



Meeting note

Project name	Gallopier Offshore Windfarm Extension
File reference	
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	28 November 2019
Meeting with	Innogy Renewables UK
Venue	Temple Quay House, Bristol
Meeting objectives	Inception meeting
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) explained their openness policy and 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, if justified for commercial confidentiality / sensitivity reasons, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted.

Introduction to the project

The Applicant gave an overview of the Gallopier Offshore Windfarm Extension project and provided details of the proposed development. Following the Agreement for Lease awarded by The Crown Estate in August 2019, the proposal will cover the area of 149 km² and be located east of the existing Gallopier Windfarm, with the installation of between 67 and 107 new turbines being considered depending on the construction timeframe and technology available. A variety of foundation design options, and up to two offshore platforms are also being considered at this time

Consultation to date

The Applicant advised that the consultation approach is at an early stage of development, and it included creating a stakeholder database to establish points of contact in key organisations and also those who had taken part in Gallopier wind farm project. The applicant will be using the Evidence Plan Process to facilitate effective consultation during the pre-application period, identifying stakeholders who may wish to get involved in certain topic groups have been identified and invited to take part. The Applicant has established road maps to pinpoint key dates, and how and when stakeholders can engage in the process and to help with resource allocation. The key objective is to receive consultees' views as early as possible and continue a dialogue as the project develops, with agreement logs being maintained helping to form statements

of common ground. The Applicant said they have held initial meeting or calls with the Galloper Commercial Fisheries working group members, and held discussions with the Local Authorities (East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council), the Civil Aviation Authority and NATS. The Applicant is aware that some statutory bodies are faced with resource constraints, and may be unable to fully engage in the project's pre-application stage at present. Therefore the Applicant proposes to employ less resource intensive engagement methods such as holding teleconferences rather than face-to-face meetings. Further engagement is proposed with the Marine Management Organisation, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, The Wildlife Trust, National Trust and the Environment Agency. The Inspectorate emphasised the need to plan ahead while working with the statutory consultees and consider various constraints they might face.

Evidence Plan Steering Group

The Applicant outlined their approach to the Evidence Plan Process (EPP), the formal tool of engaging with parties during the pre-application stage which would then feed into the project design. The Inspectorate agreed that the EPP has been widely used on other NSIPs, and some EPPs led to achieving agreement on many issues including those beyond the Habitats Regulations. The Inspectorate explained that the EPP was established by Defra in an effort to positively influence the pre-application process and ensure that the approach to collecting and gathering baseline information is robust. Its benefits include the opportunity to obtain upfront agreement between parties on matters relating to the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and providing an opportunity to discuss disagreements whilst retaining focus on the evidence-base. It is possible for the EPP to be used as a basis for agreeing Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) with key stakeholders. Additionally, the EPP will become a formal record of engagement during the HRA process, while also potentially reducing the level of resources required during the examination of the application. The Inspectorate noted that certain Applicants have widened the scope for the EPP to include aspects that are more typically contained within the Environmental Statement (ES), such as site selection, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and potential for mitigation if required. The Applicant explained that it was their intent to take this approach.

The Applicant stated that at this stage some stakeholders are unable to get involved in the process as they are struggling to commit resources at the current time. The Applicant advised of the composition of expert topic groups (ETGs) and roles of those attending the groups, and provided an overview of the proposed Evidence Plan Structure, focusing on distinct offshore and onshore topics. It was noted that the current structure of the ETG groups may be amended as the project develops and more focus is required on individual topic areas. The EPP will include a shipping and navigation topic group which will include representatives from Maritime and Coastguard Agency and Trinity House. The Inspectorate asked if there was a commitment from these bodies to resource this work and whether there is sufficient resource to facilitate this for other projects.

The Applicant advised that a draft Terms of Reference for the Evidence Plan had been circulated to various stakeholders, and this proposed a mixture of meetings and teleconferences to be held at key points in the future when more information will become available or when input and advice will be needed. The Applicant wished to know whether the Inspectorate would be available to Chair the Steering Group meetings. In response the Inspectorate advised that its involvement would depend on resources and

establishing what value can be brought to the process. It was helpful to understand different aspects of the project and key issues arising at this stage. The Inspectorate advised of its role within the wider scope of the PA2008, and its impartiality.

Outline of the current timeframe for the application

Proposed dates for the submission of a scoping request and date of the submission of the application were discussed, although these dates were yet to be finalised.

Project site selection

The Applicant advised that they are currently in the process of working with National Grid to determine where the project will connect to the National Grid, and are aware of many of the constraints within the wider area to try and refine the approach, and to avoid particularly sensitive areas. The Applicant will also consider collaboration with the Greater Gabbard Extension Project on the connection approach while also ensuring they meet the requirements of The Crown Estate Cable Route Protocol. As there are several proposed developments in the area the Applicant is looking into alternatives to find a realistic proposed onshore cable route.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to consider future resource planning and the proposed timelines for other onshore projects, as in Q1 2020 further SoS' decisions on offshore wind farm applications are expected.

Scoping

The Applicant advised that they are currently part way through the process of developing the scoping approach and identifying the likely significant issues of the proposed development. The Applicant intends to follow the standard approach when submitting the Scoping Report. The Inspectorate advised on how to prepare the Report, focusing on keeping all information succinct and relevant, using clear terminology and ensuring consistency between documents, and to ensure that the methodology behind what is scoped in and what is scoped out is clearly presented. The Applicant explained that they intend to provide preliminary HRA screening information. The Inspectorate advised on the scoping process and the potential for flexibility to adapt the scope as the project progresses. Further aspects can be scoped out of the assessment following scoping via the use of the Evidence Plan Process. The Inspectorate also referred to [Advice Note Seven](#): Environmental Impact Assessment: Process, Preliminary Environmental Information and Environmental Statements.

Specific decisions

The following actions were agreed:

- The parties agreed to arrange future meetings around key milestones during the pre-application stage, with the next meeting after the issue of the Scoping Opinion by the Inspectorate.
- Inspectorate to inform the Applicant of the details required to set up the project on the National Infrastructure website – completed.
- Inspectorate to set up a new project email address.

- Inspectorate will comment on the proposed Terms of Reference (ToR) for the EPP before Christmas and availability to act as Chair for the Steering Group meetings.