

Date: 13 June 2025  
Our ref: 17503; 489461  
Your ref: EN010125  
Interested Party ref: 20050173



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**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Application by RWE Renewables UK Dogger Bank South (West) Ltd and RWE Renewables UK Dogger Bank South (East) Ltd for an Order granting Development Consent for the Dogger Bank South Offshore Wind Farms**

The following constitutes Natural England's formal statutory response for Examination Deadline 6.

**1. Natural England's Deadline 6 Submissions**

Natural England has reviewed the documents submitted by the Applicant at Deadline 5. An update of Natural England's position regarding documents relevant to our remit is provided in Annex 1, including anticipated timing of responses. Natural England is also submitting the following detailed responses, signposted from Annex 1:

- EN010125 489461 DBS – Natural England's Risk and Issues Log Deadline 6
- EN010125 489461 DBS Appendix B6 – Natural England's Advice on Marine Physical Environment Deadline 6
- EN010125 489461 DBS Appendix C6 – Natural England's Advice on Benthic and Intertidal Ecology Deadline 6
- EN010125 489461 DBS Appendix E6 – Natural England's Advice on Fish and Shellfish

Deadline 6

- EN010125 489461 DBS Appendix F6 – Natural England’s Advice on Marine Mammals  
Deadline 6

- EN010125 489461 DBS Appendix H6 – Natural England’s Advice on Offshore  
Ornithology Compensation Deadline 6

## **2. Key progress and/or areas of concern for each thematic area**

We have provided a summary below of key outstanding concerns and/or resolutions for each thematic area. Full details are provided in the respective appendices.

- **Marine Physical Environment**

Natural England welcome the Applicant’s updated assessment on sediment transport modelling in relation to nearshore cable protection [REP5-040]. However, we remain unable to rule out alone or in-combination risks to the Humber Estuary SAC and Holderness Inshore MCZ if cable protection is placed within the 10m depth contour. Whilst Natural England have requested some clarifications from the Applicant on the assessment, we consider that there is unlikely to be agreement between Natural England and the Applicant on this matter within Examination.

- **Benthic and Intertidal Ecology**

Natural England welcome the Applicant’s provision of “15.7 Ecological Halo Effects Technical Note” [REP5-041]. We agree that, based on currently available evidence, 50m is an appropriate buffer to use to assess the potential area of impact. However, we disagree with the exclusion of ecological halo effects surrounding cable protection from the Applicant’s estimate. We also disagree that it is appropriate for the predicted impact area to be reduced by 75% based on wake/bed shear stress effects. We therefore advise that a revised estimate should be provided based on the full impact area with the inclusion of cable protection.

- **Marine Mammals**

Based on the updates to the Applicant’s RIAA [REP5-010], an Adverse Effect on Integrity cannot be ruled out for harbour seal in the Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC. We advise that confirmation is needed on whether the updated values presented in [REP5-010] are correct, and if so, that an explanation for the increased impact is provided. If the assessment

is correct, we consider it likely that a commitment to deliver a 10 dB reduction in underwater noise from construction activities would reduce impacts to a level to remove adverse effects, however this would need to be demonstrated.

Natural England's advice with respect to a stronger commitment being needed to deliver additional mitigation to reduce the impacts of underwater construction noise remains unchanged.

- **Offshore Ornithology Compensation**

It has been confirmed in the updated Guillemot and Razorbill Compensation Plan [REP5-012] that Worms Head is no longer in scope as a location for predator eradication. Natural England retains its concerns about Middle Mouse as rat presence has not yet been confirmed, and it is likely too small to compensate for the impacts of the Project alone. The Applicant has begun investigating locations in Scotland for project-led compensation, however progress within Examination timeframes is likely to be limited. This means that the Applicant's derogation case hinges on the availability of the Isles of Scilly as a strategic compensation measure.

With regard to the Applicant's case for a reduction in breeding seasons for artificial nest structure installation, notwithstanding requests made in our Deadline 4 advice [REP4-125] for further clarity on certain aspects of the modelling methodology, we are in agreement with the Applicant that there would be little merit in further discussion between our parties on this topic within the remainder of Examination, and that we maintain our respective positions.

### **3. Rule 17 Additional information requested by the Examining Authority**

Natural England have provided responses to the questions within the Examining Authority's Rule 17 letter published on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2025 in Annex 2 below.

For any queries relating to the content of this letter please contact me using the details provided below.

Yours faithfully

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## Annex 1: Natural England's Response to the Applicant's Documents Submitted prior to and at Deadline 2 Relevant to our Remit

PINS Document Reference	Document Name	Natural England’s Response/Position Summary
General		
REP5-001	15.1 Deadline 5 Cover Letter	Natural England has no comments to make on this document.
PD-026	EN010125-001711- Rule 17 Letter - Request for further information dated 9 June 2025	Natural England’s response to this document is provided in Annex 2.
REP5-036	15.2 The Applicants Responses to ExQ2	Natural England’s response to these documents is provided in our Risk and Issues Log Deadline 6 and each thematic Appendix where relevant.
REP5-037	15.3 The Applicants' Responses to Deadline 4 Documents	
REP5-028	8.23 In Principle Monitoring Plan (Revision 4) (Tracked)	
REP5-008	6.1 RIAA HRA Part 1 of 4 – Introduction and Terrestrial Ecology (Revision 3) (Tracked)	Natural England has no comments to make on this document.
DCO		
REP5-003	3.1 Draft Development Consent Order (Revision 8) (Tracked).pdf	Natural England’s response to these documents is provided in our Risk and Issues Log Deadline 6 and each thematic Appendix where relevant.
REP5-006	3.4 Schedule of Changes (Revision 6).pdf	
REP5-005	3.2 Explanatory Memorandum (Revision 8) (Tracked)	Natural England has no comments to make on this document.
Marine Physical Environment		
REP5-040	15.6 Assessment of Coastal Processes at the Dogger Bank South Landfall	Natural England’s response to these documents is provided in Appendix B6.
REP5-026	8.18 Disposal Site Characterisation Report (Revision 3) (Tracked)	
Benthic & Intertidal Ecology		
REP5-041	15.7 Ecological Halo Effects Technical Note	Natural England’s response to this document is provided in Appendix C6.
Fish and Shellfish		
REP5-033	14.9 Illustrative Noise Reduction Technical Note (Revision 2) (Tracked)	Natural England’s response to these documents is

PINS Document Reference	Document Name	Natural England’s Response/Position Summary
REP5-042	15.8 Modelling of underwater noise associated with alternative piling locations to inform potential impacts on Atlantic herring spawning grounds	provided in Appendix E6.
Marine Mammals		
REP5-033	14.9 Illustrative Noise Reduction Technical Note (Revision 2) (Tracked)	Natural England’s response to these documents is provided in Appendix F6.
REP5-010	6.1 RIAA HRA Part 3 of 4 – Annex II Marine Mammals (Revision 3) (Tracked)	
REP5-014	7.11.11.4 Appendix 11-4 iPCoD Modelling (Revision 3) (Tracked)	
Offshore Ornithology Compensation		
REP5-012	6.2.2 Appendix 2 Guillemot and Razorbill Compensation Plan (Revision 5) (Tracked)	Natural England’s response to this document is provided in Appendix H6.

## Annex 2: Natural England's response to the Rule 17 letter dated 9<sup>th</sup> June 2025

Reference	Question to:	Question	Natural England Response
R17.3	The Environment Agency, Natural England (NE), East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC)	<b>Ecology and nature conservation</b> - Biodiversity net gain (BNG) strategy The applicants have submitted an updated BNG Strategy at deadline 5 [REP5-015]. Confirm whether the document has addressed previous concerns and would be acceptable. If not, please explain any outstanding matters and how they should be addressed.	Natural England have reviewed the updated Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy, which was submitted at Deadline 5 [REP5-016]. Although BNG is not yet mandatory for NSIP development, Natural England encourages NSIP Applicants to meet the biodiversity gain objective of 10% increase in the pre-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat. We advise proposals can be iteratively refined over time and throughout detailed design, and the draft strategy identifies opportunities for this to be addressed at post consent. We note that production of the final Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy prior to commencement of the construction work is secured within Requirement 32, Schedule 2, and consider that this addresses the matter.
R17.5	The applicants NE	<b>Fish and shellfish ecology</b> Point E3/ E11 in revision 4 of NE's Risk and Issue Log [REP5-061] requests clarity from the applicants as to why information on monopiling has not been provided when assessing impacts of the proposed development Dogger Bank South (DBS) West and DBS East together. <i>NE:</i> Can you confirm if section 4.2 of the Illustrative Noise Reduction Technical Note [REP5-032] provides the information you require? If not, please explain what additional information is necessary. <i>The applicants</i> Can you explain if there is an error in the second row of Table 4-4 [REP5-032]. The title of Table 4-4 states '...concurrent installation of monopile foundations...'	Please see Appendix E6 of our Deadline 6 response.

Reference	Question to:	Question	Natural England Response
		whilst the second row of Table 4-4 states 'Cumulative exposure from two sequential monopiles in both the array areas'. [Emphasis added]. Can you respond to NE's query above.	
R17.6	NE	<b>Fish and shellfish ecology</b> Can you respond to the applicants' deadline 5 response to point E5 in your Risk and Issue log [REP5-061] regarding presentation of sandeel abundance data, such as the North Sea sandeel dredge survey, compared to the wider region? Is there any additional information or way of presenting the data that NE would recommend that could help to move this issue forward? Does the status of this issue have a material impact on the Environmental Statement (ES) conclusions?	<p>Natural England refer to the MMO's Deadline 5 response [REP5-049] that outlines how this data should be used and the current issues surrounding the Applicant's current interpretation of the data.</p> <p>The Applicant has communicated that they now have both NSSS abundance indices data and the survey sample location data, which we agree cannot be presented via mapping. However, this data would be welcomed as an additional assessment using the data set to show relative abundance and population distribution in the updated ES provided by the Applicant at Deadline 7.</p> <p>Whilst the inclusion of this information would not alter our current advice regarding the impacts to sandeel, it would have provided a higher level of detail to the Applicant's characterisation of the site.</p>
R17.10	The applicants NE	<b>Fish and shellfish ecology</b> In response to ongoing outstanding concerns from NE [Risk and Issue log REP5-061, point E14/ E29, E30, E41], can NE and the applicants both respond with their opinion on whether the applicants have fully adhered to the mitigation hierarchy and have done all they can to reduce the extent of cable protection within high and very high spawning habitats for sandeel and herring along the export cable corridor. Could the applicants refine their commitment to an upper limit of	<p>Natural England have provided advice in section (ii) of Appendix C6 of our Deadline 6 submission which is also applicable to cable protection mitigation and spawning habitat.</p>



Reference	Question to:	Question	Natural England Response
		volume of cable protection within areas of high or very high spawning potential beyond the 20% along the export cable corridor?	
R17.40	The applicants	<p><b>Marine mammals</b></p> <p>NE continue to state [REP5-061, point F10/F23] that it can only agree to piling during reduced visibility / darkness if the applicants can demonstrate that the passive acoustic monitoring equipment can cover the whole mitigation area. The applicants stated in their response to deadline 3 documents [REP4-088] that they will ensure that the passive acoustic monitoring equipment would be sufficient at monitoring the full mitigation area and would have the capability of detecting all vocalising marine mammals.</p> <p><i>To the applicants</i></p> <p>Can the applicants commit to the above statement in the commitments register?</p> <p><i>To NE</i></p> <p>Would a commitment of this nature in the commitments register satisfy its concerns?</p>	<p>Natural England maintains our previous Deadline 3 advice [REP3-053] for the Applicant to present the evidence that their proposed PAM equipment will cover the whole mitigation area for all marine mammals, and that they have considered animals that vocalise infrequently such as baleen whales and seals. Without this evidence Natural England cannot ascertain if the proposed PAM equipment would be sufficient.</p>