

Rampion Offshore Wind Farm

Newsletter



London Array Offshore Wind Farm, Thames Estuary. For illustration only.



Final turbine installation, London Array, Thames Estuary.

Welcome to our fifth newsletter, with the exciting news that the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change granted consent for Rampion on 16 July.

In this issue, we'll be explaining what the next steps are and how the wind farm will be constructed and operated. You can also find out how we're working with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew to protect important natural habitats during construction, and what we're doing to help local businesses benefit from the opportunities Rampion will bring to the area.

We'd like to thank the Sussex community for taking so much interest in our plans and for your invaluable feedback. Your views have helped to shape the project we have today.

The consent process

Our plans were formally examined by the Planning Inspectorate last year, which involved 14 days of public hearings with local councils, statutory bodies and other stakeholders.

As a result, we made a number of changes, including reducing the size of our offshore site by 25%. This will lessen the visual impact of the wind farm on the Heritage Coast, whilst minimising disruption to commercial fishing and vessels using the route from the Traffic Separation Scheme to Shoreham Port.

The Secretary of State's decision to grant consent, based on our revised plans, means that Rampion will be the first offshore wind farm off the south coast of England. Michael Lewis, Chief Operating Officer, E.ON Renewables said "We're delighted to receive development consent for the Rampion Offshore Wind Farm proposal.

This is a key milestone for the project and we firmly believe Rampion will play an important role in helping to ensure future security of supply and make a significant contribution towards meeting the UK's renewable energy targets."

The decision is good for Sussex, as the wind farm will create jobs and opportunities for local businesses. It will also help to boost the local economy and the Newhaven Port regeneration scheme. News of the consent has been supported by Lewes MP, Norman Baker, who described it as "great news for Newhaven...positioning it very well as the south east centre of offshore renewable technology for the century ahead. It's great for the economy and the environment."

Rampion at a glance

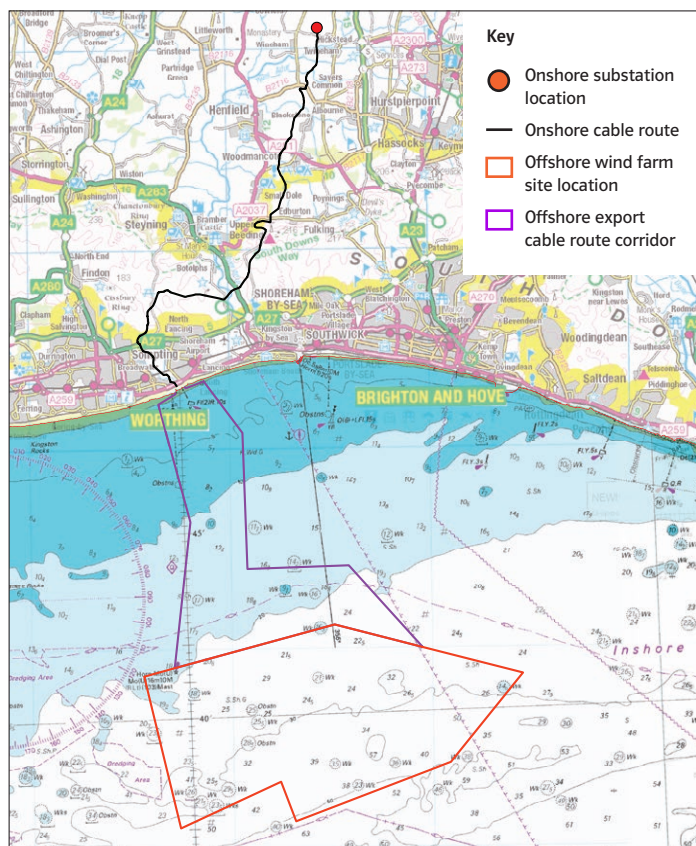
Offshore

- Number of turbines: up to 175.
- Size of site: 122 km² (reduced from 167km²).
- 13km to 20km offshore.
- Interconnecting cables under the seabed will transfer electricity generated by the wind turbines to an offshore electrical substation. There will either be one or two of these substations, depending on how much energy the wind farm is capable of producing.
- Subsea cables around 19km long will transport electricity from the substation/s ashore. The point where these cables reach land is known as landfall, and will be at Brooklands, just east of Worthing.

Onshore

From landfall, onshore underground cables will complete the 27km route to a new substation, where electricity will flow into the grid. The substation will be the wind farm's only permanent, above ground onshore structure and will be built next to the existing National Grid substation 2km south of Bolney.

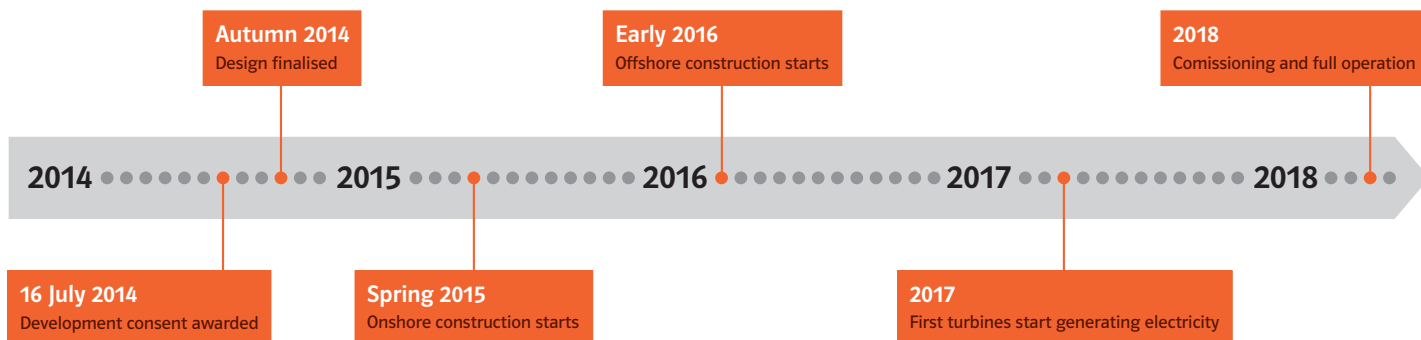
You can view the documents from the examination in detail at <http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk/projects/south-east/rampion-offshore-wind-farm>



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What happens next?

Project milestones



Pre-construction

Over the last year, we've been carrying out extensive onshore and offshore surveys and site investigations. The results will help us finalise our plans, which we hope to share with you this autumn.

This work has included taking borehole samples from the seabed, so we can find out exactly what the ground conditions are like offshore. This will help us choose the right turbines and foundations and the best places to put them, along with cabling and substations. We also have two years of wind data, from our meteorological mast. The turbine layout is likely to be a regular grid matrix, with at least 600m between each turbine.

Construction

Recently, we've been preparing tender documents to help us choose our lead contractors and we're hoping to award the first contracts in early 2015. It's likely that onshore construction work will start in spring 2015, and offshore construction in early 2016, with the wind farm being completed in 2018.

Before and during construction, we'll need to meet certain conditions and requirements, as part of our consent order, around things like highways, archaeology, Public Rights of Way, ecology, landscaping and construction noise. We'll produce management plans to show how we'll carry out work, ensuring the impact on the local area is kept to a minimum. Onshore, our plans will be approved by West Sussex County Council or the South Downs National Park Authority. Offshore, they'll be approved by the Marine Management Organisation. These authorities will also monitor our plans, throughout construction.

How we're protecting the environment

Planning ahead

We've been working with RSK, our ecology consultants, for nearly four years, carrying out surveys of the natural habitats along the proposed onshore cable route. By identifying the flora and fauna that could be affected by construction work, we'll be able to put plans in place to protect it, as part of our Ecology and Landscape Management Plan.

The surveys found areas of Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat including chalk grassland. To minimise the impact of construction, we'll use special construction methods in these places.

An innovative approach

We've also been exploring a new approach using seed harvesting, to capture and replace as many of the plants currently growing in these areas as possible. This means we'll be able to restore habitats to how we found them, once construction is completed. Because this harvesting and restoration technique is specialised, we've been working with experts from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Kew is collecting the seed, which will be tested and stored at their Millennium Seed Bank. Once the cable works are finished, the seed will be sown and the sites monitored, to make sure the restoration plan is effective. Any leftover seed will be donated to Kew and used in their charitable work across the UK. We're all very excited about working with such a well known organisation and we'll keep you up to date with the progress in future newsletters.



Brush harvesting seen in the South Downs. © Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.



Chalk grassland seed, including quaking grass, upright brome, yellow rattle and buttercup. © Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Opportunities for local businesses

We're doing all we can to make sure local suppliers have the opportunity to benefit from Rampion. For example, we launched a supply chain project led by Marine South East (MSE) in partnership with local authorities, which identified over 600 businesses with the potential to supply products and services to Rampion.

Almost 300 local suppliers came along to our Meet the Buyer event in February, and we'll be holding another one later in the year. It will focus on operations and maintenance (O&M) opportunities, in response to the feedback we've had from businesses. We're also asking lead contractors to show how they'd use local suppliers in their tender responses.

To keep up to date and register your interest in becoming a Rampion supplier, visit the project's online portal at sussexwindenergy.org.uk

Creating jobs for local people

O&M jobs will be advertised locally, by us and our chosen turbine manufacturer. To help people benefit, we're putting together an Employment Workforce Training Plan with local authorities. This will involve identifying any skills gaps and developing training and education, to help create a skilled workforce. We'll also help colleges to encourage young people into the offshore wind sector.



Meet the Buyer event, Amex Stadium, Brighton - 26 February 2014.

Apprenticeships

We're aiming to fill 10-20% of our technician roles directly from apprenticeships and we'll be the first E.ON wind farm to do this. We'll train two apprentices a year for the first three years. After that, we'll match apprenticeships to the jobs available.

Education

We supported the bid for Newhaven's University Technical College (UTC), which was given the green light by the Government in 2013. The UTC will specialise in marine and environmental engineering and we'll be helping shape and deliver the curriculum. For example, we'll deliver an offshore wind master class, provide mentoring and work experience, and organise trips to Rampion.

For younger students, we have the E.ON Energy Experience, a UK-wide education programme to help schools and colleges teach young people about energy. You can find out more at e.on-uk.com/energyexperience



Keeping you up to date

Over the coming months and years we'll let you know how things are progressing, and what we're doing onshore and offshore. Our website will be the first port of call for information, but we'll also work closely with the local media.

Before onshore construction work starts in the spring, we'll hold public events along the cable route, so local people know exactly what to expect.

Wind energy: Your questions answered

In each issue of our newsletter, we'll bring you the answer to a question we're often asked about wind energy.

Q: Will Rampion be a threat to birds?

A: There are two potential impacts on birds from wind farms – the risk of them colliding with the turbine blades and the possibility they may lose feeding areas. We've been carrying out surveys for the last two years, to find out the species and numbers using the Rampion area for feeding, foraging, resting, flying, breeding and migration. This data is then used to help calculate the likelihood of impacts on birds. The Secretary of State also carried out an environmental assessment of Special Protection Areas and birds, which found there would be no likely significant affect on them from the development of the Rampion project.

Contact us

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