



Strategic Ornithological Support Services for the UK offshore wind industry

Terms of Reference

1. INTRODUCTION

In January 2010, The Crown Estate entered into Zone Development Agreements (ZDAs) with development consortia for the third round of offshore wind farm leasing. In addition to this, The Crown Estate has entered into exclusivity agreements for wind farm sites in Scottish Territorial Waters (STW), and announced an additional round of extensions to existing Round 1 and 2 wind farms. Wind farm development on this scale in the UK presents a number of consenting challenges, and to assist the industry The Crown Estate has committed some of the Round 3 enabling actions budget to helping resolve these consenting challenges for the benefit of the offshore wind programmes.

One of the key issues is the potential for wind farms to impact bird populations. Offshore wind farms may potentially affect bird populations in a number of ways, most notably, indirect habitat loss through displacement, barrier effects for migrating birds or those making regular movements (for example, to and from breeding colonies), and direct mortality due to collisions. However, a number of uncertainties exist in assessing the likely magnitude of the impacts of proposed wind farm developments on birds. These uncertainties create potential for consenting delays and may prevent regulatory authorities from granting consents.

This document provides an outline of the terms of a key strategic relationship between the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the UK's foremost independent applied bird research organisation, and The Crown Estate to provide independent Strategic Ornithological Support Services to the wind farm industry to help address these issues.

2. THE CROWN ESTATE AND THE BTO

The Crown Estate owns and manages around 50% of the foreshore and beds of tidal rivers, together with almost all the seabed out to the 12 nautical mile limit. As landowner of the seabed, and with rights on energy development out to 200 nautical miles, The Crown Estate has responsibility for providing site options and leases for consented offshore wind, wave and tidal energy projects around the UK and recognises that it has an important role in delivering renewable energy objectives. The Crown Estate is working with both the UK government and the devolved administrations in advancing projects that have the potential to deliver significant energy supply, such as Round 3 of Offshore Wind (intended to deliver 25GW of energy for the UK) and Scottish Offshore Wind (which could deliver further energy from Scottish territorial waters by 2012).

The BTO was formed in 1933 and is the UK's leading independent research organisation studying birds and their habitats, with considerable expertise in the design, implementation and analysis of a range of projects from intensive studies to extensive surveys. It runs a number of national, annual surveys through its volunteer network, including the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) (a joint scheme of the BTO, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Joint Nature Conservation Committee, in association with the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust) that monitors the sizes and trends of the internationally important non-breeding waterbird populations in the UK. BTO research into waterbirds and seabirds includes a long-term programme of work on the key drivers of waterbird and seabird population change, including climate change, habitat loss, disturbance and non-native species.

The BTO brings to the partnership nationally and internationally recognised expertise on how birds and other biodiversity are affected by the wider environment. The BTO has worked in the renewable energy field since the 1980s. This independent advice is untainted by any campaigning activities. The BTO is proud of its independence and strives hard to maintain it. The BTO reputation should provide a guarantee of quality to Secretariat outputs, to the benefit of The Crown Estate and the renewables industry.

3. THE STRATEGIC ORNITHOLOGICAL SUPPORT SERVICES CONTRACT

The BTO's key role within this contract is to act as the Strategic Ornithological Support Services (SOSS) Secretariat and, with the help of relevant experts, identify and oversee work that will provide solutions to help in the consenting process for proposed Round 3, Round 1 and 2 extension and Scottish Territorial Waters (STW) offshore wind developments. Thus while the contract will be directly between The Crown Estate and the BTO, the secretariat's remit is to provide broader support to the offshore wind farm industry. The contract also specifies the services of the Centre for Research into Ecological and Environmental Modelling (CREEM) at St. Andrews University, and Bureau Waardenburg (BW) in the Netherlands, to provide independent technical expertise.

4. SCOPE OF WORK

The scope of services within the SOSS contract includes the following key items:

- i. To provide **Secretariat services** for a Steering Group of stakeholders (key secretariat staff are outlined below). The Steering Group will meet approximately quarterly from July 2010 over the period of the contract, co-ordinated by the Strategic Ornithological Support Services (SOSS) Secretariat.

Steering Group membership

Stakeholders represented on the Steering Group will include representatives from The Crown Estate, the BTO, the JNCC, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Natural England (NE), the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), the Marine Management Association (MMA), Marine Scotland, the RSPB, one representative from each of the consortia holding ZDAs for the nine Round 3 wind farm zones, and one representative from each developer not represented in Round 3 where that developer has an Exclusivity Agreement for a Scottish Territorial Waters site or an Agreement for Lease for a Round 1 or Round 2 extension site.

- ii. To coordinate and lead consultations with Project Working Groups overseeing individual projects, reporting back to the Steering Group. The Project Working Groups will steer and provide expert comment on the work on each project on behalf of the wider Steering Group.

Project Working Group Membership

For each individual project or Scope of Work, a Project Working Group will be formed consisting of one SOSS Secretariat representative, two representatives from either JNCC, SNH, NE, CCW, RSPB, MMO and Marine Scotland, and two representatives from among the developers. The Crown Estate will be corresponding members of each group, and may choose to be involved. Other experts may be called upon as necessary.

- iii. To identify priority issues to take forward through discussions with the Steering Group.

A key role of the Secretariat is to determine which issues are most important and need to be investigated further and which are less critical.

- iv. To develop scopes for research projects through discussions with the Steering Group, consultation with other stakeholders and the Secretariat's own technical input.

- v. To provide, with support from CREAM and BW, in-house technical support in respect of:
 - a. Offshore/marine ornithological expertise (monitoring methodologies, assessing population-level impacts, etc.);
 - b. Statistical analysis and experimental design, particularly survey design for seabirds at sea, experimental procedures for measuring environmental impacts and sensitivity analysis;
 - c. Modelling, with particular reference to population modelling;
 - d. Mapping and GIS;
 - e. Remote Technologies (radar, thermal imaging, tagging).

- vi. To oversee the tendering process and provide project management for major research projects.

Within the terms of the contract, the BTO can undertake research work as decided by The Crown Estate on the advice provided by the SOSS Steering Group. However, for some research projects The Crown Estate may elect to procure providers through a tender process. The Secretariat will oversee the tendering process and provide project management for these projects. However, should the BTO wish to bid for such work, The Crown Estate will oversee the tendering process and the BTO will have no involvement in assessing received bids nor in appointing the successful bidder. Further information regarding these processes is included in an Annex to this document.

- vii. To advise on data requirements for The Crown Estate's in house spatial planning tool, the Marine Resource System (MaRS). This will include providing recommendations for updating existing datasets.

Throughout this scope of work, it is also important that potential negative impacts on work already underway be avoided and mitigated. The Secretariat's remit is therefore not to compromise already agreed scopes of work or to reject existing methodologies and replace these with new ones, but to provide advice on how current methods can be built upon and to seek to deliver solutions to existing blockages and issues.

5. SECRETARIAT STAFF AND COMMUNICATION

Relevant staff to this contract are as follows:

The Crown Estate's Project Officer: Andrew Finlay, Consents Advisor andrew.finlay@thecrownestate.co.uk, supported by Anne Savage, Planning and Consents Manager, anne.savage@thecrownestate.co.uk and Chris Lloyd, Development Manager (Strategic Workstreams), chris.lloyd@thecrownestate.co.uk.

Head of SOSS Secretariat: Dr Niall Burton, Head of Wetland and Marine Research, BTO (niall.burton@bto.org), supported by Drs Mark Rehfisch (mark.rehfisch@bto.org) and Nigel Clark (nigel.clark@bto.org) as required.

SOSS Secretariat Officer: Dr Lucy Wright, Research Ecologist, Wetland and Marine Research Team, BTO (soss-secretariat@bto.org), supported by Dr Chris Thaxter (chris.thaxter@bto.org) as required – the SOSS Secretariat Officer will be the first point of contact for stakeholders.

Project and Contract Management (for overseeing the management of research projects): Sam Bailey, Senior Development Officer, BTO (sam.bailey@bto.org – project management) and Emily Coleman, Development Officer, BTO (emily.coleman@bto.org - contracts).

Media Communications: Claire Lovett, The Crown Estate (claire.lovett@thecrownestate.co.uk), and Graham Appleton, Director of Communications, BTO (graham.appleton@bto.org).

Wider communication through a website (<http://www.bto.org/science/wetland-and-marine/soss>), periodic newsletters, conference presence, stands, posters, talks and media announcements will be considered to support the work.