

Meeting note

Project name	Morecambe Offshore Windfarm
File reference	EN010121
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	13 September 2021
Meeting with	Offshore Wind Limited (OWL)
Venue	Microsoft Teams Meeting
Meeting objectives	Inception 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.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted (if requested by an Applicant for commercial reasons).

Details of the proposed development

The site was auctioned in the "Round 4" by the Crown Estate and it is located in the Irish Sea, 30 km from shore and with an anticipated generating capacity of 480 MW. The Applicant is a consortium of Flotation Energy Ltd and Cobra called Offshore Wind Ltd (OWL). The applicant confirmed that Royal HaskoningDHV was part of the Project team responsible for undertaking the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and preparing the Environmental Statement (ES). The applicant stated that the site included areas where there were existing offshore gas installations that were planned to be decommissioned. The Inspectorate enquired whether there were any plans for offshore CO₂ storage in the area. The Applicant explained that they were aware of interest in CO₂ storage in the area but further work would need to be undertaken to determine whether there were any implications for the Morecambe Offshore Windfarm.

Onshore grid connection

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that the Offshore Transmission Network Review (OTNR) was ongoing but no grid connection points had yet been confirmed by National Grid (NG). NG had provided a holding offer of a connection to Anglesey (Wylfa). The Inspectorate advised that if a Welsh grid connection was proposed, communication with the National Resources Wales (NRW) and the relevant local authority should commence as soon as possible, due to the need to pursue a separate Marine Licence. The applicant confirmed that the onshore conclusion of their "Study 1" had been a strong preference for a landfall on the Lancashire coast. The final onshore connection location should be

determined in January 2022 but it was a staged process and potentially they would have a better idea of their cable route and connection by late 2021.

EIA

The applicant confirmed that it was preparing at Scoping report and hoped to make a Scoping request in December 2021. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant of the potential implications of submitting a scoping report where the 28 day consultation period included the Christmas holiday period i.e. compressing the timescales for statutory consultation bodies to respond. This could have a negative effect on the quality of the feedback from the consultation bodies. The Inspectorate suggested that a submission early in the New Year would avoid this issue. The Inspectorate was strongly supportive of scoping one landfall option rather than one with multiple alternatives.

The Applicant queried whether an Evidence Plan Process (EPP) approach was right for this project. The Inspectorate advised that developing an EPP was strongly recommended for offshore wind projects, since it provides a structured and focused way to engage statutory bodies and also provides a conduit to refine and develop the EIA methodology and mitigation proposals with the input of key environmental bodies.

Future consultation

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate of its indicative programme for the submission of the application in August 2023. EIA and HRA survey work are programmed to take place between 2021 and 2023. The Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) and Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) would be ready for a statutory consultation in Q4 2022. The programme anticipated an examination starting in Q1 2024, with a decision by the Secretary of State in Q2 2025.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant on consulting any Isle of Man representative bodies on the possible impacts of the development on ferry services, as well as environmental concerns with marine mammal's protection. The Applicant assured that it will be in contact with the relevant authority regarding this topic.

AOB

The Inspectorate and Applicant discussed the preferred frequency of meetings going forward. It was agreed that update meetings would be useful at key milestone points, for example, following the publication of the Scoping Opinion and following any consultation or key engagement with stakeholders. The Inspectorate commented that OWL was welcome to instigate an update meeting or to seek advice at any time if there was a need.

The applicant requested that the publication be delayed until a formal scoping request is submitted.