

# Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	North Falls Offshore Wind Farm
<b>File reference</b>	EN010119
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	1 March 2023
<b>Meeting with</b>	North Falls Offshore Wind Farm Ltd
<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.

## General project update

The Applicant is promoting an offshore wind farm and continues to evaluate its electricity transmission options. The Applicant is in receipt of a grid connection agreement with National Grid to connect to the proposed National Grid East Anglia Green substation. In addition, the Applicant is assessing the inclusion of an additional offshore platform, in the event an offshore grid connection can be made by the Applicant by the time it needs to make a final investment decision.

With regards to the typical radial transmission connection, the Applicant explained that since adoption of the Scoping Opinion, a comprehensive substation and cable site selection options appraisal had been undertaken to refine the location of onshore works. The onshore cable corridor is currently 1km in width, and this area will be narrowed further between submission of the PEIR and the Environmental Statement. The landfall will also be further refined and dedicated working groups with key consultees have been held. Informal consultation has been held on cable routeing options.

The Applicant explained that there had been coordination with proposers of other projects in the area, including the Five Estuaries project and also National Grid East Anglia Green. The purpose of the co-ordination with both is in a bid to align infrastructure, where feasible, in a bid to potentially reduce environmental and community impacts.

In terms of project engagement, the Applicant held a round of non- statutory consultation from October to December 2022, this included a mixture of online and face to face consultation. The Applicant has also held ongoing consultation with key shipping stakeholders, this includes Harwich Haven Port Association, Trinity House and the Marine Coastguard Association. Statutory Consultation has been prepared for May 2023 and will run for a period of eight weeks.

## Transmission projects

The Applicant made reference to the proposed Sealink, Eurolink and Nautilus offshore transmission projects that are proposed in close offshore proximity to the Applicant's proposed wind turbine array areas and explained that the seabed around North Falls and these projects are heavily constrained by environmental designations, depth of water and shipping. The Applicant partakes in expert working groups with the developers of these proposed schemes to determine timelines and the possibility of an offshore connection for the Proposed Development. The Applicant explained that North Falls works as an Early Opportunity Pathfinder project in the Offshore Transmission Network Review, in an aim to establish alternative options to the radial connection. However, the Applicant advised that significant regulatory changes will be needed to commercial and legally support any offshore grid connections. The Applicant also referenced the BEIS Offshore Coordination Support Scheme to support research around offshore connection challenges. The Applicant continues to engage with BEIS, OFGEM and ESO in regard to the Pathfinder programme.

### **DCO optionality**

The Applicant explained that the North Falls development consent order (DCO) application will seek flexibility for the grid connection, with either a) an onshore grid connection to the East Anglia Green substation or b) a radial connection to an unspecified offshore transmission project. The DCO Order limits would retain both options and the Applicant stated that in option b) it was proposed that a third-party offshore connection would connect into North Falls and handle the associated offshore transmission cable routing consenting process.

The Applicant confirmed that it would want the DCO to allow either option a) or b) to be constructed. The Inspectorate advised that the Sheringham and Dudgeon Extension Project DCO has some optionality and might be a useful reference point. The Applicant asked the Inspectorate if it would be beneficial to produce a Needs Case document to explain why the DCO needs to include the optionality of the onshore and offshore plans. The Inspectorate agreed this would be of use, including through the consultation process, and it might help to secure information about timescales and challenges.

### **Environmental statement**

The Applicant advised that they will be publishing their Preliminary Environmental Impact Report following 2 years of consultation via their EIA and HRA evidence plan process. The project description at PEIR will further explain the need for transmission optionality. In addition, the Applicant will publish a Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA) at PEIR alongside a high level indication of its mitigation proposals. Once PEIR & HRA consultation feedback has been obtained, the Applicant will comprehensively review the project, which is likely to result in variations to its red line boundary. The Applicant confirmed that the environmental statement (ES) will report on all optionality required to maintain transmission optionality upto its final investment decision.

### **AOB**

The Applicant and the Inspectorate both agreed that an increase in the regularity of project update meetings would be beneficial to continue further discussions on the optionality of the DCO.

The Inspectorate pointed the Applicant towards the section 51 advice on the project webpage regarding the fishing community, it was advised to address these concerns during the statutory consultation.