



Non-technical Summary: Business and the economy, Compulsory Purchase Orders, Consultation, Why the project is needed

Introduction

This briefing note includes a summary of the information relating to the economic impact of the project, Compulsory Purchase Order and the public consultation. It does not provide new or additional assessment. For more detailed information, please see our [Environmental Statement](#).

Tourism and the local economy

The White Cross project team recognises how important tourism is for the whole of North Devon. We intend to do all we can to make sure businesses in Braunton and Saunton face as little disruption as possible during the work to connect the windfarm to the grid.

As a result of people sharing concerns, we have listened, and we will:

- Schedule as much of the work as possible to happen outside the main tourist season
- Scale down our use of Saunton Sands car park to the minimum
- Compensate businesses which lose income as a direct result of the work
- Take steps to limit the amount of extra traffic

The White Cross Offshore Windfarm project team has undertaken assessments to understand the economic impacts onshore cabling could have on businesses and employment in the local area.

We accept the work will affect some businesses in the immediate area around the cable route between Saunton Sands and the Taw Torridge Estuary. However, the work in this area is likely to be completed in less than a year, so the disruption will only be temporary. An independent assessment has confirmed that only a relatively small number of companies will be affected by the works.

Access to Braunton Burrows, Saunton Golf Club and the South West Coast Path will not be affected by the project.

Surfing brings a lot of visitors to Saunton Sands and other nearby beaches, and we commissioned a wave study to check how the offshore wind farm might affect the surf. The study found no noticeable changes to the waves as a result of the windfarm. We will stay in contact with the North Devon World Surfing Reserve as more detailed engineering work is carried out on the cable route near the shore.

The main onshore construction work will be fewer than 12 months, so any effects will be temporary. Work in the area between Saunton Sands and the estuary could be

completed in less than a year, and we do not plan to do anything which will stop people visiting the beach.

Although the disruption is short term and will be carefully managed, we want to do as much as we can to help people in the area during the time we are working there.

Traffic levels will be managed, and we will produce a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTPM) which will be agreed with Devon County Council Highways and North Devon Council. The final CTMP will contain details of control measures (e.g. routes to be used, limits on vehicle numbers and timing of deliveries) as well as monitoring procedures for managing the potential traffic and transport effects of constructing the project.

Our use of Saunton Sands car park will also be reduced to leave more spaces for visitors and local residents. The timing of our work in the car park has been changed to reduce the amount of space we will need during the peak holiday season, and we will hand back spaces as quickly as possible after work is complete. We are considering further measures to make parking in the Saunton Sands area easier during the work. More detail about this will be published as soon as we can.

We are exploring compensation for those businesses most likely to be directly affected by the temporary work. This will ensure no businesses are worse off because of the construction programme. We will need to agree criteria and appropriate evidence, but we have committed to working with businesses to reach an agreement on loss of earnings payments.

Compulsory purchase orders

We are seeking to obtain permanent rights throughout the cable route, along with the freehold of the substation area. The rights we are seeking are to install, construct and operate the cables.

We are working with land owners to make sure that all interested parties are fairly compensated for the land we need to install the cable.

Every effort will be made to acquire rights voluntarily. If it is not possible to reach voluntary agreements with all parties, the project has the option of using compulsory acquisition. This use of compulsory purchase powers is permitted because White Cross Offshore Windfarm Ltd holds an electricity generation licence under the 1989 Electricity Act. White Cross Offshore Windfarm Ltd will only use compulsory acquisition rights as a last resort.

Consultation

Three rounds of public consultation have been undertaken by the project to date in 2022/3. Each consultation was held over two days with two sessions per day; one in the afternoon (2-4pm) and one in the evening (5-7pm), with the aim of enabling as many local people as possible to attend.

The events were held on:

- 4th and 5th July 2022 in Instow Cricket Club and Barnstaple Leisure Centre

- 21st and 22nd October 2022 in Instow Cricket Club and Braunton Parish Council building
- 27th and 28th March 2023 in North Devon Yacht Club and Braunton Countryside Centre

The events were advertised in the North Devon Journal and North Devon Gazette for two weeks prior to the events taking place. Braunton Parish Council and North Devon Council were both notified and requested to advertise the events through their social media channels. We also posted information on the Flotation Energy social media accounts. Posters were put up on notice boards, where possible.

The aim of the consultation events was to introduce and raise awareness of the project, share the early plans and any refinements as the project proposals progressed. We wanted to give members of the public the opportunity to provide input to, and feedback on, the project and its development.

This staged approach was taken to enable the project team to provide more detail as it became available. It also allowed the project to demonstrate the changes to our design throughout the development process. Due to the nature of the project, detailed design work will continue between getting consent and the start of construction.

Further sessions were held with other community groups and Parish councils including Braunton Parish Council (23rd June 2022, 26th June 2023, 5th July 2023) and Instow Parish Community (1st August 2023).

A further public consultation will be held in Spring 2024 to enable us to respond to comments, bringing more information and detail to our plans.

Community benefits scheme

Infrastructure such as energy schemes are vitally needed by the UK for our energy resilience but we also recognise that they have an impact on the host community. We want to leave a positive legacy from this project, and give something back to the community to compensate for the temporary disruption the cabling work will cause.

The community benefits we deliver will be developed outside the planning process. This is because the government is expected to publish guidance on community benefits for electricity transmission network projects in 2024, and we will follow the recommendations.

Why the windfarm is needed

White Cross is a test and demonstration project which is designed to support the development of Floating Offshore Wind (FLOW). The UK government has committed to offshore wind as a vital form of renewable energy to ensure that our country is more energy resilient.

The windfarm will test innovative technology in the Celtic Sea, develop a supply chain and support the future development of offshore wind in this part of the UK.

During the consultation we were asked whether we could co-operate with other projects to minimise the impact of the cable route. However, there are no other

offshore wind projects being developed which will make landfall in North Devon. The nearest other projects are making landfall in West Wales. The next FLOW leasing round will be in 2024, and projects have an anticipated minimum lead time of 10 years.

Some people have also suggested we connect to the grid via the Alverdiscott substation. However, Alverdiscott does not have the required equipment. Connecting there would only be possible if there was a significant upgrade to the substation but this is not work the National Grid is currently planning to carry out.

FLOW is critical to the UK's efforts to reach Net Zero, and has the potential to provide secure and affordable electricity to businesses and households. White Cross Offshore Windfarm will play a key role in delivering this important technology.