Luxembourg, 12/06/2018

Public

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	NORTHWESTER 2
Project Number:	*2017-0897*
Country:	Belgium
Project Description:	A project for the construction, financing and operation of a 224 MW offshore wind farm located 46km from the Belgian coast.

EIA required: yes

Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise[1]: yes

Environmental and Social Assessment

The project comprises the construction of an offshore wind farm, consisting of 23 wind turbines with a unit capacity of 9.5 MW, and associated ancillary facilities, including inter-array cables, offshore substation and export cable to connect to the modular offshore grid (MOG). The MOG, including a high voltage offshore switchyard and subsea export cable(s) up to the connection at Zeebrugge, is being constructed by the Belgian grid operator.

Environmental Assessment

The windfarm is located in the Belgian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the North Sea, inside a dedicated zone for offshore windfarms that already contains 4 operating windfarms (C-Power, Belwind, Northwind and Nobelwind) and two further projects under construction. The Government of Belgium launched a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in the form of a Marine Spatial Plan in March 2012, approving it in March 2014. This SEA was subject to a public consultation process and took into account different usages of the Belgian North Sea EEZ, including offshore wind energy production. The project's location is in-line with this Spatial Plan.

The offshore wind farm project falls under Annex II of Directive 2011/92/EU (amended 2014/52/EU). Under Belgian law, an EIA including full public consultation is mandatory for the project and was completed in 2015. It is also subject to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ("UNCLOS") and national regulations concerning installation activities in the sea.

The EIA, including an appropriate assessment regarding the impact on neighbouring Natura 2000 sites[2] in Belgium and the Netherlands (at about 15 km distance to the project), covers

[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.

[2] BEMNZ0001 (SAC, Vlaamse Banken), BEMNZ0002 (SPA, SBZ 1/ZPS 1), BEMNZ0003 (SPA, SBZ 2/ZPS 2), BEMNZ0004 (SPA, SBZ 3/ZPS 3), NL2008003 (SAC, Vlakte van de Raan) and NL4000017 (SPA/SCI, Voordelta)

the windfarm and the ancillary facilities up to the connection to the MOG. The EIA for the MOG itself was carried out separately.

The EIA study of the offshore wind farm was performed by a department of the Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences – the Management Unit of the North Sea Mathematical Models (MUMM) – to evaluate potential impacts of the project on climate, noise (underwater and over water), safety, benthos and fish, sea mammals, avifauna, hydrodynamics, sedimentology electromagnetic fields, scenery and cultural heritage. The EIA study concludes that the project has no significant negative impacts after mitigation.

Based on its analyses, MUMM as the competent authority, concluded the review of the EIA in December 2015 with a positive opinion towards granting the environmental permit, subject to conditions including but not limited to:

- Prior agreement and approval by the competent authority of critical works, such as excavation and storage of excavated materials, cable laying or piling
- Noise mitigation measures to protect sea mammals (using bio sonar for orientation and foraging), such as an overall noise limit, the banning of piling activities from January to April (breeding season), acoustic deterrents and noise ramp-up procedures (“soft-start piling”)
- Conditions and procedures for stopping the turbines in the event of a large bird migration with increased risk of bird collision
- Obligation to collect all sunk material
- Complete decommissioning of plant after the end of its technical lifetime (which still needs to be defined)
- A strict monitoring program of all environmental relevant data (in addition to the monitoring and research activities by MUMM for the whole offshore zone)

The promoter has a good understanding of regulatory and environmental monitoring requirements, as well as relevant experience in implementing mitigating measures during construction from its previous offshore wind farms in the same area. In light of this, the promoter’s environmental capacity is considered adequate.

EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise

The direct CO_2 emission of an offshore wind farm is deemed negligible.

In accordance with the Bank’s current Carbon Footprint methodology it is calculated that based on the avoidance of electricity generation from a combination of existing and new power plants in Belgium (75% operating margin and 25% build margin) the total relative effect of the project is a net reduction in CO_2 equivalent emissions by 349 kt CO2e/a.

For the annual accounting purposes of the EIB Carbon Footprint, the project emissions will be prorated according to the EIB lending amount signed in that year, as a proportion of project cost

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Conclusions and Recommendations

The project is located in a sea area that is a preferred development zone for offshore wind as supported by an SEA. The project's EIA and AA conclude that with adequate precautionary measures, the impacts on fauna and flora, including on local and migrating birds, marine mammals, benthos and invertebrates were considered to be non-significant. The environmental permit includes a comprehensive set of mitigation measures and monitoring obligations in line with the recommendations contained in the EIA. Major monitoring results should be shared with the Bank. In particular, the Bank will request from the promoter a copy of the piling plan with noise mitigation techniques when submitted to the competent authority for approval, as well as a copy of its approval, before starting installation works.

According to the promoter, the environmental impact assessment and permitting process of the MOG, as associated infrastructure, have been carried out separately under the responsibility of the grid operator. The promoter should provide the relevant documentation.

The project is considered acceptable for Bank financing from an environmental and social perspective.

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