

## **Planning and Highways Delegations Committee**

### **Minutes of the Meeting Held on Friday 11 September 2009**

**Present:** Mr A Gunson  
Mr I Monson

**Also Present:** Mr D Callaby  
Mr M Hemsley  
Mr P Hardy  
Mr D Harrison  
Mr J Rogers  
Dr M Strong  
Mr J Shrimplin  
Ms H Thompson  
Mr A Wright

**Officers:** Mr S Faulkner – Planning and Transportation  
Mrs Anita Ragan - Planning and Transportation

**1. Apologies for absence:**

There were none.

**2. Chairman**

Mr Gunson was elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

**3. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2009 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

**4. Declarations of Interest**

Mr Shrimplin declared a personal interest in Item 5 as he was a Member of Great Yarmouth Borough Council and a Member the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Mr Monson declared a personal interest as a Member of the National Association Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

**5. Proposed Dudgeon Offshore Wind Farm**

The following comments were made in response to questions by the

Committee:

- The Applicant had consulted with the fishing industry and it was understood that comments had been received from them.
- The Environmental Statement (ES) accompanying the application indicated that the application site was not a well fished area due to its distance from the shore.
- There would be disruption to the area for the two years during construction of the turbines and cabling, after that time the impact would be minimal.
- It was not known exactly how many cables would be used, it could be between two and four.
- Navigation and warning lights on the turbines were a statutory requirement and may be seen from the shore at night.
- The proposal for the onshore elements of the wind farm were subject to a different application so no comments could be made over the impact on the land if four cables were to be used rather than two.
- As part of the ES an impact assessment had been carried out on how it would affect wildlife etc.
- There were no reports of dead birds being washed up around existing wind farm sites.
- There could be an impact on the fishing industry during the construction period.
- Most of the technology from the wind farm would come from overseas, so the opportunities for local employment would be limited.
- Servicing of the turbines should be carried out locally so there may be opportunities for employment in Wells.
- At the end of the 40 year period there would be a decommissioning plan to remove the turbines from the site but the concrete bases would be left in situ.
- Turbines would be delivered to the site in parts by ship.
- There was no information in the application regarding the siting of a helipad.
- A substantial sized offshore sub station would be needed and facilities for mooring boats but this would not be visible from land. If anything further was required in addition to the sub station this would require a new or revised application which would need to be referred back to this Committee.

The concerns of the fisherman were raised by Dr Strong as follows:

- Disturbance of the seabed in preparation for receiving the foundations for the turbines would result in a direct loss of habitat with a detrimental effect on fishing.
- The burying of cables increased the fine sediment being re-suspended which would be fatal to epifauna and infauna in the vicinity. This would environmentally affect the fishing ground in

particular shell fish and Norfolk Crab Fisheries and would take years to recover.

- It was stated that cables would be trenched and buried but this has not been undertaken, instead concrete mattresses had been placed over the cabling which would pose a snagging risk to fisherman operating in the area making it impossible to fish.
- Physiological trauma from underwater noise and vibration occurring during the construction would have long term impact of displacement or mortality on fish.
- There was potential for pollution from leaks and spillages of fuel and oil etc.
- Electromagnetic fields from the cable infrastructure may affect the behaviour of fish.
- There would be a loss of rights of free and unhindered navigation.
- There would be increased costs to other fishing grounds. Fishermen would incur the costs of moving their equipment and some would be more limited by having smaller vessels.
- There would be a complete loss or restricted access to traditional fishing grounds during construction, operation and decommissioning together with the loss of opportunity to fish and loss of earnings.
- Fisheries in the area provided an important source of employment and support to the local economy. Any disruption or displacement of fishing activities by wind farms is a significant issue.

She asked that when the next project was under consideration that planners would look at a detailed map and see what was left of the sea for them to fish in.

It was pointed out that the impact of the development on the fishermen should be offset against the benefits of the wind farm.

The Local Member for Cromer re-iterated and supported the concerns of the Local Member for Wells

Further concerns and comments were expressed as follows:

- The concerns of the fisherman were a material consideration.
- The turbines would be so far off-shore that the visual impact would be minimal.
- If there was sufficient evidence that fishing would decrease then the fishermen should be supported.
- As the turbines would be so far off-shore the application was different to previous applications but it would still have a cumulative effect on the Norfolk coastline.
- Power needed to be generated off-shore but with the proviso that the fisherman be compensated appropriately.

- The fishing industry was in long-term decline due to human interference.
- The application would provide 1% of all the UK's energy needs.
- The County Council had signed up to an LGA agreement to have in place a strategy to mitigate climate change and the application would contribute to this.

Comments from the Local Member for Sheringham were read out to the Committee as follows:

"I would like to inform the committee that, I fully support the Recommendations 1 and 2.

I certainly don't think there will be any problems at Sheringham with Visual Impact, if anything it will be a point for Visitors to note, also I believe the effect on the fishing Industry will be minimal, mainly at the erection stage of the Turbines and laying the cable, as your report states.

We have very little option but to support like projects if we value the support of future generations."

Both Cabinet Members agreed that there were no reasonable grounds for objection as the turbines would have minimal impact as they were so far off shore.

A revised motion was proposed and seconded as follows to take into account the concerns of the fishing industry:

That the Department of Energy and Climate Change be informed that the County Council does not wish to raise an objection to the Dudgeon Offshore Wind Farm providing:

- a) Norfolk's commercial fishing interests are thoroughly addressed as part of the decision-making process and;
- b) Appropriate mitigation and where necessary compensation, is given to those commercial fishing interests adversely impacted by operation of the proposed Wind Farm.

It was **RESOLVED** accordingly.

### **Reasons for Decision**

The Dudgeon Offshore Wind Farm has the potential to deliver enough electricity for 400,000 homes and make an annual saving of 825,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide. The proposal by itself could provide most of the electrical demand arising from all the planned housing growth in the region up to 2021. The proposal site is located 32 km (20 miles) offshore, north of Cromer and is the most distant proposal yet to come forward off the Norfolk Coast.

The principle of offshore wind energy is consistent with national, regional and local policies on climate change. Members will be aware that the County Council has raised concerns with recent proposals at Docking Shoal and Race Bank due their “combined” impacts on: (a) the AONB and Heritage Coast; (b) visitor numbers; (c) the fishing industry; and (d) the Wash Estuary nature conservation area.

However, the Dudgeon proposal is materially different to the above schemes in that it is:

- Located further East and offshore than the other proposals and as such its impact on the Heritage Coast and AONB is considerably less;
- The impact on visitor numbers is unlikely to be significant given the distance of the scheme offshore;
- The impact on the fishing industry is again unlikely to be significant given the limited number of vessels fishing inside the proposed wind farm site; and
- The proposed offshore cable-route does not pass through any international nature conservation site.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

Decisions relating to wind farms whether onshore or offshore are clearly very sensitive given the visual impacts of such structures. As such any decision needs to balance national, regional and local objectives for addressing climate change, while at the same time needing to protect sensitive parts of the County’s environment. The potential benefits arising from this proposal are significant in terms of the number of households (400,000) which could be supplied with electricity from a sustainable source.

However, the proposed scheme would on occasion be visible from the North Norfolk coast, which is designated an AONB. There is the potential in combination with other proposed schemes at Docking Shoal and Race Bank for an impact not just on the AONB but also the Heritage Coast (west of Sheringham). Members may feel that despite this proposal being located 32 km offshore, there would be an unacceptable cumulative impact on the North Norfolk AONB and as such an objection should be raised.

### **CHAIRMAN**

The meeting ended at 1.25pm



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