

Hornsea Project Three  
Offshore Wind Farm



## Hornsea Project Three Offshore Wind Farm

Response to the Secretary of State's Consultation  
Appendix 3A: Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ  
In Principle MEEB Plan

Date: February 2020

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Offshore Wind Farm

Orsted

**Response to the Secretary of State's Consultation**

**Appendix 3A: Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ In Principle MEEB Plan**

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## Acronyms

Acronym	Description
BEIS	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
DCO	Development Consent Order
EIFCA	Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Agency
FID	Financial Investment Decision
MMO	Marine Management Organisation
Nm	Nautical mile
ROV	Remotely Operated Vehicle
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SNCB	Statutory Nature Conservation Body

## 1. Purpose

### Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the In Principle Measures of Equivalent Environmental Benefit (MEEB) for the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ).
- 1.2 This plan has been developed in support of the Hornsea Three Application in response to the Request for Information issued by the Secretary of State for BEIS on 27 September 2019 on matters relating to the Hornsea Three Application. Specifically, this document sets out the preferred measures of equivalent environmental benefit relating to effects on Subtidal Sand features of the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ and how they would be secured and delivered under a scenario whereby the Secretary of State determines that MEEB are required for this feature of the MCZ.
- 1.3 In this scenario, a new schedule (Schedule 14: Compensation and MEEB Measures) to the draft DCO has been proposed that the Secretary of State could include in the final DCO for the delivery of the final MEEB Plan. This approach is supported by this In Principle MEEB Plan, with the final MEEB Plan required to be consistent with the principles identified here.
- 1.4 Further details on the precise delivery methodology for the MEEB would be provided pre-commencement, through the commitment to produce a MEEB Plan to be submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State, in consultation with the MMO and Natural England.

### MEEB measures

- 1.5 The proposed MEEB for the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ, in the event that the Secretary of State concludes that MEEB is required, is summarised in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Measures of Equivalent Environmental Benefit developed by Hornsea Three for the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ

MEEB measure	Description
Litter removal within the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ	Litter (predominantly expected to constitute abandoned or lost fishing gear) removal within the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ and measures to increase the recovery of future lost gear (within the Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Agency (EIFCA's) district), focused on lost/abandoned fishing gear within the MCZ and particularly the Subtidal Chalk MCZ feature.

- 1.6 Factors which may influence the content of the MEEB Plan include the spatial extent of any impact on the Subtidal Sand feature that is deemed to represent a significant risk of hindering the achievement of the conservation objectives of the MCZ, the final scheme design (noting that the current proposals are based on a Rochdale Envelope approach and associated worst case assumptions, and not the final scheme design that will be taken forward into construction) and the results of desk-based studies and geophysical surveys to identify fishing gear to be removed.
- 1.7 A commitment would also be made to actively engage with local relevant stakeholders to identify and remove marine litter from nearshore areas within the EIFCA's district (up to 6 nm within Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ), proportionate to the worst case impact possible at the time of implementation of the MEEB Plan. The Applicant is confident that the MEEB outlined in Table 1.1 is sufficient to offset and provide benefit of equivalent value to the maximum extent of Hornsea Three's effect on the Subtidal Sand feature, due to the highly limited extent (i.e. <2,940 m<sup>2</sup> in the maximum design scenario).

### **Environment Engagement Group**

- 1.8 If the Secretary of State determines that MEEB is required, following the Order being made, a Hornsea Three Offshore Environment Engagement Group would be established comprising the relevant SNCB(s) and potential delivery partner(s)<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of this group would be to help shape and inform the nature and delivery of the MEEB, post consent. The Environment Engagement Group would be consulted on the proposed MEEB Plan prior to submission to Secretary of State and during the approval process as necessary.
- 1.9 The Applicant would engage with and report to the Environment Engagement Group at least annually in the establishment phase, in agreement with the MMO/BEIS. Terms of Reference would be agreed between the parties. The Applicant would be the chair and convener of the Environment Engagement Group.

## **2. In Principle MEEB Plan**

### **Introduction**

- 2.1 This MEEB Plan would only take effect if the Secretary of State determines that Hornsea Three would represent a significant risk of hindering the conservation objectives of the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ and imposes a DCO requirement for the provision of MEEB. The upper scale of MEEB required would be as defined in the Secretary of State based on the predicted worst case footprint as defined in the Appropriate Assessment (by the Secretary of State) and any relevant refinements to that footprint based on the final project design taken forward into construction.
- 2.2 The measures described below are deliverable and sufficient to provide equivalent environmental benefit for the worst case extent of Hornsea Three's effect within this designated site.

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<sup>1</sup> Delivery partner for the MEEB Plan is likely to be the EIFCA.

## **Habitat Restoration: litter removal (nearshore)**

### **Introduction**

- 2.3 This measure would comprise working with the delivery partner (currently proposed to be the EIFCA) to identify and subsequently remove marine litter located within the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ, and the delivery of a programme to increase awareness and measures to improve the recovery of lost gear.
- 2.4 This measure would serve to maintain the Subtidal Sand feature and other features, principally the Subtidal Chalk feature, in a favourable condition.

### **Objective and scale**

- 2.5 The removals component of this measure would have the objective to restore MCZ habitat to the extent of the litter footprint. This would be achieved through the direct removal of such material from the seabed.
- 2.6 The geographic focus of the marine litter removal MEEB would be off the North Norfolk coast and in the vicinity of the Subtidal Chalk features within the MCZ in particular. It is noted that lost fishing gear (e.g. pots which have become detached from their moorings/anchors) may cause damage to reef features, through abrasion and damage to complex substrate and dislodgement of erect epifauna (e.g. sponges and coral; see Natural England's Advice on Operations for Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ<sup>2</sup>).
- 2.7 Preliminary discussions on this measure have been held with the Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA). It was agreed during these discussions that targeting removals from the Subtidal Chalk feature in particular would be of greatest benefit to the MCZ as a whole. This is due to the greater sensitivity of this feature of the MCZ to the presence of fishing gear and potential negative effects associated with this (e.g. disturbance/abrasion of chalk reef habitats and species/communities associated with them).

### **Delivery process**

- 2.8 The Applicant would work with the delivery partner (currently proposed to be the EIFCA) and local fishing industry as well as local conservation groups to establish areas where there is known or likely potential for lost or abandoned gear. This process would be followed by site investigation works (which may comprise high resolution geophysical survey techniques and/or remotely operated vehicles (ROVs)) to identify the precise location of marine litter. Following identification of any marine litter, any necessary licenses would be secured, and the material subsequently removed and returned to shore for re-purposing where possible or appropriate waste disposal.

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<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/FAPMatrix.aspx?SiteCode=UKMCZ0031&SiteName=cromer&SiteNameDisplay=Cromer+Shoal+Chalk+Beds+MCZ&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAArea=&NumMarineSeasonality=0%2c0>

- 2.9 The removal works would be accompanied by awareness events with the fisheries industry in the EIFCA's district that operate within the MCZ. These could be undertaken in partnership with relevant NGOs, the MMO, EIFCA and NFFO, and would focus on the ecological, safety and economic risks associated with lost gear.
- 2.10 It is also proposed that the identification of suitable measures to facilitate the rapid recovery of lost gear would be developed with the EIFCA. These may comprise options such as voluntary reporting and provision of technical solutions (such as transponders<sup>3</sup>) that can be fixed to static gear, the detail of which will be confirmed in the final MEEB Plan.

#### **Delivery timeframe**

- 2.11 The MEEB Plan would be approved prior to the commencement of of licensed activities, or any phase of those activities, within the CSCB MCZ (and therefore prior to any adverse effects arising). The implementation of the physical MEEB would then be in accordance with the programme documented in the MEEB Plan. Litter removal works would provide an immediate improvement in terms of physical attributes and biological recovery.
- 2.12 The programme of delivery for the implementation of measures to improve the recovery process of lost gear would also be agreed within the MEEB Plan prior to the commencement of intrusive works in the CSCB MCZ. The first year would focus on the identification of appropriate solutions and engagement with the fishing industry (through the EIFCA), potentially including education/awareness events. It is understood that EIFCA currently undertake ongoing consultation with the local fishing industry relating to static gear fishing in this region, and discussions should be timed to maximise the success of the engagement (noting that, during summer months, the fishermen are focused on carrying out fishing and, therefore, less likely to find time to engage on such matters). The measure to increase the recovery of lost gear (including education/awareness/technology delivery) could be delivered concurrent to offshore export cable installation works.

#### **Monitoring and reporting**

- 2.13 The monitoring of litter removal work would be limited to the duration of the works themselves. That is, the removal process would be monitored and the results recorded, but there would not be an ongoing monitoring process.
- 2.14 The removals would be reported to the Environment Engagement Group in accordance with a methodology to be developed within the MEEB Plan.
- 2.15 It is proposed that an annual report, for the duration of the offshore construction works, that covers measures associated with the uptake of technology aimed at the rapid identification / reporting of lost gear would be prepared by the EIFCA (supported by Hornsea Three) and reported to the Environment Engagement Group.

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<sup>3</sup> Such as <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/press/articles/archive/2019/04/nettag/>



### **MEEB Plan**

- 2.16 Prior to commencement of licensed activities, or any phase of those activities, within the CSCB MCZ, the Applicant would prepare and submit for approval a MEEB Plan in accordance with the requirements of the Order. The MEEB Plan would draw on best practice guidance and the advice of specialists as appropriate.
- 2.17 The MEEB Plan would set out, where relevant:
- Objectives (in accordance with the above objective);
  - Works details (including specific locations, timing etc.);
  - A schedule of works and working methods; and
  - Monitoring, reporting and adaptive management.