

Meeting note

Project name	Dogger Bank South Offshore Wind Farms
File reference	EN010125 EN010125
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	16 October 2023
Meeting with	RWE Renewables UK Dogger Bank South (West) Ltd and RWE Renewables UK Dogger Bank South (East) Ltd
Venue	Microsoft 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.

Statutory Consultation

The Applicant notified that its statutory consultation ran from 6 June to 17 July 2023. The headline items were:

- 44,500 letters sent to residents and businesses;
- Five public events with 383 attendees;
- 71 responses, 32 of which were from stakeholders;
- Two webinars with 23 attendees; and
- 521 visitors to the consultation website

Overview of Key Decisions

The Applicant detailed its plans for one haul road between both projects and informed that it is expected that the first Dogger Bank South (DBS) project will install onshore ducting for the next DBS project if sequentially built. A Safeguarding application to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) is being considered. The Applicants confirmed that there are solar applications to the south (which has been consented) and to the east (which has been proposed) of the substation zone.

Refinement

The Applicants detailed a reduction in the DBS array areas of approximately 29%, a change since the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)/Statutory Consultation. Key drivers for the refinement included bathymetry, ground conditions and engineering limitations, radar and mobile receptors such as shipping and

navigation, ecology and commercial fisheries. The amended array areas also now include a defined area where development above sea level will not take place between the DBS East and West array areas.

The Applicants have also refined the offshore export cable corridors, with the final selection representing routes with increased cable burial potential and the shortest routes for both DBS West and DBS East, in part to reduce the requirement for cabling within the Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation (SAC) as far as possible. The Applicant detailed the reasons for selecting Landfall 8 as it avoids the Holderness Inshore Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) and areas of outcropping/sub-cropping glacial till and steep seafloor gradient.

Changes have been made to the onshore cable corridor route, with the corridor near Long Riston moving to the south and corridor near Nunkeeling being narrowed and moved to the west. Both these alterations have occurred since the Statutory Consultation and the Applicants are still finalising the red line boundary.

The Applicants noted the new Birkhill Wood substation as the chosen National Grid connection point.

Onshore Substation

Two substation zones were included in the PEIR. However, the Applicants have removed the east zone and will only be including the west zone in the Proposed Development. Converter stations for both DBS West and East will be in this zone.

The Applicant detailed splitting the onward routing cable corridor due to existing infrastructure including a high-pressure ethylene pipeline and National Grid high pressure pipeline. It is having discussions to try to minimise any potential impacts.

High-voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) technology has been removed from the project design envelope for the export cables and High-voltage Direct Current (HVDC) technology will be used instead, meaning substation sites will have a smaller footprint, albeit the buildings may be taller.

Indicative Programme

The Applicants are aiming to submit the DCO application in Q1 2024 but will notify the Inspectorate as soon as possible if there are any changes to the submission date. The Inspectorate stressed the importance of ensuring that the project webpage is kept up to date to support those using the webpage for resourcing purposes. **Post Meeting Note** – the Applicants have confirmed that the application is now due in Q2 2024, and the project webpage has been amended accordingly.

The Inspectorate advised that if the Applicants are planning to submit draft documents, the review will take between six to eight weeks. It is recommended to focus on key documents such as the Consultation Report, the draft Development Consent Order (dDCO), draft Explanatory Memorandum, introductory chapters of the Environmental Statement (ES) and the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The Applicants should highlight any novel drafting it is using to support the Inspectorate's review.

Expert Topic Group (ETG) Steering Group Meeting

The Applicant discussed a proposed agenda for an ETG Steering Group meeting, following a request from Natural England (NE) to discuss the programme, associated risks and how the application and examination will be managed considering the large volume of Development Consent Orders (DCO) due to be examined in 2024. NE, Historic England (HE) and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) have expressed their interest while the Applicant is awaiting response from the East Riding of Yorkshire Council and the Environment Agency (EA).

The Applicant requested the Inspectorate attend to support the meeting. The Inspectorate has confirmed attendance.

ETG Update

Onshore

Post-PEIR Onshore ETGs were held on Traffic and Transport and Noise in September 2023 with more planned for November 2023 and Q1 2024.

Offshore

Post-PEIR Offshore ETGs were held on Marine Physical Processes, Benthic and Intertidal Ecology, Marine Mammals and Offshore Archaeology in September and October 2023. Further Pre-ES ETGs are planned for Q1 2024. Consultation for Shipping and Navigation, Aviation and Commercial Fisheries is ongoing outside of the Evidence Plan Process.

Section (s)42 Consultation

The Applicant detailed its responses to key themes raised in the s42 Consultation.

Onshore

- The incomplete PEIR data due to landowner access for habitat and protected species surveys has now been completed and this data will be included in the ES.
- The EA has requested approval of methodology for drainage and river crossing construction.
- Comments around methodology of Transport Assessment methodology and traffic modelling have been resolved in an ETG in September.
- A Public Right of Way (PRoW) strategy is being drafted, in response to comments, which will be discussed at the PRoW ETG in November.
- Bi-monthly meetings are being held with National Grid about the Birkhill Wood substation, Creyke Beck substation extension and the North Humber to High Marnham overhead line project.

The Applicant informed that it had not received a response to the statutory consultation from the East Riding of Yorkshire Council, the host Authority. The Inspectorate advised the Applicants to document this in the Consultation Report, including how the Applicants have tried to resolve issues and who it has attempted to liaise with for information.

Offshore

- Discussions have been held with Historic England about data analysis from an archaeological perspective and an approach has been agreed at an ETG.



The Planning Inspectorate

- NE's response was focussed on commitment to HVDC and refining the project in the ES, which the Applicants have achieved.
- Underwater noise was a key theme in MMO and NE responses and the Applicants are remodelling with reduced maximum parameters used for underwater noise modelling.

The Applicant set out how it intends to assess in the ES potential impacts from unexploded ordnance (UXO) within the offshore development area, with reference to the Inspectorate's comments in row ID 3.12.4 of the adopted EIA Scoping Opinion. Data from geophysical surveys undertaken would be used to determine the potential for UXO within the offshore development area, with the assessments in relevant ES aspect chapters to be based on a likely worst-case number of potential UXO. An outline mitigation plan would be prepared in support of the ES. **Post Meeting Note -** The Inspectorate considers the approach set out by the Applicants (to include an assessment of the likely worst-case scenario in relevant ES aspect chapters) to be proportionate and to reflect the advice provided in the Scoping Opinion. With regard to relevant aspect chapters, an assessment of potential impacts from UXO should be provided where significant effects are likely to occur. However, the Applicants should also make efforts to discuss and agree the approach (including the content of the outline mitigation plan) with relevant consultation bodies including NE and the MMO and should justify the approach taken in the ES. Any assumptions used in the definition of the worst-case scenario should be explained in the ES.

Plan Level HRA

The Applicant explained that they are actively engaged in Steering Groups for the Round 4 Plan Strategic Compensation Plans for Flamborough and Filey Coast Special Protected Area (SPA) and Dogger Bank SAC.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

- The Inspectorate to check availability for the ETG Steering Group meeting and provide an update after speaking to relevant contacts.

The next project update meeting to be organised at the beginning of December.