

Foulger's Gat - Information for recreational sailors and motor boaters

Foulger's Gat has long been used by cruising sailors and motor boaters to avoid sharing the busy shipping route through Fisherman's Gat Precautionary Area with commercial traffic. To this end, THLS installed buoys at the entrance and exit of Foulger's Gat to mark the route,

The London Array Offshore Wind Farm will be constructed around and mainly to the north of Foulger's Gat from now until the end of 2012, with activity in the area of Foulger's Gat during the summer months this year and to a lesser extent in summer 2012. In view of this, THLS has decided to temporarily withdraw the buoys at Foulger's Gat once construction begins. These buoys, and an additional fairway buoy, will be reinstated once construction of the wind farm is complete.

During the development of the project, London Array agreed with the RYA that Foulger's Gat would remain open for recreational traffic; this is still the case. However, due to the installation of turbines, cables and an offshore substation in the vicinity of Foulger's Gat, and the application of a 500m safety zone around each foundation during construction, we recommend that an alternative route is found when there is construction activity in this area.

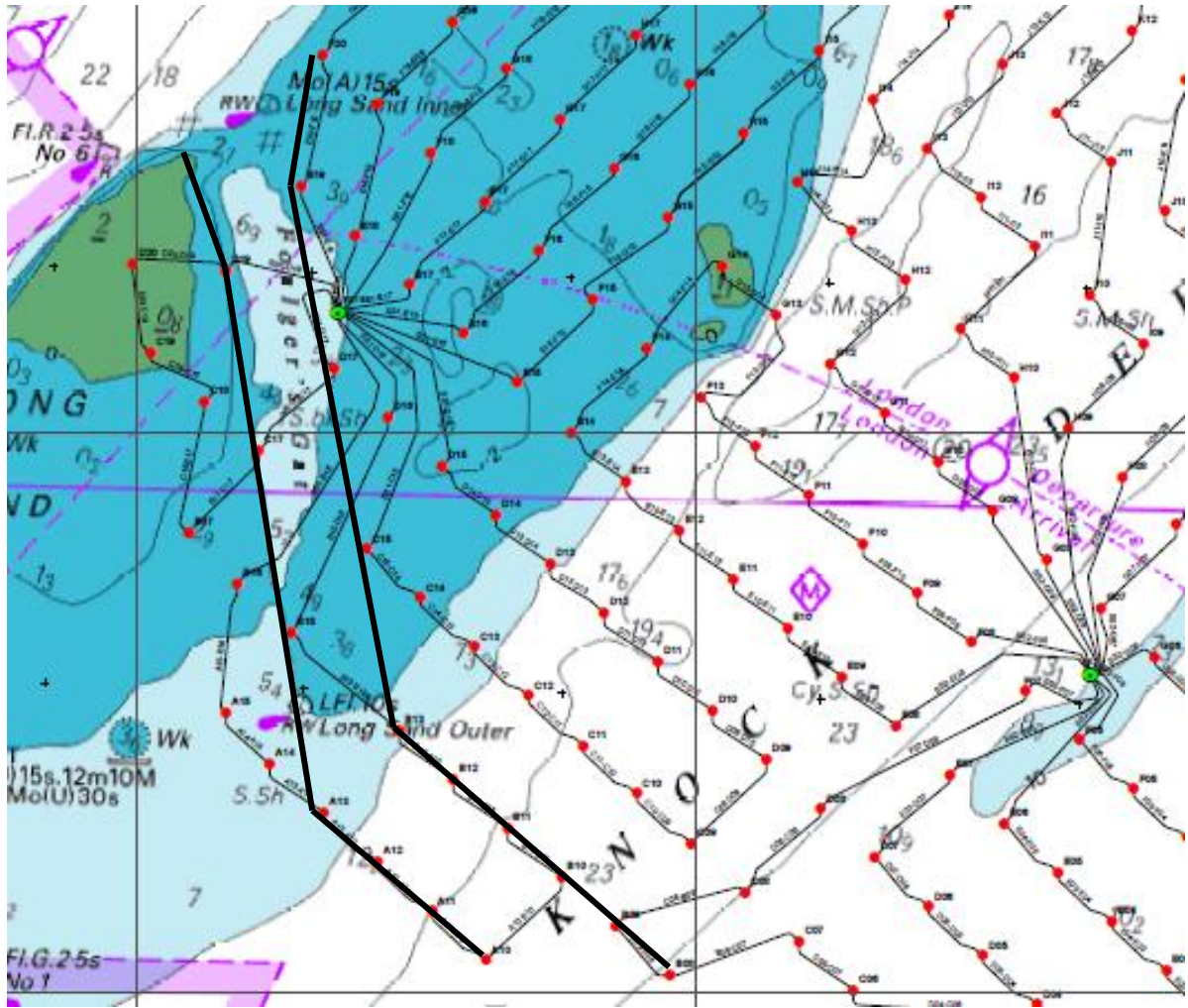
Detailed information on our planned construction activities is available through our weekly Notice of Operations, which is published on our website (www.londonarray.com).

The route through Foulger's Gat

London Array has deleted several turbines to create a channel of 700 - 800 metres through the narrow part of Foulger's Gat. Since receiving consent for the wind farm, the water depth between turbines B13 and B15 (B14 was one of the deleted turbines) at the southern end of Foulger's Gat has reduced and is now between 3.8m and 4.5m LAT.

In recognition of this, we recently supplied the RYA with a chartlet which showed the proposed route encompassing turbine B15 to provide a deeper water route between turbines B15 and B16. Since the chartlet was posted on the RYA East website in January 2011, there has been considerable concern over the position of turbine B15 in the middle of the route. Taking note of this we propose to revert to the route we originally proposed, as shown in the attached chartlet. Please note that this route is still only a recommendation; the 500m safety zone around each foundation during construction activities will be the sole formal restriction on vessel movement.

Approaching from the north, recreational traffic has to cross a bar at less than 3m LAT before reaching the deeper part of the channel, so a water depth of around 4m LAT at the southern exit of Foulger's Gat should not pose significant problems. From there on, yachts and motor boats can pass between turbine rows "A" and "B", where the passage is wider than Foulger's Gat and the water depth is significantly greater.



During construction

During construction in 2011 and 2012, a number of large installation vessels will periodically work in and around Foulger's Gat and adequate distances should be maintained to minimise safety risks. A 500m safety zone will be imposed around each foundation where construction activity is taking place. In addition to these statutory safety zones around structures, the usual IMO guidelines will apply for the avoidance of vessels actively installing structures or cables. There will be a 50m safety zone around each of the foundations once it has been installed.

The vessels engaged in the construction process will be using long anchor spreads, cable ploughs, remote operated vessels (submarines) and diving operations may be used later. High speed crew boats will take technicians to and from the substation, turbines and vessels.

Notices to Mariners will advise when and where construction activities are taking place but, in the interests of the safety of recreational traffic and the construction teams, we would recommend that sailors and motor boaters avoid using Foulger's Gat while construction is taking place, as has been suggested in the RYA East guidance.

In the longer term

Once construction is completed, the entire wind farm area is in principle free for all navigation but, if approved, a 50m safety zone will be retained around each of

the foundations. The Long Sand Inner and Outer buoys will be redeployed, and London Array will work with THLS to deploy an additional buoy to improve the fairway through Foulger's Gat. In the operations phase, a number of crew boats will operate within the wind farm, putting technicians on the turbines for maintenance work. At intervals, larger maintenance jobs will require the use of a variety of vessels and jack ups.

General Information

The wind farm consists of 175 wind turbines and two offshore substations. The rows of turbine are 1000m apart and the spacing between turbines in the rows is 650m.

Each turbine base is painted yellow and has its unique ID number repeated at 120 deg round the bottom of the turbine tower, of a sufficient size to be legible at 300m; the signs are illuminated at night. The minimum clearance (at HAT) between the blade tips and the surface of the sea is 22 metres.

Except in cases of emergency, it is prohibited to moor a boat alongside a turbine or to access the platform or enter the turbine.

During construction all turbine foundations will exhibit Fl Y 2,5 s 2nm. Once the turbine has been completed, a number of the perimeter turbines will be equipped with navigation lights and fog horns

More information

The London Array website www.londonarray.com will be updated with information on the progress of construction. You can contact our Community Relations Team 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling 0800 881 5266. Regular Notices to Mariners will be issued as the project progresses.