



Meeting note

Project name	Morgan and Morecambe Offshore Wind Farms Transmission Assets
File reference	EN020028
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	30 January 2024
Meeting with	Flotation Energy and EnBW/bp
Venue	MS 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.

Programme update

The Applicant explained that it is currently reviewing statutory consultation section(s) 42 and 47 responses. It stated that its Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) had been published and the anticipated Development Consent Order (DCO) submission date is Q3 2024.

Transmission Assets statutory consultation summary

The Applicant provided a summary of statutory consultation undertaken:

- 75,400 properties in north west England and Isle of Man had been sent newsletters;
- Seven deposit locations;
- More than 1600 letters had been sent to section 44 stakeholders;
- Two press releases; and
- Seven in person consultation events and one online webinar.

The Inspectorate asked whether consultation events held in the Isle of Man were well attended. The Applicant stated that approximately fifteen people attended but the two previous non-statutory consultation events held there were better attended.

The Applicant explained that consultation focused on the PEIR, Works Plans and commitments register. Statutory consultation closed on 23 November 2023. The Applicant stated that over 1400 pieces of feedback from s47 and s42 consultees had been received and provided a summary of key themes:

- Potential impacts from onshore substations;
- Location of onshore substations;
- Laying the cable along the Ribble estuary;
- Potential impact from construction activities;
- Potential impact on green belt land and areas of separation;
- Potential increase of flooding in the local area;
- Potential impact on the environmental wildlife;
- Roads option for installing the export cables; and
- Further clarity on 400kV export cable corridor route.

The Inspectorate asked whether the feedback received had related only to the Transmissions Assets, or to both Transmission Assets and Generation Assets. The Applicant confirmed that consultees appeared to have a good understanding of the separation between the Morgan Generation Assets, Morecambe Generation Assets and the Transmission Assets project and that separate feedback forms had been available.

The Applicant provided a summary of changes in response to s42 feedback, which includes the following:

- Impacts and effects on the Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) – reduced sand wave clearance;
- Continued ecological surveys to be undertaken to inform the Environmental Statement – with more regular meetings with Expert Working Groups planned;
- Review of substation locations to address, where possible, local concerns of the substations on currently undeveloped land and potential impacts of project on landowners;
- Potential disruption and effects of installing cables in roads – working with local stakeholders to work through technical solutions; and
- Potential effects on intertidal ornithology – project is reviewing mitigation measures.

The Applicant noted that Natural England did not agree with their conclusion of No Adverse Effects on Integrity to the Liverpool Bay Special Protection Area. The Inspectorate queried the nature of the impact but the Applicant committed to providing additional information after the meeting.

The Inspectorate queried the time frame for further activities identified by the Applicant. The Applicant confirmed that it is holding regular meetings with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and Natural England (NE) and is currently reviewing feedback.

Project update

Key offshore refinements

The Applicant provided a summary of changes made to the offshore element of the Proposed Development:

- Removal of Offshore Substation Platform OSPs and interconnector cables from Transmission Assets DCO, and will now form part of the respective Generation DCO applications;
- Removal of Morgan Booster Station;
- Reduced numbers of Vessel and Helicopter movements;
- Reduction from PEIR in sand wave clearance across offshore export cable route; and
- Cable protection parameters reduced from PEIR.

Key onshore refinements

The Applicant provided a summary of changes made to the onshore element of the Proposed Development:

- Addition of a wider range of trenchless cable installation techniques, including associated infrastructure;
- Reduction in the temporary construction onshore Export Cable Corridor width; &
- Reduction in permanent onshore Export Cable Corridor width.

The Inspectorate asked for further clarification on optionality that will be included in the DCO application. The Applicant explained that along parts of the onshore Export Cable Corridor, it currently has two options for routing presented at PEIR and it intends to make further refinements for the Environmental Statement (ES).

Targeted Statutory Consultation

The Applicant explained that further targeted consultation will be undertaken following new identified land interests and identification of a small number of emails to s47 consultees that had failed to send during statutory consultation due to a technical issue. The Applicant explained the scope of consultation relates to minor amendments outside of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) boundary relating to the onshore Export Cable Corridor, temporary access tracks, temporary compounds and operational access routes. Consultation materials will include a notification letter, maps, and a review of potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed changes upon onshore environmental receptors and will be available on the Applicant's website. The Inspectorate advised that it should be made clear in the Consultation Report of who was consulted and why.

Approach to Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA)

The Applicant explained its approach to CEA is as follows: Transmission Assets alone, Morgan Generation Assets and Transmission Assets, Morecambe Generation Assets and Transmission Assets, Morgan Generation Assets and Morecambe Generation Assets and Transmission Assets, Transmission Assets and all other projects. The Applicant explained that construction scenarios for Transmission Assets will be assessed in Transmission Assets ES alone.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to consider how different project coordination scenarios will be described in the application and assessed in the ES, and make clear for each aspect chapter which scenario would constitute the worst case. The Applicant intends to include construction scenarios within the Project Description Chapter of the ES. The Inspectorate also advised that when coordination scenarios result in different build scenarios, it should be clear how these relate to the works in the DCO.

Update on surveys and assessments

The Applicant stated that a shallow geotechnical survey for the Morecambe cable route is planned, dates of which have yet to be confirmed. The Applicant explained that surveys relating to ecology that had been carried out in summer 2023, however, not all had been in the PEIR report but will be in the ES. Ecological surveys will continue within seasonal constraints. The Applicant stated that for archaeological surveys, trial trenching is planned and a planned onshore ground investigation

GI/SI campaign. The Inspectorate asked whether the Applicant is in agreement with local authorities for the extent of trial trenching.

Land update

The Applicant stated that engagement with landowners is ongoing and feedback is accepted where possible and amendments made. Non-intrusive surveys will continue, annual survey licences are being renewed on ongoing basis and land referencing is ongoing. The Inspectorate asked for the current number of affected persons and plots and the Applicant stated it will confirm numbers.

Transmission Evidence Plan Process (EPP) overview and update

The Applicant confirmed that the next phase of Expert Working Group (EWG) meetings is taking place and stakeholders will be given project update. The next steering group meeting is being planned.

Plan for DCO application

The Applicant stated that it intends to submit the DCO application in summer 2024 and is considering if the programme will allow for sharing the draft Consultation Report and draft DCO (and works plans) with the Inspectorate for feedback. The Inspectorate advised that it can also provide feedback on the draft Explanatory Memorandum, project Description Chapter of the ES and draft Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) chapters and that the draft documents review will take 6 to 8 weeks. The Inspectorate requested that the Applicant notify the Inspectorate in advance of the anticipated date for submission of draft documents. The Inspectorate advised that an update meeting could be scheduled two weeks after the feedback is issued if needed.

The Applicant asked whether HRA matrices needed to be produced. The Inspectorate advised that HRA matrices are no longer requested and that it is the Applicant's decision on whether to include them.

The Applicant asked about the length of the Pre-Examination stage. The Inspectorate advised that one of the factors that can influence the time required for the Pre-Examination stage is whether changes are needed to the application documents prior to the Relevant Representations period. The Applicant asked whether Examination events take place in-person or online. The Inspectorate advised that Examination events are typically blended with the opportunity for both in-person and virtual attendance.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

The Applicant to advise on engagement with Local Planning Authorities (LPA) on trial trenching.

Post-meeting response: The Applicant explained that it is engaging with LPAs actively at the moment on the trial locations and it expects to commence trenching in the next 4-6 weeks.

The Applicant to consider using the Inspectorate's draft document review service. **Post-meeting response:** The Applicant explained that it is reviewing the programme and documents internally and will provide confirmation as soon as it is possible on whether a request will be made to the Inspectorate for the review of documents prior to DCO application submission. The Applicant notes the need to provide the Inspectorate with as much advance notice as possible.

The Applicant to provide further information on the receptors/ pathways related to Natural England's s42 comments in relation to their views on no Adverse Effect on Integrity on the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar site. **Post-meeting response:** The Applicant explained that it is in consultation with Natural England on the development of the HRA in light of their recent section 42 comments, including on discussions related potential mitigations, as appropriate.