

Meeting note

Project name	Outer Dowsing Offshore Wind
File reference	EN010130
Status	
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	18 April 2023
Meeting with	Outer Dowsing Offshore Wind Farm
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.

Project Update

The Outer Dowsing Offshore Wind Farm is in the southern North Sea, with an operational target date of 2028/29. The offshore wind farm (OWF) is a joint venture between TotalEnergies and Corio Generation, who have also recently been joined by Gulf Energy Development. With a projected capacity of 1.5GW, the OWF would consist of up to 93 turbines across an area of up to 300km² and a proposed landfall at Wolla Bank, between Mablethorpe and St Leonards in Lincolnshire. The Applicant signed an agreement for lease with The Crown Estate in January 2023. The Proposed Development currently includes two radial connection options following recommendations of the Offshore Transmission Network Review, those being the Lincolnshire Node and Weston Marsh.

Public Consultation to date

The Applicant gave an overview of the methods and materials that have been used for consultations undertaken to date. This has included the use of media, statutory notices, and public information events, both in-person and virtual. The Applicant has also held stakeholder meetings with individuals and specialist interest groups. The Applicant's Phase 1 non-statutory consultation took place in November 2022 and a Phase 1A non-statutory consultation recently took place in Q1 2023, which included a potential alternative route for the Weston Marsh option. Some 800 in-person attendees attended these events (500 for Phase 1 and 300 for Phase 2).

Grid Connection

The landfall for the Proposed Development would be located south of the Anderby Creek at Wolla Bank, which the Applicant considers is a suitable location to connect either of the two connection options. Underground cables would be installed from the landfall to the chosen grid connection option, which is currently still under consideration from National Grid.

The Phase 2 statutory consultation will include visualisation of possible substation scenarios and the Applicant confirmed the feedback from the consultation will help inform the substation design. The Applicant also plans to form an Onshore Substation Working Group.

It was confirmed that the route of the offshore cables would remain the same, regardless of which onshore connection option is chosen.

Surveys

The Applicant has conducted offshore ornithology and marine mammals' surveys, collecting data over a period of 2 years, which was completed in February 2023. A kittiwake census survey data was undertaken in August 2022, with further census survey and also tagging of kittiwake proposed for summer 2023. In 2022 the Applicant also completed array benthic sampling and geophysical surveying. A study of marine traffic was also completed in both winter and summer of 2022. A Seascape Visual Impact Assessment was completed in November 2022.

Onshore, the Applicant commenced winter bird surveys in October 2022. Habitat mapping and targeted Phase 1 habitat and ecology surveys have also been undertaken. Noise surveys at each of the proposed substation sites have been undertaken, as well as further noise studies along the cable route in 2022. The Applicant completed initial vantage point surveys on key watercourses, with further detailed surveys to be undertaken once the location of the substation and crossing schedule has been confirmed. In October 2022, the identification of access routes and automated traffic counts were undertaken, as well as vantage point surveys and photography of all substation location options to inform the landscape visual impact assessment.

Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) & S42 Consultation

The Applicant has issued a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) and is currently preparing S42, S46, t and S48 consultation notices. This will encompass letters to all relevant schedule 1 consultees, local authorities, the Marine Management Organisation and those with a relevant land interest. The Applicant confirmed that letters to landowners and those in the SoCC will be sent out, with notices in relevant national and local newspapers. It was also explained that a copy of the PEIR non-technical summary would be available for inspection at four libraries and four council offices. The Applicant also plans to make available at the access points USBs with the full set of PEIR documentation .

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

The Applicant gave an overview of the HRA work undertaken to date with regards to offshore ornithology. The Applicant confirmed that a draft Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA) will be submitted alongside PEIR, and will include , a high-level 'without prejudice' compensation strategy document and evidence and roadmap documents for the primary shortlisted measures, noting that the PEIR concludes no Adverse Effect on Integrity on any protected sites. 'In Principle' compensatory measures are being developed to enable early consultation with stakeholders on a without prejudice basis and include those for kittiwake, including consideration of offshore artificial nesting structures. The search areas for these will be included at PEIR. Other proposals being developed include measures for guillemot and razorbill, with proposals considering a predator control project, also included in the PEIR, and options for offshore artificial nesting structure to incorporate other species, including guillemot and razorbill.

With regards to benthic receptors, the draft RIAA also includes an assessment of the Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Applicant intends to include a high-level compensation strategy on a without prejudice basis due to the overlap between the offshore export cable corridor with this SAC. Primary measures are being explored.

Transboundary consultation

The Inspectorate confirmed that it has received no further responses from EEA States to the transboundary notification/consultation issued in February. All responses received to date have been published on the National Infrastructure Planning webpage for the project. Should any further responses be received, the Applicant would be informed and responses published.

The Inspectorate advised that its transboundary screening for the Proposed Development was based on the information provided in the Applicant's Scoping Report. The Inspectorate may choose to screen a project for likely significant transboundary effects at any time, particularly if new relevant information becomes available. At present, the Inspectorate does not have any new relevant information in this regard. The Inspectorate undertakes a further transboundary screening once a DCO application has been received and accepted for Examination.

The Inspectorate encourages Applicants to consult with as wide a range of bodies as they deem appropriate during the pre-application stage, and consultation may be wider than those bodies identified and consulted by the Inspectorate at the scoping stage for the purposes of the EIA Regulations. Applicants may also wish to consider whether to undertake their own consultation with governmental divisions and interest groups within relevant EEA State(s) and/or Crown Dependencies, as they deem relevant and appropriate.