

APPENDIX 3: SEA 6 STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

Overview

The SEA 6 stakeholder workshop took place on 23rd August 2005 in Manchester. A wide variety of potential stakeholders, drawn from UK regulators, government advisers, local authorities, other industry representatives, academics and NGOs were invited to the session. The workshop was facilitated by Hartley Anderson Ltd and Geotek (SEA team) on behalf of the DTI. Stakeholders came from a range of organisations, including a number of conservation and heritage bodies (such as Historic Scotland, CCW, RSPB and JNCC), the British Geological Survey, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, the Renewable Power Association and BWEA. The workshop had two key objectives:

1. To update stakeholders on the SEA 6 progress and issues
2. To gather stakeholder input to and comments on the information and analysis on which SEA 6 is being based

A document providing background for stakeholders on the current DTI offshore energy SEA (SEA 6) was placed on the SEA website www.offshore-sea.org.uk in advance of the workshop. At the start of the workshop, delegates were also provided with a 'Delegate Pack' which included a list of delegates in attendance, a workshop questionnaire, a workshop agenda and copies of each presentation.

The workshop agreed to the principles of the Chatham House rule to allow for free discussion without concern of being quoted and for issues and outputs to be captured without attribution. The workshop was structured in three sessions:

Session 1

Session 1 comprised a series of introductory presentations covering:

- **SEA 6 purpose, area and process** - SEA 6 area and previous SEA areas, licensing of blocks (including licensing alternatives), purpose of SEA 6, current activities in the area and the overarching objectives of SEA.
- **DTI role and context** – Regulation at various stages of operation (including permits, EIA and SEA), licensing and control of systems.
- **Overview of environment** – Overview of available data sources: review of existing information, acquisition of new information, key environmental features, existing and potential conservation sites, other activities.
- **Socio-economic considerations** – Historic and current socio-economic overview of SEA 6 and any likely impacts of future oil and gas developments on the area (using DTI projected scenarios).

A short 'question and answer' session followed to allow delegates to clarify any issues.

Session 2

Session 2 took the format of a 'poster' session with the delegate feedback questionnaires providing a framework for stakeholders to capture feedback.

Posters were divided into five themes:

- Regulatory and licensing context
- SEA 6 area overviews (e.g. seabed and substrates, plankton and benthos, fisheries, conservation, archaeology and other users)
- Previous SEAs 1-5

- Sources of effects, existing controls and potential mitigation
- SEA 6 assessment workshop

The delegates were asked to capture feedback under the following headings:

- A. Points for discussion in plenary
- B. Information base for SEA 6 - Are there studies, reports, or other information which should be considered for the SEA 6 Environmental Report? Please list below and indicate which (or all) SEA areas they apply to.
- C. Draft Recommendations - Having reviewed the draft recommendations and other posters, consider the following questions:
 1. Are there any areas that you feel should not be offered for licensing in the 24th Round and why?
 2. Similarly are there any temporal/spatial controls necessary on activities in blocks offered for licensing?
 3. Do you feel that there should be any additional operational controls introduced?
- D. Other comments - Are there any other comments which you would like to make for consideration in SEA 6?

Session 3

Session 3 was a facilitated discussion in plenary. Points raised and discussed are listed below.

A. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION IN PLENARY

- What is the process for taking forward recommendations within the DTI? If DTI are not going to take forward a recommendation a 'transparent' justification for this should be given.
- I support the recommendation for environmental assessment pre-awarding of licence. It would be useful to show how this process will work especially in relation to promote licences.
- Do the scenarios take into account activities arising as a result of 'promote licences'?
- What monitoring is being undertaken to show that the SEA conclusions (so far) are as concluded?
- Where does marine spatial planning/SEA process fit together?
- Will metadata analysis be carried out with combined SEA 1-8 data?
- PON 14 application system for seismic surveys – formal application required only outside 12nm. Need DTI to insist industry adheres to best practice with 0-12nm zone.
- How can we influence the targeting of future research efforts?
- Migration Routes – Swans & Geese (East Irish Sea flyway)
- Calving/nursing grounds for Porpoise/Bottlenose Dolphin
- If in relation to Offshore Wind then is this COWRIE remit?
- Acoustic Baseline data
- Cumulative effects, i.e. effect on designated spp – migratory birds - ↑ number of structure.
- Use of Soft Start + AHDs – Acoustic data + impact modelling.
- Draft recommendations operational controls – how will 'potential conservation sites' be delivered when carrying out assessments of potential effects on nature conservation sites?
- How have cumulative effects been addressed in SEA 6? e.g. additional infrastructure for O+G facilities other activities or effects on fish/birds of O+G and over-fishing.
- Draft SEA objectives were discussed at the assessment workshop and were to be agreed by e-mail. Has a decision been taken not to set objectives or to adopt one overarching objective and the 'seas of change' objectives? Please include good detail in the Environmental Report on how Stakeholder Workshop contributed to SEA process.
- Could you give further information on the recommendation for EIAs re. disturbance to scoters and seaducks?

A. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION IN PLENARY

- Seabed features of conservation interest. Will there be recommendations for survey methods to identify such features? I appreciate SEA is probably not the place for such recommendations but I think this SEA highlights the need for distribution of such recommendations.
- Are there guidelines already in existence?
- Potential impacts of burning fossil fuels generally – increased CO₂ production/global warming, etc., could be reduced by developing oil reserves in local waters.
- Plankton poster states that phytoplankton biomass has increased since the 1990s – this is not the case. Biomass increased between 1960 – 1990 but has decreased/moderated since.
- Fish/fisheries – could there be a positive impact of having >> numbers of platforms? These will in effect increase habitat diversifying in certain regions, therefore increasing biodiversity.
- Implications for renewable energy need to be considered thoroughly.
- Tidal stream development was not mentioned. The main area is off N. Anglesey coast.
- Main points and consideration of uncertainty captured in Coastal and Marine Archaeology poster.
- Does the JNAPC guide 'code of practice' provide enough detail about SEA requirements?
- The Marathon appraisal well is a key event in St. George's Channel. If it is successful could well be significant interest and exploration activity in the area.
- Navigation and spatial interactions of new installations – interactions.
- Windfarm noise in technical report, "Underwater ambient noise" – no mention of COWRIE research.
- Will the Marine Spatial Planning Pilot Project interact with the 24th round?
- What account has the SEA team taken of JNCC Irish Sea Pilot and DEFRA Marine Spatial Planning Pilot?

Delegate feedback

The feedback is reproduced essentially verbatim and where possible has been incorporated into the Environmental Report content. Some issues wider than SEA 6 will be discussed with the SEA steering group.

B. INFORMATION BASE FOR SEA 6

- As the seabird data (from ESAS) in the form of the Offshore Vulnerability Index was published in (I think) 1999, additional data collected – need to be included to update OVI for future licensing/applications.
- Take into account the area that may in the future be designated as a SPA – draft boundaries have been supplied to DTI.
- JNAPC Code of Practice (to be published shortly) for Marine Archaeology.
- Understanding of undesirable disturbance in the context of eutrophication and development of the UK assessment methodology for coastal and marine waters Stage 1 and 2 reports, prepared for DEFRA by Napier University, 2004.
- Irish Sea Historic Seascapes Pilot Study by Wessex Archaeology (project supported by ALSF).
- BGS flew an environmental radioactivity and EM survey across the mudflats and water zone in the SE of the Irish Sea. Not sure whether this would help but no mention.
- Like all the SEAs there is some fantastic new data which has greatly improved our understanding. However, without the complete coverage of multibeam defining the best areas or various features as SACs etc, is difficult to justify.
- An aerial remote sensing survey of frontal systems is desirable. This would provide synoptic data or compartmentalisation of work matters, which have a direct impact on ecology but also on

B. INFORMATION BASE FOR SEA 6

bottom sediment dynamics. The work on the large scale Irish Sea Front is well known but the compartmentalisation of the water column and the impact this has on pollutant dispersal is less well known and merits investigation. I am happy to provide further information on this if required – especially important in some of the shallower water parts of the area.

- Harbour reports/concerns as licences are released in areas adjacent to port approaches commercially re-routing ships becomes non-viable.
- High speed ship routes need to be considered, particularly when wind farms are being licensed.

C. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Questions asked:

Q1. Are there any areas that you feel should not be offered for licensing in the 24th Round and why?

Q2. Similarly are there any temporal/spatial controls necessary on activities in blocks offered for licensing?

Q3. Do you feel that there should be any additional operations controls introduced?

Q1. -

Q2. Depending on coastal seabird vulnerability it may be an option to limit certain activities (such as drilling an oil well) in certain areas. This may also apply for marine mammals and seismic.

Q3. The PON 14 process does not apply in territorial waters (as consent is issued under the Offshore Petroleum (Conservation of Habitats) Regulations 2001. As some areas offered for licence are within territorial limits, restrictions may be necessary on some licences if there are particular marine mammal sensitivities (in relation to seismic).

Q1. -

Q2. Not specifically but very important.

Q3. -

Q1. Marine mammal calving/nursing grounds – when identified!

Q2. Temporal control of Piling (and possibly seismic survey) operations to avoid marine mammal calving periods.

Q3. -

Q1. Concerned about oil licensing for blocks where the time taken for an oil spill to beach under worst weather conditions is less than the minimum time needed to deploy containment (<24 hrs) – precautionary approach needed – blocks should not be licensed for oil activities, especially where international numbers of seabirds congregate. Also concerned about the licensing of blocks which contain habitats/species on Habitats Directive Annexes – in the absence of property designation of sites, a precautionary approach should be taken and blocks or sub-blocks with relevant interest should not be licensed until offshore designations are completed.

Q2. Strongly support recommendation on guidance for applicants that there may be a need for temporal controls to prevent disturbance to seabirds if licensing is to go ahead.

Q3. Possibly – to be sent to consultants if so.

Q1. No.

Q2. No.

Q3. No.

C. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Q1. Existing biogenic reefs, e.g. *Modiolus*, maerl, etc., these are very susceptible to disturbance especially burial etc and already threatened due to benthic fishing operations.

Q2. :
a. Bird overwintering/breeding times.
b. Cetacean breeding times?

Q3. -

Q1. Tidal sites – areas that overlap with R2 wind farms (there needs to be consideration that new developments will need access, possibly by helicopter. This will impact on wind farms).

Q2. Yes – see above on future renewable development.

Q3. -

Q1. Tidal area to north of Anglesey which could be preferred area for tidal stream development.

Q2. Hold highly tidal areas with highest rates of c 2-3m/sec for tidal.

Q3. -

Q1. No information to advise that an area should be excluded from licensing.

Q2. Proper detailed preliminary studies for the historic and prehistoric interest should provide adequate 'control'.

Q3. Not a 'control' but protocol required for action to be taken if an unexpected discovery happens and how to deal with the finds (curatorial role).

Q1. Vulnerability data for seabirds not up to date because doesn't include recent aerial surveys so some areas with high vulnerability for common scoter not included – Shell flat and Colwyn Bay v. important.

Q2. :
a. Scenarios 5 and 7 have very vulnerable populations of common scoter and red-throated divers in winter.
b. Draft recommendations should include divers and other seabirds (rather than just seaduck) so that potentially breeding species could be included as well (especially Scenario 1 – area very high vulnerability particularly in summer for breeding seabirds (e.g. gannets, Manx sheerwaters, lesser black backed gulls, puffins).

Q3. -

Q1. On geological grounds I think there are no areas that cannot be evaluated in a licensing round. However, some blocks may require restriction or data to present key features.

Q2. -

Q3. -

Q1. -

Q2. -

Q3. -

Q1. -

Q2. -

Q3. -

C. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Q1. -

Q2.:

- a. Should we seek drive toward zero (liquid phase) emissions beyond IPPC & OSPAR?
- b. Should every producing reservoir require an associated disposal formation for PW and chemicals as a condition?

Q3. Discharge of sulphur from fuel & flare should be controlled/limited especially at near-shore locations.

Q1. -

Q2. -

Q3. -

Q1. All areas should be offered.

Q2. -

Q3. Further decrease in produced water to a level lower than the proposed 30ppm.

D. OTHER COMMENTS

1. Will recommendations be made about additional data requirements – especially in relation to birds and windfarms/wet renewables (wave and tidal devices)? For instance, although there are now no plans to have an offshore renewables SEA now, we should be ‘ready’ for when this happens....
2. Stakeholder event There was a more limited attendance at this stakeholder event than previous ones (20 people who are not directly involved in the process/employed by DTI or related contractors). For future SEA stakeholder events, we suggest a longer notification to allow people to plan attendance.
3. Would it be possible to have a CD or PDFs of the posters please? Please contact me by e-mail for postal address.
4. Shortage of information on Irish Sea Marine Mammal populations.
5. Seabird vulnerability data – is this up-to-date? Seaduck survey – East Irish Sea Developers Group Surveys.
6. Socio-economic – Tony Mackay Report did not include positive gains from Offshore Renewables.
7. Acoustic Report: Need baseline ambient data urgently, Lack of actual data, no mention of COWRIE Report on Horns Rev research, Use of exploited gas fields for storage. Is the Ormando gas and wind application also for gas storage?
8. Future studies on colonisation of offshore structure = ↑Biodiversity →aggregation of species – schooling fish and ↓fishing activities.
9. Hydrocarbon vs Renewables – geographical conflict.
10. Would have been useful to have a paper copy of draft recommendations to examine more closely.
11. Is a specific guidance document required for other offshore industries (e.g. as done with marine aggregates)?
12. Some discussion/comments on impacts of gas storage – both CH₄ and CO₂ should be included. It is possible that geological structures with no hydrocarbons could be considered for gas storage – particularly close to shore.
13. Will send an e-mail noting some textual clarifications to the data presented in the ‘Other Users’ technical reports.
14. A lot of effort has gone into producing the reports but the information would be more useful if presented in a uniform digital (GIS) format instead of paper reports/pdf.
15. Irish Sea different from other SEA areas – semi-enclosed, used by a very large variety of different interests.
16. If coastal transport sea routes transpire, how will it affect offshore renewables?