

**In Tynwald**

**May 2013**

**For Written Answer 27**

The Hon. Member for Garff (Mr Speaker) to ask the Minister for Infrastructure –

What actions he has taken to meet the threat to Isle of Man shipping lanes from proposed windfarm developments in the Irish Sea?

**ANSWER**

The windfarms that have the most potential to have an impact on the main shipping routes to the Island are those being developed by Celtic Array, which is a 50/50 partnership between Centrica and DONG Energy. These areas are to the East of the Isle of Man and will adversely impact on the ferry routes to Heysham and Liverpool. As I advised in my answer to the Honourable Member Mr Karran at the November sitting of Tynwald in 2012, senior officers from both the Steam Packet and the Department of Infrastructure continue to be closely involved in the consultation processes being undertaken by DONG Energy and Centrica in respect of their respective Irish Sea wind farm developments.

As part of this process there have been a series of meetings to discuss safety of navigation matters that have also been attended by officers from the UK Department for Transport, Maritime and Coastguard Agency and Trinity House. These latter organisations are statutory consultees on this subject within the UK's planning process and therefore need to be satisfied with respect to any proposed wind farms. The Department's concerns at the potential risks posed to vessels sailing to and from the Isle of Man and the consequent potential for disruption to the ferry service on which the Isle of Man relies have been forcefully expressed to both Centrica and DONG Energy. In addition, the Department's concerns have been explained in detail at a further meeting between senior officers of the Department and Sir Michael Pitt, Chief Executive of the UK's Planning Inspectorate, at which the Isle of Man's status in the windfarm development planning process was confirmed.

As a result of the strong views expressed by Government Departments, the Steam Packet, the Chamber of Commerce, the Manx Hospitality Partnership, TravelWatch and the public, the programme for the development of this area has been put back by approximately one year. The Department has been advised that this delay is intended to provide a period in which the various shipping concerns can be addressed. The Department will continue to liaise very closely with Celtic Array in order to be assured that the Isle of Man's concerns are being addressed constructively or, if they are not, that early notice of further action is obtained.