



## Inception Meeting note

|                        |                                               |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Project name</b>    | <b>Chatteris Wind Farm</b>                    |
| <b>Case reference</b>  | <b>EN0110041</b>                              |
| <b>Status</b>          | <b>Final</b>                                  |
| <b>Author</b>          | <b>The Planning Inspectorate</b>              |
| <b>Date of meeting</b> | <b>29 June 2026</b>                           |
| <b>Meeting with</b>    | <b>Meeting with Vattenfall Wind Power Ltd</b> |
| <b>Venue</b>           | <b>Microsoft Teams</b>                        |
| <b>Circulation</b>     | <b>All attendees</b>                          |

## **Summary of key points discussed, and advice given**

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 (PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

### **The proposed development**

Vattenfall Wind Power Ltd (the applicant) will seek to apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for a proposed onshore wind farm in England, which would comprise approximately 15 wind turbines with a tip height of approximately 200 metres, turbine foundations, crane hardstanding and laydown / storage areas, and a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) (the proposed development). Other elements of the proposed development would include an onsite substation, control building, meteorological mast, cabling, access routes, habitat management areas and biodiversity enhancement. If granted consent, the proposed development is expected to produce approximately 114 Megawatts (MW) of renewable energy.

The proposed development would be located on approximately 1,000 hectares (ha) of predominantly agricultural land in East Anglia, approximately 2 km south-east of the village of Chatteris and 11km west of Ely. The site lies within the administrative boundaries of East Cambridgeshire District Council and Fenland District Council. The applicant explained that engagement with the main landowners is currently ongoing to assess the suitability of the site and to inform the development of the design of the proposed development and its Order Limits. The site was said to be largely located away from residential receptors, with the land currently used for intensive arable farming, with some sand quarries. The main section of the site is in Chatteris Fen, with parts of the Order Limits further dispersed towards the northeast.

In answer to questions from the Inspectorate, the applicant anticipated that the proposed development, once operational, may continue to facilitate arable farming on the site, without the turbines having an impact of the use of the machinery needed for such farming. The applicant also confirmed that there are two existing 500-kilowatt wind turbines to the northwest of the site. The applicant added that it was not intending to cut across fields unnecessarily, to help maintain existing field boundaries and vegetation screening. The applicant may seeking to site the turbines closer to the field boundaries and would try to utilise any existing access tracks as part of its emerging agreements with landowners.

The Inspectorate noted potential effects of the proposed development on aviation. The applicant clarified that it was due to hold discussions with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) in respect of effects on any of its nearby airfield bases as well as the owners and users of private airfields.

The Inspectorate queried whether the current design of the proposed development is being informed by the configuration of the land parcels and site topography to reduce any visual effects. The applicant explained that owing to the flatness of the site, topography was expected to play a limited role in the screening of turbines due to limited existing features such as hills.

The applicant introduced its company and onshore wind portfolio, including projects within its development pipeline such as the Ray II Wind Farm. In answer to questions from the Inspectorate, the applicant clarified the order of its projects, with the intention to submit the application for Ray II first, followed by some additional onshore wind farm projects.

The applicant explained that the proposed development may not include a grid connection corridor or point of connection to the national grid. However, the applicant would be undertaking provisional assessments of grid connection route options, with an indication of a likely point of connection provided by UK Power Networks. The applicant will be holding discussions with National Grid and the National Energy System Operator (NESO) on seeking a grid connection agreement, which would be undertaken outside of the development of the DCO application for Chatteris Wind Farm and would follow any relevant regulations. The applicant had noted this the approach was being taken in the DCO application for Tween Bridge Solar, currently in examination, and that it would be reviewing the Secretary of State's decision on that case once it becomes available, to understand whether any applicable conventions or precedents arise.

In answer to questions from the Inspectorate, the applicant said that it was considering the appropriate consenting route for the grid connection, but it could not confirm timescales for consenting the grid connection at this stage.

**Post-meeting advice:** where consent for elements of a proposed development (such as the grid connection) is sought separately, the applicant's attention is drawn to the relevant paragraphs in the government's Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1), namely 4.11.5 to 4.11.10:

- on the need for applicants to "liaise with National Grid" or "the relevant regional DNO or TSO to secure a grid connection"
- where applicants choose to "take a commercial risk where they have not received or accepted a formal offer of a grid connection from the relevant network operator at the time of the application", applicants "should provide information as part of their application confirming that there is no obvious reason why a network connection would not be possible"
- by setting out the aim of the Planning Act 2008 to create "a holistic planning regime so that the cumulative effect of different elements of the same project can be considered together" and wherever reasonably possible, "applications for new generating stations and related infrastructure should be contained in a single application to the Secretary of State or in separate applications submitted in tandem which have been prepared in an integrated way, as outlined in EN-5"
- where it may not be possible to coordinate applications, applicants "should include information on the other elements and explain the reasons for the separate application confirming that there are no obvious reasons for why other elements are likely to be refused"
- where this option is pursued, the applicant "accepts the implicit risks involved in doing so and must ensure they provide sufficient information to comply with the EIA Regulations including the indirect, secondary, and cumulative effects, which will encompass information on grid connections".

The Inspectorate therefore advises applicants to seek a grid connection agreement with

National Grid at the earliest opportunity and before the application is submitted. Where this is not possible, applicants should demonstrate in their DCO applications that there is “no obvious reason why a network connection would not be possible”. This would also apply where an applicant has a grid connection agreement in place but for other reasons, is choosing not to include the grid connection cable corridor route and substation connection point in its application.

## Consenting programme

The applicant introduced its initial consenting programme and current pre-application activities, which include refining the land area and site connectivity, undertaking further environmental surveys and assessments to inform the design and early engagement with the local community, stakeholders and statutory consultees.

The applicant plans to 'soft launch' the project to the public in August - September 2026.

Indicative DCO Programme:

|                                                                                      |                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| NSIP Project Mobilisation                                                            | April to June 2026        |
| Consultation with technical consultees                                               | April 2026 to July 2027   |
| Inception Meeting with the Inspectorate                                              | June 2026                 |
| Submit Scoping Request to the Inspectorate                                           | August 2026               |
| Post-Scoping Opinion Review                                                          | October to December 2026  |
| Potential Engagement with Local Planning Authorities                                 | Q2 2026<br>Q4 2026        |
| Environmental Surveys: Landscape, ecology, ornithology, cultural heritage and others | April 2026 to June 2027   |
| Design Review Milestones                                                             | Q3 2026<br>Q1 2027        |
| Phase 1 Consultation / Engagement                                                    | August to December 2026   |
| Initial drafting the Environmental Statement (ES)                                    | July to December 2026     |
| Phase 2 Consultation / Engagement                                                    | January to March 2027     |
| Finalisation of the ES                                                               | January to June 2027      |
| DCO Document Preparation                                                             | October 2026 to June 2027 |
| DCO Application submission (targeted timescale subject to change)                    | August 2027               |

In answer to questions from the Inspectorate, the applicant said that it was waiting for the government's new NSIP pre-application guidance and would reflect this in its consultation strategy. It would also seek to separate and distinguish between, as far as reasonably

possible, the consultation with stakeholders for Chatteris Wind Farm and Redmere Wind Farm, as well as the EIA scoping consultation for each.

The Inspectorate noted the potential for the public to send their responses to the applicant's phase 1 consultation to the Inspectorate due to the overlap with the scoping process. The applicant was advised to carefully consider the timings of the two activities and to provide as much information to consultees on the purpose of each and where to send their feedback.

### **Early engagement with statutory bodies, local authorities, and stakeholders**

The applicant said that initial engagement has commenced with the host local authorities by way of introductory correspondence sent to East Cambridgeshire District Council and Fenland District Council, to inform them of the proposed development and the anticipated pre-application programme, including the proposed scoping and application submission timetable. A meeting with the Strategic Planning & Development Management Manager at East Cambridgeshire is planned for 2 July 2026, the applicant added. The applicant said it is also considering engagement options with Huntingdon Council as part of the site lies on the District's administrative boundary. Meetings will also be arranged with County Highways.

The applicant confirmed that engagement with key statutory consultees has also commenced. An application for Natural England's Discretionary Advice Service and Statutory Advice Service has been submitted, and a meeting with Natural England has been requested. The applicant explained that early discussions with statutory consultees will inform the scope of environmental surveys and assessments needed and assist in identifying any key issues at an early stage in the pre-application process.

The Inspectorate brought to the attention to the applicant, some complaints made by local authorities with regards to the level of information provided on technical consultations offered at pre-application on other projects and the level of technical information available to be able to make informed responses, as opposed to 'standard' consultation activities. The Inspectorate advised the applicant to consider the level of detail that can be reasonably shared with local authorities and their consultants on relevant technical issues or where post-consent discharging of requirements would be needed.

The Inspectorate further advised that the applicant should seek to use the issues tracker throughout the pre-application stage to record the progress made in agreeing with statutory consultees, the methodology to be used and scope of assessments and mitigation measures needed. The issues trackers will help to inform discussions at the project update meetings with the Inspectorate.

## **Environmental constraints and issues**

The applicant outlined the principal environmental constraints identified at this stage of the proposed development, namely landscape and visual effects, peat, noise, ecology and ornithology, cultural heritage and archaeology, construction traffic and transport effects, and potential proximity to airport and aviation-related infrastructure.

The applicant said that it is in its third year of undertaking ornithology surveys, with survey results indicating the presence of migrating bird populations within the area. In answer to questions from the Inspectorate, the applicant explained that it was currently focused on bird migration and flight activity across the site than designated sites, but was planning to hold discussions with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Natural England on the scope of assessments needed.

The Inspectorate advised the applicant to seek early agreement with the local planning authorities in respect of landscape and visual matters, as well as agreeing the main, significant viewpoints to be assessed and displayed within the application.

The Inspectorate also brought attention to the government's policy on peat and the England Peat Action Plan, that the siting of wind turbines should avoid peat as far as possible and should take account of impacts from construction roads and access tracks on ground conditions. These matters should be built into the applicant's design and any assessment and mitigation clearly explained and justified throughout its documentation. The applicant said that its initial desk-based research had showed limited peat formations on site and that the turbine locations should be able to avoid pockets of peat.

## **EIA scoping**

The proposed development is deemed to be Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development, requiring the preparation of an Environmental Statement. Scoping for the project is proposed in late August 2026.

The Inspectorate advised that a GIS shapefile of the red line boundary should be provided at least ten working days in advance of the scoping submission. This should follow the guidance in 'Advice Note Seven: Environmental Impact Assessment: process, preliminary environmental information and environmental statements'. It requested the applicant to keep the Inspectorate informed on the anticipated scoping submission date, to ensure adequate resource is available.

Regarding consultation with neighbouring authorities, such as with Huntingdonshire District Council, the Inspectorate confirmed that it will be consulting neighbouring authorities for scoping purposes, and that these regulations have not changed.

The Inspectorate also advised that discussions with Natural England prior to scoping can be useful although noted the proposed timetable does not allow for this. It advised discussing the proposed scoping date with Natural England, via its discretionary service, to ensure they have resources for scoping, particularly noting the summer holidays.

## **Preparing the draft development consent order**

The applicant explained that the preparation of the draft DCO was at an early stage. The applicant shared its experience of developing onshore wind projects in Scotland and confirmed it has appointed the services of a legal firm with extensive experience of drafting DCOs for projects in England. The applicant said that it was seeking to adopt standard provisions and requirements as applied in other types of consented onshore generation schemes but was currently considering how to address the separation of the grid connection. While voluntary heads of terms would be sought with landowners in the first instance, the DCO would contain compulsory acquisition powers as a fallback in line with the approach taken by other NSIPs.

## **Land and rights**

The applicant is progressing options with three landowners, regarding the main site. The Inspectorate advised the applicant that early drafting and agreement of protective provisions with statutory undertakers is recommended to ensure an efficient examination (as such matters have traditionally taken up substantial amounts of time during examinations, particularly where bespoke provisions are needed).

## **Consultation**

The applicant confirmed that ongoing technical engagement will take place with key statutory consultees and regulatory bodies, including Natural England, Historic England, the Environment Agency, NATS, the Ministry of Defence and the relevant county highway authorities. The applicant explained that these discussions are intended to inform the scope of environmental surveys and assessments, identify potential constraints and agree approaches to mitigation where appropriate.

The applicant highlighted that there has been limited development of large-scale onshore wind projects in England in recent years and acknowledged that consultees may have varying levels of experience with such developments. The applicant explained that it intends to continue working proactively with local authorities, statutory consultees and the Inspectorate throughout the pre-application process to ensure key issues are identified and addressed at an early stage.

The Inspectorate queried whether the applicant has encountered any local resistance to onshore wind farms. The applicant's stakeholder strategy has reviewed the positions of community groups and politicians in the area to better understand their concerns and in order to work with the community, provide the right levels of information at the right time, and ensure meaningful and proportionate engagement is carried out.

## **Submission date**

The DCO submission is expected in July 2027.

## **The pre-application service offer**

### **The service tier requested by the applicant, including justification**

The applicant stated its preferred tier for the pre-application is 'basic', based on the experience of its consultants and that it could make use of the standard Inspectorate templates for sharing information about the development of the scheme and the preparedness of the application before submission.

The applicant clarified that the pre-application service options will be kept under review as the proposed development progresses and would request the 'standard' service later in the year if more meetings are needed and a review of draft documents.

The Inspectorate advised that keeping abreast of the evolving policy landscape and legislative changes, made DCOs on equivalent applications, and addressing issues identified through the scoping process, would help to reduce the number of Examining Authority questions and support a more efficient examination.

### **Risks, including change requests**

The Inspectorate signposted the applicant to the Inspectorate's external advice note on [change requests](#). The Inspectorate advises applicants to do all it can to ensure that its submitted application is as complete as possible and has included all mitigation measures needed to facilitate the examination. While change requests can be made following 'acceptance', the scope of changes needed, the timing of the request, and the extent of impacts on compulsory acquisition may present risks to the consenting process. Change should not materially change the scheme applied for, and an Examining Authority would need to carefully review the context of the request and whether there is time in the examination to be able to consult and report on it.

## **Feedback on the applicant's initial Programme Document (post meeting note)**

The applicant supplied the Inspectorate with its initial Programme Document before the inception meeting in line with our request under the 2024 Pre-application Prospectus.

Having reviewed the document, the Inspectorate considers that it covers most of the expected content as set out in the government's pre-application guidance at paragraph 10. In particular, the Programme Document provides a sound summary of the proposed development, its pre-application timetable, list of consultees, and the risks the applicant has identified and how these will be tracked and managed.

However, the applicant should refer to and follow the template for the Programme Document as attached to the Pre-application Prospectus (as the draft version is currently set out like a PowerPoint Presentation). While the applicant has outlined a set of main issues for resolution, it would be helpful if this was presented in a table format, to also include the activities needed to resolve them. It would be helpful if the applicant could also provide some detail as to the significant cultural heritage assets on or near the site as well as any significant landscape features in its 'main issues section' that may require specific assessment and mitigation, alongside the ecological designations. Further detail on these

main issues, including the applicant's progress with agreeing its methodology and scope of surveys, assessments and mitigation needed, with relevant statutory parties, will be captured in the applicant's Issues Tracker, to record the progress made with resolving these issues during the pre-application stage.

Lastly, the applicant will need to explain how it intends to carry out its consultation and engagement activities in its Programme Document. Though the Inspectorate understands that the applicant may be waiting for the government's updated pre-application guidance following the implementation of the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, before completing this section.

## Annex A

### Meeting attendees

| Organisation              | Role                                                  |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Planning Inspectorate     | Operations Lead                                       |
| Planning Inspectorate     | Operations Lead - Environmental Services Team         |
| Planning Inspectorate     | Senior Environmental Adviser                          |
| Planning Inspectorate     | Operations Manager                                    |
| Planning Inspectorate     | Case Manager                                          |
| Planning Inspectorate     | Case Officer                                          |
| Planning Inspectorate     | Case Officer                                          |
| Vattenfall Wind Power Ltd | Lead Project Development Manager                      |
| Vattenfall Wind Power Ltd | Junior Project Manager                                |
| ERM                       | Project Manager & Planning Lead, ERM                  |
| ERM                       | ERM Senior Planner                                    |
| ERM                       | ERM, Project Stakeholder and Consultation Consultants |
| TLT LLP                   | Vattenfall's Legal Advisor                            |