



## Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	Dogger Bank South
<b>File reference</b>	N/A
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	21 September 2021
<b>Meeting with</b>	RWE Renewables UK Ltd
<b>Venue</b>	Microsoft Teams
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	Inception 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.

### Proposed development

The Applicant introduced RWE Renewables UK Ltd, and shared an image which illustrated its current offshore wind presence in the UK. Dogger Bank South (DBS) is located 150/200km from shore, relatively shallow and is near other Dogger Bank projects in the area. The Applicant provided an update on the project's status, noting that the site selection process, Evidence Plan, and draft Scoping Report are underway.

### Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping, Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and surveying

#### HRA

The Applicant highlighted that the proposed development has potential to impact on Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Holderness Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ). The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant had any insight into the plan level HRA being conducted by The Crown Estate (TCE). The Applicant noted that RWE Renewables is being provided information on the plan level HRA but that this was confidential and cannot be shared with outside parties.

It was discussed whether a derogation was likely at the plan level, this is unclear, but it was noted that decisions taken on previous leasing rounds left the management of the derogation to a project level. The delivery mechanism for strategic compensation at the project level was discussed.

## EIA Scoping

The Applicant stated that it intends to submit a scoping request in November 2021. The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant would be able to provide complete information to inform the scoping request. The Applicant confirmed that it has sufficient data for the scoping report, including, but not limited to, methodology and areas of search for cable infrastructure. More detail is to be provided before the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) is submitted.

The Applicant provided an indicative timeline overview of its site selection process. The long listing of sites will run from September 2021 to November 2021. Short listing will run from February 2022 to March 2022. A design freeze for the Development Consent Order (DCO) will take place in March 2023. To date, positive feedback has been received on the evidence plan process, feedback is ongoing and will continue throughout the DCO process. The Applicant provided information on future evidence plan meetings from post-scoping (Q1 2022) to pre-submission (Q3 2023).

The Applicant discussed its scoping report onshore study area, showing locations for potential National Grid (NG) substation sites. The Applicant confirmed it is in discussion with NG and progress has been made on which site is most likely to be selected but that the substation and therefore the cable route will not be confirmed until Q1 2022 when the Offshore Transmissions Network Review (OTNR) has been completed. All three optional sites will continue to be studied until a confirmed connection location has been decided.

The Inspectorate advised that scoping on all three locations will result in the need to consult a number of additional councils that might not be subject to a future project, resulting in abortive and time-consuming work and that it would be preferable to scope on a single option. On this basis, the Inspectorate queried whether it would be possible to delay scoping until a single site had been determined. The Applicant advised that there would be no guarantee of a NG connection even if the scoping were delayed until the outcome of the OTNR was known. In its approach to scoping, the Applicant informed the Inspectorate that it is seeking feedback from Expert Topic Groups, in particular on the approach to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and planned data collection in advance of the PEIR.

## Environmental surveys

Onshore ecology surveys are to commence from October/November 2021. The Applicant confirmed that surveys will be conducted for each of the three proposed NG connection locations. The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant was considering a district level licensing approach in relation to Great Crested Newts – the Applicant could not confirm at this time. The Inspectorate queried whether there is any likely requirement for s53 authorisations in respect of survey access. The Applicant confirmed there is potential but are not pursuing this at present, noting that coastal bird surveys will be conducted on publicly accessible land in 2021. For surveys in 2022, the Applicant confirmed it would likely use s172 of the Housing and Planning 2016 Act. The Inspectorate advised that where s53 authorisations are required, the Applicant should be aware of the minimum

three-month timescale in processing applications. The Inspectorate highlighted the timescale implications of projects covering an extensive area with multiple landowners.

Proposed offshore surveys will be conducted via monthly aerial surveys for birds and marine mammals from March 2021 to February 2023 (24 months). Geotechnical surveys will be conducted 2021 to 2022. Met ocean buoy deployment is planned for Q4 2021. Winter and summer navigation surveys, as well as geophysical and benthic surveys are planned for 2022. The Inspectorate noted that National Grid's (NG) plans to install a subsea cable from Scotland to Humber and queried whether this has any significant effect on the DBS project. The Applicant confirmed it was aware of the project, advising that this would be unlikely to have any significant effect on the DBS project. Nevertheless, it would consider the NG connection as part of its cumulative impact assessments.

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant is aware of any carbon storage projects in the area. The Applicant confirmed it is aware of a proposed Carbon Capture Storage Project, North West of Hornsea (Endurance Reserve), and will engage with the developer/operator.

The Inspectorate noted that the DBS application comprises two array areas and asked whether the Applicant intends to assess both projects simultaneously or separately, as did the East Anglia projects. The Applicant advised that it has no firm view on that and it will depend on the plan level HRA. The Inspectorate advised that a single overarching assessment would be far less complex and are happy to discuss at a later date.

### **Project information for the Inspectorate's website**

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant are content with them setting up the project page as soon as information has been provided. The Applicant agreed and reminded the Inspectorate that there will be two projects under one application. The Inspectorate agreed to send a list of information they need to set up the project webpage. The Inspectorate advised that a shapefile must be submitted at least two weeks earlier than the draft documents. The Inspectorate suggested the next meeting is held post-scoping for a pre-submission briefing, in which anything novel can be discussed in advance. The Applicant agreed and suggested a date in mid-October, with a follow up about the opinion after submission.

### **AOB**

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant had worked through hypothetical scenarios for derogation. The Applicant confirmed it is in discussion with The Crown Estate and is engaged in ongoing mitigation discussions with DEFRA. The Inspectorate noted that this would likely be a key issue during Examination, and it would be a topic to discuss in future meetings.

### ***Specific decisions/ follow-up required?***

The following actions were agreed:

- The Inspectorate to send list of information required to set up the project webpage.