



Environment Project Liaison Group (PLG) meeting: 2-4pm, Thursday 13 November 2014

MINUTES

1. Introductions

Chair – Paula Seager, Natural PR
Secretary – Katherine Elton, Natural PR

Chris Tomlinson - Rampion Development Manager, E.ON
Eleri Owen – Rampion Consents Manager, E.ON

Olle Akkesson – Sussex Wildlife Trust, Living Seas Officer
Trevor Beeston – South Down Society
Emily Cox - Greenpeace Brighton & Hove
Brianna Reeve – Shoreham District Ornithological Society (SDOS)
David Smith - Mid Sussex Sustainability Project
Chris Todd - Brighton & Hove City Sustainability Partnership
Andy Wright - Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, Sussex

Apologies – John Whiting, Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust; and David Howey, Sussex Ornithological Society

2. Rampion Project Update re: final project design and construction plans

Questions were taken from the floor during the presentation.

Chris Tomlinson gave attendees an illustrated presentation of the Rampion Offshore Wind Farm final design. The presentation notes can be downloaded on the dropbox link provided in the cover email. stressed the final design was to be kept confidential until released to media as E.ON wanted to share the information with PLG stakeholders before it was released to the wider public. The release has subsequently been issued and emailed to PLG representatives.

The presentation recapped the project stages and original scope of the Rampion project. Chris gave an overview of the progress within the project since the group last met in April 2013. He said the team had been working on offshore geotechnical surveys, and preparing documents to discharge the requirements within the Rampion Offshore Wind Farm Order (the Order), such as noise management plans, ecology and landscape management plans, ground consents and crossing.. E.ON had also been working with local planning representatives at West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) who are the discharging authorities for the DCO requirements.

Trevor Beeston asked about a potential decrease in the working width. Eleri Owen explained that the project team had taken the 'Rochdale Envelope' approach to take into account the ecology of the area. A 40 metre cable route corridor was stated in the application within which a 30m working width is defined,

taking into account localized environmental and engineering issues and constraints. Of the 30m working width, 15 metres is for the easement where the trenches are dug. She added that in some areas this could be further reduced from 30 metres for short distances at pinch points, such as hedgerow crossings.

Andy Wright asked for confirmation that onshore areas disturbed by the works would be restored to their original appearance. Chris confirmed these would be restored and people would not know the cable was present underneath.

Chris Tomlinson added that a tender process for lead contractors was now in place including shortlisting and interviewing. It was expected that the first contracts would be awarded early next year. He added that communication and engagement with stakeholders through the PLGs would continue through the construction stage.

David Smith asked whether all the turbines would work simultaneously. Chris Tomlinson said the final design had taken into account optimal working conditions for the site, including the appropriate spacing and layout of the turbines to maximize performance. He added that offshore turbines outperform onshore turbines as the wind speed is greater and more consistent.

Emily Cox asked about DECC capacity figures for the turbines and Chris stated that the 0.39 capacity factor used to calculate predicted power output was based on the latest 'Contracts for Different (Standard Terms) Regulations from August 2014, published by DECC.

Chris Tomlinson said the average operational figures for offshore wind farms over the years had increased as the technology had improved allowing greater availability, coupled with wind farms being sited further offshore with greater wind speeds.

Chris Todd asked that as E.ON was not utilising the whole area originally earmarked for development, would the company consider adding more turbines it at a later date. Eleri replied that E.ON had no plans to extend the site and that the final design area was identified as the only buildable area at present. Should technological advances result in the future potential for use of the rest of the site, this would then require a new consent requiring full consultation and new environmental impact assessment, including any cumulative effects with Rampion.

Chris Todd asked whether the final design would result in a reduced visual impact of the wind farm from the vantage point of the Sussex Heritage Coast. In response, Chris Tomlinson showed a slide showing the reduction of visual impact from various points in Sussex, both on the coast and inland. The distance from the Heritage Coast to the nearest turbine was now around 27km, almost twice the distance as the proposals consulted on in 2012. The field of view had also reduced from 33degrees to around 10degrees.

David Smith said that since the last meeting, several different planned wind farm sites had been shelved because of a reduction in subsidy. He asked whether the Rampion Wind Farm was to receive a subsidy. Brianne Reeve also asked if E.ON had the necessary funds required for the project.

Eleri replied that we are currently developing our investment case and have not made a final decision on the CfD or the renewables obligation. She added that E.ON was fully committed to the project and was seeking to make a final investment decision in March. Chris Tomlinson said that although it may have been possible to go into deeper waters, the company had to create a viable scheme based on the latest technology available and the known seabed conditions.

Shoreham Port

Chris Tomlinson said consideration had been given to Shoreham Port and there would be no commercial impact on the port. E.ON had taken into consideration points with regards to the anchorage zone and he added the final design would not compromise the ships sailing directly into and out of the port.

Final onshore design

Chris Tomlinson said there had been minor realignments to the route and that the number of circuits had been reduced from four down to two. CT added with caution, that with the reduction from four to two circuits, E.ON is currently investigating whether it might be possible to reduce the working width from 30m to 25m for the length of the cable route, but further work is required to confirm this. A haul road and an area for topsoil / subsoil storage is still required, along with considerations regarding thermal conductivity.

Andrew Wright asked how the onshore elements would be maintained if the cable and associated works were mostly out of sight. Eleri said there would be maintenance points which would look a little like a manhole cover, approximately every kilometre along the route. Chris Tomlinson added that these would be likely to be near hedges and field boundaries.

Onshore Substation

Chris Tomlinson said that the project team was actively engaging with the Local Liaison Group on the final layout design, seeking to reduce the size and scale of the buildings where possible and negate the visual impact. He added that site access would be gained through Wineham Lane, which was already used by National Grid to access the existing substation, rather than Bob Lane.

Chris Todd asked whether there would still be potential for capacity expansion with regards to the reduction from four circuits to two. He asked whether it would be possible to roll the cable through, in this instance rather than dig up along the route in the event of a possible expansion. Trevor Beeston asked whether there was the possibility that another provider may be able to utilise the cable, should they decide to add more capacity. Eleri replied that potential capacity extension would not form part of the project and the decision had been taken from a cost point of view.

Jobs & business

Chris Tomlinson summarised the expected timeframe and number of jobs which would be created by onshore and offshore aspects of construction.

Trevor Beeston asked if the project team would be directing contractors on the methods to be used during construction. Eleri replied that the contracts were out to tender on a standard process but that innovative suggestions were welcomed.

Chris Todd asked how deep the cable would be laid and Brianne Reeve asked about how the cable would be laid with regards to road and railway crossing points. Eleri replied that there would be Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) to mitigate environmental and transport impacts around crossing points such as rivers, railways and main roads and these would be carried out by specialist contractors. Work on each individual crossing point would be planned on an individual basis.

Chris Tomlinson said E.ON was committed to creating further community benefits through the Rampion Wind Farm visitor centre on the Sussex coast, he also updated the group on activity with local businesses so far identifying 600 local businesses with the capability to supply products and services for the project.

Brianne Reeve asked if the turbines would all be coming in from Germany and if so, would that result in less work for UK-based firms. Chris Tomlinson said the make and model of the turbine would be confirmed in another couple of weeks but they would be manufactured in northern Europe, not in the UK. He said the UK content of their Robin Rigg project was 32 per cent, which was significant given the turbines as the primary component were not able to be sourced from the UK. There would also be opportunities for local businesses with regards to supporting the lead contractors and that local suppliers were encouraged to

register their details on the www.sussexwindenergy.org.uk website, as E.ON would be encouraging their lead contractors to identify prospective local suppliers for any subcontracting work.

David Smith asked how the turbines would be transported to the site. Eleri said this would depend on a number of factors – the team was undertaking logistical work at the moment with regards to the transportation of turbines.

Chris Tomlinson added that a 24/7 hotline would be established for any construction issues.

3. Consent Requirements and land ownership

Chris Tomlinson outlined the different consents and associated requirements. The two onshore discharging authorities were West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) with offshore licences covered by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO).

Eleri added that before construction commenced, the project team needed to provide a decommissioning plan for taking down the wind farm, which would need to be submitted to the Secretary of State.

Andrew Wright asked about land ownership and the position as to who owned land crossed by the cable route, especially with regard to crops grown on the route. Eleri confirmed that E.ON has permanent rights for the actual bit of land where the cable is laid, but have temporary rights for accessing land, laying haul roads, etc. She said that E.ON has entered into commercial negotiations with all the land owners on the route and 99 per cent have been signed and that compulsory acquisition could be used as a last resort. Eleri replied that E.ON would own the land under the crops, so farmers could continue with their agricultural activities above the cables.

Andrew Wright asked what the biggest risk areas were for the project, aside from financial considerations. Eleri replied that weather and ground conditions posed the greatest risk and the team had already identified a number of areas which they believed would pose significant challenges. She added most could be classed 'engineering risks.'

She said in terms of environmental consents, additional offshore surveys had already been carried out in relation to marine species, in particular to establish the nesting sites of Black Bream.

4. Onshore and offshore ecology and landscape work

Onshore, she said that the hedgerows were a key environmental consideration, especially with regards to birds. Measures would include netting some areas before construction commenced to discourage birds from nesting in affected areas. She added that if the measures were not successful, stages of construction would have to be re-evaluated.

Brianne Reeve added that birds return to their usual nesting area. Eleri replied that the team were receiving assistance and guidance from Natural England with regards to hedgerows and would be using closed mesh netting and ticker tape near hedgerows and would not clear the hedgerow until birds had fledged. Construction would take place over two years to mitigate the risks to wildlife.

David Smith asked how the team planned to restore hedgerows, some of which were likely to be more than 100 years old. Eleri replied that important hedgerows were listed and specific requirements to restore these would form part of the Hedgerows Strategy. She added that the team would be producing a strategy for every single affected hedgerow and all would be reinstated. Emily Smith asked if HDD could be applied to hedgerows as well as roads. Eleri replied that the impact would actually be greater from tunneling under the hedgerow than restoring it.

David Smith asked about the possibility and risk of bird strikes. Eleri replied that the wind farm was not sited on a migratory route and the plan had been subject to a Habitat Regulations Assessment relevant to European Designated sites for birds..

Brianne Reeve said that according to SDOS records, this was a migratory route and that birds were coming across and flying east to west and west to east all of the time. She quoted that thousands of birds were killed by turbines every year.

Eleri said she did not dispute that birds were killed by turbines . RSPB and Natural England had been consulted with regards to migratory routes and other sensitive habitats. Monitoring with regards to the effect of turbines on the bird population had been carried out for a period of 7-8 years. She added that there were 0.2 fatalities per turbine per year in these instances and these were figures which were not produced by industry. She added that the effect of double glazing, cars, cats and climate change on the bird population were greater threats and the positive impact of renewable energy would outweigh the risk of bird fatalities. Emily Cox added the risk was one tenth of that posed by roads and 1,000th in comparison with domestic cats.

Eleri added that E.ON took the issue of bird strikes seriously and the topic was one of the biggest discussions in the entire offshore wind industry. She added there was more funding allocated to research into the impact of turbines on birds than any other environmental matter.

Eleri said an arboricultural survey had taken place along the entire cable route to retain as many trees as possible.. Mitigation measures would include coppicing and compensatory planting. Barn Owl nesting boxes would be closed this year and inspections would be carried out prior to the commencement of construction.

Otter surveys were carried out but did not find any evidence of the animals. Trapping of Great Crested Newts was being carried out at the substation site in order to relocate them to ponds in a similar habitat. Seed harvesting was also due to take place with advice and storage provided by Kew's Millennium Seed Bank in Ardingly. The team was also looking at reducing the working width in some areas to avoid major badger setts. They would be applying for a Badger Licence next year to close some minor setts.

Offshore, Eleri said that larval herring surveys were underway and would report back with anything of interest.

David Smith asked about the potential of site visits while work was taking place, he said there would be many in the Environmental PLG who would be interested in how the work was proceeding. Chris Tomlinson said this idea was something the team would look into, paying regard to Health and Safety considerations.

Eleri said an archaeological dig would take place on Tottington Mount and E.ON was considering an open day to coincide with this.

Shipping/fishing access

Andrew Wright asked whether the wind farm would become a 'no go' area for boats. Chris Tomlinson replied that it would not, after construction was complete.

Emily asked for further elaboration on any fishing exclusion zones within the project site as the area would lead to an increase in diversity of marine life, in particular would there be restrictions on purse seining. Eleri replied that the distance between each turbine would allow for shipping to pass through. Chris Tomlinson added there would be a 500-metre exclusion zone around a particular construction area while building work was in progress but E.ON could not exclude fishing vessels from the area once the wind farm was built. Dredging would still be possible.

Eleri said the site would be been subject to pre- and post construction monitoring of marine species.

Operations & Maintenance Base

Chris Todd asked about the O&M base planning application and whether this would be an 'industrial unit in a car park.' He asked whether E.ON would be producing a travel plan with cycle parking and showers inside the building. He also suggested solar panels and a green roof could be incorporated into the build. Eleri said measures such as cycle parking and showers for cyclists were already requirements but would take note of Chris' points.

Emily added that the location was near permanent cycle paths on the Egrets Way, which was set to be extended to Lewes and National Cycle Network Route 2 which would permit a reduction in traffic.

Section 106

Trevor Beeston asked whether section 106 agreements were in place for the project. Eleri replied that discussions were underway to take these considerations forward and these would need to be signed before construction.

5. Dates and times for future meetings

Chris Tomlinson suggested a further PLG meeting would be convened in April in advance of construction.

ACTION POINTS:

- **Send copy of presentation and project timetable to each of the Environment PLG members after issue of the press release.**
- **EON to provide a visual image of the finalised plan to members of the Environment PLG when available.**
- **Project team to look into the possibility of site visits during the construction period.**
- **HMSO advice – share link with Environment PLG.**
- **Eleri to feed back to Trevor Beeston on the progress of S106 agreements.**