



Welcome to the second newsletter for North Falls, an offshore wind project now under development

North Falls is a proposed offshore wind farm development with its offshore site in the southern North Sea and its onshore infrastructure

likely to be located in North Essex. The offshore site is between 22 and 43 km from the coast and is split across two zones that together total 150 km². It is an extension project to the existing 504MW Greater Gabbard Offshore Wind Farm and is owned in an equal joint venture by two major energy companies: SSE Renewables and RWE.



Second phase of consultation completed



12,000

invitations mailed



107,255

online impressions



1,400

visits to the portal



227

event attendees



71

written feedback

North Falls undertook its second phase of consultation in late 2022, that included five face-to-face events, two webinars and a dedicated online portal that had 1400 visits. The information shared as part of that consultation, as well as feedback from it, can be viewed in the [consultation portal](#) of our website.

A total of 227 people attended one or more of the public events and written input, including feedback forms, freepost postcards was received from a total of 71 individuals, organisations and statutory bodies.

A wide range of issues and questions was brought up during the consultation that are being considered by the project team as part of its ongoing work to prepare the preliminary environmental information report, the next phase of the project's development.

This newsletter provides an overview of the consultation feedback, responses to specific queries and a summary how North Falls will take the responses into account. More detail can also be found on the 'frequently asked questions' page of the project website, which has been updated to cover the topics and issues that were most commonly brought up including traffic management, grid connection and construction impacts.

The recently completed consultation will help the project to prepare for the statutory consultation phase which is due to take place in late spring/early summer this year.

Although the consultation is the key point at which the project seeks input from stakeholders including the local community, the team welcomes questions and insights at any time via the contact details listed on the back page.

Next steps for the project

In late March, North Falls will publish its Statement of Community Consultation which details the project's approach to consultation including who will be consulted and how. It will be available online, at selected locations and in printed version. To receive a copy, please send your details

via one of the methods on the back page, specifying if you would prefer it electronically or by post.

The North Falls Preliminary Environmental Impact Report will be published this spring and will be the subject of the statutory consultation phase, which is set to run from late spring into summer, with dates being finalised shortly.

North Falls Grid Connection



This page covers the questions that arose during the consultation that were intertwined around the topic of the project's grid connection location.

Every offshore wind farm, in fact every potential generator, needs its power to enter the national grid so it can be transmitted on to homes, businesses and industry. Once

the power enters the national grid it can be directed where needed depending on demand at the time.

North Falls currently has accepted a grid offer from the National Grid to connect into a new substation near Ardleigh. National Grid owns the high-voltage electricity transmission network in England and Wales known as the national grid.

Offshore Transmission Network Review

The project has noted the objections to the existing onshore grid connection location including concerns around cumulative impacts, substation size and potential for disruption, and has shared feedback with National Grid. However, as this is currently the only grid option available to North Falls, the project team continues to work on plans that will minimise the impacts at this location. This is with an awareness that for those affected it is not the preference, so the project in parallel remains committed to the Offshore Transmission Network Review (OTNR) process.

The OTNR aims to deliver changes around the grid that would pave the way for more coordinated grid opportunities. For example, for the project to connect offshore. The process of the OTNR is to identify and remove the complex commercial, legislative and regulatory hurdles needed to make this feasible. Changes include review of issues such as:

grid charging regulations; rules related to the government's contract for difference auction bids and the offshore transmission owner (OFTO) obligations.

North Falls has committed to exploring coordinated network designs along with four other projects in East Anglia: Five Estuaries, National Grid Electricity Transmission's Sea Link, and National Grid Ventures' EuroLink and Nautilus, and we continue to work together on this process.

Alongside the complex grid-related processes, North Falls has an imperative to meet its operational date to contribute to the government's 2030 targets, increasing the capacity of home-generated electricity and helping combat the effects of the climate emergency. For these reasons, to avoid project delays, North Falls must also continue to progress with plans related to the existing grid connection location.

Cooperation with Five Estuaries

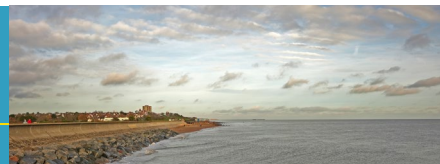
There were several questions posed during the consultation around how North Falls cooperates with Five Estuaries. Both projects have been offered a grid connection in the same location and due to this, North Falls and Five Estuaries continue to work closely on key elements such as cable corridor selection, grid connection, environmental surveys and by sharing stakeholder feedback, such as from our 2022 consultation.

[Five Estuaries](#) has advised it will hold its statutory consultation from 14 March until 12 May, 2023.



A fly through virtual model of the proposed onshore infrastructure was a key focus during the project's local consultation events, enabling visitors to picture the exact proposed cable corridor and substation zone.

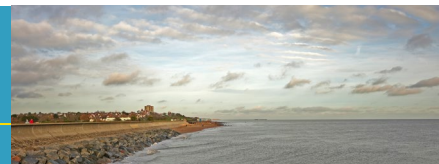
North Falls Consultation Feedback



Numerous issues were raised during the consultation that will be covered more fully in the North Falls Preliminary Environmental Information Report which is now under production. This newsletter gives a high-level summary of the key issues raised, all of which will be considered as the proposals are progressed.

Issue raised	Actions
Construction related	
Construction traffic Respondents raised concerns around construction traffic, recognising the local area has many narrow roads unsuitable for an increase in traffic. Particularly the likes of HGVs and in areas such as the village of Thorpe-le-Soken.	North Falls is working on an outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) with details of how HGV and other vehicle movements will be controlled, monitored and enforced during construction. Amongst other details it will include how accesses and offsite highway works will be designed and how a temporary haul road within the construction corridor will minimise the amount of traffic on the local road network.
Flooding Points were raised during the consultation around flooding, both the possibility of it having an impact on construction, and conversely the impact construction could have on flooding.	North Falls has carried out assessments on geology, ground conditions, hydrology and flood risk for each of the project's construction, operation and decommissioning phases. This information will inform a Flood Risk Assessment, which will establish whether the onshore infrastructure may be affected by current or future flooding, whether it will increase the flood risk elsewhere and what mitigation can be implemented to reduce it.
Access to footpaths, bridleways and the coastal promenade during construction People wanted to know what impact construction might have on recreational routes, such as the promenade between Frinton-on-Sea and Holland-on-Sea, bridleways and footpaths along the cable route.	We are identifying each recreational route in the area of our proposed construction works and will incorporate plans to minimise disruption either through use of specific construction techniques, alternative routes or by careful timing of activities.
Local ecology, birds and wildlife Some who provided consultation responses expressed concern about the impacts of construction on the local area's ecology, wildlife and bird, with a particular focus on any endangered species.	Comprehensive ecological surveys have been undertaken across the whole proposed development area recording the presence of any habitat, bird species or wildlife, including insects, that is either protected in law or notable due to its rare, scarce or vulnerable status. This information is being used to inform the baseline for planning and full details of how it has been considered will be included in the preliminary environmental information report which we will consult on this year.
Use of HDD during construction While most feedback indicated people were content with the use of horizontal directional drilling during construction, there were some questions around the process and potential for noise or pollution.	More details around the specifics of the HDD process will be included in the upcoming PEIR but the concerns have been noted and will be addressed. For example, using an inert clay as drilling fluid and pre-work noise assessments to ascertain the need for temporary noise mitigation, which would be put in place for the duration of activity.
Communication during construction There were requests for clear communications during the construction period.	We can confirm this will be a priority to ensure the local community is aware of what is happening and when. Communications methodologies will include direct letters, newsletters and eNews, a 24-hour phone line and local briefings.

North Falls Consultation Feedback



Issue raised

Actions

Cable route specific

Water main north of Thorpe Road

A specific point was brought up by a few respondents relating to a cast iron water main north of Thorpe Road.

As the water main north of Thorpe Lane is owned by the local water company, it would not be within the project's remit to remove or replace it. However, we will liaise with the water company so they are aware of our plans and the feedback we have received during consultation.

Land drainage

Some comments received related to water drainage in the area, with specific mention of a drainage ditch at Damants Farm Lane.

A land drainage consultant is being appointed to develop pre-and post-construction drainage plans in consultation with local landowners for all affected areas of the cable route. In addition, land drainage systems will be maintained during construction and land drainage reinstated once construction is complete as part of the reinstatement phase.

Horsley Cross car boot sale

More than one consultee mentioned the Horsley Cross car boot sale as something that could be impacted by the proposed cable route.

The fact this event happens each Friday during summer has been noted and will be referenced in our development consent order application. While the exact cable route has yet to be confirmed, if it is close to the car boot sale site, we would work with organisers to minimise any potential disruption from construction activity.

Residential gardens

There was concern for some residents about the cable route potentially going through back or front gardens.

We have reviewed the initial route which did include corners of some residential gardens; however, it has now been narrowed down and amended to completely avoid residential gardens.

Substation specific

Landscaping around substation

Respondents asked about how the substation would be landscaped as there are concerns around its visual impact. There were also requests for more visualisations to understand the size and how it could look.

We are following National Infrastructure Commission guidance (published February 2020), which sets out design principles for nationally significant infrastructure projects such as North Falls. These mean we will consider the cumulative impacts of other proposed substations and factors including substation orientation, fencing and associated landscaping and vegetation such as native woodland planting and hedgerows. Our site selection principles are also aligned to the Horlock Rules guidance on siting and design of substations.

North Falls has noted requests to better understand how the substation could look and will include more photographs with examples of similar substations and visual representations in future consultation(s).

Community

Community support

The consultation invited ideas as to how it could support the local community in future.

Plenty of good ideas about how North Falls can support the local community – such as sponsorships and local involvement – were submitted and will be explored as the project progresses.

For more details and to look at specific frequently asked questions and their answers, there is now an updated section on the [North Falls website](#).

North Falls Project News

Seeking beach hut owners



Beach huts at Frinton-on-Sea.

North Falls is keen to contact each beach hut owner at the Wallings, Frinton-on-Sea to ensure they are aware of the project and particularly of our future consultation activity. While the cables bringing the power to shore from the wind farm would be installed by a trenchless method underneath the huts with the area above remaining undisturbed, the properties are still classified as 'affected'.

If you are, or know of, a beach hut owner who has not yet engaged with the project, we would very much like to hear from you via our land agents Dalcour McLaren who can be emailed: northfalls@dalcourmclaren.com.



Great green bush cricket.

Onshore ecology surveys

North Falls has concluded its onshore ecology surveys with the data gathered to be used as a basis for the project's environmental impact assessment and mitigation proposals. As part of the activity more 20,000m of hedgerows were surveyed, 95 ponds were tested for presence of great crested newts, evidence of dormice was found in 12 hedgerows and water voles were found on three watercourses. The project as also undertaken extensive bird, invertebrate and vegetation surveys of Holland Haven Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) over a period of two years.

The project's site selection process will consider the sites where wildlife and birds have been found in order to avoid them wherever possible, in combination with construction methodologies that have the lowest impacts on wildlife, such as horizontal-directional drilling.

Tendring student visit

The project team invited a group of Year 9 students from Tendring Technology College to visit its consultation in Thorpe-le-Soken, to find out more about the project, offshore wind and the myriad careers the sector offers. Offshore wind is set to more than triple in the years to 2030 to meet climate, energy security and cost goals, but to get there the industry needs thousands of new people to join its workforce. With more than 100 different types of job roles, each with a separate pathway in, it is key young people are aware of the opportunities.

Design & Technology teacher Graham Higgs was keen to give the students, who were on the cusp of selecting their GCSE subjects, a glimpse of a sector they may not have considered when thinking about their choices and future careers. The students were given a tour of the consultation materials, interacted with team members and 'visited' a wind farm via virtual reality headsets (photo below).



Socio-economic benefit study results

North Falls has completed an initial socio-economic benefits study as part of its impact assessment to better clarify the type and extent of opportunities for the local area.

Employment opportunities

In terms of employment, over the lifetime of the project there will be a wide range of direct, indirect and induced local jobs, from highly skilled to more manual roles. These jobs will be with the project team itself, as well as with businesses and contractors across the supply chain. The initial socio-economic benefit study has put the total number of annual full-time equivalent (FTE)* local jobs at around 4000.

To ensure local people are well placed for these roles, as the project nears construction North Falls will implement careers awareness, training and skills initiatives with local schools, educational institutions and training providers.



4,000

Annual full-time equivalent jobs



£400 million

Gross value add for the local area

Supply chain opportunities

In terms of local supply chain opportunities, the study calculated that the gross value add (GVA)** for the local area as a result of North Falls could be up to £400 million for the lifetime of the project across the supply chain.

Local companies will be well placed to take advantage of the opportunities which will be promoted via both the project and its Tier 1 and 2 suppliers as the project progresses. Initiatives such as supply chain events, supplier registration and facilitated sessions will maximise transparency of opportunities when they arise.

* Annual full-time equivalent (FTE) is a unit to measure employed people in a way that makes them comparable although they may work different number of hours per week.

** Gross value add (GVA) measures the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector.

New project Director Andy Paine



In late 2022 North Falls welcomed new Project Director Andy Paine to lead the team as the work progresses towards submission of the project's development consent order application.

Andy is a Chartered Mechanical Engineer and Fellow of the I. Mech. E. with over 20 years' experience in the development and delivery of energy projects.

He said: "I joined as North Falls was in its second consultation phase which was an opportune time to learn quickly about the key stakeholder issues around the development and delivery of the project, which promises local opportunities while contributing to the UK's energy security and carbon emission reduction targets."

Contact North Falls

To sign up for future newsletters or email updates please email your details to contact@northfallsoffshore.com; call (24/7) **0800 254 5340** or post to: **Freepost North Falls**, indicating your preference for electronic or printed copy.

Landowners

Landowners should contact the project's land agent: Dalcour Maclaren, 20 Hollingworth Court, Turkey Mill, Ashford Road, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5PP
E: northfalls@dalcourmaclaren.com
T: 01622 623025

Fisheries

Fisheries related queries can be directed to our fisheries consultants: Brown & May Marine Ltd, Progress Way, Mid Suffolk Business Park, Eye, Suffolk, IP23 7HU
E: northfalls@brownmay.com
T: 01379 772871

For more information about North Falls visit the project website: www.northfallsoffshore.com