



Meeting note

Project name	Morecambe Offshore Windfarm Generation Assets
File reference	EN010121
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	15 November 2023
Meeting with	Morecambe Offshore Windfarm Ltd
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Update Meeting
Circulation	All attendees/ additional contacts to share meeting note

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 provided a summary of updates to the Proposed Development since the last project update meeting. The first project newsletter was published in September 2023 on the Applicant's website and sent to key stakeholders. The Applicant stated that a review of consultation comments was ongoing and confirmed it was meeting with stakeholders. The Applicant stated that it was in the process of considering and updating assessments for the Environmental Statement (ES) and continuing to collect additional data. Since submitting the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) it has refined a number of parameters and has finalised the project description. Geotechnical surveys were completed in October 2023 and a further phase of geotechnical surveys is planned for 2024.

Schedule update

Submission of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application is now expected in early to mid Q2 2024. The Inspectorate advised that it would be helpful to statutory parties to be aware of the most up-to-date expected submission date to manage resourcing; therefore, it is important to ensure that the submission date on the Inspectorate's project page is accurate. The Applicant confirmed that the submission date for the Transmission Assets project remains the same (Q2/Q3 2024) and that it intends to have a two to three month gap between the generation and transmission submission dates.

Project changes since PEIR submission

The Applicant provided a summary of changes to the Proposed Development since PEIR submission:

- Reduction in the extent of windfarm site area from 125km² to 87km²;
- Two lines of orientation for site layout as a grid arrangement instead of offset. This is to reduce potential impacts to search and rescue;
- The maximum number of turbines had been reduced from 40 to 35;
- The maximum length of inter-array cables had been reduced; and
- There had been reductions in associated parameters such as footprint and sediment disturbance volumes.

The Applicant confirmed that the changes to the Proposed Development would be reflected in the ES.

Whole project/ cumulative assessment

The Applicant confirmed that it had received feedback from Natural England and the Marine Management Organisation) that a 'whole' project' assessment (that considers both the generation and transmission assets) should be provided . The Applicant explained that following a review of options, it will take forward a multistage approach to the ES assessment of cumulative effects: the Proposed Development alone, the Proposed Development and Transmission Assets, and the Proposed Development with Transmission Assets and all other scoped in cumulative projects.

The Applicant explained that it also intends to submit a wrapper document, as a summary of impacts of both the Generation and Transmission Assets projects. This would be a signposting document that identifies where in the application the effects of the two components are assessed. The Inspectorate advised that the Applicant should take care that all Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) information is contained within the ES. It advised the Applicant to consider whether this document would need updating throughout Examination and to consider how the ease in which information can be found in an application can assist examination and the discharging of requirements.

Statement of common ground / issues and mitigation tracking

Draft Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) would not be developed for the application submission where stakeholders needed to review the final ES post submission. The DCO application would outline consultation undertaken with these stakeholders up to three months before submission.

The Applicant confirmed that it is maintaining an internal issues tracker but is not proposing to submit this as part of the DCO application. The Applicant asked for best practice examples regarding the approach to mitigation and recording measures proposed, including the use of a register of environmental actions and commitments (REAC). The Inspectorate advised that there are no best practice examples on the National Infrastructure website at present. Annex 1 to Advice Note 7: EIA: Preliminary Environmental Information, Screening and Scoping provides practical guidance on the presentation of the ES, including suggestions for the presentation of mitigation measures.

The Inspectorate advised that, if a REAC is produced, it is helpful for it to be as simple as possible and it is better as a standalone document.

Update on draft documents

The Applicant propose to submit the following draft documents to the Inspectorate for review:

- Draft ES Project Description Chapter
- Draft DCO
- Draft Explanatory Memorandum (EM)
- Draft technical ES chapter

The Inspectorate advised that it cannot comment on the substantive content of a technical ES chapter as consideration of the merits is a matter for examination. The Applicant confirmed it is being submitted as an example of how a chapter is drafted and structured, including the approach to cumulative assessment of the Proposed Development with Transmission Assets. The Inspectorate requested the Applicant to highlight any novel drafting or specific articles for advice. The Inspectorate advised it would aim to provide feedback within a six to eight week timeline and that the Inspectorate should be notified of any specific feedback points the Applicant would like to raise before the next meeting.

Early adopters programme (EAP)

The Proposed Development is not part of EAP but an update on the programme was requested. The Inspectorate explained that feedback on the use of Principal Areas of Disagreement Statements (PADS) was being considered, with some parties concerned over duplication. A newsletter setting out EAP progress has been published on the [gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk). The main focus was programming, particularly pre-planning for internal and external resources. The Inspectorate advised that design is a key principle and should be focused on in the Pre-Application stage. It also signposted to recent [advice](#) provided to the [Outer Dowsing Offshore Wind Farm](#) and the [Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm](#).

Online feedback form

The Applicant received 54 responses to the online feedback form during statutory consultation earlier this year (19 April to 4 June 2023). It explained a technical issue isolated to one of the questions on the online feedback form, affecting the receipt of responses relating to traffic and transport question. To address this, the Applicant contacted all 54 respondents allowing further opportunity to respond between 25 August and 25 September 2023. In total 14 further pieces of feedback had been returned.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to evidence this within its Consultation Report. It should also include detailed information on the regard it has had to responses and evidence to support statements of compliance (such as copies of letters and emails). The Inspectorate advised someone unfamiliar with the project could use the Applicant's draft section 55 checklist to find evidence as a quality check prior to submission. During the Acceptance stage, the Inspectorate is unable to ask for additional information, only signposting, so it is critical that the Applicant provides all relevant and necessary information in the application.

Morgan and Morecambe Offshore Wind Farms: Transmission Assets statutory consultation update

Four public consultation events, two pop-up events and an online webinar were held, to date, with a further public consultation event to be held at the Isle of Man. The Applicant provided a breakdown of the number of attendees for events and summary of key themes arising from consultation.

Statutory consultation was due to close at 23:59 on Thursday 23 November 2023.

AOB