BEATRICE OFFSHORE WIND FARM
NEWSLETTER - ISSUE 3 - OCTOBER 2012

BEATRICE OFFSHORE WIND FARM

In our last newsletter (April 2012), we announced that we had submitted our application for consent to develop the offshore element of the Beatrice Offshore Wind Farm. The application was submitted to the Scottish Government and is currently being assessed. We anticipate that a decision will be taken by Scottish Ministers in 2013.

Further information about our offshore application can be found on our website at www.sse.com/beatrice or in the second edition of this newsletter which is also available to download on our website.

BOWL ONSHORE TRANSMISSION WORKS

SUBMISSION OF PLANNING APPLICATION

We have now submitted a planning application to The Moray Council for Planning Permission in Principle to develop the onshore transmission works associated with connecting the offshore wind farm to the national electricity transmission network. This newsletter gives a summary of the works.

OVERVIEW - TRANSMISSION WORKS

The BOWL transmission works consist of two elements:

Offshore Transmission Works – These form part of the application submitted to Scottish Ministers in April 2012.

- Up to three offshore substation platforms and approximately 65km of subsea cable to the landfall point, west of Portgordon; and

Onshore Transmission Works – This application has been submitted to The Moray Council in October 2012.

- Approximately 20km of underground cable from the landfall point to the substation site and a new substation adjacent to the existing substation at Blackhillock, near Keith.

Due to the fact that the decision has not yet been made as to whether the electricity generated by the wind farm will be transmitted as alternating current (AC) or direct current (DC), there are two possible development options within the planning application. A number of factors will determine whether transmission is AC or DC. The final decision will be made during the detailed design process for the wind farm.
LANDFALL

The subsea cable from the wind farm will come ashore in an area to the west of Portgordon. The figure below shows the area the landfall will be located within. Detailed ground investigation works will take place once consent has been granted which will result in the exact landfall position being determined.

The cable landfall works will involve the pulling ashore of the offshore cable. As the beach to the west of Portgordon has been designated as a Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI), the cable will come ashore via cable ducts underneath the beach, installed using the horizontal directional drilling technique, as outlined in the graphic to the right. Using this technique will help to protect the integrity of the SSSI, minimising any environmental effects.

ONSHORE CABLE ROUTE

The onshore cable route is approximately 20km long and runs between the landfall point near Portgordon and the new substation near the existing substation at Blackhilllock. The indicative cable route is shown in the figure to the left. It will comprise:

- underground trenches containing transmission cables, exporting either AC or DC power from the wind farm;
- cable jointing bays; and
- cable crossings.

The route also allows space for working areas for construction access and equipment lay down.

The underground cables will be installed beneath agricultural land, public roads, railway lines and watercourses. Cable jointing pits will be needed at regular intervals along the route. The locations of these are yet to be determined.

The exact route is yet to be finalised, and will be subject to detailed design and feasibility assessments, but will be within the red line boundary shown in the figure to the left. The route will be the same for the AC or DC development options.
ONSHORE SUBSTATION

A new electricity substation will be constructed adjacent to where the existing substation is currently located at Blackhilllock. The existing substation is owned and maintained by Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Limited (SHETL), the licensed transmission operator in the north of Scotland. Planning permission was granted at the start of October 2012 for SHETL to redevelop the existing substation. The final design of the new BOWL substation will depend on whether the connection is AC or DC.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process which aims to ensure that applications for developments with potentially significant effects on the environment are appropriately assessed and the environmental effects quantified. The assessment must be carried out following consultation with statutory consultees, other interested bodies and members of the public. The findings of an EIA are contained within an Environmental Statement (ES) which has accompanied our application for Planning Permission in Principle.

In May 2011, we carried out a Scoping Exercise for the BOWL onshore transmission works. This sought the views of statutory consultees and other interested parties on the main issues that they wanted us to consider as part of our ES.

Public Exhibitions to inform the public about the onshore transmission works were held in July 2011 in Buckie and Portgordon and in May 2012 in Buckie, Portgordon and Keith. Views expressed at these events were taken into consideration when preparing the EIA.

The three main impacts which the onshore transmission works could potentially have are:

• Landscape and Visual;
• Noise and Vibration; and
• Transport and Access.
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LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

The landscape and visual impacts of the project have been examined and the potential effects are considered to relate to effect upon landscape character and sensitive visual receptors. The choice of substation location and layout has been made to reduce, where possible, effects on key transport routes, settlements and designated landscape areas.

We have agreed a series of representative viewpoints with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and The Moray Council and prepared a series of photomontages from some of these viewpoints. These provide a visual representation of what the substation would look like. We have also produced Zone of Theoretical Visibility diagrams (ZTVs) to illustrate the theoretical visibility of both of the proposed substation options.

TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

Two different access routes have been identified for the delivery of components, including abnormal loads, and materials to site and for general construction traffic. A decision as to which route will be progressed will be made at detailed design stage.

During construction it is likely that any abnormal loads will be brought to site outside of normal working hours in order to avoid creating delays in the local road network.

NOISE AND VIBRATION

The potential noise effects and vibration of the project have been examined.

During construction, noise and vibration will be managed through mitigation agreed in planning conditions. An example of a condition would be restrictions to the times during which construction activities and site deliveries can take place.

THE NEXT STEPS

If Planning Permission in Principle is granted, a further application will be required for matters specified by conditions once a decision has been made as to whether the electricity will be exported as AC or DC.

For further information please visit www.sse.com/beatrice or contact the BOWL Communications Manager:

Morven Smith, Inveralmond House, 200 Dunkeld Road, Perth, PH1 3AQ
Email: morven.smith@sse.com  Telephone: 01738 516650