



Meeting note

Project name	Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm
File reference	EN010115
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	6 December 2021
Meeting with	Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm Ltd
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Update meeting
Circulation	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.

Project update

The Applicant updated the Inspectorate on its current programme. The scoping opinion has been received from the Inspectorate and the offshore scoping boundary is being developed around the preferred export cable route, with a review of the route anticipated in Q2 2022 post receipt of the offshore geophysical survey data. The Applicant informed that a meeting with National Grid (NG) has been set up relating to the siting of an onshore substation within the wider Area of Search (AoS).

The Applicant will continue to explore opportunities to coordinate with the nearby North Falls Offshore Wind Farm project throughout project development. Site selection considerations will also be taken into account where feasible and practicable to optimise routes and minimise and manage environmental impacts.

More broadly, the Applicant will also seek to engage with other projects and activities and where relevant information gathered from engagement with other developers will be considered within any future site selection and route refinement work.

Consultation to date

The Applicant presented its [website](#) and explained the planned launch of its virtual consultation platform. There has been engagement with landowners, via a land agent; and discussions with Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and parish councils have begun. The Applicant is currently working on presenting the Statement of Community Consultation to the local authorities in Q2-Q3 2022.

The Applicant has engaged with National Grid (NG) regarding identification of a connection point since 2019.

Post scoping Offshore expert topic group (ETG) meetings were held in Q4 2021, with the onshore ETG expected to be held in Q2 2022. All surveys are continuing through 2022 and public engagement is currently planned for Q2 2022. The Applicant estimates that s42 consultation will start in Q4 2022 together with the submission of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) the DCO is currently programmed to be submitted in 2023.

EIA

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) commenced during 2021 within selected route corridors and substation options. Other completed surveys included offshore geophysical surveys, with anticipated completion in early December 2021, intertidal benthic ecology surveys completed September 2021, and offshore benthic ecology surveys completed November 2021. Ongoing surveys included wintering birds at landfall, in-field and intertidal areas.

The Inspectorate queried to what extent the methodology had been agreed with Natural England (NE) and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). It noted that impacts to benthic ecology could present a significant risk to the project and had led to delays in consenting other offshore wind farms. The Applicant responded that the methods used in 2021 had been agreed with NE and the MMO. The Applicant aimed to agree methodologies with NE for the species-specific surveys to be undertaken in 2022. Discussions with NE are still ongoing in relation to the coverage of the offshore ornithological surveys.

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeology has been submitted to Essex County Council for initial onshore geophysical surveys in December 2021. Onshore ecological surveys are set to be completed by Q1 2023, while noise, traffic, radar and onshore geophysical surveys for cable route and substation are anticipated to continue through 2022.

Compulsory acquisition

The Applicant confirmed that it is its position to seek voluntary agreement with landowners and occupiers for surveys and deeds, without using compulsory acquisition if possible. Discretionary payments have been offered and made to landowners in return for granting access for surveys under a licence. Compulsory means to access land for surveys will only be explored as a last resort.

AOB

The Inspectorate informed the Applicant about the advice given to other offshore windfarm projects in the area.

