

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Morgan and Morecambe OWFTA](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: EN020028 Natural England 514882 - Morgan and Morecambe Transmission Assets Examination Deadline 3 - Additional Submission
Date: 15 July 2025 12:23:51
Attachments: [EN020028 514882 Morgan and Morecambe Transmission Assets - Appendix H3 Natural England's Comments on Onshore and Intertidal Ornithology.pdf](#)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please can you accept the attached document as a late submission at Deadline 3 from Natural England:

- EN020028 514882 Morgan and Morecambe Transmission Assets – Appendix H3 Natural England's Comments on Onshore and Intertidal Ornithology

In section 4 of our cover letter at Deadline 3 [REP3-090] we outlined that we would provide additional onshore ornithology advice as soon as possible. The additional advice relates to impacts on passage waterbirds at landfall, and the proposed management at Fairhaven saltmarsh, and the measures proposed to address the loss of Functionally Linked Land affected by the onshore cable route.

The advice has also been provided to the Applicant to help progress these issues.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Higher Officer, Offshore Wind
Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region and Lancashire Area Team
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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THE PLANNING ACT 2008

THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (EXAMINATION PROCEDURE) RULES
2010

Morgan and Morecambe Offshore Wind Farm: Transmission Assets

**Appendix H3 to Natural England's Deadline 3 Submission
Natural England's comments on Onshore and Intertidal Ornithology**

For:

The construction and operation of the Morgan and Morecambe Transmission Assets located approximately 0 - 37 km from the Northwest English Coast in the Irish Sea.

Planning Inspectorate Reference EN020028

15 July 2025

Appendix H3 – Natural England’s comments on Onshore and Intertidal Ornithology

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

- [REP2-019] Outline Ecological Management Plan F02 – tracked
- [REP2-044] Technical Note on Newton Marsh SSSI and River Ribble Crossing F01
- [REP2-045] Technical note on the energetics of the birds at landfall and the adequacy of Fairhaven Saltmarsh F01
- [REP2-046] Site selection of the Environmental Mitigation and Biodiversity Benefit Areas F01

1. Major/Complex comments

1.1. Summary

Natural England has previously provided detailed comments relating to the Applicant’s onshore and intertidal ornithology assessments in our Relevant Representations [RR-1601]. Since then, Natural England has undertaken a site meeting with the Applicant to discuss outstanding areas of disagreement and visited some of the proposed mitigation areas, the River Ribble Crossing and the landfall/intertidal location. Following the site meeting, we provided written comments to the Applicant through our Discretionary Advice Service (DAS). For reference, we have included these comments in Annex 1 of this Advice letter.

Natural England welcome the Applicant’s submissions of onshore and intertidal ornithology documents at Deadline 2. We can confirm that the Applicant’s provision of the Technical Note on Newton Marsh SSSI and River Ribble [REP2-044] has satisfied our concerns with regards to Newton Marsh SSSI and the River Ribble crossing, pending some minor updates as stated in our advice letter below.

Additionally, we welcome the Applicant’s inclusion of an overwintering restriction on all construction activity from 1 November to 31 March (inclusive) at landfall. This addresses Natural England’s concerns regarding over-wintering SPA/Ramsar site waterbirds using the intertidal zone, and as a result, Adverse Effects on Integrity (AEoI) can now be ruled out for these features of the SPA/Ramsar site, as reflected in our Risk and Issues Log submission at Deadline 3 [REP3-094].

We highlight that some areas of outstanding disagreement remain. Our outstanding concerns relate to the impacts on passage SPA/Ramsar site waterbirds using the intertidal zone at the landfall and the proposed management at Fairhaven saltmarsh, and the measures proposed to address the loss of/disturbance to Functionally Linked Land (FLL) used by SPA/Ramsar site waterbirds affected by the onshore cable route. We have provided further comments on our outstanding concerns within this advice letter.

Natural England advise that the Applicant updates technical notes and ES Chapters to fully reflect SNCB advice, as provided in our Relevant Representations and subsequent advice notes. Unless subsequent updated documents/new documents are submitted into Examination by the Applicant, or we are specifically asked by the Examiner to comment on a submission, we will not be engaging further.

1.2. Newton Marsh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Natural England welcome the Applicant’s provision of the Technical Note on Newton Marsh SSSI and River Ribble Crossing [REP2-044]. The information provided in [REP2-044] satisfies

Natural England's concerns relating potential to impacts on Newton Marsh SSSI from visual and noise disturbance. The technical note contains sufficient detail on the trenching and cable burial activities, construction compounds and access tracks in close proximity to the SSSI.

We believe this issue can be readily resolved if the Applicant includes appropriate text to reflect this additional detail in the Information to Support an Appropriate Assessment (ISAA) document [APP-017]. This is necessary as the site is used by SPA/Ramsar site waterbirds, and therefore the issue is an SPA/Ramsar site as well as an SSSI matter. This is also stated in our Risk and Issues Log (Appendix K, comment ref: RI_H8).

Should any design changes/ changes to construction parameters occur which may affect the potential for disturbance on the SSSI, Natural England should be informed.

1.3. River Ribble Crossing

The information provided in [REP2-044] satisfies Natural England's concerns relating to potential visual impacts and noise impacts on ornithological receptors present at the River Ribble Crossing. The technical note contains sufficient additional detail on the extent of the flood embankments, the presence of hedges and the steep slope down to the farmland (where the entry and exit pits will be located, sitting below the embankment height). Taken together, this information illustrates that visual disturbance impacts to SPA/Ramsar site waterbirds are unlikely to occur. Further, due to the presence of the embankments, the noise modelling presented in [REP2-044] shows noise levels will be below the level where disturbance is likely to occur.

We believe this issue can be readily resolved if the Applicant includes appropriate text to reflect this additional detail in the ISAA document [APP-017]. This is also stated in our Risk and Issues Log (Appendix K, comment ref: RI_H27).

1.4. Passage SPA/Ramsar site waterbirds at Landfall

Natural England welcome and acknowledge the efforts made by the Applicant to reduce impacts to features at landfall, including the over-wintering seasonal restriction and the technical notes and updated Outline Ecological Management (OEMP) [REP2-019] submitted at Deadline 2.

To address the outstanding issues regarding passage SPA/Ramsar site waterbirds, Natural England advise that the Applicant needs to further consider the mitigation hierarchy. This advice was included in our Relevant Representations [RR-1601]. We acknowledge that the seasonal restriction is a significant measure to avoiding impacts to over-wintering features, and we encourage the Applicant to explore the possibility of extending the restriction to avoid impacts to passage features too. Recognising that full restrictions to the passage periods may be very challenging, we recommend the Applicant consider whether partial restrictions e.g. April, October might be practicable.

Once this mitigation option is exhausted, we then advise the Applicant to consider further reducing the impacts at the source i.e. at the landfall in the first instance. It is unclear whether measures such as visual screening and noise reduction techniques have been considered. We also believe that a more strategic approach might merit consideration e.g. implementing a wider working corridor to allow birds to feed without disturbance in the vicinity of the works. Reducing the impact on the feeding birds would reduce the potential significant energy loss. Additionally, reducing the impact at source could involve an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECOW)

being situated strategically at 'pinch points' where the public will cross the working corridor and inform the public of areas of the foreshore to avoid to give birds space to feed. More generally, we advise any mitigation needs to be well developed, deliverable and include measures to monitor its effectiveness for the impacts it is in place to mitigate for. The details of the mitigation required are discussed in detail in section 1.5 and Table 1.

Energetics

Natural England notes the information provided in [REP2-045] outlining the Applicant's approach to assessing energetics of passage features at landfall/Fairhaven saltmarsh. The information provided in [REP2-045] provides some clarity on the likely energy costs and savings of affected passage features. We believe the information provided is moving in the right direction, however some concerns still remain, particularly relating to the deliverability of the energy savings and associated potential for a significant gap between expenditure and recouping. This is discussed further in section 1.5. To progress discussions, we have a teams call scheduled with the Applicant in the week commencing 21st July to discuss onshore ornithology matters further.

1.5. Management at Fairhaven Saltmarsh

Natural England have ongoing concerns regarding the suitability of the Fairhaven Saltmarsh as a mitigation area. As previously raised in our Relevant Representations [RR-1601], more detail is required to be confident that the measures are achievable and deliverable.

One of the key concerns that remains for Natural England is the appropriateness of Fairhaven Saltmarsh as a mitigation site due to it being heavily disturbed by recreational users. It should also be noted that the birds foraging and loafing at the landfall area towards high tide are potentially birds that have been flushed from Fairhaven Saltmarsh in the first instance, as also recognised by the Applicant in [REP2-046].

At present, we are not confident that the measures proposed by the Applicant in their Deadline 2 submissions will fully combat the impacts from recreational users. We therefore advise that further detail is still required from the Applicant in the form of a clear deliverable work plan for the mitigation area, with indicative timescales and benchmarks. The management plan should also include the delivery of monitoring to ensure the implemented measures are appropriate. Adaptive management should be embedded to ensure the results of monitoring inform ongoing management.

The mitigation plan not only needs to account for suitability to cater for all species/birds displaced from the landfall area, but also how measures will be implemented to adapt the behaviour of recreational users that regularly frequent the Fairhaven site and surrounding foreshore. Although the detail in the OEMP [REP2-019] on wardening, signage, local education and fencing is in principle appropriate, altering peoples' behaviour could be a significant blocker to the success of the mitigation area and this part of the mitigation proposal needs to be further developed. Additionally, as highlighted above we advise that this measure should be considered at the source of impact itself i.e. within the landfall working corridor. This area of foreshore is regularly used by recreational users to walk from one end of the beach to the promenade next to the Fairhaven Saltmarsh, and wardens/ECOWs should be considered for both locations. We have included detailed comments on suggested measures to include in a management plan in Table 1.

In the absence of an appropriate management plan, we are not confident that the Fairhaven mitigation site will lead to energy savings for passage features of Ribble and Alt Estuary SPA/Ramsar. Daily energy budgets are likely to be increased by the temporary habitat loss

and disturbance at landfall, and without further detail we are not confident that sufficient energy savings will be made by reducing disturbance at the roost site. If the mitigation at Fairhaven is unsuccessful, the birds will incur greater energetic losses by having to travel greater distances to a suitable alternative roost site.

1.6. Management measures for loss of Functionally Linked Land (FLL)

Works occurring through the onshore cable corridor and at the substation locations during the construction period have the potential to cause disturbance, displacement and temporary/permanent habitat loss for all SPA/Ramsar site birds using the corridor. There are a suite of birds utilising the corridor as FLL in significant numbers (over 1% of the population). The OEMP [REP2-019] provides further detail on the temporary mitigation area at Lytham Moss stating it will be set up *“to provide temporary habitat (foraging areas) for pink-footed geese and whooper swan during the construction period.”*, however detail is required e.g. in the form of a Supplementary Feeding Strategy to outline an indicative plan. Further comments are included in Table 1.

Additionally, the Lytham Moss mitigation area needs to be utilised by other displaced species occurring in numbers >1% according to baseline surveys e.g. redshank, black-tailed godwit, teal, shelduck, wigeon and golden plover (APP-017 and APP-092). There has been no detail on delivering mitigation for these species which may use the area once displaced or disturbed. These SPA/Ramsar site species have specific requirements and it cannot be assumed that measure for the prioritised species will address the impacts on these. Without detail on how mitigation habitats will cater for other species potentially impacted during construction using the cable corridor, Natural England cannot advise on suitability or be confident in the conclusions drawn in the ISAA.

The need for this additional detail has already been included in our Relevant Representations [RR-1601] and discussed on the site visit on 28th April 2025. We acknowledge that the additional information included in the OEMP [REP2-019] does provide some supplementary detail, however the detail is not sufficient to satisfy concerns that this area will effectively function for the FLL affected species at an appropriate scale. At present Natural England are still not confident that the mitigation area can provide for all the birds likely to be displaced at any one time.

We consider that the permanent mitigation area at Newton-with-Scales has the potential to support the mitigation need. We acknowledge the additional information provided within the OEMP [REP2-019], which does include specific details on creation of scrapes suitable for waders and wildfowl and re-wetting areas by installing sluices. The measures and indicative locations of the mitigation measures are potentially appropriate for the birds likely to require alternative habitat; however we advise that further detail is still required and greater consideration of its suitability on a species-by-species basis. Specifically, as mentioned for the other mitigation areas, information is needed on how the site will be delivered and how the desired habitats will be achieved at an appropriate scale. Both these aspects of the mitigation area were discussed on the site visit on 28th April 2025.

It remains our position that for both the mitigation areas (Lytham Moss and Newton-with-Scales) there is insufficient detail on how these sites will effectively support the FLL for displaced and disturbed species and how these mitigation areas will effectively be delivered. Additionally, there has been minimal consideration of the extent to which the areas will deliver for the birds that are currently using these mitigation areas, in addition to the birds potentially displaced and/or disturbed which could also use the areas during the construction period. Further detail is therefore required to show how the birds impacted by the development will be supported in addition to birds already using the areas.

Therefore, we advise that the Applicant should produce detailed draft Habitat Management Plans for the mitigation areas which should include detail on the measures, their relevance to specific waterbirds species, how these measures will be delivered, timescales of delivery and monitoring to demonstrate the measures are appropriate and inform adaptive management if needed. For each mitigation area suggested measures that could be included are discussed in Table 1.

1.7. Construction Phase Timetabling

To understand the potential scale of disturbance and displacement at any one-time during construction, further information on the phasing of works is necessary. We reiterate our Relevant Representations comments on this matter. Without an indicative work schedule, Natural England has to assume the Worst-Case Scenario which is that all the works could be carried out simultaneously and therefore the risk of impacts to SPA/Ramsar features is greater. We therefore urge the Applicant to further consider phasing of works. If the Applicant included a phasing plan, this would likely reduce the need for the mitigation areas to have to deliver for all displaced birds and would therefore reduce the risk.

2. Detailed comments

Table 1: Natural England's Advice On: Onshore and Intertidal Ornithology – Outline Ecological Management Plan [REP2-019]

Document reviewed: [REP2-019] Outline Ecological Management Plan F02 – tracked			
NE Ref	Section	Key Concern and/or Update	Natural England's Advice to Resolve Issue
1	General – [REP2-019]	<p><u>Reducing impacts at landfall</u></p> <p>There are no proposed measures for reducing the impacts at the landfall itself during the passage periods. This area is well connected to Fairhaven Saltmarsh and implementing measures at both locations could aid in reducing recreational pressure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of using ECoWs/ wardens at landfall to educate and deter recreational users from areas in the vicinity of the works which are being used by feeding/loafing birds; and • Screening areas from visual/noise disturbance where practicable, and increasing the working corridor to allow for undisturbed areas for birds to feed.
2	B.2.1 – Fairhaven Saltmarsh (page 56)	<p><u>Local Education</u></p> <p>Part of proposed mitigation measures include Local Education activities to be organised by Local Groups and potential visits to school.</p> <p>Concerns over lack of detail to demonstrate mitigation will be effective.</p>	<p>NE advise that further detail should be provided to ensure the mitigation of Local Education will be effective and avoid any ambiguity regarding what is proposed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of which Local Groups the applicant will work with, and <i>how</i>. We advise clarification should be provided if any other partnership working will be undertaken and on how the applicant will engage with these partners; • Further evidence to demonstrate Local Groups are committed to working with the Applicants to raise awareness of disturbance; and • Further information of what education material will be used, and what activities will be arranged. This should also include detail of what measures will be put in place to ensure any educational material is correct and kept up to date.

		<p><u>Wardening</u></p> <p>Part of mitigation includes wardens being employed on site to further advise and educate the public.</p> <p>Concerns over lack of detail to demonstrate mitigation will be effective.</p>	<p>NE advise that further detail should be provided to ensure the mitigation/stakeholder engagement will be effective and avoid any uncertainty including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will the wardens be employed by - will this be the Applicant or a third party?; • How many wardens will be employed, and evidence to demonstrate the level of site presence will be sufficient to effectively intervene to avoid disturbance to roosting birds; • How the critical months for the waders will be decided. Natural England would expect these decisions to be based on the bird survey evidence and include the timing that the roosting birds are using the area; and • What lead-in times will be used to establish a site presence and begin dialogue with regular users in advance of the critical months.
3	B.2.5 – Lytham Moss (page 65)	<p><u>Supplementary Feeding</u></p> <p>Document updated which includes reference that supplementary feeding will be provided for pink-footed goose and whooper swan during core wintering period. Feeding will comprise retained spoiled crop on arable land or the import of additional feed, and will meet the calorific requirements of the affected species. The regime will be similar to that of the Farmland Conservation Area.</p> <p>Further information will be required to ensure the effectiveness of the Supplementary Feeding.</p>	<p>We advise a Supplementary Feeding Strategy will be required, which includes the following details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of how the timescales have been decided. The timing of the supplementary feeding should be based on the bird survey evidence on when the target birds are using the area (not just the core wintering period), and reflect likely rates of consumption; • If the applicant chooses to import additional feed, then the grain calculations should be included within the strategy to ensure its efficiency. These should be based on the calorific requirements of the effected species;

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarification of when the supplementary feeding will start. NE advise any supplementary feeding should be instigated in the November of the year that the construction of the proposed development commences, or earlier if the bird evidence shows the birds are utilising the area earlier e.g. September or October; Details of the monitoring that will be undertaken to ensure the supplementary feeding is effective, and to ensure adequate measures will be in place; and The length of time that the supplementary feeding will be in place.
		<p><u>Creation of Scrapes</u></p> <p>We acknowledge the detail included on the creation of scrapes; however further information is required to ensure the scrapes will be maintained and monitored.</p>	<p>We advise the Applicant to include subsequent detail in a draft Habitat Management Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing water levels to maintain it at a suitable level; Species specific measures to ensure the scrapes provide suitable habitat (with a focus on species occurring >1%); and Grassland management in surrounding areas: sward height, mowing/grazing schedule to maintain surrounding area at an optimal time for the months proposed.
4	B2.2 Land to the south of Newton-with-Scales (page 58)	<p>The area is proposed to be suitable to mitigate for non-breeding waders, breeding waders, wildfowl, and farmland birds and non-breeding wildfowl and farmland birds.</p> <p>The site is therefore going to be delivering for the needs of multiple different species and there is lack of detail of how this will be achieved.</p>	<p>More detail is needed on measures for each group of birds and how these will be developed. This should be outlined in a detailed draft Habitat Management Plan. The plan should also include detail on monitoring the measures and commit to adaptive management on the basis of monitoring findings.</p>
		<p><u>Wet Features</u></p>	<p>The draft Habitat Management Plan should include additional detail outlining how rewetting will be achieved and monitored.</p>

		There is no detail on where the sluices will be installed, target water levels and whether rewetting of the site will be monitored.	
		<p><u>Creation of scrapes</u></p> <p>There is a map showing the indicative locations of the scrapes and some detail on the location and size of the scrapes; however further detail is required to ensure the scrapes will be appropriately maintained.</p>	<p>We advise the Applicant to include subsequent detail in a draft Habitat Management Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing water level to maintain it at a suitable level and how this will be achieved; and • How the habitat will be designed to cater for species specific requirements
		<p><u>Grassland management</u></p> <p>More detail is needed on how the mosaic of grassland will be delivered and maintained.</p>	<p>We advise the Applicant to include further detail in a draft Habitat Management Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management regarding proposed sward height/s, approach to mowing/grazing to maintain area in optimal conditions for the months proposed, taking into account species-specific requirements; • Percentage of area for each grassland habitat to ensure the breeding and non-breeding birds will be supported by each area of varying height; • Indicative annual timings of grassland management; • Detail on predator management proposed for ground-nesting birds; and • Monitoring schedule to allow for adaptive management of the site as required.
		<p><u>Field Margins</u></p> <p>More detail is required on the measures to improve the existing field margins.</p>	<p>We advise the Applicant to include further detail in a draft Habitat Management Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information to show where the tall grasses and wildflower areas will be situated in relation to the other grassland habitats and scrapes;

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline plan of planting hedgerows; and • More detail on changes to the cutting regime and 'gapping up' e.g. across all the field margins or certain sections and timings of cutting.
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Annex 1 – DAS advice Onshore Ornithology 04/04/2025

Date: 01 May 2025
Our ref: 510672
Your ref: Morgan and Morecambe Transmission Assets Ornithology
Technical Notes



Customer Services
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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Laura

Discretionary Advice Service (Charged Advice): UDS-A012451

Development proposal and location: Morgan and Morecambe Transmission Assets

Reference: Ornithology Technical Notes

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 04 April 2025, which was received on 04 April 2025.

This advice is being provided as part of Natural England's Discretionary Advice Service. Morgan Offshore Wind Limited (Morgan OWL) and Morecambe Offshore Wind Limited (Morecambe OWL) have asked Natural England to provide advice based upon the information within the following documents:

- Technical Note: Liverpool Bay SPA Limited Working in November and December
- Technical Note: Transmission Assets Pre-Examination: Passage birds at landfall

Morgan OWL/Morecambe OWL and Natural England undertook a site visit followed by a meeting held over Teams on 28 April 2025 where ornithological issues were discussed in detail. During the afternoon meeting, Natural England and Morgan OWL/Morecambe OWL agreed that we would issue our written offshore ornithology advice. The advice contained in this letter therefore highlights points which were discussed in the meeting.

This advice is provided in accordance with the Quotation and Agreement dated 12 January 2024.

Detailed Comments: Liverpool Bay SPA Limited Working in November and December Technical Note

This technical note presents an updated Maximum Design Scenario (MDS) for the construction phase of the works. It details a commitment to restrict construction activity within the wintering period for the red-throated diver and common scoter features of Liverpool Bay SPA (LB SPA) to a maximum of 21 days in November and December for the purposes of completing cable burial. The MDS consists of a maximum of 5 vessels operating at any one time with a zone of influence of 76.97km².

Basis of Natural England's assessment

The assessment presented focusses largely on the potential for mortality impacts on the red-throated diver and common scoter features of LB SPA, due to the disturbance effect of the construction vessels operating within the SPA. While the analysis presented is broadly in line with Natural England's best practice guidance for assessing displacement and disturbance impacts, in this case it is not the potential for mortality which has caused Natural England to consider that Adverse Effect on Integrity (AEoI) cannot be ruled out. As it is not the abundance attribute of the features which is of primary concern to Natural England, the analysis and discussion of baseline mortality increase, foraging days lost and species energetics dynamics do not have a particular bearing on our judgement regarding AEoI.

As shown in Table 3, the conservation objectives for red-throated diver in LB SPA include the **distribution** of the feature as an attribute, with a target to *"Restore the distribution of the feature; preventing further deterioration, and where possible, reduce any existing anthropogenic influences impacting feature distribution"*. There is also a target to *"Restore the extent, distribution and **availability of suitable habitat** which supports the feature; preventing further deterioration"*. For common scoter, the equivalent targets are to *"Maintain the **distribution** of the feature; the extent should not be reduced by anthropogenic factors"*, and to *"Maintain the extent, distribution and **availability of suitable habitat** which supports the feature"*. Although "maintain" targets are less stringent than "restore" targets, we note that the cable route passes through an area of high scoter density, indicating that it is highly suitable habitat for that species and that relatively high numbers of individuals would be subject to disturbance. We consider that potentially excluding both these features from 76.97km² or 4.52%* of the original SPA for up to 21 days would not be aligned with the stated targets for these feature attributes, and that AEoI therefore cannot be ruled out. We continue to advise that the best way to avoid AEoI would be a commitment to avoid all construction activity throughout the sensitive winter period of November to March inclusive.

*(We noted a calculation error in the response to Natural England's RRs (EN020028 Annex 3.2.12, Appendix F). The percentage of the original SPA area affected was given as 0.02% for a single 3.5km radius ZOI, when it should have been 2.26% (38.5km²/1702.9km²).)

Densities

We note that there is uncertainty regarding the densities of the two species present in the SPA in the months of November and December, given the lack of survey data in those months. We do not consider that there is sufficient evidence presented to justify reducing the densities used in the assessment, and we consider the characterisation of the proposed reductions as 'precautionary' to be incorrect and misleading. In the context of significant variability and uncertainty, the precautionary approach is to use the unadjusted mean peak densities.

Other comments

There appears to be a contradiction in the text on page 25 regarding the variability of the distribution of common scoters within the SPA. It is stated that the distribution of scoters shows little variation, but the paragraph goes on to state that defining a baseline distribution and detecting a change in distribution would be impossible due to the variability of the distribution. This may be due to a copy-paste error – there are a couple of incidences in the document of a section of text concerning red-throated diver being reused for common scoter and the species not having been changed.

Comments on offshore ornithology following the site visit (28 April 2025)

Natural England thank Morgan OWL/Morecambe OWL for a useful discussion around construction works in Liverpool Bay SPA in November and December. The discussion centred around the advice outlined above relating to the technical note. Following the meeting Morgan OWL/Morecambe OWL agreed to have further discussions with their engineers about reducing the number of contingency days required for any potential additional cable burial works in November/December. Natural England therefore awaits further consultation on this matter.

Detailed Comments: Passage Birds at Landfall Technical Note

This technical note provides additional information on the potential impacts of construction activities during the passage and breeding periods of features of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA. Further information is provided on temporal and spatial usage of the passage features at landfall and use of Fairhaven Saltmarsh proposed mitigation area by passage features.

Comments on onshore ornithology following the site visit (28 April 2025)

We thank Morgan OWL/Morecambe OWL for a useful discussion on the mitigation areas and landfall site. We provided advice verbally on the additional information we require, which Morgan OWL/Morecambe OWL agreed to provide. Further written advice and a summary following the site visit is provided below:

Impacts to Ribble and Alt Estuary SPA

As stated previously in our Relevant Representations [RR-1601], it is Natural England's view that an AEoI on the Ribble and Alt Estuary SPA cannot be ruled out therefore further consideration and refinement of the mitigation hierarchy needs to be undertaken.

Further advice on reducing impacts at the landfall

During the Teams call held on the 28th April, Natural England gave advice on mitigation options for the Project to implement at the landfall site to reduce potential impacts. We recommended that the Project should consider further options to reduce impacts at the working areas. For example, further consideration of screening equipment for the large machinery on site where possible and consideration of a suitable width of corridor for the landfall area which is off limits to the public. This could reduce some recreational disturbance if birds were able to feed in the space between machine disturbance and people disturbance which could further help to reduce energetic costs on the birds being temporarily displaced during construction. We also advised that the Project could have an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) or similar to undertake public engagement at the landfall site. We would expect to see a detailed plan on how the ECoW will engage with members of the public to reduce impacts to birds. For example, directing members of the public on where to cross the construction corridor to have the least environmental impacts and avoiding walking near flocks of birds.

It is not currently clear what the Worst Case Scenario (WCS) is with regards to number of seasons worked over during the landfall construction. The Project Description [AS-024] states that the WCS for the sequential option of landfall construction is 66 months. Natural England advise that the Project should refine the landfall construction period and if possible, undertake the works in a single season. Additionally, if one Project (i.e. Morgan or Morecambe) goes first, implement measures to ensure the impacts from the second project are reduced.

Information on energetics

As discussed during the site visit, further information should be provided on the construction impacts to energetic costs. Natural England require this information to fully understand the impacts associated with the wider population and birds using the landfall site and Fairhaven saltmarsh.

Roost package for Fairhaven saltmarsh

Natural England advise that it is essential for the Project to include further information on the roost management at Fairhaven saltmarsh. In particular, we advise the package should include detailed information on how recreational disturbance will be managed e.g. location of signs, location/timing of wardening activity. Consideration should also be given to the time needed to engage local communities and for birds to become familiarised with the site. The roost package should also include information regarding future management and adaptive monitoring of the site with regards to social and environmental elements.

The package should also identify which birds are using the saltmarsh. For example, if there are more birds using that area than just those associated with the area of impact (i.e. the landfall site), addressing disturbance here could have wider benefits and at a wider population level which may contribute wider energetic savings.

Following the site visit, agreement was reached with Morgan OWL/Morecambe OWL that updated technical notes relating to passage birds at landfall and further information relating to the temporary and permanent mitigation areas will be issued. Natural England therefore awaits further consultation on this matter.

☒ The advice provided in this letter has been through Natural England's Quality Assurance process

The advice provided within the Discretionary Advice Service is the professional advice of the Natural England adviser named below. It is the best advice that can be given based on the information provided so far. Its quality and detail is dependent upon the quality and depth of the information which has been provided. It does not constitute a statutory response or decision, which will be made by Natural England acting corporately in its role as statutory consultee to the competent authority after an application has been submitted. The advice given is therefore not binding in any way and is provided without prejudice to the consideration of any statutory consultation response or decision which may be made by Natural England in due course. The final judgement on any proposals by Natural England is reserved until an application is made and will be made on the information then available, including any modifications to the proposal made after receipt of discretionary advice. All pre-application advice is subject to review and revision in the light of changes in relevant considerations, including changes in relation to the facts, scientific knowledge/evidence, policy, guidance or law. Natural England will not accept any liability for the accuracy, adequacy or completeness of, nor will any express or implied warranty be given for, the advice. This exclusion does not extend to any fraudulent misrepresentation made by or on behalf of Natural England.

Yours sincerely,



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