

Offshore Wind Strategic Enabling Actions Programme

Summary of issues and outcomes from workshop of 4 December 2019

The Crown Estate committed to establishing a **strategic enabling actions programme** as part of the [Offshore Wind Sector Deal](#), with the aim of increasing the available knowledge and evidence to support the sustainable and coordinated expansion of offshore wind. The programme will be delivered, working in partnership with government, devolved administrations and in collaboration with stakeholders, and relevant organisations.

On 4 December 2019, we hosted a workshop along with our strategic programme partner organisation, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and supporting partner the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The workshop brought together over 40 participants including policy makers, regulators and advisors from UK government as well as representatives from the offshore wind industry and environmental non-governmental organisations. The event was chaired by Prof. Dickon Howell and workshops were independently facilitated.

During the session, participants worked together to define the outcomes, goals and delivery routes that will be needed for this programme to meet the challenge of increasing offshore wind deployment in the UK in a co-ordinated and sustainable way.

Approach to the session

The workshop was structured around **four key themes**:

- a) strategic research and evidence-gathering projects, to reduce uncertainty and enable more projects to be deployed with confidence about their environmental impacts (“**Improving understanding of environmental impacts and benefits**”)
- b) investigating the practical operability of the Habitats Regulations Assessment derogation process as a mechanism to deliver planning consents for offshore wind farms, whilst also protecting the integrity of European protected sites (“**Unlocking further deployment via the derogation process (Habitats Regulations)**”)
- c) increasing strategic coordination of different activities and interests, opening up new opportunities through co-location and innovation allowing multi-use of space (“**spatial coordination and co-location**”)
- d) delivering coordinated net environmental gain investment through new project delivery to maintain support for deployment scale up (“**How the industry can deliver net environmental gains**”)

Discussions were collaborative, open to all views, balanced, and focused on identifying areas where the strategic enabling actions programme could meet a need, make a difference, and importantly to complement existing sector activity.

Cross-cutting issues discussed at the workshop

1. The need to progress at pace with activity to address the UK’s transition to net zero

A number of participants highlighted climate change is a pressing issue and therefore there is a need to adopt an ‘emergency’ mentality to ensure this programme proceeds and delivers impacts quickly. There was also recognition that development should not be at the expense of stewardship of the marine environment and protection of marine ecosystems.

2. The strategic enabling actions programme should be bold in its ambition

Participants noted the value in enabling better data to inform effective decision making. Through technological innovation, changing the orthodoxy and challenging the norm, the programme could re-think traditional approaches to use of surveys, data, assessments and evidence.

3. The benefits of a strategic coordinated UK-wide programme

Workshop participants highlighted an ambition for stakeholders from all sectors to work collectively to shape and progress actions. There was consensus around the need for coordination and collaboration and a genuine recognition that a more joined up approach to sharing knowledge would yield benefits.

Outcomes

The workshop participants defined a series of outcomes, based on the four themes, which delegates highlighted would represent success for the strategic enabling actions programme.

Improving understanding of environmental impacts and benefits

- Evidence and data is used in a smarter way; and shared effectively. Asking the right questions to ensure that post-consent monitoring delivers useful findings.
- There is a clear, centralised strategic view of the evolving evidence base and how it should be used in assessment and decision-making.
- A closer link is established between government policy ambitions for offshore wind and the regulatory process for consents to enable a common understanding of climate and biodiversity priorities to create certainty for developers.

Unlocking further deployment via the derogation process (Habitats Regulations)

- An efficient, effective and agreed process is in place to address derogation in the consenting process and this is supported by government, regulators, industry, Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies, non-governmental organisations.
- Evidence based thresholds / impact levels that trigger Adverse Effects on Integrity are agreed, where practicable.
- A compensation bank is developed and in place.

Spatial coordination and co-location

- The use of UK marine space is optimised, allowing for the enhanced delivery of sustainable blue economy sectors, including offshore wind, and protection of the marine environment.
- Offshore wind development is intrinsically linked to marine planning and a long-term view of marine resource and grid connection is developed.
- Cross-border working is effective and coordinated (UK and wider).

How the industry can deliver net environmental gains

- Offshore windfarms deliver net environmental benefits led by a strong government mandate, and this is recognised and supported in the planning process and amongst stakeholders.
- The benefits of offshore wind in addressing climate change are clearly articulated and widely understood.

A full write up of the workshop is available on request.

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