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Your ref: EN010115
Our ref: MRFVE001
Date: 25/07/2025

Dear John

Defra Response to DESNZ Request for Information: “Application by Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm Limited (“the Applicant”) for an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm (“the Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm project”)”

Thank you for your letter of 11 July 2025 in which you requested Defra to inform you whether the Five Estuaries OFW is 1) eligible to apply to the MRF, and 2) that extension of an existing SAC or designation of a new SAC with a Sandbank feature would be deliverable through the MRF.

As confirmed in the [Written Ministerial Statement](#) HCWS394, and the [interim guidance](#) published in January 2025, Defra committed to designating new MPAs and/or extending existing MPAs in Secretary of State waters to deliver sufficient strategic compensation to compensate for likely benthic environmental effects of offshore wind development. These also outlined specific eligibility criteria that new offshore wind developments would need to meet.

Based on the information available, we understand that the Five Estuaries offshore windfarm project will impact benthic habitat and could be eligible for the compensation we are proposing to make available via compensatory MPAs. This would be verified upon application to the MRF through the supporting documentation provided at the time.

We are confident that compensation is likely to be available for this feature and that this could be delivered through the MRF which is expected to go live by the end of 2025. We note that whilst you refer specifically to the extension of an existing SAC or designation of a new SAC, we are unable to confirm at this stage the designation type that would be delivered through the MRF. [REDACTED] The applicant will have to go through the appropriate MRF process to secure compensation, and guidance on this will be published in due course.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Interim Director for Marine & Fisheries
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs