



THE PLANNING ACT 2008

THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (EXAMINATION PROCEDURE) RULES
2010

Outer Dowsing Offshore Wind Farm

Appendix H6 to the Natural England Deadline 4a Submission
Natural England's Advice on Onshore Ecology - Species Licensing
[REP3-030, REP4-072, REP4-113]

For:

The construction and operation of Outer Dowsing Offshore Wind Farm located approximately 54 km from the Lincolnshire Coast in the Southern North Sea.

Planning Inspectorate Reference EN010130

26th February 2025

Natural England's Advice on Onshore Ecology - Species Licencing.

In formulating these comments, the following documents have been considered:

- [REP3-030] 8.10 Outline Landscape & Ecological Management Strategy V4_with Annex A7 (Tracked Confidential)
- [REP4-072] 8.10 Outline Landscape & Ecological Management Strategy V5 (Tracked)
- [REP4-113] 21.8 The Applicant's Comments on Natural England's Risk and Issues Log

Issue Specific Hearing 5 (ISH5) on Onshore Environmental Matters and the draft Development Consent Order Actions 5 and 6 are addressed within this Appendix. Items for protected species within the Risk and Issues log will be updated to reflect our position at Deadline 5.

1) Protected Species Licencing - ISH5 Action Item 6

ISH 5 Action 6. Undertake discussions regarding the need, or not, for a badger and otter licence or Letter of no Impediment (LoNI) and provide a note on the outcome of these discussions as well as discussing other outstanding matters from the Risk & Issues Log.

Unfortunately, there has been insufficient time between the hearing and Deadline 4a to meet with the Applicant. However, we can confirm that Letters of No Impediment (LoNIs) have been provided by Natural England's Wildlife Licensing Service (NEWLS) with respect to Great Crested Newt (GCN) and water voles. Therefore, unless significant changes to the scope, route, or impacts of the project are predicted to occur that would affect those species, Natural England advises that the Secretary of State should have confidence in the approaches as agreed via the LONI process for GCN and water voles.

Licensable approaches for badgers, bats and otters have not been agreed between Natural England and the Applicant, predominantly as the Applicant has advised that no licensable impacts have been identified currently. Natural England notes that the proposed approaches to avoiding impacts to bats and badgers are consistent with ecological best practice and recommended ecological guidelines; however, we have identified that additional information will be required with respect to otters, before Natural England can offer a view on whether a mitigation licence will likely be required.

Notwithstanding the further survey detail required with regarding otters, the Applicant's current strategies for bats, badgers and otters sit outside of a planned licensable approach; therefore, the Applicant will need to satisfy themselves, and the ExA, that they have sufficiently considered impacts to these species, and the need for licences or not, appropriately.

Should the need for licences for impacts to otters, bats, and/or badgers subsequently be identified, then we would encourage the Applicant to engage with Natural England through the LoNI process, as they have done with respect to water voles and great crested newts.

Please also refer to our detailed advice regarding the proposed mitigation as set out within the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Strategy (OLEMS) [REP3-030 and REP4-072] in Section 2 for bats, Section 3 for badger and Section 4 for otter where there are particular concerns.

2) Bats

Natural England advises it is for the Applicant to decide if a mitigation licence is required. The Applicant has stated there will be zero roost loss, that flightlines will be maintained throughout the duration of works, and that a buffer around known/potential bat roosting habitat will be incorporated. These measures are consistent with expected best practice and recommended ecological guidelines.

Relatedly, the Applicant has also stated that there will be zero loss of any potential bat roosting habitat, and that the maintenance of flightlines and use of sensitive lighting will be employed, negating the requirement for further surveys at this stage to inform decision making . Natural England advises that the undertaking of both pre-construction surveys and regular monitoring throughout the construction period should be secured within the DCO and/or named plan in order to inform the need for mitigation licensing, should impacts to bat roosts be identified. In the event that further surveys indicate potential impacts to bats that might require a licensable approach, we would advise the Applicant to engage with Natural England through the LONI process as soon as possible.

3) Badger

ISH Action 5 Natural England to confirm that access has been obtained to the latest confidential badger Annex to the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Strategy (OLEMS), and to obtain this from either the Applicant or Planning Inspectorate.

Natural England can confirm we have access to the latest confidential Outline Landscape and Environmental Management Strategy (OLEMS) [REP3-030] and has reviewed the confidential Annex 7 for Badgers. Natural England acknowledges that the avoidance and mitigation measures as currently proposed are in line with best practice and recommended ecological guidance. We would, though, encourage the Applicant to undertake pre-construction surveys following receipt of the DCO, and should those surveys identify impacts to badgers and their setts that would require wildlife licences, to engage with Natural England further at the earliest opportunity.

4) Otter

It is noted that the Applicant deems the mitigation proposals effective at minimising disturbance levels, rendering it unnecessary to apply for a A45 licence. However, at present, Natural England does not have sufficient information to determine the effectiveness of the outlined mitigation measures as presented in the OLEMS [REP4-072]. Whilst we appreciate all efforts to avoid disturbance, further information regarding the nature and proximity of works to otter holts is required.

Natural England is particularly concerned about the potential natal holt in ECC 10 within 150m of works. Further surveys will be required (as outlined) to determine whether this is in fact a natal holt. If a mother and cub(s) are present, the distance of mitigation measures and screening would need to be carefully considered, along with the possibility of the need for a mitigation licence, as any impacts to a natal holt would be considered high-impact and high-risk with respect to licensing. Robust surveys to provide further information and to allow for a comprehensive assessment of any impacts are therefore required. In addition, further information regarding the second holt at ECC14 and the nature and proximity to works would be welcomed.

As with other species, a clear commitment to undertake pre-construction surveys with respect to otters within the DCO and/or named plan would be welcomed.