

Offshore Wind Power Limited

West of Orkney Windfarm Onshore EIA Report

Volume 1, Chapter 20 - Conclusions and Next Steps

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20 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

20.1 Concluding statement

This Onshore Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out for the onshore elements of the West of Orkney Windfarm ('the onshore Project') in support of the application for Planning Permission in Principle (PPP) under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) submitted to The Highland Council (THC).

The onshore Project consists of all onshore components of the West of Orkney Windfarm landward of Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS) including onshore underground export cables, a new onshore substation, and all associated infrastructure (e.g. access tracks). At the landfall, the onshore Project will interface with the offshore Project, which is composed 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.

A number of alternatives have been considered throughout the development of the onshore Project, both in terms of location and design options (specifically with regards to cable landfall installation and substation design), in order to refine the onshore 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. environmentally designated sites, scheduled monuments and listed buildings, woodland and landscape designations, amongst others) and technical (e.g. slope, utilities, watercourses, and ground conditions) constraints at various stages of the pre-application stage, informed by desk-based studies, Project specific surveys and stakeholder engagement. The site selection process and Project engineering design is ongoing and further refinements will occur as the development of the onshore Project progresses. Chapter 5: Project description outlines the design details for the onshore Project that have been informed by the consideration of site selection and design alternatives.

This Onshore EIA Report provides a robust assessment of the potential environmental effects of the onshore Project. The approach and method for the Onshore 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 onshore Project design in accordance with the Scottish Government (2022) Guidance on Using the Design Envelope for Applications under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989¹. The first version of the PDE was presented within the EIA Scoping Report and has since been refined for the purposes of this Onshore 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 onshore Project parameters is required and necessary at this stage. Within this Onshore 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

¹ Although this EIA Report covers onshore infrastructure, it is onshore infrastructure associated with an offshore wind project which is the subject of a Section 36 consent, and therefore this guidance is also considered relevant here.



this is clearly explained in each topic-specific chapter. This approach results in an impact assessment, that provides security and confidence that the likely significant environmental effects of the onshore Project will be no greater than those identified and assessed within the Onshore EIA Report.

The significance of an effect was determined within each topic-specific assessment chapter (chapters 8 – 17) 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, secondary 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 – 17) to verify impact predictions and address uncertainties and summaries are provided in chapter 19: Summary of mitigation and monitoring. Monitoring approaches will be further refined during the post-consent stage in accordance with relevant planning 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 onshore Project are predicted to be non-significant (Table 20-1). The exception to this are some localised significant effects on visual receptors during the construction and operation and maintenance stages. The detailed design of the onshore substation is not yet known, and therefore, mitigation measures relevant to the final design cannot be adopted at this stage. However, it is envisaged that mitigation may include measures related to site design, colour schemes, and landscape screening, planting and restorations. Offshore Wind Power Limited (OWPL) will continue to consider environmental impacts of the onshore Project during further design refinement in the post-consent stage to reduce these effects where possible, informed by detailed engineering design studies. Despite the impact assessment predicting significant impacts, Policy 11 (e) of NPF4 states that *"In addition, project design and mitigation will demonstrate how the following impacts are addressed: ii. significant landscape and visual impacts, recognising that such 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."*

The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (Scottish Government, adopted February 2023) has a key focus on Scotland's national assets, particularly the environment which is covered under Policy 3 and 4 (Biodiversity and Natural Places). These policies are part of a strategy to support, plan and deliver Sustainable Places through restoration and enhancement opportunities to protect and strengthen the local biodiversity. The West of Orkney Windfarm has an ambition to not only conserve local biodiversity but to also enhance it, where possible. Subsequently, the Project is proposing four enhancement opportunities, within a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan an outline of which accompanies this PPP application, additional to the mitigation measures already embedded into the Project. The approach includes, but is not limited to, partnering with key stakeholders, neighbouring developers and the local community to ensure that any proposed enhancements are suited to the environment that they are situated in and will benefit not only the primary species but the wider ecosystem.



A suite of post-consent plans will be developed as the onshore Project design is finalised, in line with PPP conditions. Several Outline Management Plans in support of the PPP application have been provided and these will be updated and finalised during the post-consent stage for approval by THC.

Table 20-1 Summary of EIA outcomes

CHAPTER	SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT		
	CONSTRUCTION STAGE	OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE STAGE	AND DECOMMISSIONING STAGE
Chapter 8: Geology and hydrology	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 9: Freshwater ecology	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 10: Terrestrial non-avian ecology	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 11: Terrestrial ornithology	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 12: Land use and other users, including forestry	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 13: Terrestrial archaeology and cultural heritage	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 14: Air quality	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 15: Noise and vibration	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Chapter 16: Access, traffic and transport	No significant effects identified	All impacts scoped out	No significant effects identified
Chapter 17: Landscape and visual	Potential significant effects identified on visual receptors	Potential significant effects identified on visual receptors	No significant effects identified



If successful in attaining the PPP (and associated offshore Project Section 36 consent and associated Marine Licences), the development of the Project will play a key role in fulfilling Scottish and United Kingdom (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.

20.2 Next steps

Following the submission and acceptance of this Onshore EIA Report and supporting PPP applications, the key next steps are as follows:

1. **Notifications and consultation:** OWPL will notify owners, and agricultural tenants of all land and buildings which are the subject of the PPP application. THC will undertake neighbour notification / publication of the application (as appropriate) upon validation of the application and thereafter consultation with stakeholders.
2. **Determination stage:** THC will consider the information provided within this Onshore EIA Report and supporting documentation, representations from the public and comments from consultees in their decision making process to determine whether PPP should be granted.
3. **Notification of decisions:** If successful in obtaining the PPP applied for, a decision notice along with the PPP will be issued by THC detailing the conditions to which the decision is subject.
4. **Post-consent:** OWPL will continue to refine and finalise the PDE 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 PPP conditions within the timeframe specified and in consultation with stakeholders where relevant.
5. **Construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning:** Once all necessary environmental, financial and supply chain requirements are secured, the construction of the onshore Project will commence. The construction programme will depend on the date that a Contract for Difference (CfD) is awarded, contractor and equipment availability, weather conditions and other supply chain or logistical issues. However, it is envisaged that construction may last approximately four years. Once construction and commissioning of the onshore Project is complete, it will enter into the operation and maintenance stage, and the decommissioning stage will commence at the end of the operational life of the onshore Project. A Decommissioning, Restoration and Aftercare Plan will be prepared for the onshore Project and agreed with THC prior to decommissioning works being undertaken.



20.3 References

Scottish Government (2022). Electricity Act 1989 – section 36 applications: guidance for applicants on using the design envelope. Available online at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/guidance-applicants-using-design-envelope-applications-under-section-36-electricity-act-1989/> [Accessed 29/08/2023].

Scottish Government (2023). National Planning Framework 4. Available online at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/> [Accessed 29/08/2023].



20.4 Abbreviations

ACRONYM	DEFINITION
CfD	Contract for Difference
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
MHWS	Mean High Water Springs
MLWS	Mean Low Water Springs
NPF4	National Planning Framework 4
OSP	Offshore Substation Platforms
OWPL	Offshore Wind Power Limited
PDE	Project Design Envelope
PPP	Planning Permission in Principle
THC	The Highland Council
UK	United Kingdom
WTG	Wind Turbine Generators