



THE PLANNING ACT 2008  
THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (EXAMINATION PROCEDURE)  
RULES 2010

NORFOLK BOREAS OFFSHORE WIND FARM  
Pre 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020 Issue Specific Hearing Advice  
Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN010087

**Updated Benthic Ecology Advice**

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9 January 2019

Please find below Natural England’s comments on the following documents as submitted by the Applicant at Deadline 1.

DCO Document 8.11 Outline Offshore Operation and Maintenance Plan

DCO Document 8.12 In Principle Monitoring Plan Norfolk Boreas

DCO Document 8.16 Outline Scour Protection and Cable Protection Plan

DCO Document 8.20 Outline Norfolk Boreas Haisborough Hammond and Winterton Special Area of Conservation Site Integrity Plan

1. Main Point

1.1 Natural England’s advice generally remains unchanged since the Relevant Representation [099] and cannot currently advise that an Adverse Effect on Integrity (AEol) on Haisborough Hammond Winterton SAC can be ruled out. However, we would like to recognise that the Applicant is moving in a positive direction in applying mitigation and reducing the impacts on the designated site features to a more acceptable level.

Should the Applicant be able to commit to only one cable through HHW SAC, as suggested within the HHW SIP then this is also likely to go some way to ameliorating the impacts to the site.

2. Detailed Comments

DCO Document 8.11 Outline Offshore Operation and Maintenance Plan		
2.1	Page 7	445 vessel movements for cleaning purposes (only) each year- it is not clear how vessel movements have been taken into account in terms of disturbance to Red Throated Diver (RTD).
2.2	Page 10	Why in the Table (Appendix 1) is ‘cable burial with surface protection’ – no marine licence required included and then the next row is ‘placement of cable protection in new areas’ - yes marine licence required. This is confused as surely the first one is replacement of cable protection installed during installation? Please can the Applicant clarify.
2.3	Page 11	There is reference to replacement cable protection within the SAC, but Natural England would like to reiterate that this is on the understanding that it is consented in the first place. Please be advised that NE’s position remains unchanged i.e. we consider the placement of cable protection in a SAC to have an AEol and therefore we are currently unable to support this document.
DCO Document 8.12 In Principle Monitoring Plan Norfolk Boreas		
2.4	Section 1.1. Page 4	Please note that monitoring is for residual impacts to ensure that they are not significantly affecting the environment, and that the predictions/assessment conclusions are correct. Monitoring will need to demonstrate this and any hypothesis of the HRA.

2.5	Section 9, Page 5	What happens if NVG is under construction and impacts upon NB pre construction surveys and vice versa in terms of NVG monitoring requirements?
2.6	Section 35, Page 15	Natural England would like clarity from the Applicant as to what they see the benefits being of undertaking an Annex I reef survey in 2020. Our understanding is that the survey results will not feed into the Boreas examination. And whilst we always welcome more survey data in this situation we envision there being two likely outcomes; a) Applicant demonstrates reef is there and NE advice doesn't change or b) Applicant demonstrates there isn't any reef currently present and NE advice doesn't change as the fisheries byelaw/management measures to ensure recovery hasn't started being implemented yet. Moreover, in relation to outcome b we advise there is a risk that 2 years' post 2020 a similar survey could have very different results. Outside of the byelaw areas the data could start to help form a core reef approach, but again more than one additional dataset would be required to fully implement that. Therefore we wish to highlight this to the Applicant in order to inform their decision making process.
2.7	Table 4.2	The IPMP only seems to focus on construction and not on Operations and Management (O&M). The requirement for Annex I reef surveys for O&M activities seems to have fallen between the cracks. Monitoring of Annex 1 reefs for O&M will be required in the form of Geophysical data and ground truthing using drop down video, completed 18 months – 2 years prior to the works taking place. For anything other than this justification will be required.
2.8	4.7.23	NE advises that it would be appropriate for the hypotheses to be tested through the monitoring to be listed, especially for Ornithology.
DCO Document 8.16 Outline Scour Protection and Cable Protection Plan		
2.9		The update to this document consists of inclusion of statements committing to the reduction in protection and sign positing to the SIP; whilst NE welcome the reduction in protection our previous comments on the Outline Scour Protection and Cable Protection Plan remain unchanged.
DCO Document 8.20 Outline Norfolk Boreas Haisborough Hammond and Winterton Special Area of Conservation Site Integrity Plan		
2.10	Section 56, Section 4.2.1	An Annex I reef survey is planned for 2020, it would be good to know how this relates to the construction time table.
2.11	Section 77, Page 25	NE notes the Applicant refers to temporary disturbance if Annex I reef cannot be avoided. This is something that NE has advised against in our RR [099], and our advice remains unchanged.

2.12	Plate 5.1. Page 26	What does a DCO variation or new ML involve? What would be required to achieve either of these? And what would be the timeframes? The reason NE asks is that our understanding of both options to date is that this can be quite time consuming e.g. Race Bank, costly and would require further data collection requirements.
2.13	Section 81, Page 28	NE welcomes the consideration of different electrical solutions, particularly the consideration of only one export cable to be located within HHW SAC. However, from discussions with the Applicant on 8 <sup>th</sup> January 2020 it is clear that that this is not committed to and previous numbers of cables remains an option. Should the option of a single cable route be proposed as mitigation then further consideration will need to be given as to whether or not this is sufficient to remove NE concerns in relation to AEoI on the site. In order to do this the impact assessments will need to be revised.
2.14	Section 96, Page 31	NE is concerned that the disposal of sediment will only be agreed in the final HHW SIP post consent. We would hope that ongoing surveys will enable this to be agreed sooner rather than later.
2.15	5.4.1	NE welcomes the consideration of further mitigation measures.
2.16	Section 106, Page 35	NE welcomes the removal of redundant cables to reduce the cable protection requirements.
2.17	Section 127, Page 37	The proposals are not mitigation, but best practice and doesn't remove cable protection requirement.
2.18	Table 6.1 Page 43	The additional survey of Sabellaria reef is welcomed.
2.19	Appendix I Page 48	In relation to ability to micro site NE advice remains unchanged from that of our relevant representation [REP – 099].
2.20	Appendix 3 of SIP likely Cable protection locations	General point - all of the site is designated with no site fabric

2.21	Appendix 3 of SIP likely Cable protection locations	3.1. Natural England is less concerned about cable crossing points compared to un-impacted areas, as it is unlikely for reef to be present.	
2.22	Appendix 3 of SIP likely Cable protection locations	Whilst this document gives more confidence that areas of reef will be avoided, we remain concerned that protection is still being proposed within the site.	