



Meeting note

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| Project name | Hornsea Project Four Offshore Wind Farm (Generating Stations) |
| File reference | EN010098 |
| Status | Final |
| Author | The Planning Inspectorate |
| Date | 27 May 2021 |
| Meeting with | Ørsted Hornsea Project Four Limited |
| Venue | Microsoft Teams Meeting |
| Meeting objectives | Project Update |
| Circulation | All Attendees |

Summary of key points discussed and advice given:

Introduction

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 introduced changes to the case team.

Status regarding previous meeting minutes

The Applicant confirmed the completion of the actions from the previous meeting. The new anticipated submission date was 15 September 2021. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) community consultation note was issued in April regarding changes to the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR). Additional changes had since been made and a further community consultation note was due. It applied a new EIA sensitivity test due to Hornsea Offshore Wind Farm (Zone 4) – Project 2 (H2) entering the construction phase since baseline characterization. Both data sets were comparable, considered valid and had been agreed with the relevant consultation bodies. The Inspectorate attended a Gravity Based Systems (GBS) and Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) familiarization workshop.

Hornsea Project Four Update

The submission date for the DCO Application had been extended in February 2021, with EIA updates in March 2021.

The derogation case and compensation measures were progressing through to August 2021. Evidence reports were submitted to stakeholders in May in advance of the third compensation workshop.

The Ornithology chapters of the Environmental Statement (ES) and the Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA) had been submitted to Natural England (NE) for review. Baseline validity reports on data for key topics had been undertaken. Any validity concerns and further mitigation had been highlighted to stakeholders for agreement. This would be included in the final ES.

Onshore substation and intertidal ground investigation work had been completed, which should confirm the project's ability to use horizontal directional drilling (HDD) for the landfall connection works.

A new access route off the A164 was now proposed, following a proposal by the East Riding of Yorkshire Council to utilize a route in place at the point of construction, to be shared with the A164 Jocks Lodge junction improvement scheme. The new route included a non-motorised agricultural route which requires targeted consultation. The Applicant was identifying local community groups that could be affected. Targeted consultation would shortly take place and the Applicant would confirm the dates with the Inspectorate. Parish Council briefing meetings would be held in June in conjunction with the consultation.

Site investigation work was ongoing. Survey work was on schedule. The onshore landfall geotechnical surveys had been completed, with consent geophysical surveys into the array and ECR nearing completion. Geohazard geophysical surveys had begun, with near shore geotechnical surveys planned for mid-June 2021.

Compensation package

A workshop was scheduled to present supporting evidence for proposed compensation measures. NE comments to the presented Evidence Reports were due on 11 June 2021. Further mitigation for Kittiwake and Auk were also being considered. A developable area approach, part 3, would be implemented at the point of DCO application reducing the array to avoid high concentrations of Auk species. NE endorsed this pre-application work. Further research and study into Auk displacement and mortality rates was ongoing and would support the EIA, RIAA and Derogation case. The data could also help shape the project design for the final array layout. The approach was discussed with NE and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). Species specific compensation measures being considered included predator eradication, provision of artificial nesting sites, sea grass creation/enhancement to increase prey availability, and reduction of bycatch. Hornsea Four was also considering associated research and funding to address data gaps. The Applicant had set out stakeholder acceptance measures to support its ability to produce an accepted, quantified, sufficient and deliverable package. It was in discussions with BEIS and DEFRA regarding fisheries measures to increase prey availability. It had also identified a potential area for predator eradication. Changes would be made to the package following NE feedback, before a final workshop in August 2021 to present the pre-application information.

Derogation Case preparation

A Draft 'without prejudice' derogation case was currently at the internal legal review stage (~end of May 2021) and would be further updated at the beginning of June 2021.

A series of stakeholder reviews of evidence to support compensation options were planned between May – August 2021. Compensation plans and road maps were due to be drafted during July 2021 and the Applicant hoped to consult on these pre-Application.

Update on Statements of Common Ground (SoCG), discussions regarding gravity base foundations and use of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB)

The Applicant provided an overview of the status of SoCG's with various parties. It highlighted the SoCG with Natural England on the derogation case as the highest priority as PINS have previously indicated the potential acceptance risk here, however good progress was being made through workshops. It was confident that all SoCG would be ready for examination. The Inspectorate requested sight of an early drafts, including highlighting areas of non-agreement, for any SoCG that were still to be agreed/finalized at the point of submission. The Inspectorate also suggested that a SoCG with BP in relation to the Endurance project would be helpful.

The DMRB was presented at an Evidence Plan workshop, along with the updated significance of effects matrix, an updated maximum design scenario (MDS) justification and also changes post PEIR. NE were seeking justification for the use of DMRB. The Inspectorate acknowledged the ongoing discussions and advised that any comments raised should be addressed. MDS technical panels were ongoing, particularly geo-physical and geo-technical data to inform the MDS. The Applicants MDS justification principles included alignment with National Policy Statement (NPS) EN-01, Advice Note 9 and NE recommendations.

180 Gravity base foundations had been reintroduced for the wind turbine generators, with a commitment to not exceed 110 if used. The DCO and DML would be updated to reflect this maximum. Gravity Based Systems (GBS) were included following initial site investigations on the basis of technical advice. The Applicant confirmed GBS were not the preferred option or the internal base case, though their inclusion was necessary at this stage of project development.

Queries for PINs regarding submission

The Inspectorate confirmed that a file transfer was acceptable for the submission of the application and that We Transfer had previously been used successfully on other cases. Prior to submission date it advised sending through a test link to ensure there were no difficulties accessing documents. The Inspectorate highlighted Advice Note 14 and the guidelines on data protection and redaction. In particular, the Applicant should consider the inclusion of expert credentials in application documentation and whether the Expert has been sufficiently commissioned to allow inclusion of credentials without redaction under General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

The Inspectorate advised that the without prejudice derogation case should be categorised as part of the HRA report within the application electronic index. The Inspectorate advised one standalone glossary in the main consultation report, covering the annexes, would suffice.

The Inspectorate confirmed that it would contact local authorities to seek views on adequacy of consultation during acceptance, alongside its own checks, including views on any consultation undertaken virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Inspectorate advised it was expected to move towards blended examination events as COVID-19 restrictions were eased. An Audio-Visual company who could manage this should be sourced, alongside suitable venues for physical events. The Sizewell C project would be a pilot for blended events and should be monitored.

The Applicant requested the Inspectorate avoid setting midnight deadlines during the Examination, to avoid health and wellbeing pressures on the Applicant's team. The Inspectorate advised that it would consider the Applicant's request, but it would be for the appointed Examining Authority (ExA) to decide whether to agree in due course, and no decision would be made before then.

AOB

The Applicant confirmed that draft documents would not be supplied for review.

The Applicant queried whether the ExA would be likely to request a SoCG with Net Zero Teesside. The Inspectorate advised this would be unlikely, but the relationship and stance with the overall BP Endurance consortium would be likely explored in detail.

The Applicant queried the likely timescales for the start of the Examination, following the submission of the application in September 2021. The Inspectorate advised it was unable to provide firm indications at this stage as it would depend on a number of factors, such as whether any s51 advice is issued, the timescales for starting and closing relevant representations. It is also important to note that the Christmas Period would fall during the pre-examination stage, if the application is accepted in October 2021. The Applicant had a working assumption that Examination would start in February 2022.

The Inspectorate highlighted the imminent consultation on draft NPS, with final versions expected to be published at the end of 2021. This could have implications on the NPS for carbon capture and storage, which might affect the case for co-existence with the endurance reserve.

Summary of actions/follow-up

The following actions were agreed:

- The next project update meeting would be arranged for mid-July. This would be approximately one month prior to the Inspectorate issuing "warm up" letters requesting fees, shape files and local authority contact information.