**Equinor responses –**

* **Weybourne Parish Council is fundamentally opposed to the repeated disruption and environmental damage from windfarm cabling. We urge Equinor to engage more proactively with the OTN solution to this problem. Subsequent questions about onshore cabling are therefore not an indication of acceptance of onshore radial connections**

Your feedback is noted. However, as there is currently no developed legislative proposal to support a coordinated approach on our project timeframes, it is not possible for us to integrate the OTN into SEP and DEP. We are actively engaging with the Government’s Offshore Transmission Network Review and are fully supportive of efforts for greater coordination in the offshore wind sector. We have proposed SEP and DEP to be a pathfinder project within the early opportunities workstream of the OTNR, and we continue to use our position to promote this idea with the Government and are working closely with trade body Renewable UK to contribute to the Government’s review.

* **Landfall – how will this affect the beach and the coastal path? How long is disruption to this area likely to last? Will this affect the local fishing industry?**

The only time the beach would be closed will be for the few hours it would take on one or two days to pull out the cable ducts. Equinor has committed to using horizontal directional drilling (HDD) which will minimise disruption at the landfall location. Additionally, we will not locate a main construction compound at the landfall. In total, 4-5 months of activity are likely to occur at the landfall site.

We have been engaging with the local fishing community, and as part of our Development Consent Order (DCO) application, we will develop a Fisheries Engagement strategy. Throughout construction we will use an onshore Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO) to facilitate engagement and information sharing with local fisheries during the project development/construction phase.

* **Is there likely to be any disruption to Beach Lane? This is a narrow and heavily used route.**

The landfall location will be located on private land, with access taken through the Muckleburgh Estate only. No access will be required via Beach Lane and there will be no construction traffic on Beach Lane.

* **In addition, the pond/reedbed and sallows in Beach Lane are a County Wildlife Site and home to at least one Schedule 1 bird, as well as water voles which are a protected species. These areas should therefore be avoided during construction.**

There will be no direct impacts to the Beach Lane CWS, however there is the potential for disturbance from construction activity at the landfall location. To reduce the potential for disturbance we will seek to maximise the distance between physical works and the designated sites, including siting features such as construction compounds and temporary access routes as far from the CWS as possible. There will be other mitigation measures that can be adopted to mitigate specific impacts. For example, external lighting at the main compound would be designed and positioned to minimise light spillage. Appropriate pollution prevention measures will also be adopted to ensure that plant and materials do not result in any contamination to the surrounding habitats.

* **Houses along The Street – what is Equinor doing to reduce disturbance to residents during construction, and to reduce EMF exposure during the operation of the windfarm? Is it not possible for Equinor and Ørsted to cooperate and share trenching here?**

National Grid carried out an independent assessment of EMF associated with onshore infrastructure required for SEP and DEP, which can be found in Appendix 30.1, which is an appendix to the health chapter within our Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), available on our website at [https://sepanddep.commonplace.is/proposals/11-peir-documentation](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsepanddep.commonplace.is%2Fproposals%2F11-peir-documentation&data=04%7C01%7Cjantr%40equinor.com%7C97d867ce53bb4d47c12008d979e8076a%7C3aa4a235b6e248d591957fcf05b459b0%7C0%7C0%7C637674859775284690%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=C4so%2BWELTEO%2B5AZBQbf%2Fwavjm9DSnQXTMKP%2FhTkbsus%3D&reserved=0).

This study is currently being updated to account for design changes in other projects in the vicinity of SEP and DEP to give the correct assessment of any potential cumulative effects. The final report will be shared as part of our DCO submission.

The EMF study is part of a commissioned study by National Grid which assessed the strength of EMFs along the onshore footprint. These calculations are performed by an independent third party in accordance with relevant standards to provide impartial, accurate and reliable analysis, demonstrating that magnetic fields are below the specified limits.

The Government, acting on the advice of authoritative scientific bodies, has put in place appropriate measures to protect the public from EMFs. These measures comprise compliance with the relevant exposure limits. These measures are set out in a Written Ministerial Statement, National Policy statement EN-5, and various Codes of Practice. 5.1.8. All of the proposed technology options for the SEP and DEP export cables and third-party crossing points would be fully compliant with the Government policy. Specifically, all the fields produced would be below the relevant exposure limits. Therefore, there would be no significant EMF effects resulting from this proposed development.

Additionally, Equinor have commissioned National Grid to provide a more detailed assessment of the anticipated EMF levels at Weybourne and at the A149 crossing, this data will be available from National Grid in due course. This is to provide greater reassurance that the anticipated levels are significantly below the relevant exposure limits that are set out within the UK Government’s guidelines.

Regarding coordination with Ørsted, Equinor is having on-going discussions with Ørsted regarding interactions with the Hornsea Project Three (HP3), although it will not be possible to share cable trenches. HP3 has already received development consent and is therefore working towards a different construction timeline. Furthermore, the width of a shared cable corridor would be much greater compared to what is required for HP3 and SEP/DEP alone. This is due to the number of cables, and the separating distances required between circuits. Routing of the cable corridor to avoid sensitive features would therefore be more challenging and would almost certainly result in a greater overall impact.

* **Will construction traffic avoid Holt Road and Sandy Hill Lane/Station Rd? Neither of these is suitable for heavy construction traffic. There are already issues due to the narrow road and the presence of caravans/campervans and agricultural machinery.**

There are several different considerations we have made to reduce construction traffic through Weybourne as much as possible. Firstly, we will not have a storage compound for the onshore cable works at the landfall location. This will help to reduce traffic movements within and around Weybourne considerably. Secondly, there will be direct access from A149 into the cable corridor. This will allow vehicles approaching from the west to access the first section of the cable corridor in this area without having to pass through the village.

With regards to Sandy Hill Lane, Equinor will utilise the haul road from A148 as much as possible to reduce the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) movements. Some vehicle movements along Sandy Hill Lane will be required to facilitate the trenchless crossing of Weybourne Woods, however vehicles would be escorted using pilot vehicles to reduce the conflict with local road users.

* **Even bringing construction traffic through Weybourne on the A149 is fraught with issues – pedestrians crossing near the cemetery; pedestrians on the road due to lack of footpaths on Sheringham Rd and The Street; narrow road with buildings/walls on both sides near the church – even normal lorries struggle to get past if there is traffic coming the other way, and there are often buses and caravans/campervans, as well as pedestrians trying to cross (many of our residents are elderly, while holidaymakers are unfamiliar with the road and the traffic issues).**

A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) is being prepared for the DCO application which will set out in detail the procedures for managing the impact of HGV traffic during the onshore construction period.

Listed below are some of the measures that will be relevant to managing HGV traffic within and around Weybourne. This includes:

* Use of pilot vehicles to escort construction vehicles along sensitive links
* Enhanced driver training to ensure awareness of delivery timing constraints, approved routes, diversions, highway safety concerns, etc.
* Community liaison officer to help effectively manage deliveries during local planned events (e.g. harvests, fêtes and around public holidays)
* Monitoring and reporting system to ensure compliance with the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP).

* **Crossing Holt Road – the proposed crossing appears to be located on a sharp bend with poor visibility. Will trenchless drilling be used here? What steps will Equinor take to ensure safety and keep disruption to a minimum?**

Following community feedback and in order to reduce disruption, Equinor have committed to a trenchless crossing of Holt Road. Please see above for how we will manage driver and pedestrian safety and keep disruption to a minimum. 

* **Sandy Hill Lane/Weybourne Woods – has the company now decided to opt to take the cables under Weybourne Woods, rather than up/across the road? What impact will this have on wildlife and habitat in the area? Will there be any traffic impact on Sandy Hill Lane/Station Rd?**

Based on results from ground investigations carried out late summer 2021, we have confirmed the feasibility of a trenchless crossing beneath Weybourne Woods.

The horizontal directional drill will be undertaken in two parts, each approximately 400m in length.  The midway point (400m into Weybourne Woods) has been the subject of an arboricultural survey, which has been used to locate a drilling compound within an existing gap in the wood. The surveys have indicated a low density of trees with limited ecological value in this area. Furthermore, we are exploring long-term opportunities to create an alternative habitat within this area that will improve species and structural diversity.

As mentioned previously, some deliveries of plant, material and personnel would be required along Sandy Hill Lane to facilitate the trenchless crossing of Weybourne Woods. However, vehicles would be escorted using pilot vehicles to reduce the conflict with local road users.

* **How long after a section of cabling is completed is the habitat reinstated?**

Replacement planting will be implemented during the first planting season following completion of construction.

* **Will Equinor monitor reinstated areas to ensure that the reinstatement has been successful? (e.g., survival of hedging plants over a period of years, drainage, watercourses)**

An Outline Landscape Management Plan will be prepared for the DCO application, and this will include commitment to a maintenance and aftercare period for replacement planting.

* **Will Equinor commit to carrying out SEP and DEP as one project to reduce impact, provided permission is granted for this?**

It has always been Equinor's intention to bring both the projects forward at the same time and with a common transmission system. As two separate ownerships are involved, we do no control whether both will be successful in the same CfD round. Equinor has been lobbying hard for the required regulatory changes to make this happen, to reduce the overall impact to the community. However, under the current regulatory framework this is not possible, so we are contributing to the Offshore Transmission Network Review, and working closely with BEIS to try and achieve this.

* **We strongly believe that Weybourne and other Parishes directly affected by the construction of the onshore cabling should be the recipients of compensation for the impact on life and habitat, rather than there being a Norfolk-wide fund.**

The potential benefits of any Community Funds which may be associated with these projects will form part of Equinor's stakeholder engagement with local communities as the projects are matured. As for the existing Sheringham Shoal and Dudgeon windfarms community funds, potential resources will be targeted at initiatives benefiting the local community affected by the SEP and DEP projects.

* **We favour a fund allocated to each of the areas affected, so that the communities can make their own decisions about how compensation should be spent in their own localities, rather than having to go cap in hand to a central fund and make their case; this is how the solar park fund at East and West Beckham works.**

Local engagement and ownership is a prerequisite for such funding to work as intended, please also see above answer.

* **We have no faith in the promise of “local jobs” after the decision to transfer the existing Wells and Sheringham operations to Lowestoft. Promises of jobs and investment in STEM training will not benefit the local communities that are affected by the windfarm developments.**

Combining the operations for both the Sheringham Shoal and Dudgeon offshore Wind Farms into one operations and maintenance hub in Great Yarmouth positions both organisations for future growth, and suitably qualified individuals in North Norfolk can apply for any job opportunities that may exist from time to time in the Great Yarmouth hub.

The STEM Programme grants from the Dudgeon Community Fund help to prepare young people in the North Norfolk, Breckland and Great Yarmouth regions of Norfolk for future careers in offshore wind energy or related industries.

* **There are issues with construction at almost any time of the year:**

**1.**            **The tourist season (April-October)**

**2.**           **The low season (November-March)**

**3.**           **Agricultural activity (year-round)**

**4.**           **The bird breeding season (April-August)**

**5.**           **Migratory birds (spring and autumn)**

**6.**           **Overwintering birds (October-March)**

We have noted the concern about the timing of construction. Mitigation relating to all of the above issues will be set out within the DCO application. For example, in relation to breeding birds, all vegetation clearance along the onshore cable corridor will be undertaken between September and February inclusive, to avoid the main nesting bird season.

* **Spring Beck – this is an internationally rare chalk stream habitat, and work has been carried out by the EA to improve the watercourse, and it now features Brown Trout, Otters and Kingfisher.**

Equinor have committed to a trenchless crossing of Spring Beck in order to avoid impacts to this watercourse.

* **The PEIR has not included the importance of the Weybourne area for migrating birds. Why not? Weybourne/Muckleburgh is an important landfall/take-off site for migratory birds and provides a scarce habitat which birds can use for resting/foraging on arrival or prior to leaving. There are few other similar features on the North Norfolk coast.**

The northernmost section of the route, from Weybourne to Plumstead has been subject to two years of over-wintering bird surveys. No significant species or notable concentrations were observed, although of interest was a flock of up to 3,500 pink-footed geese that was present within a harvested sugar beet field beet just south of Weybourne cliffs during the November/December 2019 and January 2020 surveys.

The distribution of over-wintering bird activity is closely linked with the presence of suitable habitat, namely arable fields with ground cover of stubble or sugar beet crop. The impact of construction is anticipated to be of negligible significance because there is typically an abundant supply of suitable fields for foraging for over-wintering birds throughout Norfolk and surrounding counties, which would be expected to be able to support any displaced foraging demands.

* **Weybourne’s main industries are tourism, agriculture, and fishing, all of which are likely to be negatively affected by the onshore cabling.**

Equinor has made several commitments to reduce impacts on tourism within the area:

* HDD at the landfall to minimise impacts to the beach and to keep access restrictions to an absolute minimum
* Locating the landfall on private land, with access through the Muckleburgh estate only and no access via Beach Lane
* No compound for the onshore cable works located at the landfall
* HDD of Weybourne Woods to avoid closing Sandy Hill Lane and to reduce impacts to recreational users of the woods
* A commitment to avoid closing any of the roads leading in and out of Weybourne
* Enhanced measures within a CTMP

With regards to agriculture, mitigation measures during construction include the use of an Agricultural Liaison Officer, ensuring agricultural drainage systems are maintained and employing best practice measures in line with a Soils Management Plan.

Joint bays and link boxes will be required approximately every 1000m and will be located wherever possible on field boundaries to avoid any impact on farming practices during the operational phase of SEP and DEP.

We also understand the importance of the fishing industry and have long-lasting relationships with local fishing organisations and representative bodies. Equinor will continue dialogue with local fisheries in North Norfolk to minimise the impacts of our activities and secure safe coexistence.