



## New approach for completing environmental assessments for Thor offshore wind farm is being launched

The Danish Energy Agency has decided that a Strategic Environmental Assessment must be completed prior to submission of final bids for Thor offshore wind farm. In addition to this, comprehensive environmental assessments are still to be carried out prior to final bids. Later, the winner of the concession will

## **have to carry out Environmental Impact Assessment of the concrete project.**

The Danish Energy Appeal Board decision of 20 December 2018 concerning Vesterhav Syd offshore wind farm has resulted in an adjustment of the approach for undertaking environmental assessments for the Thor offshore wind farm project, in order to ensure a legally appropriate process for environmental assessments and permitting.

The adjusted approach is based on a thorough analysis of the underlying legal framework, approaches used in other areas and in other countries, risk-mitigation, etc. As part of the analysis, the Danish Energy Agency has consulted the Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark, the Danish Environmental Protection Agency, Kammeradvokaten, Energinet as well as the industry represented by Wind Denmark. Moreover, a representative selection of developers has been involved.

### **Central elements in the new and adjusted approach**

From now on, the Danish Energy Agency will be using an approach based on a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) prior to final bids of the *plan* for the offshore wind farm in line with the Executive Order on environmental assessment of plans, programmes and specific projects. The *plan* to be assessed consists of the political decisions regarding the Thor offshore wind farm project, namely, the Energy Agreement 2018 and related decision concerning the tender (the selected site, capacity of the wind farm in MW, and the decision to include the grid connection in tender). At the operational level, Energinet will be responsible for carrying out the SEA-process by order from the Danish Energy Agency.

In addition to the SEA, Energinet will also carry out a range of environmental assessments as has been practiced previously. The purpose of these additional assessments is to provide critical data for as much risk-mitigation as possible for the Thor offshore wind site. These additional assessments focus on bird surveys, safety of navigation, radio links and radar, fisheries, marine archaeology, noise and cumulative impacts.

After the deadline for bidding, the concession winner will carry out the Environmental Impact Assessment of the *project* at sea - i.e. wind farm, offshore substation and export cables forward to the landfall. In addition to this, Energinet will undertake Environmental Impact Assessment of the concrete project on land, that is, from the landfall and onwards to the onshore

substations, the onshore substations themselves as well as onwards to the 400 kV transmission grid at Idomlund. The Environmental Protection Agency is responsible authority for the project on land.

Not until the Environmental Impact Assessment of the concrete project has been carried out and approved, will it be possible to grant the licence for construction, which is the environmental permit for the project. Prior to the launch of the Environmental Impact Assessment, a hearing of the public and relevant authorities will be carried out on the scope and content of the Environmental Impact Assessment report will be carried out. There will also be a hearing of the public and relevant authorities, when the EIA-report and a draft licence for construction has been drafted. Only hereafter will it be possible to make the final approval about whether a licence for construction can be granted. There will be a four-week time limit for complaints after granting the licence.

## **The Danish model for offshore wind persists**

One of the core aims of the analysis and selection of a new approach has been to capture as many elements as possible of the *Danish model* for offshore wind tendering, which is widely recognized by developers. The central parameters for success selection of a new approach has thus been:

- Ensuring a legally appropriate process
- Minimizing risks for developers, here under procedural risk related to appeals, in order to facilitate lowest possible bid price
- Minimizing the time needed for the procedure with respect to the political requirements for an optimized time table, but also a focus on lowest possible bid price
- Setting up an appropriate and inclusive consultation process with local citizens, thus addressing a growing need for a transparent and open consultation process regarding offshore wind farms

## **Standard approach for environmental assessments in future tenders**

The chosen approach for environmental assessments is considered useful as the standard model for future calls for offshore wind farm tenders, since it is flexible and can be used for complex and less complex projects. The Thor offshore wind farm project will for example be put out for tender with a flexible farm-size of 800-1,000 MW and a decision to include the grid connection in the call for tender, all of which requires flexibility concerning

positioning of turbines and offshore substation.

**[Read more about the new procedure for environmental assessment in these guidelines: “Guidelines for completing environmental assessments for Thor offshore wind farm”.](#)**

### **Information meetings with citizens and stakeholders**

The Danish Energy Agency will hold a first information meeting with local citizens and stakeholders on the process for environmental assessments for Thor offshore wind farm in the first quarter of 2020. This meeting will have a focus on the SEA of the overall project as well as on the EIA of the onshore project. The process for the SEA of Thor offshore wind farm is expected to be completed by the second quarter of 2021, while the EIA-process for the onshore project is expected to be completed by the third quarter of 2021.

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