Navitus Bay Wind Park Local Impact Reports for Christchurch and East Dorset Councils

Key Issues –
Production of the LIRs was largely informed by review of the Navitus Bay Wind Park Environmental Statement, together with liaison with the client (Christchurch and East Dorset Councils) and neighbouring authorities.

The aim of an LIR is to ensure that local authorities have the opportunity to highlight to PINS any key issues or local matters of relevance to the NSIP project in question as it relates to their region particularly where these are not identified in the Environmental Statement.

The LIR also gives local authorities the chance to make specific requests in relation to mitigation and allows them to ask PINS to include these requests in the project Development Consent Order (DCO) if granted.

To successfully delivery the project it was therefore essential to have a good understanding of the clients concerns, as well as a thorough understanding of the project and potential impacts through the ES review.

Purpose of the project
The purpose of the project was to prepare Local Impact Reports (LIRs) detailing the key concerns and issues associated with the proposed Navitus Bay Wind Park (NBWP) offshore windfarm on behalf of Christchurch and East Dorset Councils. NBWP is a nationally significant infrastructure project (NSIP).

Description of the project
When the LIRs were produced in summer 2014, NBWP comprised the proposed installation of up to 194 offshore wind turbines, together with extensive onshore underground cabling works required to connect NBWP to a new substation proposed to be located in East Dorset. Since the LIRs were submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) the project developer has submitted plans for a reduced scheme which it is proposed would be located further from the shore; this was one of the main recommendations raised in the Christchurch LIR.
Lessons learnt

- The ability to quickly review and understand the key issues of the ES as these related to the concerns of the local authorities was essential to ensure the work was undertaken efficiently and to a high standard.
- Arguments made in the LIRs had to be robust and able to withstand scrutiny at Examination Hearings.
- Communication with the client and neighbouring authorities was essential to ensure that they met the expectations of the client and, where relevant, the LIRs delivered a consistent message.
- The use of local knowledge in preparing the LIRs was extremely helpful (e.g. from local council members and local wildlife and recreation groups). This allowed the presentation of locally important information to PINS that was not captured in the ES.
- Understanding of the draft Development Consent Order (DCO) and the measures within it was important to identify where additional requests for mitigation or specific working practices could be made.

Lessons learnt cont. -

- In reviewing the ES it was essential to be able to identify and, where relevant, summarise relevant information in the LIRs, without repeating ES content. This ensured the production of focussed and concise LIRs.
- LIRs should be considered as early as possible to ensure there is adequate time to liaise with neighbouring authorities and other statutory consultees to agree a common approach where relevant and appropriate to do so.

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