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Subject Tender result: Offshore Wind Energy Permit for Hollandse Kust (west),
Site VI

Our reference

DGKE / 22576244

Dear President,

This letter is to inform the House about the outcome of the permit procedure for the construction and operation of an offshore wind farm at Site VI of the Hollandse Kust (west) Wind Farm Zone. With the construction of this wind farm, another major step is taken in making the Netherlands more sustainable. It comes one month after my announcement of the outcome of the procedure for the adjacent wind farm at Site VII (Parliamentary Paper 33561, no. 55). The wind farm built at this site will produce enough sustainable electricity to meet around 3% of Dutch electricity demand – about the same amount as consumed by one million households. The wind farm will contribute to the ecology of the North Sea by implementing dozens of innovative experiments and solutions and starting a movement towards establishing offshore wind farms with a net positive impact on nature. With its nature-inclusive design, innovative pile-driving techniques and multidisciplinary research at the interface between offshore wind energy and ecology, this wind farm not only invests in a sustainable energy supply but also in the resilience of nature on the North Sea.

Maintaining a robust and healthy ecosystem and biodiversity in the North Sea is of vital importance. Nature and economic activities such as shipping, fishery and offshore wind energy must be in balance. This requires investment. In this letter I will therefore briefly discuss the broader measures I am taking to ensure that the sustainable energy transition in the North Sea, as one of these activities, contributes to this balance. Preserving biodiversity and limiting negative effects on biodiversity are also in line with the Dutch commitment to COP 15 in Montreal, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Hollandse Kust (west) Site VI – ecology

Site VI of the Hollandse Kust (west) Wind Farm Zone is 53 kilometres off the Dutch coast and is therefore not visible from the shoreline. The site offers space for a capacity of over 700 megawatts and the wind farm is expected to be commissioned in 2026. Site VI has been licensed using the procedure of a comparative assessment with financial bid, as detailed in the Regulation on granting the permit for Hollandse Kust (west) Wind Farm Zone, Site VI (Government Gazette 2022, no. 7101). In granting the permit for this site, the

focus – in addition to the primary objective of realising the wind farm – is on the contribution of this wind farm to the ecology of the North Sea. Together with the permit procedure for Hollandse Kust (west) Site VII, this was the first permit licensing procedure featuring a comparative assessment with financial bid. The bidding period closed in mid-May. There was considerable interest in this tender: 8 parties/consortia submitted applications.

Result: Ecowende

To determine which party/consortium would receive the permit, the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) – together with an independent expert committee – assessed the applications received. Ecowende (joint venture between Shell and Eneco) obtained the most points and was therefore granted the permit.

Ecowende achieved the maximum score on several criteria: the amount of the financial bid, certainty of completion and the wind farm's contribution to energy supply. As with the permit procedure for Hollandse Kust (west) Site VII, in addition to the financial bid of 50 million euros, the cost of the environmental impact assessments and site studies – totalling 13.5 million euros – will be borne by the party awarded the permit.

In addition to generating electricity, the Government challenged the parties participating in this tender to devise solutions that contribute to the naturally occurring biodiversity of the Dutch North Sea, in addition to the environmental measures prescribed in the Wind Farm Site Decision. Ecowende scored the highest of all applications for the 'contribution to the ecology of the North Sea' criterion.

For example, Ecowende intends to make an impact and gather knowledge using 40 innovative experiments and solutions, working with ecological experts from academic, non-profit and commercial partners to analyse which measures are most effective. The design of the wind farm is nature-inclusive, for example by including a bird corridor where the wind turbines are spaced further apart. Various pile-driving techniques will also be used to measure and minimise impact on underwater life. In addition, Ecowende is focused on significantly reducing bird and bat collisions with wind turbines by introducing new control technology. Marine biodiversity will also be boosted by, for example, placing natural reef structures on the seabed.

To assess the effectiveness of these measures in the interim, an expert sounding board group will be consulted, among other things. Together with a multidisciplinary team with expertise in offshore activities and ecology, which aims to contribute to filling knowledge gaps in the field of the ecological impact of offshore wind turbines, Ecowende will involve a wider audience and encourage further (academic) research that will also be of international relevance.

Ecology and offshore wind energy

Given the continuing vital importance of a robust and healthy ecosystem in the North Sea and the positive reactions from society and the private sector to these offshore wind permit procedures with a focus on ecology, I intend to include an additional ecology criterion for the IJmuiden Ver (Sites I - IV) tender. I have already announced this in my letter about the offshore wind permit procedure for IJmuiden Ver (4GW) (Parliamentary Paper 35092, no. 33). The lessons and results

from Hollandse Kust (west) Site VI will be taken into account for the design of this ecology criterion.

However, the permit procedure is just one of the instruments I intend to use to ensure the energy transition succeeds within the ecological capacity of the North Sea, as agreed in the North Sea Agreement. Through the integrated assessment process of the North Sea Programme, the Government will ensure that wind farms are also planned outside protected nature conservation areas. Furthermore, the Government is focusing on four additional tracks;

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1. Knowledge development

The aim is to better understand the effects of offshore wind energy and identify effective measures. Until 2016, research and monitoring were the responsibility of the wind farm owner. Since then, it has been taken over centrally, with Rijkswaterstaat taking overarching responsibility, on behalf of my department, under the Offshore Wind Ecological Programme (WOZEP). The research has already provided important insights into the impact of wind farms on birds, bats and marine mammals. Where possible, the knowledge acquired through WOZEP is and will be applied in the permit requirements or criteria. Partly within the context of WOZEP, a study is also underway into the ecological effectiveness, safety and technical feasibility of using a black rotor blade to limit the number of collision victims among seabirds. The findings of this study are expected to be shared at the end of 2024 (Parliamentary Paper I 35092, no. P).

2. International cooperation

Neither nature nor the effects of human activities in the North Sea respect geographical boundaries. It is therefore very important that the various North Sea countries work together on the issue of how the further rollout of offshore wind energy can be undertaken within ecological frameworks. This is already being done, for example through participation in OSPAR¹ and the North Seas Energy Cooperation (NSEC)². The Netherlands will chair NSEC in 2023 and has identified three spearheads, one of which is the various transitions in the North Sea with an emphasis on the connection and challenges between nature and the energy transition. With this, I am committed to ensuring that North Sea countries can strengthen their joint knowledge base and take joint measures to better protect nature while also achieving our sustainable energy ambitions.

3. Mitigating measures in Wind Farm Site Decisions to limit negative consequences for nature

Environmental measures that have already proven their value (some resulting from WOZEP studies) and can therefore be made requirements are included in the Wind Farm Site Decisions. These include a stricter standard for underwater noise during pile-driving work, a curtailment provision to protect bats and regulations for minimum capacity per wind turbine and maximum number of wind turbines. With each Wind Farm Site Decision, new insights are reviewed and, if relevant, the environmental requirements in the Wind Farm Site Decision are tightened.

¹ [OSPAR Commission | Protecting and conserving the North-East Atlantic and its resources](#)

² [The North Seas Energy Cooperation \(europa.eu\)](#)

4. Nature reinforcement to increase the robustness of offshore nature
Next year, the Minister for Nature and Nitrogen Policy, Christianne Van der Wal-Zeggelink, and I will develop a joint programme to strengthen nature in the North Sea and Wadden Sea. In anticipation of this, we are currently investigating which measures are possible in the short term, if any, to strengthen the populations of a number of bird species.

**Directorate-General for
Climate and Energy**

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Minister for Climate and Energy Policy