



## Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	Hornsea Project Four Offshore Wind Farm (Generating Stations)
<b>File reference</b>	EN010098
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	28 January 2021
<b>Meeting with</b>	Orsted Hornsea Project Four Limited
<b>Venue</b>	Microsoft Teams
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	Project Update Meeting
<b>Circulation</b>	All attendees

### Summary of key points discussed and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

### Status regarding previous meeting minutes

The Applicant stated that the frequency of meetings with the Inspectorate had increased recently; the Inspectorate explained they welcomed the engagement, and the Applicant summarised the note of the previous [meeting](#).

### Hornsea Project Four update

The Applicant explained they recently met with Natural England (NE), stating that a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) for onshore matters, has been drafted and is currently under review. The Applicant expects the return and comments on the SoCG during the second week of February 2021.

### DCO Application

The Applicant discussed 17 March 2021 as a submission date, with the option to postpone submission for approximately 6 months from this submission date. This was in response to discussions between the Applicant and stakeholders on the preparation of the HRA derogation case. The Applicant discussed the implications of the delay on the original application date for the environmental assessments undertaken and their approach to addressing them in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The Applicant aims to get the full draft DCO Application signed off by 11 March 2021. The onshore Environmental Statement (ES) and associated documents are nearing completion, and the offshore ES and associated documents are also close to completion slightly behind the onshore work. The Applicant confirmed that there would be a Project SteerCo meeting taking place in February 2021 to decide whether the application should

be delayed for a period of 6 months, and the Inspectorate would be advised accordingly. With regard to the HRA derogation case, the Inspectorate asked whether a clear compensation strategy was emerging or if multiple avenues of research were still being explored. The Applicant provided an outline of the likely measures which would form the core of a 'without prejudice' compensation package for each of the qualifying features concerned.

The Applicant explained how the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), Cefas and NE have some concerns in relation to the reintroduction of Gravity Base Foundations (GBF) constituting a potential material change. NE consider the shift from pile-based foundations to gravity-based foundations potentially constituted a material change due to the increase in maximum parameters of the proposed development. The Applicant was of the opinion this was not a material change as it was unlikely to result in additional environmental impacts being identified and would still be adequately assessed. The Applicant has arranged a workshop with NE, MMO and Cefas to discuss the nature of the changes and provide an opportunity to discuss with stakeholder. The Planning Inspectorate were invited to attend and accepted.

The Applicant outlined changes that had been made to the terminology used when describing the significance of likely environmental effects, as per the DMRB significance matrix. This was in response to the July 2019 updates to the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) guidance.

The Applicant provided an update on their monthly engagement with NE, which was largely positive, however there were concerns regarding available resources due to COVID by NE. The Inspectorate asked whether this was a driver in the Applicant considering delay to the submission date. The Applicant advised that it is not the only factor, but it is a key driver in determining a final submission date. The Applicant explained how an extension to the submission date would allow opportunity to gather more evidence, provide clarity to stakeholders on their introduction of Gravity Based Systems (GBS) into the design envelope and fill some onshore ecology data gaps. The Applicant will set out a roadmap on how to progress further, should the application not be submitted on 17 March 2021.

## **Derogation Case preparation**

The Applicant gave an update on internal review dates for their derogation case. The Applicant feels that the six-month extension would provide opportunity to further collect evidence to support the compensation measures being proposed, and to ensure the derogation case is provided in appropriate detail prior to submission of the DCO application. This could be achieved through further engagement with key stakeholders.

The Applicant asked whether another round of non-statutory consultation would be beneficial. The Inspectorate advised that due to the two-year period since some of the survey work informing the EIA, it may be appropriate to update consultees and the public regarding the matter and to be open minded about potential changes that may be required as a result of further consultation. The Inspectorate suggested that an update newsletter may also be helpful, as well as applying a new EIA sensitivity test to identify whether the two-year period has any implication on the outcome.

The Applicant stated that shipping and navigation baseline data was established prior to Hornsea Offshore Wind Farm (Zone 4) – Project 2 (H2) entering into the construction phase. The Applicant explained that baseline data may need to be updated to reflect this change in the marine navigation environment and subsequent effects on vessel traffic and routing.

The Inspectorate advised that since the original data collection did not include implications for H2, it may be worth seeking expert advice on the limitations to this. This will provide a better reflection of what the situation will now be.

The Applicant invited the Inspectorate to a familiarisation workshop on the matters discussed above, including the GBS and DMRB. The Inspectorate accepted the offer and will be attending on 15 February 2021. This workshop will be held for all relevant stakeholders.

The Inspectorate advised that Advice Note 14 – Compiling a Consultation Report will be updated in early Spring 2021; this should have no significant implications to the application but the updated Advice Note will reflect permanent changes in legislation which came into force on 31 December 2020 relating to the removal of the requirement to deposit physical copies of consultation documents. It will also update the advice more generally based on emerging best practice since the note was originally published in 2014.

The Inspectorate made their retention and General Data Protection Regulation policies known to the Applicant. The Applicant praised the Inspectorate on how helpful and easy to navigate their website is.

### ***Specific decisions/ follow-up required?***

The following actions were agreed:

- Applicant to advise the Inspectorate on the outcome of its SteerCo meeting to discuss the submission date;
- Applicant to consider publishing an update newsletter regarding new EIA matters;
- Applicant to apply new EIA sensitivity test due to H2 entering the construction phase since baseline characterisation;
- The Inspectorate to attend GSB and DMRB familiarisation workshop on 15 February 2021.