



Meeting note

Project name	Morecambe Offshore Windfarm Generation Assets
File reference	EN010121
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	27 July 2023
Meeting with	Flotation Energy
Venue	MS Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Update 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.

Project Update

The Applicant confirmed that the Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Generation Assets is targeted for the end of Quarter 1 2024, and the DCO Submission for the Morgan and Morecambe Offshore Wind Farms Transmission Assets is targeted for early Quarter 3 2024. The Inspectorate highlighted the importance of accurate submission dates on the project pages, to allow statutory bodies to plan resources.

The Applicant confirmed that two years of monthly ornithology and marine mammal digital aerial surveys at the windfarm site and surrounding buffers were completed in February 2023. Surveys such as an Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) risk assessment and a shallow geotechnical survey were completed in May 2023. Additionally, a deep Geotechnical survey was being undertaken within the windfarm site, with an aim to finish by end of October 2023.

The Applicant confirmed that they have reduced the windfarm site boundary and have reduced the western boundary to a smaller current red line boundary.

Consultation update and feedback summary

The Applicant confirmed that invitation postcards were sent to around 100,000 addresses across north-west England, north Wales and the Isle of Man, and posters were put up at prominent locations. The advertising campaign spanned print, digital and audio means. Notices were placed in regional, national and fishing trade newspapers, and emails were sent to an excess of 1,300 consultees before and during the consultation.

The Applicant confirmed there have been 12 deposit locations, and two joint press releases with bp and EnBW, as well as 19 in-person consultation events and an online webinar.

The Applicant confirmed they have received approximately 170 pieces of feedback, including over 80 via online feedback form, over 80 via email and at least six via Freepost submissions. The key emerging themes from the feedback include:

- Potential cumulative impact on shipping routes;
- Lack of perceived benefits for the Isle of Man;
- Potential impact on wildlife (including fish, seabirds, seabed ecology);
- Potential impact on the fishing industry;
- Positive sentiment about renewable energy and offshore wind;
- Potential visual impact;
- Potential impact on airports; and
- Interface with other marine users and other developments.

The Inspectorate asked the Applicant if they are going to produce an update newsletter for further developments, and the Applicant responded that they would and that it is in the process.

Approach to the Environmental Statement (ES) and the Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA)

The Applicant confirmed that the Project Design Envelope (PDE) refinement (including reduced windfarm site boundaries) will inform the ES and RIAA assessments. The latest Steering Group and Expert Topic Groups (ETGs) meetings took place in June 2023, and the focus was on the initial responses to ETGs comments on the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) and draft RIAA. The Applicant confirmed that technical notes were being issued to the ETGs in relation to key PEIR comments for formal responses, and that the next round of ETGs was scheduled for Quarter 3 2023, where discussions on mitigations will take place where applicable.

The DCO will not include the transmission assets, which will be the subject of a separate standalone DCO (the Morgan and Morecambe Offshore Wind Farms Transmission Assets DCO). Feedback had been received from Natural England (NE) that a whole project assessment is required. The feedback is consistent with NE's comments at scoping. The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has supported NE's position. The Applicant considers that its proposed approach to consenting the transmission assets separately to the generation assets for the two projects is consistent with national policy, which encourages co-ordination of infrastructure. The programmes for the three DCO applications (Morecambe generation assets, Morgan generation assets and combined transmission assets) are staggered so it is not possible to undertake a single EIA, but information from the transmission

assets PEIR will be available in order to undertake a robust cumulative assessment within the Morecambe generation assets ES.

The Inspectorate advised that as the PEIR would not typically form part of the DCO application, any examining authority would likely want some form of assessment within the generation assets ES considering the transmission assets. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to engage with NE to understand the viewpoint and consider how to assess other infrastructure forming part of the wider project. One option could be to undertake a multistage approach to assessment of cumulative effects, firstly considering the Proposed Development, then Proposed Development and transmission assets, and finally Proposed Development with transmission assets and all other cumulative projects scoped in. The Inspectorate pointed the Applicant to the Net Zero Teeside project, which has recently been examined, and has inter-dependencies with projects not subject to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime. The Inspectorate noted that there might be some helpful insight into how such matters could be examined in the written questions and the Applicant's DCO documents. The Inspectorate advised that tables could be used to set out overlap and impacts when considering cumulative impacts for the project and its transmission assets.

The s42 consultation was undertaken on the Morecambe generation assets PEIR. The PEIR included consideration of the transmission assets within the cumulative effects assessment. The response from the Wildlife Trust suggested that fishing should be considered as a cumulative project. The Applicant considers that fishing would be a part of the baseline, rather than to be treated as a cumulative project, and that this is consistent across industry. NE has raised comments about collision risk to ornithology receptors from existing offshore windfarms. The Applicant is continuing discussions about how to establish values that will feed into the cumulative assessment in the absence of data being available from existing windfarms. The Applicant was discussing potential cut off dates for cumulative projects to be considered in the ES. The Inspectorate advised of the potential for examination questions seeking to update the assessment if additional cumulative projects were identified or existing projects changed.

Draft documents

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate of its intention to submit a suite of draft documents for review ahead of submission of its application. The Inspectorate advised of a six – eight week timeframe for review, dependant on the documents submitted. It also requested the Applicant review the project description against the DCO, ensuring the wording was clear and consistent across both documents. The Applicant agreed to produce a list of documents and expected timeline for submission.

NSIP Early Adopters Programme

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that due to their project timescales; they chose not to formally participate in the programme, but that they have reviewed options to trial some elements of the programme components.

Format on submitting the DCO Application

The Inspectorate informed the Applicant that as per Advice Note 6, the DCO Application must be submitted electronically. However, hard copies of some documents may be requested

before and during the Examination stage. A trial of the submission method should be tested when submitting draft documents.

Morgan & Morecambe Offshore Wind Farms Transmission Assets update

The Applicant confirmed that the PEIR assessments and drafting were ongoing, and they were proposing to start the Statutory Consultation in September or October 2023, where the consultation would run for approximately 42 days. Also, the Applicant confirmed that the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) was out for consultation with the planning authorities for 28 days.

The Applicant confirmed that it is proposing to do the following:

- Publicise the consultation through a variety of communication channels;
- Submit the s46 Notification to the Secretary of State of the Proposed Applications to the Inspectorate; and
- Consult with s42, s43,s44 and s47 parties
- Consult with local communities, elected representatives, Seldom heard groups and special interest groups
- Undertake multiple consultation events within the 'consultation zone'
- Carry out an online webinar
- Engage with stakeholders

