



## Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	Morecambe Offshore Windfarm project
<b>File reference</b>	EN010121
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	26 May 2022
<b>Meeting with</b>	Flotation Energy
<b>Venue</b>	Microsoft Teams
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	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 Offshore Transmission Network Review (OTNR) was progressing and final design recommendations had been received. On this basis the Applicant intended to proceed with coordinated transmission connection with the Morgan Offshore Wind Project, at Penwortham, Lancashire.

The proposed approach was for Morecambe Offshore Windfarm to submit two separate applications for Development Consent Orders (DCO). The initial application would cover the generation assets (windfarm site) and the second would be a further DCO for the transmission assets (covering both the Morecambe Offshore Windfarm transmission infrastructure and the Morgan Offshore Wind Project transmission infrastructure in the same application). The Applicant said that as these two projects will share a common grid connection location and coordinated/shared export cable corridors, this would allow better consideration of potential impacts and provide greater clarification for stakeholders. The transmission assets would not be a National Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) in their own right and therefore the intention was to seek a s35 Direction from the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, & Infrastructure Strategy (BEIS) to cover both the Morecambe Offshore Windfarm and the Morgan Offshore Wind Project transmission assets. Consultation with the BEIS was required on this approach and the draft National Policy Statements (NPS) supported this. The Applicant would consult with BEIS and local planning authorities (LPAs) on alternative options, if required. The programme for the application submissions was being determined, with the aim of keeping the DCO submissions as close together as possible. Division of the assets across two applications would allow for progression of the generation

asset consenting process whilst the outcomes of the OTNR were not in the public domain. A meeting would be requested with the Inspectorate to understand practicalities around the Examination and how to progress.

### ***Responding to Uncertainty about Grid Connection***

The Applicant discussed its strategy for scoping its Environmental Statement (ES). The Evidence Plan Process (EPP) for the Morecambe Offshore Windfarm generation assets has commenced. Grid uncertainty had impacted the project strategy and programme for scoping. A draft scoping report for the generation assets had been shared with Expert Topic Groups (ETG's) along with Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) method statements. This allowed for progression of generation asset EIA assessments. However, only consultees involved in the EPP, have been consulted therefore the Applicant was keen to move forward with scoping to obtain formal responses from the full range of consultees. Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening was progressing, along with grid optioneering studies and refinements. Windfarm site surveys were ongoing. The second year of aerial bird and marine mammal surveys had commenced, whilst winter vessel traffic and benthic surveys at the windfarm site took place earlier in 2022.

### ***ES Scoping request for Generation Assets***

The Applicant clarified the definition of the project for which a Scoping Opinion is being sought and provided more detail on the rationale for splitting the generation and transmission assets into two projects. Scoping would include the generation assets only. The generation asset project infrastructure would include offshore wind turbine generators, offshore substation platforms within the array, foundation and support structures, including scour protection, inter-array cables and platform link cables.

Transmission asset project infrastructure would be subject to a separate Scoping Report and would include offshore export cables, offshore booster substation (if required), foundation and support structures, cable landfall, onshore export cables, onshore substation and grid connection export cable. Offshore substation platforms would be included in both the generation asset project infrastructure and the transmission asset project infrastructure Scoping Reports on a precautionary basis. The Applicant would be reviewing where delineation would be.

The generation asset Scoping Report would provide details on the likely grid connection location and likely transmission infrastructure, plus details regarding the DCO consenting strategy, methodology for assessing cumulative effects of the array area and the link transmission assets. The approach aligns with the consenting and delivery strategy. It maximises the time for stakeholders to provide views and allows the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) report programme for the generation assets to progress with more certainty. It also allows more time to develop the delivery model for the transmission assets.

The Inspectorate noted that some statutory consultees tend to provide generic comments on scoping reports and the Applicant should be aware of this. The Inspectorate advised that the Triton Knoll projects used their EPP to address EIA as well as HRA issues so this could be an alternative approach. A shapefile and correlating red line boundary in the Scoping Report would be required for the area for which the scoping opinion was sought. If the shapefile/ red line boundary only applies to the generation assets then this reduces the number of consultees which would be notified under regulation 11 of the Infrastructure (EIA)

Regulations or consulted on the scoping opinion because the 'relevance' test would not be met for bodies such as parish councils or local authorities.

The Inspectorate suggested that even if the Scoping Report is only covering the generation assets it would be helpful if it also included some information describing the approach/ expected approximate location of the transmission assets. This would give more confidence to certain consultees about how the transmission assets would be assessed and delivered in future.

***Methodology of assessing cumulative effects of the array area; and the separate but linked transmission asset project.***

The Applicant was considering how to ensure cumulative impacts were appropriately assessed between the two assets, especially around construction and operation of the transmission asset project. This would be set out in the Scoping Report, covering total effects and all receptors. It would refer to and be set out in accordance with the Inspectorate's Advice Note 17 and other relevant guidance (such as Natural England's practical toolkit).

Cumulative assessments would be unique to each topic, and the zone of influence would vary depending on activities in that area. Scoping would not detail individual impacts per project, which would be progressed in the EIA. Scoping for transmission assets would consider the spatial overlap, construction and operation phases of both transmission assets. The Applicant would be consulting with ETG's and specialists on how cumulative assessments should be set out. The Inspectorate advised it would be useful to include how the Applicant would define zones of influence. It also highlighted the expectation to include high level decommissioning within the Environmental Statement (ES). The final design would then inform the EIA.

***Approach to Regulation 8(1)(b) of The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017***

The Applicant suggested notifying the Secretary of State of the intention to provide an ES in respect of the development in a two-step process.

The intention would be that the Applicant would submit notification of the intent to submit an ES for the generation assets, with the inclusion of a note of the intention to make a separate notification for the transmission assets. It would continue to discuss how to progress with the Morgan Offshore Wind Project and would seek to obtain a s35 Direction for the transmission assets. Agreement on who the Applicant would be for that application was also needed.

The transmission assets project would have its own project page on the Inspectorate's website (similar to Triton Knoll). The Inspectorate asked the Applicant to consider potential amendments to the existing project description. Some explanatory paragraphs could be included as part of scoping. This would be considered formal notification and would allow the Inspectorate to notify bodies under Regulation 11 and also consult on scoping in parallel.

The OTNR recommendation was expected to be published at the end of June 2022 and the submission of the scoping request for the generation assets in expected in June 2022.

***AOB***

The Applicant would request the next project update meeting once the s35 Direction request had progressed.