



DUDGEON OFFSHORE WIND FARM

ONSHORE SUBSTATION DECISION APPEALED

Dudgeon Offshore Wind Limited (DOW), a subsidiary of Warwick Energy Limited, has appealed to the High Court the recent decision to refuse its planning appeal for a substation at Little Dunham, Norfolk. The decision to refuse the earlier appeal was taken jointly by the Secretaries of State for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) on 20th September 2011 based on a report and recommendation of a Planning Inspector, who had held a short informal hearing on the subject in June 2011.

‘We believe that the Inspector’s report was seriously flawed in a number of areas and we hope to have the opportunity to correct these matters’ said Mark Petterson, Project Director. ‘In particular, after explicitly ruling out consideration of alternative sites at the hearing he reported that there could potentially be better locations for the substation. If he had entertained discussion on this topic he would have understood that the other possible locations are not as suitable.’

The planning application, submitted by DOW in December 2009, explained that a new substation was essential for the £1.5bn offshore wind farm to go ahead. This was accepted by both the Inspector and the Secretaries of State, who also reflected on the priority and importance afforded such projects in the planning guidelines. It is widely accepted that projects such as Dudgeon will be key for the UK’s energy security, its achievement of carbon reduction targets and for local and national economic growth over the next few years.

The Little Dunham substation site was carefully chosen from over 100 possible alternatives after a year-long selection process. It represents the location with the lowest overall environmental impact and lies on the far side of the existing main pylon system that runs 0.5km to the south of Little Dunham. Breckland Council officials expressed satisfaction with the process that identified this site as the best available.

‘Given the Inspector’s report in front of them it was not surprising that the Secretaries of State decided as they did’ added Mr Petterson ‘but they would have been unaware that a review of alternative sites was specifically excluded from consideration at the hearing by the Inspector’

The original appeal was launched by DOW after Breckland Council refused planning permission in October 2010 on landscape and visual impact grounds. That decision went against the recommendation of its own planning officers, despite the inclusion in the plans of nearly 20 acres of landscaping, including significant new tree planting, to screen the substation and the complete lack of any objections from independent expert consultees.

The Dudgeon project could generate up to 560MW and is expected to cost up to £1.5bn; save up to 40 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions over its expected 50 year life; and could provide more than 0.5% of the UK’s annual electricity needs. The project could create many temporary jobs during the construction phase and at least 50 full time jobs thereafter.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The Dudgeon project would include up to 168 wind turbines producing enough electricity on average to supply up to 400,000 homes with green electricity, approximately the same number of households that exist in the county of Norfolk.
2. In relation to the onshore electrical connection, DOW held public exhibitions in Fakenham, Necton and Holt in November 2009. The main aims of the exhibitions were to increase public awareness of the project; identify any particular concerns that the general public might have; and to answer questions on a face to face basis.
3. The public exhibitions were attended by 321 people of whom 154 (48%) completed a questionnaire, either at the exhibitions or afterwards by post, which provided feedback on the scheme.
4. DOW was very encouraged by the general level of local support for the project and this was confirmed from the questionnaire returns at the exhibitions where 69% of people supported the specific onshore proposals, 23% were undecided and only 8% of people were against the proposals.
5. Planning applications for the Dudgeon onshore electrical connection were lodged with North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) and Breckland Council on 18th December 2009, accompanied by a full Environmental Statement (ES) regarding the onshore elements of the project. The ES drew on the results of the environmental surveys and studies and concluded that the development will not have a significant impact on the local environment. None of the expert consultees (including Natural England, the Environment Agency etc), nor any of Breckland Council's own experts, objected to the proposals.
6. The consent applications for the offshore elements of the Dudgeon project were lodged with the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in June 2009 and are still being considered.
7. It is expected that electricity generation from offshore wind farms, such as this one at Dudgeon, will make a significant contribution towards the UK's target of producing at least 20% of its energy needs from renewable sources by 2020.
8. Warwick Energy's wind farm project at Dudgeon is one of 15 such projects that were awarded licenses by The Crown Estate as part of a national second round of offshore wind projects.
9. The Dudgeon area holds the potential for a second stage of development which could more than double the output currently proposed. The planning requests for the onshore works take into account this possible additional activity to ensure that the maximum possible impact was correctly assessed.
10. Warwick Energy Limited is a leading UK developer of a range of energy projects and has previously been responsible for the development of the 90MW Barrow offshore wind farm (in operation since 2006) and the 300MW Thanet offshore wind farm (completed in 2010).
11. Thanet is currently the World's largest operational offshore wind farm facility, but Dudgeon could be almost twice its capacity.

Contacts: Mark Petterson Director, Warwick Energy 01789 471091

Warwick Energy Limited, Wellesbourne House, Wellesbourne, Warwickshire CV35 9JB