

Floating Wind in the Celtic Sea stakeholder engagement workshop summary

March 2022

Overview:

This document provides a summary of The Crown Estate's marine stakeholder engagement workshop for floating wind (FLOW) in the Celtic Sea, held on 10 February 2022.

In order to gather insight and inform its approach, The Crown Estate brought together a wide range of marine stakeholders with an interest in the Celtic Sea. The purpose of the workshop was to update and brief participants on proposals for Floating Wind in the Celtic Sea, and to seek views and feedback on data and information relating to The Crown Estate's initial work on spatial design. After some initial presentations, the workshop conducted breakout sessions to allow for in-depth stakeholder participation and feedback.

This summary outlines some of the key takeaways from the two breakout sessions that were held - the first on exclusion buffer zones and co-location/displacement of activities, and the second concerning pairwise comparison weightings used in spatial modelling. It also provides an overview of the key points raised during a Q&A between attendees and representatives from The Crown Estate.

Breakout session 1: Exclusion buffer distances and single-issue co-location and displacement

This breakout session, led by facilitators from The Crown Estate, investigated the proposed development exclusion buffer distances, and single issue co-location or displacement opportunities, risks and mitigation in the Celtic Sea. Stakeholders were initially asked via an online poll if the buffers assigned to the Development Exclusions were agreed with. A second online poll invited stakeholders to respond with their views on co-location and displacement in relation to five sectors - commercial fishing, navigation, telecommunication and interconnectors, protected features and defence activities. The results from the online polls were subsequently discussed in groups of stakeholders using an interactive whiteboard (Miro) for support. Below, a summary of the discussion and feedback in the breakout rooms and some of the key findings is provided:

Part 1 - Proposed buffer distances

- Across all breakout groups there was general broad agreement with the buffer distances proposed by The Crown Estate for FLOW in the Celtic Sea.
- However, when objections were raised, they were commonly in relation to the proposed buffer zones for a) commercial fishing b) navigation and c) defence activities. Reasons for these objections included:
 - a) Commercial fishing: Stakeholders cited concerns around the potential displacement of fishing activity by FLOW, especially vessels fishing species such as crab and lobster that are concentrated in small geographical areas. Concerns were also raised

about safety, with the potential for FLOW, and associated infrastructure, to interfere with fishing equipment.

- b) Navigation: Several stakeholders called for the buffer distance for navigation activity to be expanded, with calls for a two nautical mile buffer, as commonly used by marine administrations in Europe. Stakeholders also called for additional leeway to take into account the impacts of bad weather and anchorage on the courses taken by ferries and shipping vessels.
- c) Defence activities: Some stakeholders called for greater buffer distances for nearby defence activities that cannot be displaced.

Part 2 - Co-location and displacement

Opportunities

- Whilst discussing co-location and displacement, stakeholders identified several opportunities for sectors impacted by the development of FLOW:
 - Commercial fishing: It was considered by some stakeholders that the displacement of fishing activity could help aquaculture and support the restoration of natural habitats.
 - Oil and gas: Some stakeholders considered there was an opportunity for co-location between FLOW and Carbon Capture and Storage.
 - Protected features: Some stakeholders cited the opportunity for coordination between The Crown Estate and the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult on its research into the impact of mooring and anchor types on habitats.
 - Telecommunications: Some stakeholders cited the opportunity to conduct a coordinated approach to cabling and interconnectors.

Potential Risks

- Whilst discussing co-location and displacement, stakeholders also identified a number of potential risks for sectors impacted by the development of FLOW:
 - Commercial fishing: As noted above, concerns were raised about the displacement of some commercial fishing activity by FLOW, as well as the creation of de facto exclusion zones by buffer distances. A general theme expressed related to the knock-on effects of displacement of activities from FLOW and the impact this may have on other sectors or interests within the Celtic Sea (for example fisheries being displaced into areas with high levels of environmental designations). Stakeholders also reiterated safety concerns relating to the potential use of fixed cabling, calling for further engagement between The Crown Estate and industry on the location of FLOW sites and the anchorage types used within FLOW design.
 - Defence activities: Some concern was raised about the interplay of FLOW with Ministry of Defence practice exercise areas, air defences and firing ranges, with a call for dialogue to ensure that co-location could occur where possible and mitigate safety risks. However, it is evident that not all Defence activities may be able to co-locate.
 - Protected features: Stakeholders called for FLOW to work around Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in order to limit the potential impact on the environment, as these areas cannot be

- moved or displaced. There were also calls for The Crown Estate to consider the impact of FLOW on birds, mobile species and mammals that reside in the Celtic Sea.
- Navigation: Some stakeholders expressed strong feelings that International Maritime Organisation routes and shipping lanes could not be displaced or moved. It was also noted that port authorities have no control of vessels once they are outside of port limits, creating safety concerns. There were calls for engagement with marine stakeholders on the development of a high-level strategic plan for the Celtic Sea.
 - Telecommunications: Stakeholders called for a greater consideration of the impact of FLOW sites on telecommunications cabling from a maintenance perspective, with the need to consider the lifespan of telecoms cabling and anchor drag in areas of co-location.

Breakout session 2: Analytical Hierarchical Processing - Pairwise comparisons

The second breakout session, led by The Crown Estate facilitators, focussed on the Pairwise comparisons built into spatial design modelling for marine activity impacted by FLOW, with attendees split into groups based on their areas of expertise – species distribution; environmental designations; navigation; fisheries; subsurface, aviation & infrastructure; and social & historic environment. Facilitators led discussions by sharing the proposed weighting of considerations built into each tier of modelling, with stakeholders invited to share their thoughts on proposals and the datasets included. A summary of discussions is outlined below:

Tier 3 weightings (focussed on the consideration of individual criteria on FLOW within sub-themes of modelling)

Species distribution

- Stakeholders called for a greater understanding of the impacts of specific FLOW sites on species, such as the mobility of mammals and seabirds.
- Stakeholders also raised concerns about making judgements around the relative risk to development of different species categories at the dataset level, with some calling for them all categories to be given equal weighting.

Environmental designations

- Stakeholders in this group called for Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) to be given equal weight in the modelling with Ramsar sites, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).
- Stakeholders also raised concerns about the impact of FLOW on migratory birds and vulnerable habitats and species, calling for a greater consideration of these groups in weightings.

Navigation

- Stakeholders in this group broadly agreed that Harbour Authority areas (HAs) should be given less weighting than other parameters, as they are less relevant in the Celtic Sea. There were calls however for greater clarity on the definition of HAs within models.

- Stakeholders agreed that anchorage sites should be given greater weight than disposal sites, but less weight than other factors, given that ships will be unable to anchor in water depths where FLOW sites will be located.

Fisheries

- Stakeholders in this group agreed with the weightings set out, as vessel monitoring systems (VMS) and automatic identification system (AIS) density will show where fishing occurs more accurately than International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) zones.
- However, the group called for more clarity on the datasets used in the model, the vessels included, and reinforced the need for clarity on the definition of the Celtic Sea when discussing with fisheries stakeholders, as the term has a different meaning in a fisheries context.

Subsurface, aviation and infrastructure

- Stakeholders in this group largely agreed with the equal weighting given to evaporites compared to Carbon Capture and Storage (CCUS) and oil and gas fields. However, they called for out of service pipelines to be given greater weighting than out of service cables in addition to adding plugged and abandoned wells and weighting them more highly than out of service pipelines given the contamination risk and inability to re-locate.

Social and historic environment

- Stakeholders agreed with the Tier 3 pairwise comparisons set out in this group, although stakeholders raised the potential for unknown wrecks and historical sites to be discovered during the FLOW process.

Tier 2 weightings (focussed on the relative development risks of sub-themes within each high-level theme)

- Stakeholders in the *species distribution, social and historic environment, and environmental designation* breakout rooms broadly agreed with the weighting set out in the Tier 2 considerations. *Environmental designation* stakeholders however called for species distribution to be weighted more highly due to concerns about the impact of FLOW on protected species.
- When comparing environmental designations with species distributions, stakeholders called for more prominence to be given to species distributions, including those that are outside of marine protected areas MPAs.
- Stakeholders in the *navigation* group called for navigation to be given more weight than fisheries due its greater contribution to the economy, and concerns about the environment and energy security. They also called for defence and aviation to be split into separate categories. Conversely, *fisheries* stakeholders called for fisheries to be given more weighting than navigation and defence and aviation, as in their view navigation routes can re-locate whereas fishing grounds are potentially less spatially flexible.
- Members of the *subsurface, aviation and infrastructure* breakout room largely agreed with the weightings for Tier 2 considerations, but said that subsurface parameters may need to be weighted more highly as research on the colocation of CCUS and FLOW develops.

Tier 1 weightings (focussed on the relative importance of high-level themes in modelling)

- Due to time constraints, most groups were unable to discuss Tier 1 pairwise comparisons in depth.
- However, stakeholders interested in *species distribution* called for environmental considerations to be prioritised over economic and social considerations, especially as colocation and displacement issues emerge.
- *The subsurface, aviation and infrastructure* group of stakeholders called for social considerations to be weighted less than economic and environmental considerations.

Workshop Outputs

The outputs collected from both breakout sessions will be used to help inform spatial modelling. They will act as a foundation to frame decisions based on engagement with stakeholders, but it is important to clarify that they do not represent a final spatial model. Our spatial methodology utilised to reach Areas of Search will be published later this year.

Question & Answer session

The marine stakeholder workshop ended with a Question & Answer (Q&A) session allowing all attendees to put their questions to a panel of representatives from The Crown Estate. An anonymised summary of some of the key questions raised by participants and a high level overview of the panellists' response is provided below.

- One participant raised the need to take a balanced approach to FLOW in the Celtic Sea, asking what reflections could be taken from the recent ScotWind leasing announcement. In response, the panel spoke of the potential for FLOW to support net zero and create opportunities for jobs and the supply chain in the Celtic Sea and across the country. Panellists added that it is hard to compare the two approaches (FLOW in the Celtic Sea and ScotWind) when both remain incomplete, before citing the desire for The Crown Estate to collaborate with the wider sector to ensure deliverability and project success.
- A question was submitted asking the panel how the approach for FLOW would consider the impact of some infrastructure being time limited (e.g. the need to decommission oil and gas infrastructure in due course). In response, it was stated that The Crown Estate would consider anything that is likely to be decommissioned but that this would be limited given it would need to be decommissioned before the entire lifecycle of a potential project.
- One stakeholder questioned whether The Crown Estate would be including Marine Conservation Zones within their plan-level Habitat Regulations Assessment. In response the panel confirmed that the scope of the Habitats Regulations would only cover European Designated Sites, but that The Crown Estate will be undertaking a separate MCZ assessment which will support meeting its obligations under the Marine and Coastal Access Act.
- A question was asked about the application of weightings under the Pairwise comparisons and if there would be another round of engagement with stakeholders. In response, the panel clarified that there would be further opportunities for engagement stating that there would be broader engagement, with opportunities to further refine methodologies.
- One stakeholder highlighted concerns around the scouring impacts of different mooring types and anchors for FLOW projects compared to fixed wind farms, asking if any research had been

undertaken to compare this with the impacts of the oil and gas industry. In response, the panel highlighted the ongoing need for research to continue to understand the impacts of projects, and the opportunity presented by the FLOW test and demonstration scale projects being brought forwards.

If you would like any further information about the stakeholder workshop, or if you have any queries regarding the content of this summary, please contact us at The Crown Estate - offshorestakeholder@thecrownestate.co.uk.