

A 'ONE STOP SHOP' FOR SOUTH KOREAN OFFSHORE WIND PERMITTING?

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Korea's offshore wind power sector is hungry – and primed for – rapid growth, but its licence and permitting regimes are still evolving. What lessons can be learned from other regions that have streamlined their approvals processes towards the award of a comprehensive consent, such as the UK's Development Consent Order (DCO) process?

A multi-agency approvals process

The ambitious plans set forward in the **Green New Deal** mean that South Korea is set to be an exciting and valuable new market for renewable energy. However, like other markets that have entered the developing offshore wind sector before it, South Korea is starting out with permitting regimes that were not designed for offshore wind.

Currently, multiple agencies and applications are involved in the process. Ulsan City, for example, involves more than **seven different bodies**, from local government to the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage. (Ulsan City is an important location for this sector, with several developers taking projects through the early stages of development. It is also where the **two Floating LiDAR buoys delivered by RPS** are deployed as part of feasibility studies for Korean offshore wind power.)

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This multi-agency situation will be familiar to those who worked on early offshore wind projects elsewhere in the world. In the UK, multiple permissions, granted by multiple agencies under multiple pieces of legislation, would originally have been needed under the previous planning regime. However, the current planning regime acts as a 'One Stop Shop', where the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) will make a recommendation on the award of a Development Consent Order (DCO) for a development, removing the need to seek multiple approvals. Within this system, other authorities and agencies, stakeholders and the public can highlight concerns or provide comments on the application (and these must be considered by PINS in making their recommendations).

Consolidating a multi-faceted regime into a single one means that one authority evaluates multiple interests – from the local community and to protect the natural environment through to visual impact and defence considerations – awarding (or recommending award of) a comprehensive consent (or permit) for a development. This streamlines the permitting stage considerably, even if multiple consultations are still necessary – and are indeed advisable – to maintain effective communication and provide appropriate consideration of all interests.

South Korea is currently considering a 'One Stop Shop' permitting process, although it is still under discussion. So what must developers working in the region consider to ensure the successful outcome of their projects, and what other advantages could a simplified system bring?

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Permitting in Korea: the challenges for offshore wind farm developers

It goes without saying that a simplified process is good for developers. Not only is it more efficient, but it also means programme risks can be prevented. A comprehensive consent, evaluated by a single agency, can offer greater transparency – whereas dealing with multiple organisations/processes to obtain multiple different permits, potentially under

different legislation, adds complexity. From an industry perspective, such an approach can also enable a more holistic perspective for decision-making.

In particular, a one stop shop could offer significant improvements in project timescales. The introduction of a new licencing system in South Korea (including a one stop shop approach) is aimed at shortening the period for project development by more than two years. In addition to this increased efficiency, the intention in South Korea is also to improve the acceptability of development to stakeholders – another consideration that is critical to timely and successful project development.

Internationally, it is well-known that permitting process delays are a major barrier to the efficient and rapid deployment of offshore wind being sought by industry and governments. A highly efficient permitting process will be vital to help South Korea meet its target of achieving net-zero carbon by 2050. When it comes to competing markets, being able to offer a streamlined, timely process – that remains rigorous and robust – could also be an important factor in attracting international investment in the future.

For developers, a simplified and more efficient process removes headaches, especially when speed to market and ensuring stakeholder confidence are priorities. A comprehensive consent with a single agency responsible for considering applications can reduce the risk of project delays, offering greater confidence over development timelines, and allowing development managers to give clearer expectations to investors and other stakeholders. In countries where a form of one stop shop system exists, such as the UK, this communication challenge has been eased. If, instead, you find yourself with delays as projects get tied up in lengthy examination with multiple stakeholders for multiple permits, this can be frustrating as well as expensive.

Processes and partnerships: the keys to project success

It is in the offshore wind industry's interest to ensure robust, transparent permitting regimes to result in responsible, sustainable and therefore successful projects. RPS advice is that projects also need to

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consider and comply with international standards as well as local ones so that they meet the requirements of most International Financial Institutions.

Related read: [Offshore wind Korea – obtaining a local and international licence to operate](#)

With decisions still to be made over the future of South Korea's offshore wind permitting process, how can you increase the chances of success for your current projects under the current permitting regime?

Partnering with an experienced consultant with both local and international experience is essential. Local knowledge can help untangle individual regulatory processes, as well as providing ways to understand and address local needs. International experience brings learnings from more established wind power

industries that have overcome similar hurdles and set their own precedents.

At RPS, we benefit from [our South Korean partner SEKWANG Engineering Consultants](#)' expertise in maritime engineering and infrastructure. SEKWANG has taken the lead in developing Korean maritime and port infrastructure for over 50 years. Meanwhile, our own deep expertise in this sector was gained in working on world-firsts for the offshore industry, such as leading the EIA for [the world's largest offshore wind project, Hornsea Three](#); the environmental studies for Australia's first offshore wind project, [Star of the South](#); and providing marine subject matter expertise to support Vineyard Wind, the United States' first utility-scale offshore wind energy project. We are hugely excited to see how the South Korean offshore wind power industry develops and to be a part of its evolution.

If you would like additional information on the permitting process to meet local and international environmental and social requirements and obtain project finance, please don't hesitate to contact **Sam Roh**, Country Manager South Korea, sam.roh@rpsgroup.com; or **Alun Williams**, Director - Offshore Renewables, williamsal@rpsgroup.com.