Key Issues

- Onshore works formed part of a DCO project. Therefore key elements of the EIA process included:
  - Consultation strategy to meet DCO process requirements;
  - Clear and transparent consideration of alternatives and mitigation options;
  - Consistency between final Environmental Statement, DCO, land and works plans;
- RPS undertook detailed study of potential landfall, cable route and substation options;
- Due to the nature of the coastline in this area, it was necessary to consider locations that were within national environmental designations;
- Process required balancing of needs and requests of different consultees, with different aims. For example, regeneration consultees preferred re-use of sites with potentially significant environmental effects on sensitive environmental receptors.

Purpose of the project

RPS was commissioned to provide EIA coordination and topic specialist expertise for the delivery of the onshore element of the Atlantic Array Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project. In addition, RPS provided specialist offshore input, including seascape and visual, nature conservation, historic environment and noise.

RPS produced final submission documents, including DCO works plans.

Description of the project

- Offshore Wind Farm within the outer Bristol Channel
- 14.3 km of onshore cable from the landfall site of Cornborough Range to grid connection point at Alverdiscott, near Bideford, Devon.
- A new substation at Alverdiscott would be required adjacent to an existing substation to transform the incoming voltage to that suitable for the National Grid.
Lessons learnt

- DCO process requires consultation strategy to be identified early and for the strategy to be followed throughout the project;

- The process required early identification of key stakeholders, including statutory and non-statutory consultees and landowners;

- Early consultation generated good working relationships with stakeholders, including sharing of survey results and draft documents;

- Approach to EIA agreed through meetings, scoping, provision of Preliminary Environmental Information and provision of detailed methodologies for discussion with consultees;

- Results of ongoing work and project updates provided to consultees regularly;

- Some issues required multi-party consultation, where aims of different parties were conflicted (for example, regeneration vs protection of designated sites);

Where appropriate, working groups of consultees (such as the Five Parishes Working Group) set up for the project;

- Full consultation undertaken on draft ES;

- Comprehensive approach throughout project lifetime reduced the amount of comments from statutory consultees on final submitted documents and enabled work on Statements of Common Ground;

- Project evolution required some additional consultation to be undertaken, for example where amendments made to construction compounds;

- DCO application accepted by Planning Inspectorate;

- Following submission of application, statutory consultees provided positive feedback regarding the quality of consultation throughout the project.

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