

## The Harwich Harbour Fisherman's Association

Chairman P.Caunter

Hon Sec T.Armstrong

27th September 2024

Interested Party Reference Number 20048237

### PROPOSED FIVE ESTUARIES OFFSHORE WINDFARM OBJECTION

As a member representing 22 vessels of Harwich Harbour Fisherman's Association and other associations making approximately a total of 50 vessels on the 5 estuaries Commercial Fisherman Working Group, Most the fishers are operating under 10m vessels with a large majority single handed using multiple fishing methods. I submit the associations concerns, comments and formal objection regarding the proposed application to the Five Estuaries Proposed project.

For some months we have engaged in discussions through the working group, and we appreciate the efforts by the developers to have open and meaningful discussion with our members however, there are still to date matters that are of serious concern which will create some major issues for all the inshore fleet on the east coast if the project goes ahead. One of the main issues is that they will not accept certain fishing methods will be disrupted during construction and operation.

The Fishers only have previous experience on how past and ongoing wind farm projects have been managed and how they have compromised the commercial activities of fishers within the Harwich and east coast area. Sometimes a disruption payment has cushioned the impact during construction, but we wish to stress that this objection has nothing to do with money; we just do not want anymore wind farms, for the reason highlighted, and **WE HAVE OUR SHARE AND WHEN WILL ENOUGH BE ENOUGH!**

In the past the developers has agreed to pre and post construction surveys to possible mitigate the impact on Fishers but because of the uncertain stability of the seabed on the east coast (continually shifting seabed) what may be satisfactory one day does not give the guarantee it will be safe to fish in the future. We have in all discussion stated that cables will not stay buried in certain sections, which is exactly what has occurred on the Gabbard, Gunfleet and other wind farms. Any exposed cable is a serious snagging hazard and could have serious consequences for the vessels safety and no skipper is willing to endanger his vessel and crew. The applicant will I am sure say they will follow best practice techniques but will not be able to give cast iron guarantees that cables will be buried and stay buried. The licence conditions will state the seabed should be restored however, again from our experience it will not happen in certain areas. Every cable crossing will have to be covered and each covering will create additional hazards!

Over the recent years our fishing activities has been restricted over extremely large areas due to the provision of previous and ongoing sustainable renewable energy schemes and any additional projects on the east coast must be given serious consideration. These sites were regular fishing grounds used by our members but are now no longer available. The knock on effect is that all the fishing activities have been condensed into much

smaller areas, with our members struggling to have viable areas to work. Any new additional wind farm will compound this issue, hence our objection.

There are ongoing proposals on the east coast that will, if approved, compound the issues further, such as the numerous major cable installations, existing wind farms, East Anglia 3 Construction soon to start, East Anglian1N, East Anglian2 and North Falls in the planning stages. Couple that ongoing dredging, aggregate extraction and Marine Conservation Zones, soon there won't be a clear area for fishers to undergo their lawful commercial activities.

It is our believing that certain species of fish are deterred and because of the ongoing works and vibrations, existing arrays and cables now avoiding the Thames estuary. For example, one of the main revenue streams in the winter months was cod. They are caught north and south of the Thames estuary in abundance but haven't been seen in our area for approximately 12 years coincidentally the same time as construction started with our working area. There are continual areas of turbines whether we motor North or South now forming a barrier that they don't seem to want to enter or travel through.

An additional effect to our members is that, because of the local inshore areas being restricted, longer journey times will be forced on our members, increasing the carbon footprint and running costs of all our vessels. This will also place additional challenges to our members and some safety concerns, how far is it safe for a single-handed vessel to travel safely?

The present government has stated commitment to ensure fishing remains sustainable on the East Coast, continual reductions of accessible fishing ground for the coastal commercial fishing fleet brings this commitment into doubt.

If the Five Estuary proposal is granted approval, the local fishing fleet (our members) will suffer considerable changes to their existing fishing area, not just during construction but during the ongoing operation of the site, but it will also have long term affect on the future generation who hopefully would have inherited a credible and sustainable fishing industry on the east coast, which now must be in question.

The proposed wind farm is totally opposed by our association.

Trevor Armstrong  
Honorary Secretary