



Offshore Wind Power Limited

# West of Orkney Windfarm Offshore EIA Report

## Volume 1, Chapter 23 - Conclusions and Next Steps

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## CONTENTS

23	CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS	5
23.1	Concluding statement	5
23.2	Next steps	8



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## 23 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### 23.1 Concluding statement

This Offshore Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out for the offshore elements of the West of Orkney Windfarm ('the offshore Project') in support of the Section 36 Consent and Marine Licence applications and in accordance with relevant guidance and regulations.

The offshore Project consists of all offshore components of the West of Orkney Windfarm seaward of Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) including Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs), cables, foundations, Offshore Substation Platforms (OSPs) and all associated infrastructure. All WTGs and OSPs, inter-array cables and inter-connector cables will be located within the Option Agreement Area (OAA), located 23 kilometre (km) from the north coast of Scotland and 28 km from the west coast of Hoy. The offshore export cables will be located within the offshore Export Cable Corridor (ECC) which is located between the OAA and landfall(s) at Caithness. The offshore export cables will connect to the OSPs within the OAA.

A number of alternatives have been considered throughout the development of the offshore Project, both in terms of location and design options, in order to refine the offshore Project design to a level at which a meaningful impact assessment can be conducted. The iterative site selection process involved consideration of environmental (e.g. aviation constraints, main helicopter routes, mobile fisheries, recreational sailing and visual impacts amongst others) and technical (e.g. wind resource, bathymetry, ground and metocean conditions) constraints at various stages of the pre-application stage, informed by desk-based studies and stakeholder engagement. The site selection process and the choice of Project design is ongoing and further refinements may occur as the development of the offshore Project progresses. Chapter 5: Project description outlines the design details for the offshore Project that have been informed by the consideration of site selection and alternatives.

This Offshore EIA Report provides a robust assessment of the potential environmental effects of the offshore Project. The approach and method for the Offshore EIA Report is described in chapter 7: EIA methodology. The EIA process involved identifying potential impacts from the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning stages and assessing the potential significance of the associated effects on the receiving environment. A Project Design Envelope (PDE) approach has been utilised to provide the flexibility for further refinement of the offshore Project design in accordance with the Scottish Government (2022) guidance on using the design envelope for applications under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989. The first version of the PDE was presented within the EIA Scoping Report and has since been refined for the purposes of this Offshore EIA Report through environmental surveys, technical and engineering studies and discussions with stakeholders and the community, as part of the EIA process. In line with the Scottish Government (2022) guidance, chapter 5: Project description provides an explanation of why, flexibility in the offshore Project parameters is required and necessary at this stage, taking account of the scale of the offshore Project and the potential for technological and supply chain advancements. Within this Offshore EIA Report, the design parameters which represent the worst-case scenario for the impact assessments have been determined using the PDE on a topic-by-topic basis, depending on the receptor and impact being considered, and this is clearly explained in each topic-specific chapter in line with the Scottish Government (2022) guidance. This approach results in an impact assessment, that provides security and confidence that the likely significant



environmental effects of the offshore Project will be no greater than those identified and assessed within the Offshore EIA Report.

The significance of an effect was determined within each topic-specific assessment chapter (chapters 8 – 20) by defining the sensitivity of each receptor (influenced by tolerance to change, recoverability, adaptability and value) and the magnitude of impact (influenced by spatial extent, duration, frequency, intensity and likelihood) using professional judgement and industry best practice guidance, science, and accepted approaches. For each impact, the sensitivity and magnitude were then combined using a matrix approach to determine the potential consequence of the effect, ranging from negligible to major, where any effect of moderate or greater consequence was deemed significant in EIA terms.

Each impact assessment took account of embedded mitigation measures, and where significant effects were identified in the initial assessment, appropriate and proportionate additional mitigation measures are proposed in order to reduce the residual effects to non-significant levels where possible. Monitoring requirements have also been outlined, as required, in each topic-specific assessment chapter (chapters 8 – 20) to verify impact predictions and address uncertainties and summaries are provided in chapter 22: Summary of mitigation and monitoring. The monitoring approaches will be further refined during the post-consent stage in accordance with relevant consent conditions and in consultation with stakeholders.

Overall, with the implementation of the identified mitigation measures (embedded and secondary) and monitoring proposals, the majority of potential effects of the offshore Project are predicted to be non-significant levels (Table 23-1). The exception to this are some localised significant effects on seascape, landscape and visual receptors during the operation and maintenance stage. The detailed design of the offshore Project is not yet known, and therefore, mitigation measures relevant to the final layout cannot be adopted at this stage. OWPL will continue to consider environmental impacts of the offshore Project during further design refinement in the post-consent stage to reduce these effects where possible. This will be informed by detailed engineering design studies, including the development of the ground model informed by the results of geotechnical investigations of the OAA which are still to be undertaken. Furthermore, the Scottish National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), does identify that significant seascape, landscape and visual impacts *'are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable.'*

A suite of post-consent plans will be developed as the offshore Project design is finalised, in line with Section 36 consent and Marine Licence conditions. Several outline post-consent plans in support of the Section 36 Consent and Marine Licence applications have been provided with the application and these will be updated and finalised during the post-consent stage for approval by Scottish Ministers.



Table 23-1 Summary of EIA outcomes

CHAPTER	SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT		
	CONSTRUCTION STAGE (INCLUDING PRE- CONSTRUCTION)	OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE STAGE	DECOMMISSIONING STAGE
Chapter 8: Marine physical and coastal processes	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 9: Water and sediment quality	All impacts scoped out	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 10: Benthic subtidal and intertidal ecology	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 11: Fish and shellfish ecology	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 12: Offshore and intertidal ornithology	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 13: Marine mammals and megafauna	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 14: Commercial fisheries	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 15: Shipping and navigation	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 16: Marine archaeology and cultural heritage	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 17: Military and aviation	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified



CHAPTER	SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT		
	CONSTRUCTION STAGE (INCLUDING PRE- CONSTRUCTION)	OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE STAGE	DECOMMISSIONING STAGE
Chapter 18: Seascape, landscape and visual impact assessment (SLVIA)	No significant effects identified	Potential significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 19: Socio-economics	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 20: Other sea users	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified

If successful in attaining the required Section 36 Consent and Marine Licences, the development of the offshore Project will play a key role in fulfilling Scottish and UK renewable energy and climate change reduction targets and will have beneficial impacts for energy security and on the local and Scottish economy, for example through positive contributions towards employment opportunities and wider economic output.

## 23.2 Next steps

Following the submission and acceptance of this Offshore EIA Report and supporting Section 36 and Marine Licence applications, the key next steps are as follows:

- Consultation and publication notices:** OWPL will issue all relevant public notices in accordance with relevant regulations and guidance from the Marine Directorate-Licensing Operations Team (MD-LOT). MD-LOT will undertake the consultation with key stakeholders.
- Determination stage:** Scottish Ministers (via MD-LOT) will consider the information provided within this Offshore EIA Report and supporting documentation, representations from the public and any comments from consultees in their decision making process to determine whether consent should be granted.
- Notification of decisions:** If successful in obtaining the Section 36 and Marine Licences applied for, a decision notice along with the Section 36 Consent and Marine Licences will be issued by Scottish Ministers (via MD-LOT) detailing the conditions to which the decision is subject. OWPL will issue a public notice in accordance with the relevant regulations.
- Post-consent:** OWPL will continue to refine and finalise the Project Design Envelope during the post-consent stage, and this will be informed by further surveys, technical and engineering studies, technology advancements, supply chain considerations and discussions with stakeholders and the community. OWPL will discharge and/or comply with all relevant Section 36 Consent and Marine Licence conditions within the timeframe specified and in consultation with stakeholders where relevant.
- Construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning:** Once all necessary environmental, financial and supply chain requirements are secured, the construction of the offshore Project will commence. The





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construction programme will depend on the date that a Contract for Different (CfD) is awarded, contractor and vessel availability, weather conditions and other supply chain or logistical issues. However, it is envisaged that construction may commence as early as 2028, lasting approximately four years, with an additional year of pre-construction activities. Once construction is complete and commissioning of the offshore Project is complete it will enter into the operation and maintenance stage, the decommissioning stage will commence at the end of the operational life of the offshore Project.