



Comments on the Final Waterbird Survey Report (REP9-032)

**for the
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds**

Submitted for Deadline 10

7 April 2022

Planning Act 2008 (as amended)

In the matter of:

**Application by Alternative Use Boston Projects Limited for an
Order Granting Development Consent for the
Boston Alternative Energy Facility**

Planning Inspectorate Ref: EN010095

Registration Identification Ref: 20028367

| Para | Statement | RSPB comments |
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| 4.1 | <p>Data search The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) www.nbn.org.uk was searched for records of protected species within the 10km OS grid square TF34. The River Haven is known to support numerous bird species including nationally significant numbers of Brent Goose.</p> | <p>We welcome the additional NBN information identified by the Applicant. However, it is disappointing that this information was not collated earlier in order to inform the survey requirements and design at the early stages of the Application. Such an approach should have been taken as best practice.</p> |
| Tables 2-7 | | <p>We note that Tables 2-7 demonstrate that features of The Wash SPA and Ramsar are present in all the survey sections along The Haven. It is also notable that the numbers of each species in this area of the Haven changes between low tide and high tide, and between survey dates, indicating that birds are moving elsewhere at different times in the tidal cycle and through the winter (presumably to The Wash SPA, given that this is the main area of suitable habitat nearby). We also note that dark-bellied brent geese have been recorded in all sections of The Haven. This is an exclusively coastal/marine species so would not be using The Haven if there wasn't a functional link to The Wash. This serves only to reinforce that the site is functionally linked to The Wash SPA and Ramsar and that significant numbers of birds occur adjacent to the Application site. A number of the features present in the surveys also have restoration targets. We have picked out the most significant bird species counts at each location/tidal stage in the subsequent comments</p> |
| Table 2 | <p>Bird species recorded within the vicinity of West Grid during a low tide survey between December 2021 – March 2022.</p> | <p>The dark-bellied brent geese numbers are significant (1.6% of The Wash SPA population) and show late winter increase in numbers. Notable numbers of curlew are also using the site given the significant national declines in this species and its current red-list status. A number of the features present also have restoration targets (dark-bellied brent geese, shelducks, turnstones and redshanks).</p> |
| Table 3 | <p>Bird species recorded within the vicinity of West Grid during a low tide survey between December 2021 – March 2022.</p> | <p>The redshank and ruff numbers are significant (1.2% and 18.8% respectively of The Wash SPA populations) and show late winter increase in numbers through to the passage period. Notable numbers of curlew are also using the site given the significant national declines in this species and its current red-list status. A</p> |

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| | | number of the features present also have restoration targets (dark-bellied brent geese, shelducks, turnstones, dunlins and redshanks). |
| Table 4 | Bird species recorded within the vicinity of Middle Grid during a low tide survey between December 2021 – March 2022. | The dark-bellied brent geese numbers are significant (13.5% of The Wash SPA population). A number of the features present also have restoration targets (dark-bellied brent geese, oystercatchers shelducks, turnstones, and redshanks). |
| Table 5 | Bird species recorded within the vicinity of Middle Grid during a high tide survey between December 2021 – March 2022. | The dark-bellied brent geese numbers are significant (1.5% of The Wash SPA population). A number of the features present also have restoration targets (dark-bellied brent geese, oystercatchers, shelducks, turnstones, and redshanks). |
| Table 6 | Bird species recorded within the vicinity of East Grid during a low tide survey between December 2021 – March 2022. | The dark-bellied brent geese numbers are significant (8.0% of The Wash SPA population) and show late winter increase in numbers. Golden plover and lapwing numbers are also significant (6.6% and 6.6% respectively of The Wash SPA population). A number of the features present also have restoration targets (dark-bellied brent geese, oystercatchers and redshanks). |
| Table 7 | Bird species recorded within the vicinity of East Grid during a low tide survey between December 2021 – March 2022. | <p>The dunlin, lapwing, oystercatcher and turnstone numbers are significant (4.2%, 4.8%, 7.9 and 16.7% respectively of The Wash SPA populations). Several of the features present also have restoration targets (dark-bellied brent geese, turnstones, dunlins and redshanks).</p> <p>At high tide, it is notable that there are higher counts of species recorded within this area that have declined across The Wash due to site-specific issues and which have restoration targets. Given the Applicant has stressed that any additional impacts would occur during the high tide periods this only reinforces the concerns that increased vessel disturbance could be significant and adversely affect species which have already suffered population declines on The Wash.</p> |
| 4.3 | Systematic list | We welcome the helpful comparison of bird counts with the current 5-year average. This clearly highlights where species have reached/or exceeded 1% of The Wash SPA population. These data continue to highlight the importance of The Haven in supporting important numbers of waterbirds. |

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| 5.1.1 | Overall, 37 bird species were recorded across both sections between December 2021 – March 2022; of these 18 appear on the amber list and 8 are on the red list. 10 species occurred in numbers over 1% of The Wash population based on latest 5 year mean. | This supports the importance of The Haven for features of The Wash SPA and Ramsar. |
| 5.1.1 | Redshank peaked at 72 with 87.5% of those occurring within the West Grid at high tide, these birds were using the site to predominantly roost, during low tides Redshank were using The Haven to feed, peaking at 39 with 34 (87.18%) of these within the West Grid. These two percentages show the importance of the West Grid to Redshank at high and low tide. One might argue that the West Grid and Sites A and B are actually of more value to wintering Redshank than the current SSSI boundary along The Haven. | <p>We note that redshanks may be using areas of The Haven at high tide for activity other than roosting. We infer this from the description that redshanks “predominantly roost” at high tide in the western section of The Haven. There is no detail provided on other activity taking place at high tide. We query where birds were foraging at high tide and what impact occurred from vessel movements.</p> <p>It is notable that the Applicant suggests Sites A and B could be considered of higher value for redshanks than the SSSI boundary, which terminates at the eastern end of The Haven. We consider this demonstrates the significance of the area of The Haven adjacent the Application site in supporting and maintaining features of The Wash SPA and Ramsar site. It also demonstrates the importance of ensuring that adverse effects arising from the development can be adequately addressed. We have already highlighted our concerns about the proposed ‘Habitat Mitigation Area’ and that this should be better included within the compensation package (in our response to Q3.3.1.34 of the Third Written Questions (REP7-031)). However, we continue to have concerns about the scale of habitat being provided for roosting and foraging waterbirds and consider the Applicant’s surveys justify the need to consider more fully the area indirectly impacted by the Application as well as the area directly affected (see our detailed comments on this in our comments on the Fifth Report on outstanding submissions submitted at Deadline 10, our summary of the RSPB’s position and key concerns (REP5-018) and our Written Representations (REP1-060).</p> |