FIVE ESTUARIES
OFFSHORE WIND FARM



Project Newsletter Autumn 2025

Five Estuaries nears major milestone

As we move through the final stages of the planning process, Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm project remains focused on delivering clean, reliable energy for the UK while creating long-term benefits for local communities and the region.

The project's Development Consent Order (DCO) application is currently awaiting the Secretary of State's decision, expected by 17 December 2025.

While we wait for that important milestone, our team continues to prepare for the next stages – progressing design work, coordinating with our neighbouring project North Falls, and exploring opportunities to support local skills, supply chains, and community initiatives.

In this edition, you'll find updates on recent site activities, upcoming engagement opportunities, and a closer look at how we're working to ensure the project delivers real value for the people and places along our proposed onshore route.

We would like to thank all stakeholders, community members, and partners for their continued interest and support.

Five Estuaries in summary

- Proposed extension to the operational Galloper Wind Farm
- Located off the north Essex and south Suffolk coast, approximately 37 kilometres (km) from shore at its closest point
- Up to 79 turbines with a maximum tip height of 370m, split across two seabed areas covering 128km^2
- One new onshore substation to connect the project into the proposed National Grid East Anglia Connection substation
- Generating capacity of up to 1080MW, which would power hundreds of thousands of UK households each year



Unearthing the past along our proposed onshore cable route

Over the last couple of months, local fields within the parish of Little Bentley were the centre of archaeological investigation as part of early-stage work for the proposed Five Estuaries and North Falls offshore wind farms.

Although construction of the wind farms remains subject to achieving development consent and securing Contracts for Difference (CfDs) and Final Investment Decisions (FIDs), both projects are committed to understanding and preserving the heritage of the areas they will pass through.

In September 2025, a six-week programme of archaeological trial trenching was carried out on private land between Bentley Road and Ardleigh Road. The work, undertaken by Wessex Archaeology, is part of a wider strategy to identify and protect any significant archaeological remains along the projects' proposed shared onshore cable route before any potential future development begins.

Trial trenching is a method used by archaeologists to assess the potential of a site by digging trenches at carefully selected locations. The trench locations were informed by a combination of geophysical surveys, historical maps, and aerial photography carried out in 2023. The aim was to investigate both known areas of interest and more 'blank' spots where hidden features might still lie beneath the surface.

Over the 22-day excavation, a total of 126 trenches were dug across six land parcels. Of these, 46 trenches revealed archaeological features, leading to the discovery and recording of 53 separate features. Most of these were historic buried ditches, which are actually very valuable to archaeologists as they often reveal how the landscape was divided, farmed, and managed over centuries.



Trench being excavated



Trench showing archeological features

The discoveries span an impressive time range, from prehistoric times through to the post-medieval period, showcasing a long history of human activity in the area. Among the findings were several isolated pits, some containing charred plant remains, now being analysed by environmental specialists to learn more about past diets, crops, and local ecology.

One of the most intriguing discoveries was the presence of two deposits of cremated remains. These were carefully excavated and removed for expert study in a laboratory setting.

While no accompanying artefacts or urns were found, which might typically help date such burials, the team hopes to use radiocarbon dating to establish when these individuals lived.



Open trench ready for reinstatement

Once the trenches had been analysed by the archaeologists, in discussion with the County Archaeologists at Place Services on behalf of Essex County Council, they were fully backfilled and reinstated, ensuring that local farming could continue.

Post-excavation analysis and detailed reporting are still underway. These will help build a fuller picture of the area's history and ensure that important archaeological information is properly recorded and preserved before any construction begins.

This was the second stage of archaeology surveys undertaken, with the proposed substation area surveyed in 2023. Further surveys along the proposed cable route will take place next year. The identification and refinement of these future work locations follows regular discussion and consultation between the projects, the appointed archaeological contractor and Essex County Council/Place Services.

We're committed to involving the local community by sharing information about the area's archaeological and historical heritage.

In the future, this could include school workshops, talks for local groups with opportunities to handle finds, and guided site tours for small groups during archaeological investigations. By offering these activities, we aim to make the discoveries accessible and meaningful, and share information about what was discovered to those who live and work in the area.

This careful balance between development and heritage is a key part of how Five Estuaries and North Falls are working together to deliver renewable energy while respecting and recording the region's rich past.



Roman pottery identified within a trench during excavation

We are currently planning further surveys for 2026 to support the development of the proposed onshore cable route's final design.

Prior to this work, we will contact affected landowners to discuss the proposed activities and to seek information on cropping schedules to help us plan and to minimise disruption.

Building opportunities

For Five Estuaries, supporting local communities is a priority. In addition to delivering clean, green energy to hundreds of thousands of homes, and contributing to the UK's ambition for energy security and net zero, we are equally focused on the positive, long-term impact our project can bring to the region.

We are already preparing to focus on three key areas of regional benefit, should we receive development consent by the end of the year. This community benefit package consists of:

Supply chain opportunities | **Skills and employment** | **Community funding**

We are committed to developing this project collaboratively, working with communities, local businesses, education providers, and other developers to maximise opportunities and ensure the region is well positioned for future growth.

Supply chain

Ahead of potential construction, we are actively working with local businesses to prepare them for upcoming opportunities. Our STEP (Supplier Transparency and Engagement Platform) site is live, with over 180 businesses currently registered as interested in working with Five Estuaries.

We are committed to working with as many local businesses as possible and will continue to promote awareness, transparency, and access to the opportunities available. Interested businesses can register their interest on our STEP platform to stay informed and connected at **fiveestuaries.co.uk/suppliers**

Our supply chain engagement began in June at the East of England Energy Group's Southern North Sea (EEEGR SNS) conference, a key industry forum where energy sector stakeholders from industry, supply chain, academia, and government come together to collaborate. Over the two days, we met with 18 potential suppliers to learn more about their services and share information on the project's future timeline and requirements.



Looking ahead to 2026, we will be increasing our engagement through dedicated supply chain events and by sharing details on tender opportunities and upcoming work packages as the project progresses.

As well as building the actual wind farm, we'll need to construct the onshore elements that connect the wind farm to the grid. We'll need a diverse range of suppliers to support construction, spanning from specialised electrical equipment providers and civil engineering firms to fencing contractors and welfare unit suppliers.

Skills and employment

One of our key priorities is creating opportunities for local people and businesses to develop the skills needed for future careers in renewable energy.



Over the coming months, we'll be building on the Outline Skills and Employment Strategy submitted with our DCO application to create a detailed plan that sets out our commitments to training, education, and employment across the region. We'll be working closely with organisations such as Essex and Tendring councils, EEEGR, local training providers, and schools, colleges, and universities to identify where we can make the biggest impact.

To support this, we're forming a skills working group with key regional partners and increasing our presence at careers fairs and workshops to highlight future opportunities.

By investing in people and skills now, Five Estuaries aims to help grow local talent and ensure communities are ready to benefit from the opportunities this project will bring.

Community funding

As a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, Five Estuaries' approach to community benefit funding will follow relevant UK Government guidance.

In April 2025, the Government published its guidance on 'Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Infrastructure', subsequently they have consulted on a further working paper 'Community benefits and shared ownership for low carbon infrastructure'. A formal response to this consultation is expected later in 2025, with more detailed proposals anticipated in early to mid-2026.

Once we have clarity on the guidance to follow, Five Estuaries will review and confirm its approach and carry out consultation alongside North Falls Offshore Wind Farm. Feedback received from local communities and stakeholder groups during consultation will shape any future community benefits fund and inform how it's administered.

Both projects are committed to setting up funds that ensure local people guide funding decisions that meet real needs. With good governance and a transparent, inclusive process we want to make sure this flexible funding is easy to access and can be used to support long term sustainable community development.

We'll work to understand local priorities, potential opportunities, and investment needs as we develop the fund to help ensure that people living and working near the projects have genuine opportunities to benefit. We'll also consider opportunities to collaborate with other regional developers to explore ways to align engagement and funding frameworks for the greatest local impact.

Once the government guidance is confirmed and the project has more clarity about its future direction, we will provide further information on our approach to community benefits and share our plans for future consultation.



An update on our Joint Substations Design Guide engagement

To support the final design of North Falls and Five Estuaries' proposed co-located onshore substations, the two projects are working together to produce a Joint Substations Design Guide (Design Guide).

The purpose of the Design Guide is to outline the overarching design principles for each substation and establish a series of shared commitments that the final substation designs must follow. It covers key elements such as site layout, building form and materials, ensuring a consistent and coordinated design approach across both projects, particularly if separate contractors are commissioned.

The Design Guide, alongside other documents, will be submitted to each project's substation designers, providing a fixed framework for the final designs.

As you would expect, building a substation is complex, and there are many fixed elements that can't be changed for safety and technical reasons. However, the first draft of the Design Guide presented optionality and invited feedback on the topic areas that can be influenced, such as colour, landscaping and fencing. It's important to us that key stakeholders and local communities have the opportunity to influence the Design Guide as much as possible and that the final design reflects local preferences.

We received helpful and insightful responses during phase one of our engagement, which took place between 18 August and 29 September 2025. This provided feedback from residents, parish councils and the Essex and Tendring authorities, and we welcomed over 60 people to our information event in Lawford.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to engage in the process and provide feedback.

What is happening now?

Our second phase of engagement will now take place in January 2026 rather than October 2025, as originally intended. This is to allow our team more time to fully consider the feedback received, gather more input and develop the next draft of the Design Guide.

We are continuing to work closely with the Essex Quality Review Panel (EQRP), established by the Essex Planning Officers Association in partnership with Place Services, to "ensure delivery and promotion of high quality new developments through the creation of good design, sustainability and improved quality, creating better places and environments to work and live in the county."

Essex County Council and Tendring District Council continue to be key stakeholders and we hold regular meetings with both councils as part of our ongoing Joint Substations Design Guide working group, which was established early in the Design Guide process with a clear goal to ensure transparency and oversight.

We are currently working on an updated version of the Design Guide, which will refine the options presented based on feedback and further discussion with the EQRP, Essex County Council and Tendring District Council.

Summary of feedback received

Phase one feedback has provided plenty of insightful and useful comments from stakeholders and the community. A full update will be provided in the next iteration of the Design Guide presented during phase two. Some key themes from the feedback are set out below:

- Preference for substation buildings to integrate with the surrounding rural landscape in terms of building form and roof type.
- Calls for materials to be as environmentally-friendly as possible.
- Preference for chosen colours and materials to blend into the local rural landscape, including nearby agricultural buildings, as far as possible.
- General preference for planting to include a mix of native species and avoid species that suffer in drought.
- Request for consideration of how planting will be monitored and/or maintained.
- Questions on how fencing will interact with planting and how the general public uses the area.
- Comments that planting to field boundaries could obstruct road user visibility and calls for appropriate road signage to safeguard against collisions.

Looking ahead to phase two

While we finalise the next version of the Design Guide ahead of phase two beginning, we can provide an early indication of the document's content and what we'll be seeking feedback on.

Generally, we feel we've achieved consensus on many of the topics we presented options for during phase one, meaning there will be fewer topic areas with optionality. For topics where we're not presenting multiple options, we will be seeking general feedback on how the Design Guide has evolved as a result of feedback received during phase one.

The next draft will be more technical in nature as we look to more closely align the document with its ultimate purpose – to be used as a document that informs the tender and detailed design processes by providing a clear indication of design requirements for the two projects.

As with phase one, we will be producing an accompanying feedback booklet that sets out our feedback questions and summarises the Design Guide and engagement process. It will also point to relevant sections within the Design Guide where people can find more information on the topic areas where we're seeking feedback.

After the engagement phase is finished we will consider the feedback received and prepare the final version of the Design Guide.

Selected stakeholders will be briefed directly on the final draft and it will also be available to read in full on the Project website.

The two projects will continue to provide regular updates on matters relating to their proposed co-located substations following the conclusion of the Design Guide engagement process.

Get involved

We're currently targeting January to launch phase two. We will be writing to local stakeholders directly and the second draft of the Design Guide and supporting materials will be available on the Project website.

Please monitor the Project website for further updates: **fiveestuaries.com/design-guide**

Project timings and what's next...

The exact timings for Five Estuaries are not yet confirmed, as they depend on a number of important approvals and government processes.

Right now, the project is waiting for a Development Consent Order (DCO) decision from the Secretary of State, expected by 17 December 2025. If consent is granted, the next step would be for the project to take part in a Contract for Difference (CfD) auction – a government process that supports renewable energy projects by providing stable pricing for the electricity they generate. Once a CfD is secured, the project would then move towards a Final Investment Decision (FID), the point where we confirm funding and prepare for construction.

Until these milestones are reached, construction dates can't be set. In the meantime, the Five Estuaries team continues to prepare by progressing design work, planning, and community engagement so we are ready to move forward once decisions are made.

We'll share updates as the project progresses through these next important stages – you can register on our website to receive them.

Pre-application development 2020-2024
Early project scoping, stakeholder engagement, environmental assessments and three consultation stages were undertaken to refine the design and prepare for a Development Consent Order (DCO) submission.

Examination 2024-2025
The Planning Inspectorate and Secretary of State review the DCO application, assessing evidence and representations from all interested parties to determine the project's compliance and suitability.

Consent decision December 2025
The Secretary of State grants development consent, providing the legal authority to proceed with the project as defined in the approved plans and conditions.

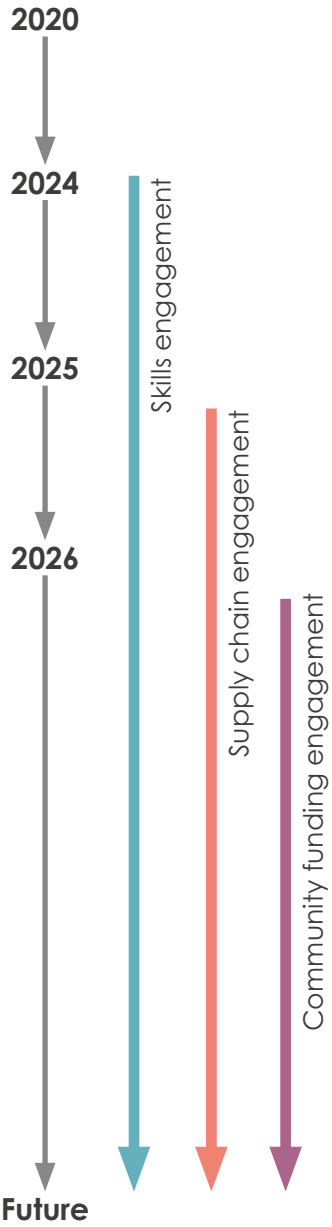
Contract for Difference
The project secures a revenue support mechanism, ensuring financial stability and long-term price certainty for low-carbon electricity generation.

Final Investment Decision
Investors and project sponsors commit to full funding, marking the transition from development to delivery and locking in supply chain contracts.

Pre-enabling
Early site works, permitting, and mobilisation activities commence to prepare for full construction while mitigating initial project risks.

Construction
The main build phase begins, delivering infrastructure in line with the approved design, safety standards, and environmental commitments.

Operation



*The above dates are indicative and subject to change as the project progresses.

0333 880 5306
fivestuaries@rwe.com
fiveestuaries.co.uk

FIVE ESTUARIES OFFSHORE WIND FARM

Skills, jobs and supply chain

Explore our opportunities across a range of education levels:
rwe.com/en/rwe-careers-portal/early-careers/

Take a look at the RWE Careers Portal to find opportunities around the world:
rwe.com/en/rwe-careers-portal

Register as an interested supplier on our STEP platform: **fiveestuaries.co.uk/suppliers**