



National Infrastructure Planning
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol, BS1 6PN

Customer
Services: 0303 444 5000
e-mail: HornseaProjectFour@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

The Applicant

Your Ref:

Our Ref: EN010098

Date: 28 July 2022

Dear Ms Tower-Roethe,

**Planning Act 2008 (as amended) Section 89
The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 (as amended) – Rule 17**

Application by Ørsted Hornsea Project Four Limited for an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed Hornsea Project Four Offshore Wind Farm

Request for further information and written comments

The Examining Authority (ExA) notes that Natural England [page 122 of RR-029] deferred to NatureScot to comment on the suitability of the Applicant's assessment of impacts on the Moray Firth Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The Applicant [page 404 of REP1-038] confirmed that Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot) was issued with the draft Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report and the draft report to inform the appropriate assessment (RIAA) during the pre-application phase and that no comments were received from NatureScot in relation to these communications.

The ExA therefore makes a written request for further information under Rule 17 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. Could the Applicant direct NatureScot to the summary information about the bottlenose dolphin qualifying feature of the Moray Firth SAC in the Report on the Implications for European Sites (RIES) (Table 4.2, Moray Firth SAC section) [PD-015] and verify that NatureScot agrees with the conclusions of the Applicant, as recorded there. In brief, these are:

- Protected site: Moray Firth SAC.
- Qualifying feature: Bottlenose dolphin.

- Potential Adverse Effects on Integrity (AEoI): Increase in underwater noise (during construction and decommissioning).
- Potential AEoI: Vessel disturbance (all phases).
- Potential AEoI: Vessel collision risk (all phases).
- Summary: At application, in its RIAA [AS-014]¹, the Applicant concluded that no AEoI were likely. The supporting document B2.2, RIAA Part 12: Appendix G: Marine Mammals - Bottlenose dolphin RIAA information [APP-178] provides the detail.

The ExA requires a response on this matter by Deadline 8 which is midday on Thursday 18 August 2022.

Should you have any queries regarding the content of the letter, please contact the case team using the details at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Jo Dowling

Lead Member of the Examining Authority

¹ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010098/EN010098-000837-Hornsea%20Project%20Four%20Offshore%20Wind%20Farm%20Examination%20Library.pdf>

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