

# Inception Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	<b>Ossian Transmission Infrastructure</b>
<b>Case reference</b>	<b>EN0210006</b>
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	<b>The Planning Inspectorate</b>
<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>09 December 2024</b>
<b>Meeting with</b>	<b>Ossian Wind Farm 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 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the Inception Meeting note could be delayed by up to 6 months, if required by the developer for commercial confidentiality/sensitivity reasons, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted.

### **1. The proposed development**

- **Detailed description of the Proposed Development**

The applicant (Ossian Wind Farm Ltd) explained that the proposals are a joint venture between SSE Renewables, Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners (CIP) and Marubeni aiming to connect the Ossian Offshore Wind Farm Array (located in Scottish waters) to two National Grid substations to provide up to 3.6 Gigawatts of capacity. The proposal will connect the offshore wind farm via subsea HVDC cables to 2 National Grid substations located in Lincolnshire. The applicant explained that the offshore wind farm element is located within both Scottish and English waters and the cable route and onshore element of the project will be located within English territorial land.

The applicant advised that it is currently considering potential routes for its grid connection for the onshore elements of the project and landfall search areas and corresponding cable routes for the onshore elements of the project. The grid connections will be located at Weston Marsh and Lincolnshire Connection node, both in Lincolnshire.

- **Consenting programme and introduction to the pre-application Programme Document**

The applicant advised on key dates, as contained within their Programme Document.

- **Early engagement with statutory bodies and local authorities, and other stakeholder engagement to date**

Stakeholder engagement has taken place with 2 project information days with the public located near to the location of the 2 substation sites in Lincolnshire. There has also been engagement with Lincolnshire County Council and South East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership.

The applicant advised there had been limited engagement so far with Statutory bodies. The applicant advised that it is in the process of formally notifying all consultees of the

project with a view to establishing Expert Topic Groups and other technical working groups for key EIA topics.

The applicant had advised that Natural England had expressed some constraints in its ability to participate / provide feedback on the proposals. The Inspectorate advised to keep it informed of any significant updates. The Inspectorate advised that the applicant may wish to begin work on an issues tracker for the application, to assist in identifying the main issues as consultation progresses and noted the benefits of doing so from the start of the pre-application process.

- **EIA Scoping**

The applicant advised it was intending to submit a scoping report in February 2025 and that the scoping opinion should be received in April 2025.

The applicant identified a number of environmental surveys are currently ongoing which will also inform the refinement of the proposals.

The applicant advised that non-statutory consultation was due to take place in February/ March 2025. The Planning Inspectorate recommended avoiding any crossover of the Scoping Report and Non-statutory Consultation as this has in the past resulted in confusion as to where interested parties should submit their comments.

- **Preparing the draft Development Consent Order, including any novel approaches to drafting**

The applicant explained its intention to refine the proposals in advance of and following the PEIR stage, and that it is not intending to include the breadth of optionality which is currently being explored in the DCO application. The proposals are at an early stage and it was agreed to discuss preparation of the DCO at a later meeting as things evolve.

The applicant advised it was their intention to form an Expert Steering Group and wished to involve the Planning Inspectorate in this group as it takes it plans forwards to establish appropriate expert topic groups.

The Planning Inspectorate recommended the applicant look at other similar projects where projects have worked collaboratively to coordinate elements of their onshore work and may be worth building into their programme documents.

- **Land and rights: Scope of compulsory acquisition etc powers sought and potential constraints and issues**

The applicant advised that it did not yet have details of the scope of any compulsory acquisitions or powers sought this stage as it had not yet finalised the route for its land cabling connections.

- **Submission date**

The applicant advised The Inspectorate that it intended to submit the Development Consent Order (DCO) in July 2026.

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

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

The applicant advised that it would like to proceed with the standard level of service. It advised that the measures taken by the project team meant it did not envisage requiring any higher level of service. The applicant was advised a maximum of 6 Project Update Meetings per year were permitted, along with 5 Evidence Plan Meetings within this level of service after the inception meeting, including any multi-party meetings subject to their agreement. The Planning Inspectorate advised that they would confirm the tier of service to the applicant, along with a request for invoicing details within 28 days.

The Inspectorate advised that should a change of service level be requested that 3 months notice would need to be given

## **3. Practical Arrangements**

- **Confirming the pre-application tier service and invoicing**

The applicant was advised that a webpage, to be hosted on the Inspectorate's 'Find a National Infrastructure Project' website needed to be set up. The publication of the webpage and the inception meeting note could be delayed for up to 6 months after the inception meeting or until the Scoping Request was received, whichever was sooner. The applicant confirmed that they would notify the Inspectorate of the timescale within which the project webpage could be published.

- **Draft Documents**

The Inspectorate informed the applicant of the draft documents feedback service offered by the Inspectorate. If submitted, the applicant would receive feedback on any submitted documents within six weeks. The Inspectorate advised the applicant that documents submitted should be well developed and that the applicant should allow time in pre-application to take feedback into account in the final submission.

- **Advice Page**

The Planning Inspectorate recommended the applicant look at Planning Inspectorate's advice page where it provided information regarding 'Good Design' elements for the proposed development plan and to look at the advice on linear projects for guidance / information.

- **Project email account**

The Inspectorate advised the applicant that a project email account had been created.

- **Contacts**

The applicant was advised that a Case Manager would be assigned in due course and would be its main contact for the project.

**Post-meeting s51 advice on the applicant's initial programme document:**

The applicant supplied the Inspectorate with its initial programme document ahead of the inception meeting. Having reviewed the document, the Inspectorate considers that it only partially covers the expected content as set out in the government's pre-application guidance at paragraph 10, namely:

- the date the applicant intends to submit their application
- a comprehensive timetable of the applicant's pre-application process, the main events with dates and milestones demonstrating how the pre-application process will be completed (using the maximum target of 2 years as a benchmark)
- cross references to the SoCC required by [section 47 of the Planning Act](#)

The programme document provides enough detail about the proposed development and timetable. However, in the next iteration of the document, it would be useful to have greater detail on the activities for the pre-application process, namely:

- the applicant's view on the main issues for resolution and activities they will undertake to address those
- the applicant's proposals for engaging with statutory consultees and local authorities during the pre-application period and any intended financial support agreements, such as Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs)
- the applicant's identification of risks to achievement of the pre-application stage and the process by which these risks are tracked and managed