

## Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm
<b>File reference</b>	EN010115
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	14 September 2023
<b>Meeting with</b>	Five Estuaries Ltd (the Applicant)
<b>Venue</b>	Microsoft Teams meeting
<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.

### Project update

The Applicant gave an overview of its consultation activities in 2023 and updated that it is now preparing the Development Consent Order (DCO) application due to be submitted in Q1 of 2024. The Applicant updated that it is close to finalising the order limits but need agreement with North Falls Offshore Wind Farm (OWF) project on a few areas. The Applicant explained that the difference in timeline with North Falls OWF adds complexity.

The Applicant summarised its plans for targeted consultation which is due to take place later this year for six weeks with new identified persons with an interest in land (PIL). The Applicant does not plan to hold any public consultation events but will offer briefings to each PIL. The Applicant plans to undertake community engagement ahead of submitting its application to set out the key changes to the proposals since statutory consultation, including the reduced cable corridor widths and details of the substation location.

The Inspectorate mentioned that the Applicant should elaborate the consultation and community engagement in the Consultation Report and to explain why the consultation was targeted and not full consultation.

### Land and Property Update

The Applicant gave a brief update on land and property matters and said that it is working closely with North Falls OWF and have set up regular workshops with Dalcour Maclaren, its common land agent. The Applicant said that there are 34 category 1 affected landowners

along the cable route. A number of these are represented by a land interest group, there are one or two who are unrepresented. The Applicant has developed overarching head of terms and has agreed principles of those with some landowners.

The Applicant confirmed that it had analysed landowner specific statutory feedback and Dalcour McLaren will be creating a report to support further engagement with the landowners.

### **Offshore Environmental Statement Update**

The Applicant explained that it had carried out a number of expert topic group (ETG) meetings over the first week of September 2023. These ETGs covered physical processes, benthic ecology, marine mammals, fish and ornithology. On ornithology, the Applicant explained that it had reached agreement with Natural England (NE) over their apportioning methodology.

Regarding seascape, landscape, and visual impact assessment (SLVIA), the Applicant explained that it had held discussions with NE and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) separately as they were unable to make the main ETG. At the main ETG concerns were expressed related to the curtaining effect of the Proposed Development cumulatively with the East Anglia 2 project. Consultation bodies made suggestions to reduce the numbers and heights of turbines. The Applicant's position is that this would be unwarranted given the distance of the array to the shore and is currently carrying out some work to see what, if any, further mitigation it could propose without impacting the project.

The Applicant mentioned that it had co-ordinated with North Falls OWF and met with Harwich Haven Harbour Authority and the Chamber of Shipping to discuss the detail of their comments at s42 consultation. The Applicant will have a follow up joint meeting with North Falls OWF and Harwich Haven. The Applicant also met with DP World London Gateway Port and the Port of London Authority with regards to installation methods timings and refinement to cable corridor and has decided to amend the red line boundary offshore in response to stakeholder feedback.

### **Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA)/Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) update**

The Applicant updated that it was revising its technical assessments and plans to circulate these key stakeholders towards the end of October. It plans to have another Ornithology ETG mid-November, which will include on compensatory measures for bird features.

The Applicant mentioned that it is progressing with surveys of the compensatory sites for lesser black backed gull.

### **Project Co-ordination**

The Applicant has signed a good neighbour agreement with North Falls OWF and both parties hold regular meetings to support co-ordination. Both are also engaged with National Grid and are having monthly joint meetings.

### **Early adopters update**

The Applicant confirmed that the Programme Plan had been published on its website.

The Applicant requested feedback on its draft Policy Compliance Document (PCD) which had been provided to the Inspectorate in advance of the meeting:

- The scope and content of the draft PCD broadly aligns with PINS' expectations for this product, however the relative absence of demonstration of compliance within the various tables has not allowed PINS to develop a more subjective view at this stage. PINS will resource for an Inspector to review a more mature iteration of this product circa November (in conjunction with the business-as-usual draft documents submission).
- The draft PCD assumes that an updated suite of energy NPSs will be published before the applicant submits its application (circa Feb/ Mar 24), but the applicant should be prepared for a fallback position where designation has not occurred by that milestone. In this circumstance the PCD is expected to cover both designated and emerging draft NPSs.
- It is helpful that the PCD explains the interaction with the Planning Statement (PS). PINS is conscious of the potential for duplication between these documents and it is helpful to see the applicant's interpretation of how these documents should interface. Through the EAP PINS/DLUHC will develop thinking around the PCD and how the relationship with the PS can be optimised in the future full service.
- PINS endorses the culmination of the document in a summary of policy focus areas which will benefit the ExA/ wider system.