

Meeting note

Project name	Dogger Bank D Wind Farm
File reference	EN010144
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	05 August 2022
Meeting with	Gatoben Developments 2 Limited
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Inception 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.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted (if requested by an Applicant for commercial reasons).

Project Background

The Applicant explained the Dogger Bank Wind Farm is a joint venture between SSE, Equinor and ENI Plenitude comprising of Dogger Bank A, B and C. The original consenting process was conducted by Forewind, a joint venture of four leading energy companies: SSE, Equinor (then Statoil), Statkraft and RWE. The Applicant further explained that after consent was granted, one company withdrew from the projects and as such the remaining companies split the Dogger Bank projects as noted above, with RWE progressing the fourth project, now called Sofia Offshore Wind Farm. The Applicant stated during 2021, the Joint Venture saw an opportunity to split Dogger Bank C, by focussing the array area on the western part of the site and creating a new array on the eastern part of the site, with additional capacity in the region of 1.5GW.

The Inspectorate queried if this current proposal is a material change to Dogger Bank C Development Consent Order (DCO) or a new stand-alone project. The Applicant confirmed it is a new project with its own standalone DCO.

Project Description

The Applicant noted the project name will be Dogger Bank D and will target first power generation in late 2020s. The Applicant explained it is currently exploring a range of options for exported electricity, and in addition to a typical grid connection to the Lincolnshire Node (following the outcome of the recent Holistic Network Design process), the project will also explore the potential to produce green hydrogen from the wind farm and link directly into the wider hydrogen value chain that is being developed in the Humber region. The Applicant confirmed it is looking to progress two separate connection options,

offshore wind farm array, export cable route for typical connection, onshore route to onshore HVAC substation/HVDC converter station and export cable route for hydrogen electrical conversion infrastructure and hydrogen production facility. The Applicant noted at some point in the DCO process, some of these options will fall away; however the Applicant is unable at present to confirm when that will be, although it will not be prior to scoping.

The Applicant outlined a number of offshore surveys that have commenced and that early-stage onshore site selection work has started.

The Inspectorate queried if one of the connection options being explored is shared with the Dogger Bank South (DBS) project. The Applicant confirmed it has ongoing discussions with National Grid and representatives of the DBS Project and that a connection to Dogger Bank South is expected offshore. The Applicant stated the project's grid connection has been subject to the Holistic Network Design Review as part of the Offshore Transmission Network Review.

The Inspectorate queried if the Applicant intends to scope on both connection options. The Applicant confirmed it will be scoping both options but is not yet in a position to confirm if both will be included in the DCO submission. The Applicant explained that its consultation will be helpful in understanding stakeholder views on the options. The Inspectorate noted that it would be helpful to rule out options prior to scoping to avoid unnecessary consultation with local communities on options that might later fall away.

The Inspectorate queried how this project fits in with the Crown Estate leasing process. The Applicant confirmed the site is part of the previous lease round, it was leased as part of round 3 as it is part of the original Dogger Bank site.

Why Green Hydrogen at Dogger Bank D

The Applicant explained there is a government ambition for 10GW of low carbon hydrogen production by 2030 of this at least 5GW will be from green hydrogen. The Applicant stated various green hydrogen projects are emerging in the UK however there is a clear need for scaling up to reach government targets.

The Applicant outlined that the Dogger Bank Wind Farm parent companies are part of the Zero Carbon Humber consortium, looking to change the Humber into the UK's first net zero carbon region by 2040 and as such Dogger Bank D will be a key part of achieving this goal.

The Inspectorate queried if the Proposed Development would also include distribution pipelines. The Applicant stated that this would depend on the outcome of the site selection process. The Inspectorate queried the status of development of safety standards for hydrogen production. The Applicant stated that this was in development by the HSE. The Inspectorate recommended that the Applicant engage with the HSE regarding this aspect of the Proposed Development.

Outline Programme

The Applicant explained it is in the early stages of site selection and is starting to prepare scoping. The Applicant noted its scoping is expected to be submitted to the Inspectorate towards the end of Quarter 1 2023.

The Inspectorate queried when Statutory Consultation is likely to take place. The Applicant confirmed that it is likely to be 7 to 8 months prior to the submission of the DCO application.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant that early agreements with relevant stakeholders is key as it will be vital in getting individuals input on the project in this area.

The Inspectorate queried if the Applicant is following an evidence plan process. The Applicant confirmed an evidence plan approach is its intention.

The Inspectorate queried if a derogation under the Habitats Regulations would be required for this project. The Applicant stated it is very aware of this issue but was not able to comment due to the early stage of the project and the ongoing assessment process. The Inspectorate stated that it might be better to work on the basis that a derogation case would be required and develop 'without prejudice' solutions as early as possible with relevant stakeholders within the preapplication stage to avoid issues arising at acceptance or due to this issue dominating the examination process.

The Inspectorate noted it would expect to attend steering group meetings for evidence plans.

Specific decisions or follow-up required

The following actions were agreed:

- The Inspectorate to send the Applicant list of information required to set up the project webpage. **Post Meeting Note:** The Inspectorate has sent this information and the Applicant has responded.