

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	Offshore Transmission Network Round 2A
Project Number:	2011-0265
Country:	United Kingdom
Project Description:	The project concerns a framework facility, for the second transitional Round (Tranche A) under the OFTO (Offshore Transmission Owners) Regulation, which is intended to provide funding for entities that will own and operate the high-voltage transmission assets (\geq 132 kV) connecting large-scale offshore wind farms to the national onshore transmission network. The ownership will be transferred to the entities through a competitive tendering process under the OFTO regulation. The transmission assets which may potentially benefit from this framework facility are associated with the following wind farms; Gwynt y Mor (576 MW located 18km of the north Wales coast), Lincs (250 MW located 8km of Lincolnshire coast) and London Array Phase 1 (630 MW located 20km from shore in the Thames estuary).
EIA:	Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not required <input type="checkbox"/>

Summary of Environmental and Social Assessment, including key issues and overall conclusion and recommendation

Undersea cables, substations and wind farms fall by virtue of their technical characteristics under Annex II of EIA-Directive 85/337/EEC (as amended). According to national regulations an offshore wind farm including its associated infrastructure is subject to a full mandatory EIA including public consultation. Thus all components of this framework facility have been subject to comprehensive EIAs. Having obtained all necessary consents is one of the qualifying pre-conditions for offshore wind farm developers to get accepted for the OFTO transitional regime tender process. In 2002/03 and prior to the development of the project related EIAs, the UK government conducted a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), in accordance with the SEA Directive¹, for its plan to develop offshore wind in its territory. Three large areas - the Thames estuary, the Greater Wash and the North West - identified by the government as being potentially suitable, were assessed.

The OFTO transitional wind farms have all carried out detailed EIAs, for both wind farms and transmission infrastructure, and produced comprehensive environmental statements in accordance with UK regulations and the EU directives (Habitats & Birds and EIA). Appropriate Assessments according to the Habitats Directive were requested by the UK statutory authorities, and have been carried out on all the wind farms and associated transmission infrastructure being considered under this project. A second Appropriate Assessment on the Lincs Wind Farm was undertaken as a result of the designation of a new offshore Special Area of Conservation covering the entire sea area where the wind farm is located.

The various studies undertaken analysed potential impacts on the sea floor (sediment), water quality, fish populations, marine mammals and benthos organisms, bird populations, noise, shipping and navigation safety. Conclusions of the overall assessment process, for all components of this framework facility, indicate that provided the proposed mitigation and monitoring requirements are put in place, no significant impacts or effects resulting from the projects are envisaged.

¹ Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (27 June 2001).

All the key statutory licences and consents have been obtained, i.e. FEPA (Deposits in the Sea in Connection with Marine Construction Works) Licence, Section 36 Consent including deemed planning permission (Construction and Operation of a Generating Station) and Section 34 Consent (Coastal Protection Installation of Subsea Cables).

Based on the information available, the environmental processes undertaken and results indicated are acceptable for Bank financing.

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Impact and Mitigation

Gwynt y Mor:

Gwynt y Môr Offshore wind farm will be located 13 to 15 km off the coast of North Wales. Offshore, the transmission cable will be routed from two offshore platforms, with the routes being 22km and 19km. Onshore the cable routing will be 11km in length. A detailed EIA was carried out for all project components, including public consultation, and environmental approval was issued in May 2010. Relating specifically to the transmission infrastructure, temporary disturbance of seabed habitats during construction will be a feature, and it is believed that the offshore structures and scour protection will present new surfaces for colonisation by a range of underwater animal species which could act to increase biodiversity and habitat complexity within the region. The environmental impact study has identified the potential for some significant effects on the Llandudno Bay and Colwyn Bay seascapes. Significant visual effects are also predicted for people at Llandudno and at Graig Fawr in the Clwydian Hills. At all other viewpoints around Liverpool Bay, from Anglesey in the west to Sefton in the east, visual impacts are not considered significant. When considered cumulatively with other consented wind farms in Liverpool Bay, the sensitivity of seascapes to the addition of Gwynt y Môr is generally considered to be reduced. This would also apply to the sensitivity of people looking out to sea. Some potentially significant impacts on a small number of set-net fishermen from North Wales may also occur. For the remainder of the issues considered, the EIA process has, in the majority of cases, identified no significant impacts. In those cases where potentially significant effects have been identified, appropriate mitigation or management arrangements will be employed to reduce the effect.

Lincs:

The wind farm development consists of two parts, first part is the Lincs wind farm (including the transmission infrastructure) and the second part relates to an additional 6 turbines which were originally consented as part of the Lynn and Inner Dowsing wind farms (LID6) but which now form part of the Lincs wind farm and will use the Lincs export cable infrastructure. The offshore cable routing will be approximately 48km and the onshore approximately 12km, and there will be one offshore platform. The first part of the project was subject to a full EIA procedure including public consultation and was granted environmental approval in October 2008. The corresponding Environmental Impact Study concluded that the most relevant impacts of the project derive from pile driving (noise) during construction, from the construction of the grid connection (access to environmentally sensitive and protected areas of the Wash estuary), and from operating the wind turbines (potential bird collisions, visual impacts). During construction temporary localised deterioration in water quality due to increased turbidity may be likely to occur and possible release of historically contaminated sediments with potential consequences for water quality and ecology. A positive feature relates to the Offshore structures and scour protection, they present an opportunity to enhance habitat of underwater animal species in the vicinity. The consent obliges the promoter to mitigate and control these risks through the application of adequate low-impact construction practices and through environmental monitoring before, during, and after project implementation. In September 2009, the promoter was informed by UK authorities of a proposal to designate, by the end of 2010, a new offshore Special Area of Conservation covering the entire sea area where the wind farm is located. Following the designation, an appropriate assessment was carried out in June 2011, by the DECC, to review the appropriateness of the project in the light of the new circumstances. This assessment gave a

positive conclusion and stated that there was no reason to modify or revoke the existing consents for the Wind Farm.

The second part of the project (LID6) had previously been part of LID wind farms but was not built due to grid capacity restrictions onshore. A separate EIA was undertaken for this project building upon previous assessments undertaken for the LID and Lincs projects since 2002. Also, the proposed marine Special Area of Conservation was taken into consideration in this assessment. The result indicated no major adverse impacts upon the environment have been identified in this EIA process.

London Array:

The proposed site is located on and between two long sandbanks located approximately 20 km from both the Essex and Kent coasts. The transmission infrastructure comprises 2 offshore platforms to house the offshore substations. These will be connected to the national grid substation by buried cable which will follow a 54km offshore cable routing and 1 km onshore cable routing. The cable route crosses the Swale Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar Site and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Swale SPA and Ramsar site were designated for supporting internationally important populations of breeding, passage and over-wintering birds. Several species: Wigeon, Teal and Grey Plover regularly over-winter in numbers of international importance and others, including Shoveler, Knot, Dunlin and Spotted Redshank are regularly present in winter in nationally significant numbers. The cable laying is the only construction process likely to directly affect the interests of the SPA and Ramsar site. The timing of these works would be between April and September to reduce effects on over-wintering and peaks of passage birds. Impacts on birds from cable installation include: direct disturbance due to noise, vibration and visual intrusion; temporary habitat loss due to excavation activities; disturbed birds could be displaced to other areas of the SPA/Ramsar. While the cable laying activity could have an impact on waterbirds and invertebrates the area affected and mobile nature of sediments suggests the effect will be low and short-term.

Relevant consents were granted gradually from end 2006 to end 2007 by the competent authorities after thorough consideration of the possible offshore and onshore impacts of the project and of the advice received from statutory consultees on navigation and nature conservation issues.