Miljøministeriet
Miljøstyrelsen

To Espoo Point of Contact in
The United Kingdom and Finland

Landskab og Skov
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Notification regarding project for the establishment of energy cluster "Viborg Go Green"

Legal basis

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The Espoo Convention[1] and the SEA Protocol on transboundary environmental impacts, which are incorporated into the EIA Directive[2] and the Danish Environmental Assessment Act[3], obliges the parties to inform and consult affected countries and carry out environmental assessments across national borders. If specific projects or plans/programmes are likely to have transboundary environmental impacts, the Convention and the Protocol enter into force.

The developer BioCirc plans to establish land-based energy plants for the production of green energy. The planning area within Viborg Municipality constitutes one of several Danish foraging areas of a sub-population of the protected bird species - taiga bean goose, which is a breeding bird in northern Sweden, Norway and Finland. Therefore, this notification is submitted in connection with the Espoo consultation of affected neighbouring states pursuant to Article 7 of the Environmental Assessment Directive and Article 7 of the EIA Directive.

Description of the project

In connection with Viborg Municipality's wish to convert the energy supply to renewable energy forms, the developer BioCirc has prepared a project proposal to establish a land-based energy island for the production of green energy, called

[1] Convention of 25 February 1991 on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context

[2] Directive 2011/92/EU of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment and Directive 2014/52/EU of 16 April 2014 amending Directive 2011/92/EU of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment and Directive 2001/42/EC of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

[3] Consolidated Act no. 973 of 25 June 2020 on environmental assessment of plans and programmes and of specific projects.

"Viborg Go Green". The purpose of the energy cluster is to develop a full bioeconomic cluster in Viborg Municipality, consisting of a number of energy-producing facilities (sub-projects) that together make up the project. The sub-projects include wind turbines, solar cells, biogas plants with associated pressure sterilization, straw wax and grass protein plants, electrolysis plants, plants for the production of green fuel (e.g., methanol), and plants for the utilization of digestate (degassed slurry) from the biogas plant (this can be pyrolysis plants or HTL[4] plants). Excess heat will be able to supply district heating customers in Viborg Municipality. An overview of the project areas can be seen in figure 1.

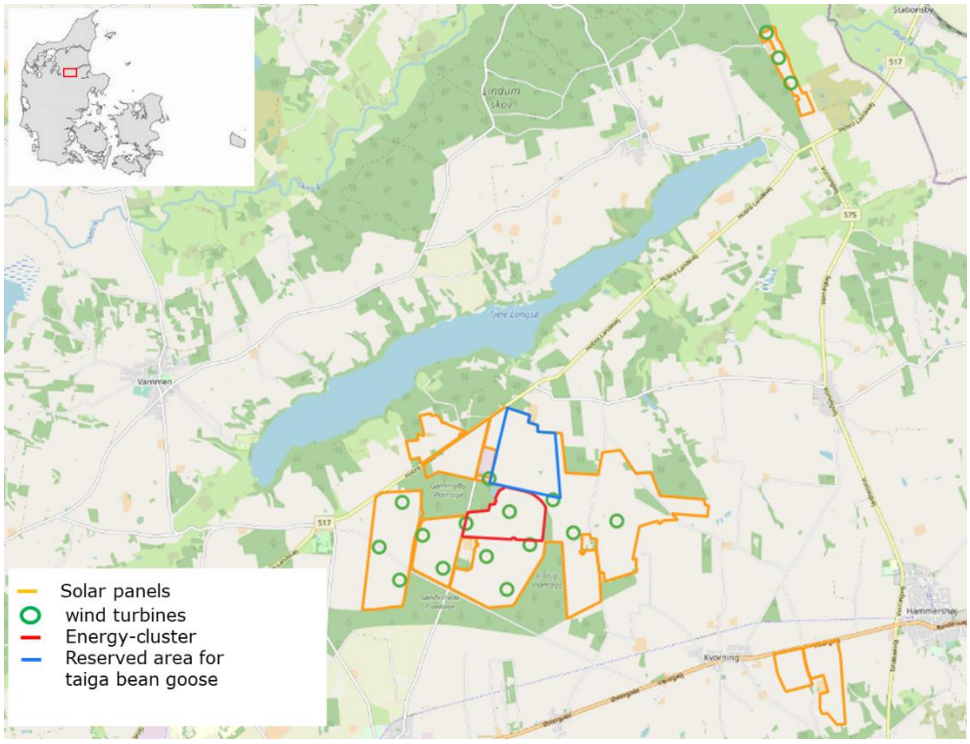

Figure 1: Project areas of "Viborg Go Green",

In the preliminary studies, it has been concluded that issues related to the Taiga Brent Goose, which is designated for the neighbouring Natura 2000 site N33 "Tjele Langsø and Vinge Møllebæk", may have significant transboundary impacts.

Due to the nature and location of the project, an environmental impact assessment of the project must be carried out in accordance with the Environmental Assessment Act as part of the regulatory process. Consultation of the environmental impact assessment in Denmark is coordinated with consultation under the Espoo Convention.

Possible significant transboundary impacts on the taiga bean goose

The bean goose (Anser fabalis) occurs in Europe with two subspecies, the

[4] Hydrothermal liquefaction

West Palearctic tundra bean goose Anser f. rossicus, which numbers over 600,000 individuals, and the western taiga bean goose Anser f. fabalis[5] with an estimated number of 52,600 in 2015. While the population of rossicus has been growing and the species has expanded its breeding territory, the population of the taiga bean goose has been declining in recent decades.
Therefore, the status of this stock has been the subject of much attention and protection measures in recent years. These efforts culminated in the development of an international single species action plan (ISSAP) in the framework of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Waterbirds (AEWA).

Recent telemetry studies and counts of Taiga bean geese in Denmark have revealed that there is a special sub-population of around 1,500 individuals that predominantly use three resting areas in north-east Jutland (see Figure 2). These geese breed in northern Scandinavia in the triangle area where Norway, Finland and Sweden meet. However, the project area in Denmark overlaps with one of the staging areas, which is located south of Tjele Langsø in Viborg Municipality (area TLS in Figure 2). The area is characterised by large fields where geese forage on winter cereals during daylight hours. During frost-free periods, the project area is used as a resting area for part of the population, while the largest population rests in Nørreådalen and Lille Vildmose. During periods of frost, when shallow areas freeze over, the geese in Nørreådalen in particular seek out the project area and rest in connection with Tjele Langsø, which is why the lake has been designated as a bird protection area under the Birds Directive (DK00EX016) with the taiga bean goose (and whooper swan) on the basis of designation.

As mentioned above, the project includes large areas for solar panels (approx. 700 ha) as well as the installation of up to 18 wind turbines, which will be placed in combination with solar panels. The establishment of these plants is associated with three potential impacts, which are explained in Table 1.

[5] Anser f. fabalis has lately been established as separate species called Anser serrirostris

Figure 2: Danish resting areas for sub-population of taiga bean goose. (LVM=Lille Vildmose, TLS=Tjele Langsø, NÅD= Nørreådalen)

Table 1: potential impacts on tajga bean goose

Impact	**Explanation**
Loss of habitat	Energy installations can seize fields that have hitherto served as foraging areas
Displacement	The geese can keep their distance from energy plants and are thus displaced from foraging areas
Risk of collisions	The geese can collide with wind turbines during the daily flight between sleeping places on Tjele Langsø and the foraging areas.

Loss of habitat and displacement can potentially affect the fitness of geese if they do not find sufficient alternatives, thereby indirectly affecting breeding success. Collisions mean an increased mortality rate and can thus directly affect the population. Both direct and indirect impacts have a potentially transboundary character, as they can affect breeding populations in Sweden, Norway and Finland.

Based on the described potential impacts, Viborg Municipality wishes to consult the parties whose territory constitutes the breeding area special for the mentioned sub-population of 1,500 individuals that rest in the project area.

There are no other aspects of the project that give rise to transboundary effects.

Permit and timetable of the project, public involvement

Viborg Municipality is the EIA authority for the project and the planning authority for the municipality´s spatial plan supplement and the local zone plan with associated environmental assessment for the project. Viborg Municipality has chosen to prepare a comprehensive report that includes both an environmental impact report (EIA) and strategic environmental report (SEA), as there is a large coincidence between affected environmental factors, geographical extent and temporal coincidence between EIA report and SEA report.

A scoping report will be prepared that constitutes Viborg Municipality's statement to the developer on how comprehensive and detailed the information that the developer must present in the environmental report. The scoping report sets the framework for the preparation of the Environmental Impact Report (EIA), cf. section 23 of the Environmental Assessment Act, and indicates the environmental factors and underlying environmental issues that are assessed to be significantly affected by the project and which must therefore be assessed further in the environmental report.

The scoping report will also contain requirements for the preparation of screening and appropriate assessments of whether the project and the associated plans may significantly affect Natura 2000 interests, cf. section 6(2) of the Habitats Order (BEK. no. 2091 of 12/11/2021). It is in this report that the mentioned potential effects on taiga bean geese are assessed.

The final scoping report will be determined by Viborg Municipality on the basis of the ideas received and proposals from the idea phase for an energy cluster at Tjele, Viborg Go Green. There has been a public consultation in the idea phase on 3 February 2023. In addition, comments from Viborg Municipality's consultation of affected authorities have been taken into account.

The public will again be involved in connection with the start of the permit procedure when the application for the project, including the EIA report, is submitted to the authorities. In parallel, the Espoo consultation of the parties who have expressed their wish to participate is ongoing. To this end, the Parties will receive the Espoo Report, which provides detailed information on the potential transboundary impacts and their assessment.
The public consultation in Denmark and the Espoo consultation are scheduled to take place in September 2024.

Invitation letter to participate in the consultation process
If you wish to participate in the environmental assessment process or have comments on the transboundary environmental impacts, you are kindly asked to send your request for participation or comments no later than 13 Of October 2023 to Espoo@mst.dk with file number 2023-34021

Kind regards
Timm Sonn-Juul

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