

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	<i>Offshore Transmission Network Round 4</i>
Project Number:	<i>2016-0518</i>
Country:	<i>United Kingdom</i>
Project Description:	<i>Facility to support financing of 1 offshore wind farm transmission network (Burbo Bank Extension) being competitively tendered under the fourth phase (Round 4) of the UK regulatory regime OFTO. This follows previous framework approvals covering six Tender Round 1 projects, four Tender Round 2 projects and two Tender Round 3 projects.</i>
EIA required:	yes
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise ¹ :	no

Environmental and Social Assessment

The project concerns a framework facility, for the fourth Round under the OFTO (Offshore Transmission Owners) regulation, which is intended to provide funding for entities that will own and operate the high-voltage assets (≥ 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 Burbo Bank Extension wind farm (generation capacity of approximately 258 MW). The Burbo Bank Extension offshore wind farm is located 20 km off the coast of Liverpool. The wind farm will be connected to the transmission system through a single offshore 220 kV export cable with a route length of approximately 24.3 km, three single onshore export cables with a route length of approximately 10.4 km to an onshore substation, and the onshore substation will be connected via three single 400 kV cables with a route length of approximately 0.7 km to one 400 kV gas insulated switchgear bay within the existing NGET Bodelwyddan substation.

Environmental Assessment

Wind farms fall under Annex II of the EIA Directive (2011/92/EU). According to national regulations an offshore wind farm, and its associated transmission infrastructure, is subject to a full mandatory EIA including public consultation. Hence, the 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 be accepted for the OFTO regime tender process. In 2003 and prior to the development of the project related EIAs, the UK government conducted a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), in accordance with the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC, for its plan to develop offshore wind in its

¹ Only projects that meet the scope of the Pilot Exercise, as defined in the EIB draft Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: above 100,000 tons CO₂e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tons CO₂e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

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territory. Three large Strategic Areas – the Liverpool Bay, the Thames Estuary and the Greater Wash – have been identified.

For the transmission assets, which will be part of the Tender Round 4, as well as for the associated offshore wind farm, full EIA has been conducted, including an appropriate assessment of impacts on biodiversity (Habitats and Birds Directives), public consultation with all relevant stakeholders has taken place, and consents have been granted.

The various studies undertaken analysed potential impacts on the sea floor (sediment), coastal processes (erosion), water quality, fish populations and benthos organisms, marine mammals, bird populations, noise, coastal landscape, shipping, fishing activities, navigation safety and flight paths.

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, the facilities would not have significant adverse effect on the environment. The appropriate assessment on biodiversity concluded that the project, both alone and in combination with other plans and projects, together with mitigation and monitoring as proposed is not expected to have an adverse effect on the integrity of the relevant European sites: Liverpool Bay Special Protected Area (SPA), Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar sites, Morecable Bay SPA and Ramsar sites, Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore proposed SPA and proposed Ramsar sites, Bowland Fells SPA, River Dee and Bala Lake Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

All the key statutory licenses and consents have been obtained, including:

- A development consent order under the Planning Act 2008 for the offshore elements of the project that are in English waters. This was examined by the National Infrastructure Directorate within the Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of State had the final decision (in September 2014). A deemed marine license from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) incorporated in the consent.
- A marine license under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 for the offshore elements of the project in Welsh waters by the Welsh Government Marine Consents Unit.
- Planning permission under the Town and Planning Act 1990 for the onshore elements of the project by the Local Planning Authority which is the Denbighshire County Council.
- FEPA license under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1995 by the Secretary of State.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

Details of the project have been publicised and made available to residents and local authorities. The project developers undertook a public consultation for the wind farm project and carried out public exhibitions in order to inform the general public and receive comments. Stakeholders and interested parties have been also consulted during the approval processes of these projects including relevant authorities and expert bodies in the preparation of the respective mitigation plans.

Other Environmental and Social Aspects

The marine license granted by the UK Marine Management Organisation (MMO) include a set of conditions related to the implementation of the mitigation measures. A key condition of the marine licenses concerns the marine mammals with the preparation of a Marine Mammal Mitigation Plan to be agreed with MMO prior to construction. In accordance with the conditions stated in the marine license, a Marine Mammal Mitigation Plan was prepared in consultation with Natural England on basis of best practice guidance described in JNCC guidelines “Annex B – Statutory nature conservation agency protocol for minimising the risk of disturbance and injury to marine mammals from piling noise” (August 2010). The last to date revised plan was approved by MMO on 21 March 2016.

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One of the main impacts on ecosystems during construction relates to the noise from the piling process with disturbance and possible injury to marine mammals. An assessment of marine mammals was carried out as part of the EIA. The assessments identified three key species: harbour porpoises, bottlenose dolphins and grey seals. Impact from construction noise was assessed to be of slight significance. Mitigation measures were only deemed necessary in relation to possible piling activity during the construction. According to the approved Marine Mammal Mitigation Plan, in order to avoid beginning piling activities while marine mammals are present within a specific zone, developers shall implement the following mitigations measures: direct monitoring for the presence of animals by independent marine mammal observers located on board the installation vessels using both visual and passive acoustic monitoring techniques, use of a soft start procedure to piling and use of an acoustic mitigation device at night or in poor visibility conditions during the day.

Regarding the onshore biological environment, habitat of potential value to breeding birds within the landfall site is limited to small boundary areas of rough grassland with scattered scrub; precautionary measures will be taken and any effect on the local breeding bird population will be of slight (adverse) significance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the information available, the environmental processes undertaken, the conclusions and the mitigation plans in place, the framework facility is acceptable for Bank financing from an environmental perspective.