NORTH FALLS
Offshore Wind Farm

sse Renewables | RWE

WINTER
2025

North Falls Offshore Wind Farm awaits Secretary of State's decision

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER 7

In the three months following the conclusion of our six-month Examination on 28 July 2025, the Planning Inspectorate's Examining Authority has been compiling its Recommendation Report. As of 28 October 2025, this report was submitted to the Secretary of State who has a further three months to consider our application and decide whether to grant North Falls a Development Consent Order (DCO).

North Falls has therefore moved from the Recommendation phase of the national infrastructure consenting process to the Decision phase and we expect a decision to be made in late January 2026.

IN THIS NEWSLETTER

The Examining Authority's report and recommendation are not available to read at this stage but they will be available to read via the Project information page of the Planning Inspectorate's website once the Secretary of State has made their decision.

Following the Secretary of State's decision

If the DCO is granted there will be a six-week Judicial Review period, during which the Secretary of State's decision can be challenged in High Court.

Should the Project pass through the Judicial Review period, it will proceed to construction in 2027 at the earliest, subject to securing a Contract for Difference (CfD) and Final Investment Decision (FID).

An update on our Joint Substations Design Guide engagement

To support the final design of North Falls and Five Estuaries' proposed co-located onshore substations, the two projects are working together to produce a Joint Substations Design Guide (Design Guide). You can find previous updates in our Spring 2025 and Summer 2025 newsletters.

The purpose of the Design Guide is to outline the overarching design principles for each substation and establish a series of shared commitments that the final substation designs must follow. It covers key elements such as site layout, building form and materials, ensuring a consistent and coordinated design approach across both projects, particularly if separate contractors are commissioned. The final Design Guide, alongside other documents, will be submitted to each project's substation designers, providing a fixed framework for the final designs.

As you would expect, building a substation is complex, and there are many fixed elements that can't be changed for safety and technical reasons. However, the first draft of the Design Guide presented optionality and invited feedback on the topic areas that can be influenced, such as colour, landscaping and fencing. It's important to us that key stakeholders and local communities have the opportunity to influence the Design Guide as much as possible and that the final design reflects local preferences.

We received some really helpful and insightful feedback during phase one of the engagement process, which took place between 18 August and 29 September 2025, receiving 19 pieces of feedback and welcoming over 60 people to our public information day in Lawford. Thank you to everyone who took the time to engage in the process and provide feedback.

WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW?

Our second phase of engagement will now take place in January 2026 rather than October 2025, as originally intended. This is to allow our team more time to fully consider the feedback received, gather more input and develop the next draft of the Design Guide.

We are continuing to work closely with the Essex Quality Review Panel (EQRP), established by the Essex Planning Officers Association in partnership with Place Services, to "ensure delivery and promotion of high quality new developments through the creation of good design, sustainability and improved quality, creating better places and environments to work and live in the county."

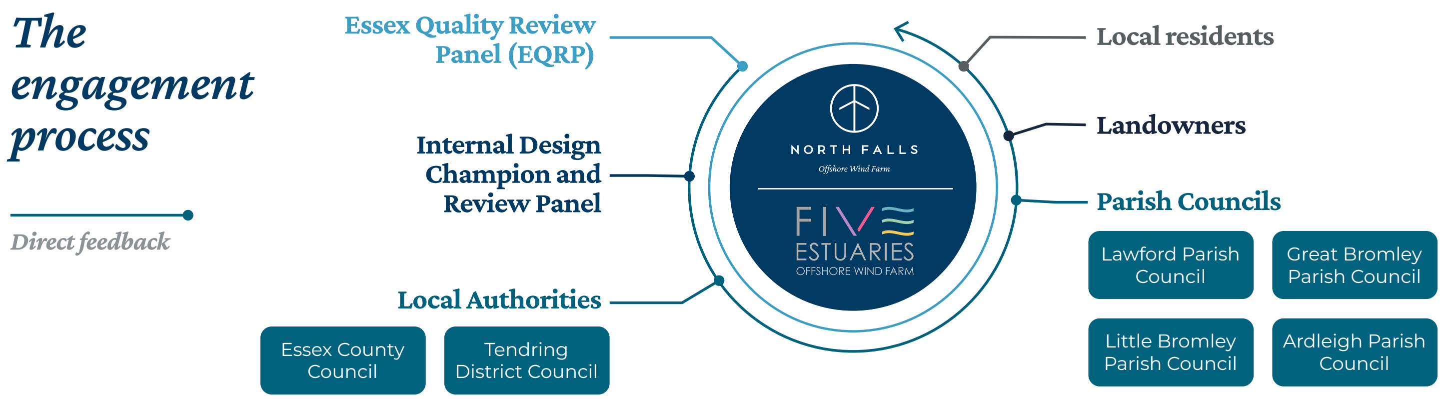
Essex County Council and Tendring District Council continue to be key stakeholders and we hold regular meetings with both councils as part of our ongoing Joint Substations Design Guide working group, which was established early in the Design Guide process with a clear goal to ensure transparency and oversight.

We are currently working on an updated version of the Design Guide, which will refine the options presented based on feedback and further discussion with the EQRP, Essex County Council and Tendring District Council.

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK RECEIVED

Phase one feedback provided plenty of insightful and useful comments from stakeholders and the community. The final draft of the Design Guide – to be issued later this year following the conclusion of phase two – will include a more detailed overview of feedback received and how it's been considered.

- An overarching preference for substation buildings to integrate with the surrounding rural landscape in terms of building form and roof type.
- Calls for materials to be as environmentally-friendly as possible.
- Preference for chosen colours and materials to blend into the local rural landscape, including nearby agricultural buildings, as far as possible. General preference for planting to include a mix of native species and avoid species that suffer in drought.
- Request for consideration of how planting will be monitored and / or maintained.
- Questions on how fencing will interact with planting and how the general public uses the area.
- Comments that planting to field boundaries could obstruct road user visibility and calls for appropriate road signage to safeguard against collisions.



Looking ahead to phase two

While we finalise the next version of the Design Guide ahead of phase two beginning, we can provide an early indication of the document's content and what we'll be seeking feedback on:

- Generally, we feel we've achieved consensus on many of the topics we presented options for during phase one, meaning there will be fewer topic areas with optionality.
- For topics where we're not presenting multiple options, we will be seeking general feedback on how the Design Guide has evolved as a result of feedback received during phase one.
- The next draft will be more technical in nature as we look to more closely align the document with its ultimate purpose – to be used as a document that informs the tender and detailed design processes by providing a clear indication of design requirements for the two projects.

As with phase one, we will be producing an accompanying feedback booklet that sets out our feedback questions and summarises the Design Guide and engagement process. It will also point to relevant sections within the Design Guide where people can find more information on the topic areas where we're seeking feedback.

After the engagement phase is finished we will consider the feedback received and prepare the final version of the Design Guide.

Selected stakeholders will be briefed directly on the final draft and it will also be available to read in full on the Project website. The two projects will continue to provide regular updates on matters relating to their proposed co-located substations following the conclusion of the Design Guide engagement process.

GET INVOLVED

We're currently targeting January to launch phase two. We will be writing to selected local stakeholders directly and the second draft of the Design Guide and supporting materials will be available on the Project website.

Please monitor the Project website for further updates:
www.northfallsoffshore.com/design-guide

Joint Substations Design Guide engagement timeline*

PHASE ONE

- **18 August:** First draft of the Design Guide issued, triggering the start of the first six-week engagement period.
- **2 September:** Drop-in public information day at Lawford Venture Centre, from 3pm to 7pm.
- **29 September:** First six-week review period concludes. The project teams consider the feedback received and work on the second draft of the Design Guide.

PHASE TWO

- **January 2026:** Second draft of the Design Guide issued, triggering the start of the second engagement period.
- **February:** Second review period concludes. The project teams will consider the feedback received and work on the final draft of the Design Guide.
- **March:** The final Joint Substations Design Guide is published, including a summary of the feedback received and how it shaped the final document. Selected stakeholders are briefed directly.

**Future milestones are as anticipated at the time of publishing and subject to change.*

IN THE FIELD

Revealing the sunken secrets of Doggerland and its Mesolithic inhabitants

This summer we completed an offshore site investigation campaign to gather geological data required to inform detailed design around the burial of the offshore export cable, as well as information around landfall and within the Project's offshore array area. A crucial part of this work included archaeological analysis of geophysical data and geoarchaeological recording of geotechnical vibrocores (marine boreholes).

Dr Daniel Young, Principal Geoarchaeologist at Haskoning, who carried out the work on behalf of North Falls, shares more.

The seabed area covering North Falls' proposed offshore Project area represented part of Doggerland, a terrestrial landscape that linked Britain to mainland Europe around 8,000 years ago before rising seas gradually flooded low-lying lands. Today, we know that Doggerland would have comprised a mosaic of marshes, lakes, rivers and forests that would have supported diverse flora and fauna. Previous archaeological finds have included antler tools and stone handaxes, proving that Mesolithic hunter-gatherers would have once exploited this resource-rich environment.

Dr Daniel Young
Principal Geoarchaeologist
Haskoning

As part of our summer site investigation campaign we examined the sediments under the seabed to identify terrestrial features, such as rivers and marshes, that could have sustained prehistoric human communities.

These features are often infilled with sediments that can preserve not only archaeology, but also biological remains, such as pollen and seeds. This allows us to reconstruct the environments of the past, including evidence of human activity such as woodland clearance and burning. The most useful of these is peat (pictured opposite), the decomposed remnants of plants growing in former wetlands that would have been a rich resource for prehistoric hunter gatherers.

Image courtesy of William E. McNulty and Jerome N. Cookson, National Geographic Magazine.

The North Falls logo has been overlaid to give you an approximate idea of where the proposed offshore Project area is located in relation to Doggerland.

> *Doggerland would have comprised a mosaic of marshes, lakes, rivers and forests that would have supported diverse flora and fauna.*

Reconstruction of a Mesolithic camp-site with a hunter in the front ready to fire an arrow mounted with stone microliths. Credit: Ulco Glimmerveen.

Peat layers in a geotechnical vibrocore from the North Falls offshore Project area.

We have identified evidence of peat deposits at various locations within the North Falls offshore Project area and these will now be radiocarbon dated to establish their age. Specialist laboratory assessments of biological remains will then be undertaken to examine the deposits and provide a record of past environments, including any evidence of human activity that could be between 8 and 14,000 years old. We expect to have full results in 2026, so watch this space for further updates.

Work such as this, driven by development projects like North Falls, provides an invaluable contribution to a rapidly growing body of data on this now sunken but no less fascinating landscape.

WHAT WAS MESOLITHIC STONE AGE LIFE LIKE?

VIDEO

Scan this QR code with your phone's camera to watch a short film from BBC Bitesize.

Image courtesy of BBC TV

Peat samples were taken from the vessel Voe Vanguard.

IN THE FIELD

Unearthing the past along our proposed onshore cable route

This autumn, local fields within the parish of Little Bentley were the centre of archaeological investigation as part of early-stage work for the proposed North Falls and Five Estuaries offshore wind farms. Although construction of North Falls and Five Estuaries remains subject to achieving development consent and securing Contracts for Difference (CfDs) and Final Investment Decisions (FIDs), both projects are committed to understanding and preserving the heritage of the areas they will pass through.

In September 2025, a six-week programme of archaeological trial trenching was carried out on private land between Bentley Road and Ardleigh Road. The work, undertaken by Wessex Archaeology on behalf of both projects, is part of a wider strategy to identify and protect any significant archaeological remains along the projects' proposed shared onshore cable route before any potential future development begins.

Trial trenching is a method used by archaeologists to assess the potential of a site by digging trenches at carefully selected locations. The trench locations were informed by a combination of geophysical surveys, historical maps, and aerial photography carried out in 2023. The aim was to investigate both known areas of interest and more 'blank' spots where hidden features might still lie beneath the surface.

Over the 22-day excavation, a total of 126 trenches were dug across six land parcels. Of these, 46 trenches revealed archaeological features, leading to the discovery and recording of 53 separate features. Most of these were historic buried ditches, which are very valuable to archaeologists as they often reveal how the landscape was divided, farmed, and managed over centuries.

The discoveries span an impressive time range, from prehistoric times through to the post-medieval period, showcasing a long history of human activity in the area. Among the findings were several isolated pits, some containing charred plant remains, now being analysed by environmental specialists to learn more about past diets, crops, and local ecology.

Roman pottery identified during a trench excavation.

Trench showing archaeological features

One of the most intriguing discoveries was the presence of two deposits of cremated remains. These were carefully excavated and removed for expert study in a laboratory setting. While no accompanying artefacts or urns were found, which might typically help date such burials, the team hopes to use radiocarbon dating to establish when these individuals lived.

Once the trenches had been analysed by the archaeologists, in discussion with the County Archaeologists at Place Services on behalf of Essex County Council, they were fully backfilled and reinstated, ensuring that local farming could continue. Post-excavation analysis and detailed reporting are still underway. These will help build a fuller picture of the area's history and ensure that important archaeological information is properly recorded and preserved before any construction begins.

This was the second stage of archaeology surveys undertaken, with the proposed substation area surveyed in 2023. Further surveys along the proposed cable route will take place next year. The identification and refinement of these future work locations follow regular discussion and consultation between the projects, the appointed archaeological contractor and Essex County Council / Place Services.

> *"A total of 126 trenches were dug across six land parcels. Of these, 46 trenches revealed archaeological features, leading to the discovery and recording of 53 separate items."*

An example of typical Roman pottery found in Britain.

Our commitment to archaeology

We're committed to involving the local community by sharing information about the area's archaeological and historical heritage. In the future, this could include school workshops, talks for local groups with opportunities to handle finds, and guided site tours for small groups during archaeological investigations. By offering these activities, we aim to make the discoveries accessible and meaningful, and share information of what was discovered, to those who live and work in the area.

This careful balance between development and heritage is a key part of how North Falls and Five Estuaries are working together to deliver renewable energy while respecting and recording the region's rich past.

Ditch and adjacent posthole

Looking ahead to 2026

With the Project expecting to receive its DCO early next year, we're starting to look ahead to bringing to life the tangible benefits and opportunities the Project can unlock for local communities.

To this end, we'll be focusing on three key pillars throughout 2026: ***community benefits, skills and employment,*** and ***supply chain engagement.***

1. COMMUNITY BENEFITS

As a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, North Falls' approach to community benefit funding will follow relevant UK Government guidance.

In April 2025, the Government published its guidance on 'Community benefits for electricity transmission infrastructure'. Subsequently, they have consulted on a further working paper: 'Community benefits and shared ownership for low carbon infrastructure'. A formal response to this consultation is expected later in 2025, with more detailed proposals anticipated in early to mid-2026.

Once we have clarity on the upcoming guidance to follow, North Falls will review and confirm its approach and carry out consultation alongside Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm. Feedback received from local communities and stakeholder groups during consultation will shape any future community benefits fund and inform how it's administered.

Both projects are committed to setting up funds that ensure local people guide funding decisions that meet real needs. With good governance and a transparent, inclusive process, we want to make sure this flexible funding is easy to access and can be used to support long term sustainable community development.

We'll work to understand local priorities, potential opportunities, and investment needs as we develop the fund to help ensure that people living and working near the projects have genuine opportunities to benefit. We'll also consider opportunities to collaborate with other regional developers to explore ways to align engagement and funding frameworks for the greatest local impact.

Once the government guidance is confirmed and the Project has more clarity about its future direction, we will provide further information on our approach to community benefits and share our plans for future consultation.

NEXT YEAR'S ONSHORE GROUND INVESTIGATION CAMPAIGN

We're currently planning ground investigation surveys for 2026 to support the development of the proposed onshore cable route's final design. Prior to this work, we will contact affected landowners to discuss the proposed activities and to seek information on cropping schedules to help us plan and to minimise disruption.

2. SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

One of our key priorities is creating opportunities for local people and businesses to develop the skills needed for future careers in renewable energy.

Next year we'll build on the Outline Skills and Employment Strategy we submitted with our DCO application, with the aim of creating a detailed plan that sets out our commitments to training, education, and employment across the region. We'll be working closely with Essex County Council and Tendring District Council, local training providers, and schools, colleges and universities to identify where we can make the biggest impact.

To support this, we're forming a skills-focused working group with key regional partners and will be increasing our presence at careers fairs and workshops to highlight future opportunities. By investing in people and skills now, North Falls aims to help grow local talent and ensure communities are ready to benefit from the opportunities the Project can unlock.

3. SUPPLY CHAIN ENGAGEMENT

Ahead of construction potentially starting we will work with local businesses to prepare them for upcoming opportunities. Our supply chain portal went live earlier this year and remains open for businesses who want to learn more and register their interest in working with us.

In June 2025 we exhibited at EEEGR's Southern North Sea (EEEGR SNS) conference, a key industry forum where energy sector stakeholders from industry, supply chain, academia and government come together to collaborate. Over the two days we met with 18 potential suppliers to learn more about their services and share information on the Project's future timeline and requirements.

Looking ahead to 2026, we will be increasing our engagement through dedicated supply chain events and by sharing details on tender opportunities and upcoming work packages as the Project progresses. As well as building the wind turbine generators, we'll also need to construct the Project's onshore elements that connect the turbines to the grid. We'll need a diverse range of suppliers to support construction, spanning from specialised electrical equipment providers and civil engineering firms to fencing contractors and welfare unit suppliers.

We are committed to working with as many local businesses as possible and will continue to promote awareness, transparency, and access to the opportunities available. If you haven't already, please register your interest: **www.northfallsoffshore.com/supplier-registration/**

Story so far

PRE-APPLICATION

2018: Early engagement begins and the Project is formally launched as North Falls Offshore Wind Farm.

October to December 2021: Stage 1 (introductory) consultation takes place, a non-statutory consultation on the Project's early proposals.

October to December 2022: Stage 2 (pre-application) consultation takes place, a non-statutory consultation on the Project's progress following stage 1 (introductory) consultation. Feedback received during this consultation informed the reduction in the width of the Project's offshore and onshore cable route, and the selection of more defined landfall and onshore substation locations.

May to July 2023: Stage 3 (statutory) consultation takes place, a statutory consultation focused on the Project's Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR). Feedback received during this consultation informed, amongst other things, the removal of the Project's northern offshore array area and reduction in size of the remaining southern offshore array area.

March to April 2024: Stage 4 (targeted) consultation takes place, focusing on proposed localised changes to the Project's onshore PEIR boundary. Feedback received during this consultation informed ongoing discussions with land interests and will influence the Project's detailed design of proposed highway improvements.

July 2024: DCO application submitted.

ACCEPTANCE

August 2024: DCO application accepted for Examination, triggering the beginning of the Pre-examination phase.

PRE-EXAMINATION

September to October 2024: Relevant Representations period conducted and Examining Authority appointed.

December 2024: Rule 6 letter issued by the Planning Inspectorate to Interested Parties, inviting them to a Preliminary Meeting. This included a draft Examination timetable.

EXAMINATION

January to July 2025: Preliminary Meeting held, triggering the beginning of the Examination phase.

What's to come*

RECOMMENDATION AND DECISION

July to late 2025: Following the close of Examination, the Planning Inspectorate has up to three months to compile a report and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State.

Late 2025 to early 2026: The Secretary of State has a further three months to make a decision as to whether to grant the Project development consent.

WE ARE HERE

POST-DECISION

2026: Six-week period in which the decision may be challenged in High Court.

2027: Earliest anticipated construction date.

2030: North Falls is aiming to be operational.

**Future milestones are as anticipated at the time of publishing and subject to change.*

PEOPLE IN OFFSHORE WIND

We're keen to bring to life the breadth of skills and jobs required to make development projects like North Falls a reality. In our Summer 2025 newsletter we profiled Georgina Harbottle, Geotechnical Project Engineer (Offshore), SSE, and David Reid, Engineering Manager, RWE.

In this edition we hear from Joseph Bailey, Survey Manager, SSE, who has been part of the team overseeing the offshore site investigation campaign described on pages 4 and 5.

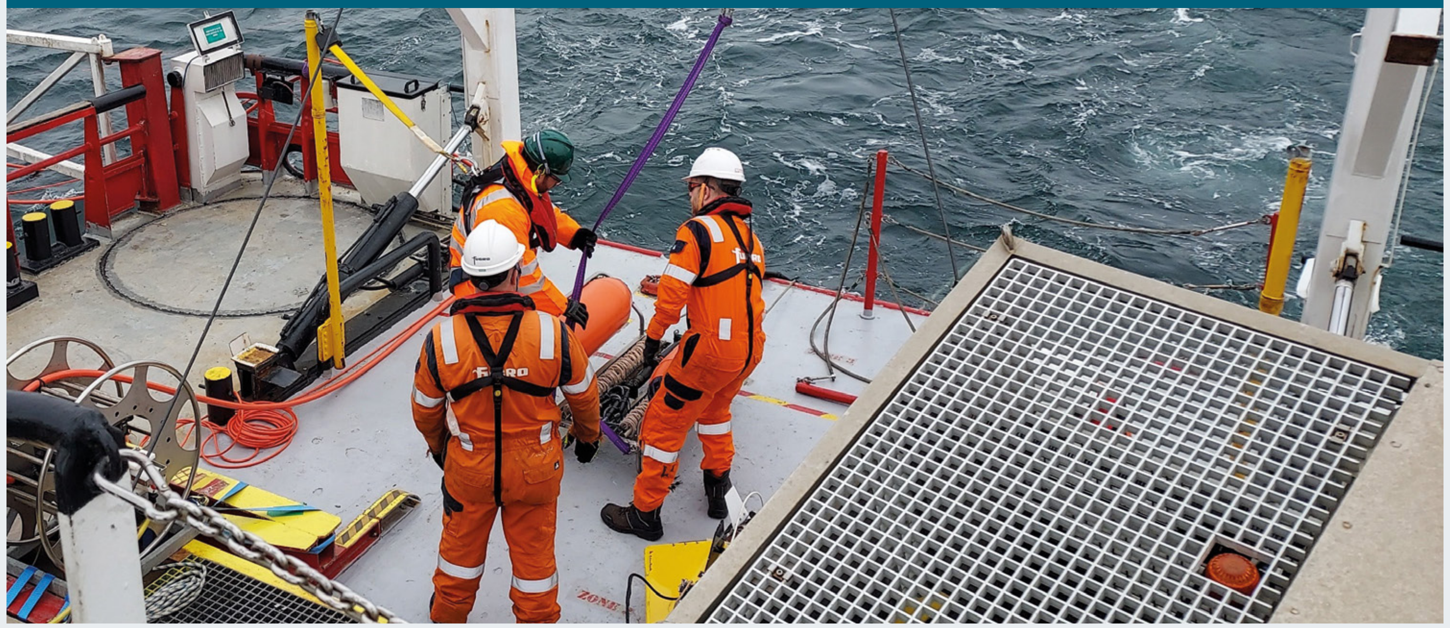
Joseph Bailey
Survey Manager
SSE

"I've always loved being outdoors, and that curiosity about nature sparked my interest in how landscapes form. That passion led me to study geology at university, and later a master's in engineering geology, where I learned how geology applies to real-world projects and how structures interact with the ground.

My career has been quite an adventure! I started out onshore, supervising ground investigations and getting hands-on experience with soil and rock. Over time, I moved into consultancy and eventually offshore work, which took me to projects all over the world.

A few years ago, I joined SSE and stepped into the renewable energy sector – a direction I never imagined when I began. Today, I'm Survey Manager for North Falls, where I plan and deliver offshore geotechnical and geophysical surveys.

What I enjoy most is the variety: one day I'm out on a survey vessel, and the next I'm working alongside archaeologists in a lab. No two days are the same, and that's what keeps it exciting."



Exploring the ocean: our upcoming metocean measurement campaign

As part of our ongoing commitment to understanding the marine environment, we are launching a new metocean (meteorology and oceanography) measurement campaign within the offshore Project area. Chloe Blyth, Metocean Engineer at SSE shares more.

Chloe Blyth
Metocean Engineer
SSE

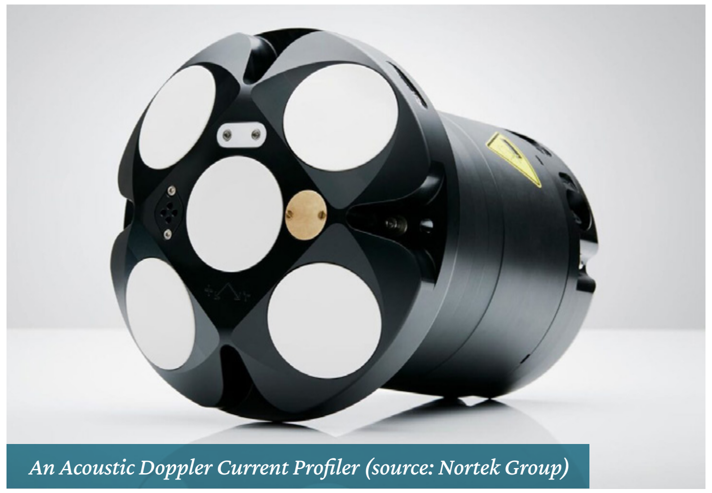
Starting soon, we will be deploying two sub-surface moorings – specialised underwater platforms moored to the seabed – equipped with a suite of sensors that will continuously measure ocean conditions. These moorings will remain in place for a year, with quarterly service visits to download data and ensure that everything is running smoothly.

WHAT WILL WE BE MEASURING?

- **Current speed and direction:** Using an ADCP (Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler), we will measure how fast and in what direction the water is flowing at different depths through the water column.
- **Water levels:** An external pressure sensor will record changes in water level, including the effects of tides and storm surges.
- **Waves:** The ADCP will also capture data on the wave spectrum, including wave height, period and direction.
- **Water temperature and salinity:** A CTD (Conductivity, Temperature and Depth) sensor will measure the temperature and salinity (via conductivity) of the water.
- **Turbidity:** An optical backscatter sensor will measure how clear or cloudy the water is, which can be affected by sediment, organic matter or pollutants.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Accurate metocean data is crucial for offshore wind development. It enhances our understanding of the local, seasonal marine conditions on the site, which improves our design models. This in turn will help engineers to design structures that can withstand the harsh offshore environment and ensure safe working conditions for installation.

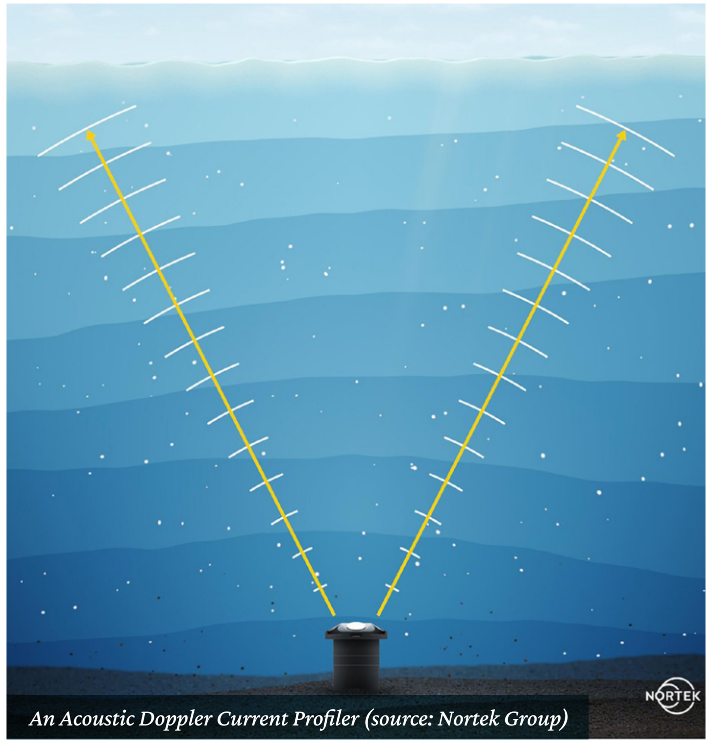


An Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (source: Nortek Group)

HOW DOES AN ADCP WORK?

An Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler is an underwater instrument that measures how fast and in what direction water is moving beneath the surface. It does this using sound – specifically the Doppler effect, which is the same principle that makes a passing ambulance sound different as it moves towards or away from you. This is how it works:

- **Sending acoustic pulses:** The ADCP sends out sound waves into the water column from its transducers (usually pointed upward or downward depending on deployment orientation).
- **Listening for echoes:** The sound waves bounce off tiny particles suspended in the water, like plankton or sediment, and return to the instrument.
- **Measuring the Doppler shift:** If the water is flowing, the particles will be moving, so the frequency of the returning sound waves will be slightly different from the original. This change in frequency is called the Doppler shift.
- **Calculating water movement:** By analysing the Doppler shift at different depths, the ADCP can calculate the speed and direction of the water currents throughout the water column.



An Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (source: Nortek Group)

NORTH FALLS AT-A-GLANCE:

Up to
57
wind turbine generators

Offshore array area of
95
square kilometres

Up to
2
offshore substation platforms and their associated foundations

Generating capacity of approximately
1
gigawatt

24
kilometres of onshore export cables

Onshore cable route width of predominantly
90
metres

NORTH FALLS

Offshore Wind Farm

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