1. Introduction

1.1 Members will recall giving consideration to an earlier S42 consultation in July 2012 concerning this proposal. Navitus Bay Development Limited is proposing to construct an offshore wind park to be known as Navitus Bay Wind Park. The proposed wind park would be located off the Hampshire and Dorset coast and to the west of the Isle of Wight, potentially covering an area of approximately 67 square miles. If granted consent, the wind park would be located 8.9 miles from the shore at the nearest point off Durlston Head on the Isle of Purbeck and 8.6 miles from the Needles. The closest location to the wind park from within the National Park would be at Keyhaven.

1.2 Onshore, a cable would run underground from for a length of 22 miles from the shore line at Taddiford Gap, Barton-on-Sea to a new substation at Three Legged Cross, north of Ferndown. The cable would run through parts of the National Park, mainly to the east and north of New Milton (Bashley) before exiting the park south of Bashley Cross Road. The cable would then re-enter the Park to the north of the Cat & Fiddle Public House in Hinton and then running in a north westerly direction across to the south of Neacroft before leaving the park boundary.

1.3 The developers have provided 3 indicative layouts of the wind turbines. These comprise firstly a layout of 218 5MW (Max height to blade tip 177m) turbines, secondly a layout of 136 8MW (Max height to blade tip 200m) turbines and finally a layout with a mix of 169 turbines (5mw, 6mw (Max height to blade tip 182m) and 8mw). The development as such would be classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and would be considered by the Planning Inspectorate (having taken on this responsibility from the recently abolished Infrastructure Planning Commission).

1.4 The proposed application for which the applicant will be seeking a Development Consent Order (which is currently anticipated to be submitted in early 2014) will comprise the following:
• Construction of up to 218 offshore wind turbines, number being dependent on the generating potential of each turbine.
• Construction of one offshore monitoring mast to collect information, such as wind speeds and wind direction.
• Construction of up to three offshore substations, and cables to link the wind turbines and the offshore substations.
• An electrical connection, including the offshore export cables, onshore cables and onshore substation.

1.5 Under Section 42 of the Act, Regulation 3 and Schedule 1 of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009, the applicant is required to undertake consultation with statutory consultees, local authorities and those who have an interest in the land affected by the application.

1.6 This is expected to be the final round of consultation before the application is submitted to the Inspectorate next year. The Authority is specifically being consulted on the latest environmental information on which the application will be assessed. This is known as ‘Preliminary Environmental Information. Edition 3’ or ‘PEI3’ for short. There are thirty three chapters in the document, divided between three very large A3 lever arch files.

1.7 The Authority has a detailed copy of all the documentation submitted with the S42 consultation. The information (and relevant chapters) is also available to download on the developer’s website by following this link.

http://www.navitusbaywindpark.co.uk/preliminary-environmental-information-pei3

It is worth noting that the non-technical summary document (available on the same website) provides a useful overview of the project and the various elements outlined in more detail in the full document.

2. Background information

2.1 Significant documentation has been submitted as part of this S42 consultation and officers in relevant specialist fields are scrutinising the information. In addition, officers are undertaking close liaison and cooperation in the consideration of this information with officers from New Forest District Council and Hampshire County Council. Essentially, officers will be assessing the following matters:

• Is the methodology that has been used to assess the impact of the development satisfactory in its scope and its usage? (i.e. have the developers looked at all the relevant evidence on the topic and have they assessed the evidence in a fair and reasonable manner?)
• Are the conclusions that they have drawn on the likely impact reasonable, given the evidence available?

• Is the developer’s categorisation of the impact as either negligible, minor, moderate or major reasonable given the evidence, and given the extent of any mitigation proposed?

3. Consideration of Section 42 Consultation

3.1 It is important to note that the aim of the exercise is not to say whether the Authority agree or disagree with the proposal at this stage, but rather, to comment on whether the assessment of the proposal within the documents is fair and comprehensive, and whether the Authority is able to draw to the developers attention any additional local evidence before the proposal is submitted for consideration by the Inspectorate.

3.2 It is also critical that the Authority seeks only to comment on matters which relate specifically to the Authority. There are many chapters on issues relating to the offshore works which will undoubtedly not require consideration by the Authority and therefore officers are limiting the assessment specifically to matters which would have an impact on the Park. In particular, the matters of landscape/seascape visual impact, in relation to the offshore element of the works is being assessed as is, the impact of the on-shore cable on the Park (inevitably this covers a wider range of matters than just landscape/visual impact).

3.3 The consultation period for S42 consultations is 42 days (in this particular case the Authority needs to respond by Friday 11th October) and therefore significant effort is being made to both assess the information and to enable Members to engage in the process and give consideration to the Authority response to the consultation. Notwithstanding this, officers are not in a position yet to bring a recommendation before Members in this report. Whilst efforts will be made to bring a recommendation before Members at Committee on 17th September, an alternative that may need to be considered could involve the Development Control Manager co-ordinating a working party with a smaller number of members to convene and formulate a response by the Authority within the set deadline of 11th October. The Working group would then confirm the Authority’s response to Development Control Committee in October.

4. Recommendation

i) Members note the report and give consideration to whether the Development Control Manager be authorised to co-ordinate a working group of Members to consider and provide an Authority response to the consultation by 11th October 2013.