

PLANNING & HIGHWAYS REGULATORY COMMITTEE

Proposed Ormonde Offshore Wind Farm and the Ormonde Gas Field Development

7 December 2009

Report of Head of Planning Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is to provide Members with updated information on the progress of the Ormonde Offshore Wind Farm and the on-shore facilities associated with it.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to note the report.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 On 22 August 2005 the Planning & Highways Regulatory Committee considered a report on the proposal by Eclipse Energy for an offshore electricity generating station to the south west of Walney Island, in the Irish Sea. The proposal was in two parts. One was for a gas fired electricity generating plant exploiting two relatively small gas fields (Ormonde North and Ormonde South). The other is was for an offshore wind farm with up to 30 turbines.

2.0 Proposal Details

2.1 The wind farm part of the proposal is expected to generate enough electricity for 71,000 homes. The main significance of the scheme to the Lancaster area is that the cables connecting the plant to the National Grid will connect to it at Heysham. Although this is further away from the site than Barrow-in-Furness, it offers the advantage that the high voltage power lines needed for its distribution are already in place, serving the existing power station complex at Heysham. A connection to Barrow would require an additional high voltage line which would be expensive to construct, and would pass through the sensitive landscape on the southern fringe of the Lake District National Park.

2.2 Originally, it was intended that the cable connection would follow an underground route at the side of the Morecambe to Heysham railway line between Heysham Port and the nearest available switching station. However Network Rail does not now regard this as acceptable; it would have implications for the future capacity of the rail link and could create problems with any future proposal to upgrade it.

2.3 The alternative route now proposed is a more circuitous one cutting across open land to the south of the railway line, and then following the side of Middleton Road as the northern entrance to the former ICI petrochemical depot. From there it would run first east, and then north to reach the existing National Grid switching station.

2.4 The works involved are covered by the permitted development rights associated with electricity infrastructure but it is considered that Members should be aware of them. The cable laying operations at the side of Middleton Road will, inevitably, result in disruption while it is in progress. However this will be relatively short in duration.

3.0 Details of Consultation

3.1 As the development does not require planning permission, no public consultations have been carried out by the City Council. However, the developers carried out an extensive programme of public consultation before obtaining the approval of the Department of Trade & Industry.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

4.1 For the reasons set out above, the direct route along the side of the railway line is no longer available. The City Council has not been presented with any further alternative routes for the cable connection but it is likely that they would be considerably less direct than the one proposed.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Members are asked to note this report.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT	
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(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)	
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None discernible.	
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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	
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None	
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SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS	
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Not applicable	
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LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
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None	
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MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS	
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Not applicable	
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BACKGROUND PAPERS	Contact Officer: Peter Rivet
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