. This is the message from 50 of the world leading biodiversity and climate experts assembled by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

“The authors warn that narrowly-focused actions to combat climate change can directly and indirectly harm nature”

36. The report identifies:

“any measures that focus too narrowly on climate change mitigation should be evaluated in terms of their overall benefits and risk, such as some renewable energies [generating surges of mining activity or] consuming large amounts of land ...these can have large negative

¹¹ [Report: Tackling Biodiversity & Climate Crises Together and Their Combined Social Impacts](#), June 2021

environmental and social impacts - such as interference with migratory species and habitat fragmentation.”

K. Conclusion

37. The 2018 25 Year Environment Plan has been in place since before the current round of offshore wind farms was formally proposed. How then does allowing EA1N and EA2 to go ahead meet the criteria of the 25 year plan unveiled in that paper? It doesn't. Quite simply, this is the wrong place for an Energy Hub. The reality is that these projects and those to follow in its wake, will decimate irreplaceable habitats and the biodiversity that lives within it. Given that there are less environmentally harmful onshore solutions available, the onshore works, as they stand, should not be consented.

SEAS

5 July 2021