



Welcome to our first newsletter for the Offshore Wind Evidence and Change programme. This regular newsletter will be published three times a year to share news, views, outputs and successes from the programme and to highlight the work from partners, members and others who are working together to deliver the programme's objectives.

Since our programme launched in December, together we've made excellent progress across our pathfinder projects and I've been delighted with the response to our recent 'call for projects' and to see so much energy and collaboration from members. As programme manager, I look forward to continuing to coordinate and support.

In this edition of the newsletter you will find updates on some of our current projects, and in-depth features on Defra's work and on the East Coast Grid Spatial Study, which has recently published its summary report.

Like the programme, these newsletters will be collaborative so do get in touch to share news and updates, or if you are a member of the steering group and would like to be involved in the next 'Spotlight' or 'Insight' features.

Please note that we've recently updated the programme [website](#) with more information on projects – do please take a look and share it with any contacts or colleagues who may be interested.

Mandy King

Programme Manager



Latest programme news



East Coast Grid Spatial Study: This pathfinder project published its outcomes in late April and will support offshore wind planning and delivery around the busy east coast of England. The study will help build understanding of the interactions that future offshore wind farms on the east coast are likely to face when connecting into the electricity network – such as environmental constraints or access to suitable landing points. It considered whether alternative approaches to grid connection can mitigate future development impacts. This study has been delivered with National Grid Electricity System Operator (ESO), National Grid Electricity Transmission and The Marine Management Organisation.

[Read more](#)



Offshore Wind Environmental Evidence Register: This project will build – for the first time – a publicly accessible UK-wide register of evidence gaps and relevant research projects across three areas – the seabed, marine mammals and seabirds. Defra is leading the development of the register, which will be delivered by JNCC. You can view the initial register on the Marine Data Exchange [here](#).

[Read more](#)



Offshore wind knowledge and evidence hub: This new project started in May. It will bring together all relevant offshore wind data into a new single, authoritative source of knowledge and evidence on which to base future offshore wind assessments. This will help to improve EIA decision making and reduce the burden of the EIA process by ensuring documents are accurate and proportionate in assessing the environmental impacts of offshore wind farms, and how they can be mitigated. The project is led by The Crown Estate and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) with support from others.

[Read more](#)



May Programme Steering Group meeting: Over 27 organisations came together for the second Programme Steering Group meeting of 2021. During the meeting, partners and members explored current project proposals and discussed future priorities including how the programme can support decision making, improve co-ordination with other sector activity and drive positive change. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 16 September 2021 – we look forward to seeing members there.

[Read more](#)



Project insight – East Coast Grid Spatial Study

This edition, we caught up with Richard Clay, Senior Energy Policy & Regulation Manager at The Crown Estate, to gain a project insight into the East Coast Grid Spatial Study.

What are the key outputs from the study?

The study had three key aims. Firstly, to develop a deeper understanding of potential terrestrial and marine constraints that future offshore wind farms connecting into the east coast of England (from Lincolnshire to Essex) are likely to face as and when grid connection solutions are developed under the prevailing radial connection model.

Secondly, to assess the risks and issues to deployment of offshore wind projects driven by constraints, and finally, to consider if a coordinated or integrated approach to offshore transmission could mitigate those risks and issues. You can find the summary report outlining the approach and findings on the Offshore Wind Evidence and Change Programme page on our website.

How will the outputs support the programme ambitions around change?

The project provides a new evidence base on the impacts potential terrestrial and marine constraints could have on how and where future offshore wind projects could connect within the study area covered.

This is an extremely important dynamic in the context of the expected significant growth in offshore wind in the UK over the coming decades. We've discussed this work extensively with

BEIS and Ofgem in the context of the Offshore Transmission Network Review (OTNR), and the outputs are an important evidence point into that major policy programme. We're really pleased to see that the OTNR now includes specific reference to the importance of environmental issues in decision-making, alongside economic and technical factors.

How was the project delivered?

The project was scoped and delivered in partnership with National Grid Electricity System Operator, National Grid Electricity Transmission and the Marine Management Organisation. We appointed specialist consultancy AECOM to deliver the work, which including engaging with a range of relevant stakeholders.

Are there any lessons to share with other members delivering other projects?

It's fair to say that delivering this project has been a journey of discovery, both in terms of the technical content but also in terms of delivering in partnership. One of the keys to the success of this was the work that was done up front by the partners, in defining what it was we wanted to explore and detailing specific and targeted questions. This informed a robust scope of work for the consultants and helped enormously in the management of the work. The early work was definitely worth the effort!

What are you focusing on next?

We are now socialising the outputs of this study with key stakeholders, including relevant Government departments and agencies. We're also considering whether similar studies could be undertaken in other regions, and decisions on this will come forward later in the year.



Spotlight on – Defra

Each newsletter, we'll be shining a spotlight on one of the programme partners or members. For this edition, we heard from the Defra team about their role and why they're involved in the programme.

Defra is delighted to be a partner in the The Crown Estate's Offshore Wind Evidence and Change programme. We are committed to supporting delivery of the Government's ambitions

for offshore wind, recognising that this must be delivered in a way that supports the Government's commitments to protect and enhance the marine environment.

To enable Government and industry to balance these priorities, evidence on the impact of offshore wind farms on the marine environment is crucial.

In November 2020, Defra launched the Offshore Wind Enabling Actions Programme (OWEAP), designed to increase understanding of the environmental impacts of offshore wind and find strategic solutions to manage and mitigate impacts in order to reduce barriers to this expansion. Partnering with The Crown Estate and BEIS in the programme enables us to amplify this work and work together on our closely aligned objectives focused on collecting robust evidence and filling strategic evidence gaps to improve our understanding of environmental impacts, enable delivery of net gain in the marine environment and enable the use of derogations in consenting.

OWEAP currently lead on two major programme projects: the cross-Government derogation group and the Offshore Wind Environmental Evidence Register, as well as inputting to wider programme activities including its extensive research programme.

Dates for your diary

- 16 September 2021 – Programme Steering Group meeting
- July to December 2021 (for projects of £50,000 - £500,000 value) – 2nd call for projects

And finally..



'Pier nursery'

A reminder that man-made structures can be important for our precious marine life. This was the winner of the Underwater Photography competition back in 2020 – British Waters Living Together category, sponsored by The Crown Estate. Congratulations to the photographer, Dan Bolt!

Feedback is important to us, if you have any comments or enquiries, please [visit our website](#) to get in touch.

