



Meeting note

Project name	Mona Offshore Wind
File reference	EN010137
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	10 October 2023
Meeting with	Mona Offshore Wind Limited
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 Overview

The Applicant described the Proposed Development (PD) with a landfall near Llanddulas, Conwy and a connection to the existing Bodelwyddan National Grid substation. A small section of the array area, which was previously in English waters, has now been removed, meaning the PD lies solely in Welsh waters; a change made following responses to the recent Statutory Consultation.

The Development Consent Order (DCO) will include a deemed Marine Licence (dML) for generation assets and a separate Marine Licence application will be made to Natural Resources Wales for the transmission assets after the draft DCO has been submitted and accepted for examination.

The Applicant confirmed that it has continued to work closely with the Morgan and Morecambe Offshore Wind Farm project teams.

Statutory Consultation

The Applicant detailed that the Statutory Consultation ran from 19 April to 4 June 2023, following on from Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping in 2022 and non-statutory consultation in early 2023.

The consultation was based on the PD as a whole, with a focus on the location of wind turbines, proposed cable route and substation site, how to minimise construction impacts and the Preliminary Environmental Impact Report (PEIR).

Statutory Consultation methods included:

- Postcards sent to 30,000 homes and businesses in Primary Mailing Zone (primarily based in the area where the onshore infrastructure is planned);
- Posters sent to 22 locations across the PD area;
- Two press releases: one at consultation launch and one two weeks before consultation closure;
- Advertising campaign spanning digital platforms;
- Six consultation events;
- Three pop-up events;
- Webinar; and
- Feedback form.

The Applicant detailed a technical glitch in the feedback form at Question 1.14, which 48 individuals had accessed. To address this, the Applicant followed up with a letter and/or email for resubmission, to which four people have responded. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to fully document the steps taken to resolve the issue in the Consultation Report.

The Inspectorate informed that, if the Applicant is planning a draft document review, it would be useful to include the Consultation Report. The Applicant confirmed that no draft documents review is currently envisaged in its programme but would notify the Inspectorate if their position changed.

The Applicant has identified new land interests so will be undertaking a round of targeted consultation (dates to be confirmed).

Project Changes

The Applicant distributed an Onshore Newsletter in August 2023 and an Offshore Newsletter in September 2023 to stakeholders, in response to the Statutory Consultation and incorporating new design information.

Offshore

The red line boundary has significantly changed since the PEIR, predominantly due to shipping and navigation matters and in response to feedback from the public on the Isle of Man due to concerns about ferry route accessibility.

Due to unsuitable ground conditions, the Applicant has removed monopiles from the PD which will subsequently reduce underwater noise impacts.

Commitments have been made around orientation array layout, increasing spacing between turbines within the array and ensuring there are no turbines in key areas of scallop dredging in response to fishery concerns. The Applicant noted that these commitments were received positively by the fishing community during a recent Fisheries Outreach meeting.

The Applicant detailed a reduction in the maximum number of turbines from 107 to 96 and an increase in the maximum rotor size of the largest turbine.

Safety of Navigation was a key risk highlighted in PEIR and the Applicant held a joint marine navigation forum across Mona, Morgan and Morecambe wind farm projects to discuss this. There has been ongoing engagement with stakeholders and the fifth marine navigation engagement forum and second Cumulative Hazards workshop were recently held in September.

The Applicant has made commitments regarding reduced cable protection within the Menai Strait and Conwy Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the removal of intertidal

cabling to overcome concerns raised at PEIR stage. The Applicant stated that it had agreed with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) that there would be no direct impacts on the SAC, is providing information on indirect impacts and is working towards agreeing no adverse effects on integrity with NRW.

Onshore

The Applicant has selected a single onshore substation and has refined the onshore cable route, with further refinement being made.

The Applicant is undertaking site investigations and trial trenching surveys whilst being sympathetic to landowner requests to balance data collection and potential impacts. Several requests for access to land under s172 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 have been made, one being the main substation site; the Applicant is hoping to progress agreements with the landowner.

The Expert Working Groups (EWGs) are progressing well and a Steering Group meeting is being held on 17 October 2023. The Applicant has been discussing the use of a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) to acquire external support to aid Local Planning Authorities (LPA) in reviewing plans and attending ETG meetings. Resource constraints are inhibiting LPAs' ability to fully engage with the Applicant, including entering a PPA, and some documents may not be reviewed by the LPA in time for the dDCO submission. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to document their efforts to engage.

The Inspectorate explained that commitment registers are beneficial to set out Applicant commitments. The Applicant will detail their commitments in a 'Mitigation and Monitoring Schedule' at submission.

Applicant's Enquiries

The Applicant informed that its EIA is written against the draft National Policy Statements (NPSs), whilst also addressing the current NPSs as it needs to address the NPSs that will be in place at the point of decision. It plans to use an NPS tracker using both the existing and draft NPS, which has been done on recent projects.

The Applicant enquired about whether the Inspectorate is aware of a standard template for a Sulphur Hexafluoride Report; the Inspectorate will enquire but it is unlikely that there is such a template.

(Post Meeting Note: the Inspectorate is not aware that there is a template or published standard guidance for a Sulphur Hexafluoride Report. It recommends that the Applicant reviews relevant current projects on the Inspectorate's National Infrastructure Planning website for examples of how it has been addressed in other DCO applications.)

The Applicant noted that the timing of the submission of National Grid's application to extend the Bodelwyddan substation may be relatively close to the submission of the PD application. The Applicant is including the extension in the cumulative assessment in its Environmental Statement (ES) based on material available from National Grid's consultation and will potentially submit additional environmental information post-acceptance if necessary. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to explain its approach to this matter in the application cover letter and within the ES.

The Applicant recognised the potential for cumulative impacts between the Mona Offshore Wind Farm, the Isle of Man Offshore Wind Farm and the Morgan and Morecambe Offshore Wind Farm and will address these in its cumulative impacts assessment.

DCO Practicalities

The Applicant aims to submit its draft DCO in Q1 2024.

Hearings

The Applicant raised concerns over issues with the MS Teams transcripts generated when Interested Parties gave evidence in Welsh for the recent Awel y Môr Offshore Wind Farm project. The Inspectorate noted the Applicant's concerns and confirmed that it would speak to its IT team to try to find a solution.