

## Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	Outer Dowsing Offshore Wind
<b>File reference</b>	EN010130
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	27 January 2022
<b>Meeting with</b>	Green Investment Group TotalEnergies
<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.

### *Introductions*

The Applicant shared with the Inspectorate the Outer Dowsing Offshore Wind team structure.

### *Update to the proposed development*

The Outer Dowsing Offshore Wind (ODOW) project was awarded Preferred Bidder status for a 1.5GW site located in the southern North Sea, approximately 54km from shore, as part of the Crown Estate's Round 4 leasing. The project is a joint venture between Green Investment Group (GIG) and TotalEnergies. A map including the site boundaries and a summary of the proposed development surroundings was shared with the Inspectorate. The Applicant advised that the Crown Estate is undertaking a plan level Habitats Regulations Assessment which was anticipated to conclude in Spring 2022.

In terms of the project's parameters, the project size is approximated to be 500 km<sup>2</sup> with water depths between 5m and 40m and a maximum number of wind turbine generators of 100. The turbines are likely to be a maximum height of 400m to blade tip. The offshore and onshore cable corridor length is to be confirmed in due course, following any outcomes from the Offshore Transmission Network Review (OTNR).

## ***Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)***

The Applicant gave an overview of the ongoing offshore geophysical and geotechnical surveys being progressed to support the EIA. The 2021 geophysical campaign was completed in January 2022 with the whole array site being covered. Subject to outcomes of the OTNR, the geophysical, benthic and geotechnical survey campaigns for the export cable route are expected to commence in Q2 2022.

In terms of offshore aerial surveys, a Digital Aerial Survey programme is continuing, covering a 24-month period from March 2021, 15% of the site has been covered. The Applicant gave an overview of the main avian and marine mammal species typical of the southern North Sea. To help intertidal wintering ecology surveys, the British Trust for Ornithology count data was reviewed and analysed to reinforce the results.

## ***Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)***

The Applicant noted that given recent DCO decisions on other OWFs on the East Coast of England, the proposed development may have potential to require a case for derogation of the Habitats Regulations in relation to the Flamborough and Filey Coast Special Protection Area. As a result, it intends to progress discussions on 'without prejudice' compensation options through the pre-application stage.

## ***Biodiversity Net Gain***

A commitment to securing Biodiversity Net Gain will be included in the Development Consent Order.

## ***Stakeholder engagement***

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that a steering group has been established, as part of its Evidence Plan Process (EPP), and that an independent chair has been appointed. The Applicant explained that Expert Topic Groups (ETGs) have been ongoing, with offshore ETGs held in January 2022 and onshore ETGs to commence once there is more certainty around the onshore grid connection. Local Authorities will be invited to engage in the Steering Group and relevant onshore ETGs as more clarity is available on potential grid connections. The Applicant confirmed that a novel derogations and compensation group is being established to consider 'without prejudice' compensation options.

The Applicant shared a list of the main stakeholders that have been engaged to date. Natural England, the Marine Management Organisation, Environment Agency, Historic England, RSPB and The Wildlife Trust have had regular meetings, established via the EPP. Commercial fisheries and shipping and navigation operators have also been contacted, as well as other offshore wind developers and operators in search of any strategic industry collaboration.

## ***Grid connection update***

The Applicant informed that the OTNR remains ongoing and that it estimates preliminary outputs on the Holistic Network Design in March/April 2022, which will inform transmission routes; this has resulted in a delay to the previously planned submission of

the Scoping Opinion Request. Nevertheless, the Applicant is looking at possible cable routes and working closely with the OTNR to establish a connection as soon as possible.

The Applicant sought clarification whether there is any relevant leasing or guidance arising from the recent withdrawal of the Dogger Bank South Scoping Report. The Inspectorate informed the Applicant that the Applicant's withdrawal letter, and the Inspectorate's response, has been published to the Dogger Bank South project page on the National Infrastructure website; no further details are available.

The Inspectorate sought an updated date for the submission of the Applicant for the Scoping Report; the Applicant was unable to provide any certain timescales at present as it is dependent on further information of the grid connection. However, it would continue to provide as much advance notice as possible of the request to the Inspectorate's team. The Applicant questioned what an appropriate amount of time would be to notify the Inspectorate of a Scoping Report submission. The Planning Inspectorate prefers an early indication of the intent to submit a notification/request preferably several months in advance of the actual request being made. The Inspectorate also requested the Applicant provide the GIS shapefile at least ten working days prior to the Applicant's formal Scoping Opinion request. The Inspectorate and the Applicant discussed the practicalities for submitting the Scoping Report; the Applicant would consider potential file sharing and would carry out a trial run prior to the submission of the Scoping Report itself.

### **AOB**

The Applicant queried whether there had been any new advice for compulsory access powers. Although the Inspectorate often asks Applicant whether it is seeking s53 of the PA2008 powers, some applicants instead seek to use the powers in the s172 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016.