



THE PLANNING ACT 2008

THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (EXAMINATION PROCEDURE) RULES
2010

Rampion Two Offshore Wind Farm

Appendix C6 to the Natural England Deadline 6 Submission

Natural England's Advice on Marine Mammals

For:

The construction and operation of the Rampion 2 Offshore Windfarm located approximately
13km off the Sussex coast in the English Channel.

Planning Inspectorate Reference EN010117

01 August 2024

Appendix C6 – Natural England’s advice on Marine Mammals

In formulating these comments, the following documents have been considered:

- [REP5-078&REP5-079] 7.15 Draft Unexploded Ordnance Clearance Marine Mammal Mitigation Protocol Rev B (tracked & clean)
- [REP5-086 & REP5-086] 7.22 Commitments Register Rev E (tracked & clean)
- [REP5-046 & REP5-047] R6.4.11.3 Appendix 11.3 Underwater noise assessment technical report Rev B (tracked & clean)
- [REP5-128] 8.90 Applicant’s Response to Action Point 22 – Bottlenose Dolphin Population Modelling Rev A
- [REP5-031 & REP5-033] 6.2.11 Environmental Statement Volume 2 – Chapter 11 Marine mammals Rev D
- [REP5-119] 8.81 Applicant’s Response to Examiner’s Questions
- [REP5-122] 8.84 Applicant’s Comments on Deadline 4 Submissions

1. Summary

Natural England have provided our advice on each document below. We advise our Deadline 6 Risk and Issues log is consulted for our latest position in light of these further submissions.

2. Main Comments

Documents Reviewed

7.15 Draft Unexploded Ordnance Clearance Marine Mammal Mitigation Protocol Rev B; 7.22 Commitments Register Rev E

Natural England notes the updated wording of the commitment C-275 in the two documents. We support the prioritisation of low order detonations, using the ‘deflagration method’, which is in accordance with the current [joint interim position statement on UXO clearance](#).

6.4.11.3 Appendix 11.3 Underwater noise assessment technical report

Natural England notes the minor changes and clarifications in this document. Natural England has taken the updates into account when updating its position at Deadline 6 in the Risk and Issues Log. We note that aspects of Point C24 remain outstanding in the Log.

8.90 Applicant’s Response to Action Point 22 – Bottlenose Dolphin Population Modelling

In summary, due to the Applicant’s commitment to deploy double big bubble curtains as the minimum single offshore piling noise mitigation technology for all foundation installations, we consider that the Coastal West Channel (CWC) bottlenose dolphin population will not be significantly impacted by project piling activities.

We welcome the Applicant’s population modelling of the CWC bottlenose dolphin population. The modelling shows that a significant effect on the population (based on a >1% decline per year in the population, averaged over a 5–6-year timescale) should not occur from project-alone or cumulative disturbance impacts.

We have the following comments on the modelling:

- There appears to be a discrepancy in the calf survival rate used by the Applicant (0.86) and that recommended by Sinclair *et al.* (2020) (0.8). We advise that this is unresolved as it needs to use the correct value as per Sinclair *et al.* (2020).
- Single monopile driving has been used as the worst-case scenario. We advise that it would be beneficial if the results of simultaneous/sequential piling were also presented, to demonstrate that the worst-case has considered. This matter remains unresolved.

We advise that in order to ensure a robust assessment has been conducted these comments should be addressed to resolve the issue. However, we consider that on balance they are unlikely to affect the results of modelling in such a way that would lead to a significant impact being demonstrated. In coming to this advice, we have taken into account that the population modelling does not include the reduced area of disturbance (and so animals disturbed) that would result from the use of noise abatement systems (NAS). We understand that the Applicant has committed to the use of NAS year-round, and that this commitment further reduces the risk of a significant impacts to bottlenose dolphin from piling.

We advise that it should be noted that we are aware that new evidence may be published soon on the CWC bottlenose dolphin population, which may update some of the baseline and population parameters used in the assessment. We advise that should this be published before the start of piling, an updated pre-construction assessment based on the latest available evidence should be undertaken.

We advise that monitoring is undertaken to validate the effectiveness of noise abatement in reducing the impact of disturbance to bottlenose dolphin. This matter remains unresolved, and it is something that will need to be addressed in the final Offshore Monitoring Plan.

We refer you to Point C14 in the Risk and Issues Log, the RAG rating for which has been changed to yellow following new information submitted at Deadline 6.

6.2.11 Environmental Statement Volume 2 – Chapter 11 Marine mammals Rev D

Natural England considers it appropriate to submit the draft EPS licence post-consent, as stated in our Risk and Issues Log.

Natural England notes that the Applicant has changed instances of Negligible magnitude to Very Low magnitude in the assessment, in accordance with our comment C1 in the Risk and Issues Log. We advise that you refer to point C1 of the Risks and Issues log for any outstanding points.

Natural England notes that several changes have been made to the Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA) text and figures in the Chapter. We consider that the changes made do not have a material effect on the assessment conclusions, or our outstanding concerns regarding the assessment in relation to Harbour porpoise and its conclusions (see comment C10).

Notwithstanding our outstanding concerns regarding the assessment of Harbour porpoise, we have the following comments to make on the updates that have been made. We note that the Applicant has updated the number of harbour porpoise disturbed during piling at Rampion 2 in the CEA, to take into account the recent commitment to use a Double Big Bubble Curtain (DBBC) during all piling. We welcome this commitment and consider it appropriate to take into account in the assessment. We advise that it would have been beneficial to update all the project-alone assessments to reflect the inclusion of the DBBC, rather than just the assessment of harbour porpoise impacted by the project alone in the CEA. For example, to

include the reduction in noise from the DBBC in the underwater noise modelling. We advise that the noise reduction offered by the DBBC is included in the refined underwater noise modelling undertaken post-consent.

Natural England is currently reviewing its advice on suitable effective deterrent ranges for different levels of noise reduction offered through noise abatement systems. We do not necessarily agree that the 15km EDR is appropriate in this case, due to a lack of evidence. We advise monitoring of marine mammal disturbance responses to piling with noise abatement systems is considered as part of the post-consent monitoring and would expect to see this in the Offshore Monitoring Plan.

8.81 Applicant's response to Examiner's Questions; 8.84 Applicant's Comments on Deadline 4 Submissions

Natural England has reviewed the Applicant's response to Examiner's Questions and the Applicant's comments on Deadline 4 Submissions in relation to Marine Mammals when formulating our position on the points in the Risk and Issues Log at Deadline 6.