

Date: 14 July 2022  
Our ref: 13622  
Your ref: EN010098



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**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Hornsea Four Offshore Wind Farm: Attendance at Issue Specific Hearings**

Natural England are writing to inform the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) and Examining Authority (ExA) that we will not be attending the Issue Specific Hearings (ISH) during the week commencing 18<sup>th</sup> July.

A large volume of documents relating to important outstanding issues have been submitted by the Applicant at Deadlines 5 and 5a. This information includes material which is intended to address some of the fundamental concerns raised by Natural England regarding offshore ornithology and marine processes, and establish the potential impacts of the proposal at an EIA scale and implications for designated sites. Were we to attend the hearings, our ability to review and provide written comments on these documents at Deadline 6 would be severely constrained, and in particular this would delay the formulation of our HRA integrity judgements and our advice on compensatory measures. Should we then defer our written response to a later deadline, we are conscious that there would be limited scope to close out remaining outstanding issues and provide final positions prior to the close of the examination.

In this instance, it would not be possible to both attend the ISH and also review the Deadline 5 and 5a written submissions in time for Deadline 6. We appreciate that this will be disappointing, however, we consider the priority is to review these critical submissions in good time, in order give the best possible chance of these issues being resolved within the Examination timescales.

At Deadline 6 we are also intending to submit our Risk and Issues Log, which will be updated to reflect all current positions including on the ornithology baseline, as well as comments on the Ornithological Assessment Sensitivity Report [REP5-065], the Applicant's strategic updates to ornithology compensation [REP5-086], and a response to the Applicant's concerns [REP5a-018] regarding Natural England's advice on auk displacement and apportioning [REP5-115]. We have also been working with the Applicant on Statements of Common Ground for other offshore matters to close out these topics as far as possible in advance of Deadline 6.

We would be happy to provide written clarifications into Examination on any actions raised during the hearings, or answer any subsequent questions the Examiners may wish to ask.

For any queries relating to the content of this letter please contact Emma John [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully,

Melanie Hughes  
Director – Sustainable Development

cc. Richard Hunt, Planning Inspectorate