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24 TRAFFIC AND ACCESS

24.1 Introduction

This section describes the effects of the onshore elements of the Thanet Offshore Wind Farm (Thanet) project on the local transport infrastructure. It describes the existing local transport network and the potential impacts upon local traffic during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the project, along with any necessary mitigation measures.

24.2 Assessment Methodology

The environmental effects of traffic and access have been assessed with reference to Guidance Note No. 1 Guidelines for the Environmental Assessment of Road Traffic (1993) issued by the Institute of Environmental Assessment.

Data sources have included the Environmental Statement issued for the East Kent Access Phase 1C (Babtie, 2002).

24.3 Existing Environment

24.3.1 Local road network

The local road network of relevance to the project comprises the A256 Sandwich Road and Ramsgate Road between the Lord of the Manor roundabout to the north and Sandwich to the south (see **Figure 20.1**). The onshore cable route has a landfall at the north end of Pegwell Bay and will follow the carriageway of the A256 Sandwich Road, for about 3.0km to the disused Richborough Power Station (NGR TR 333 619).

The A256 Sandwich Road is a modern single carriageway standard road, subject to the national speed limit of 60mph, running north - south between the built-up areas of Dover and Thanet. Traffic counts taken from south of Richborough estimate a two way flow of traffic in excess of 23,000 vehicles per day for an average month in 2001 (Babtie, 2002). Around 10% of this flow is concentrated into each of the morning and afternoon peak rush hours. Such traffic demand would ordinarily require a two lane dual carriageway standard of provision.

The section of road south of Ebbsfleet Lane (B2084) and Ramsgate Road (A256) roundabout (NGR TR336 624) suffers from significant congestion during peak hour flows, with queues and delays on a regular basis. The A256 is currently not capable of handling the maximum hourly flows on an average day. Consequently, journey times are increased, with traffic moving at a crawl and on occasions reaching a total halt (Babtie, 2002).

There are no recorded public rights of way that will be affected by the onshore cable laying works.

24.3.2 East Kent Access, Phase 1C

Kent County Council has consented improvement works for the ‘East Kent Access, Phase 1C’, which comprises improvement of the A256, from south of Ebbsfleet Lane to

the Ramsgate Road roundabout (NGR TR333 602), to a two lane carriageway with the possible provision of traffic signals at the junction of Ebbsfleet Lane. Part of this scheme includes the southern extent of the onshore cable route between Ebbsfleet Lane and the entrance to Richborough Power Station.

Commencement of the improvement works has already experienced delays, however works are anticipated to start during 2005, taking approximately 18 months to complete.

24.4 Impacts during Construction

24.4.1 Disruption due to delivery of plant and materials

A temporary construction area to accommodate site offices, storage facilities, canteen, toilets and car parking would be required for the onshore works. The location would be chosen by the Cable Contractor and would be subject to a separate local planning application at the time. Plant and materials would need to be delivered to this compound and areas of construction as required. The onshore cable would most likely be delivered to site by road on cable drums, in 500m lengths. This would require up to 42 lorry loads to the laydown area over a period of four to six weeks. Other construction plant would include excavators and a drilling rig if the horizontal directional drill option were chosen (see **Section 2**, **Project Details**). In addition, construction personnel would also travel to site on a daily basis.

In order to minimise the amount of disruption to the local road network, deliveries would be programmed outside the morning and evening peaks. Otherwise it is anticipated that other than in the immediate area of the works, the wider traffic network would be able to accommodate the additional traffic numbers due to the relatively small increases in traffic movements compared to the existing two way flow of traffic, which is in excess of 23,000 vehicles per day.

Given the above mitigation measures and further discussions with the Highways Authority, to agree any additional measures, a **negligible** impact on the road network is envisaged.

24.4.2 Disruption to traffic flows

The onshore cables would be laid in the carriageway of the A256 Sandwich Road for approximately 3.0km, which would lead to a disruption in traffic flows along both sides of the road. There is already significant congestion along the A256 Sandwich Road during peak hour flows, with queues and delays on a regular basis. Speed restrictions and lane closures associated with any works in the road would inevitably exacerbate this situation.

At this stage, the programme of works for the construction of the Phase 1C East Kent Access works is unclear, however agreement would be reached with the Highways Authority as to the exact programming of both projects, such that road users experience minimum disruption. Other matters such as the length of road that can be worked on at any one time and traffic management requirements would also be established. All work in the highways will be carried out in accordance with the New Roads and Street Works Act (1991).

It is anticipated that cable ducts would be laid during the works associated with Phase 1C of the East Kent Access so as to minimise the need to excavate the road again at a later date and, hence, reduce the potential for disruption to other road users.

Access to all existing residences and business premises would be maintained at all times as far as possible, with road users and nearby residents and businesses warned in advance of the works and any particular elements of disruption.

Given successful implementation of the mitigation measures agreed with the Highways Authority, the impact on traffic and access is expected to be short term **minor adverse**.

24.5 Impacts during Operation

It is not anticipated there will be any requirement to excavate the cable during the operation of the Thanet project and as such there will be **no impact** upon traffic and access.

24.6 Impacts during Decommissioning

It is anticipated that the cables would be disconnected and left in place, unless otherwise advised by the Local Planning Authority. **No impacts** are therefore anticipated.

24.7 Cumulative Effects

Kent County Council has planned Improvement works for the A256, (East Kent Access, Phase 1C). These are scheduled to begin during 2005 and construction works are expected to last approximately 18 months. Construction would be expected to result in increased traffic delays during peak morning and evening traffic periods (Babtie, 2002).

Where practicable, works associated with the cable laying operation, such as laying of cable ducts, will be carried out at the same time at the road improvement works. By combining such activities with ongoing liaison with the Highways Authority, minimum disruption to road users as a result of the two projects will be ensured where possible.

24.8 Summary

The onshore cable route would, for much of its length, be buried beneath the A256 Sandwich Road. The section of road south of the Ebbsfleet Lane (B2084) and Ramsgate Road (A256) roundabout, which includes Sandwich Road, suffers from significant congestion during peak hour flows, with queues and delays on a regular basis. Disruption to the local traffic network would be anticipated during the installation of the onshore cable route and during the delivery of plant and materials, which would include up to 42 lorry loads delivering the cables over a period of four to six weeks.

All works within the highway will be undertaken in accordance with the New Roads and Street Works Act (1991) and deliveries will be timed to avoid the morning and afternoon peak traffic flows. In addition, further discussions will take place with the Highways Authority to agree other traffic management requirements as well as the maintenance of access to residences and businesses.

The affected stretch of road also includes part of the recently consented improvement works along the A256, known as East Kent Access, Phase 1C. The programme for these works is unclear at the present time and discussions will therefore take place with Kent County Council to ensure that there is minimal disruption to the stretch of road as result of the two projects.