

MD-LOT European Protected Species Case Handling Report

Licence Number: 00010699

Licensing Officer: [Redacted]

Site	North Sea Renewables Grid, Central North Sea
Company	Cerulean Winds Ltd 24/25 The Shard 32 London Bridge Street London SE1 9SG
Applicant	██████████
Brief Description of Project	Geophysical, geotechnical and benthic surveys
Associated Licences	

Species	harbour porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>);bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>);minke whale (<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>);white-beaked dolphin (<i>Lagenorhynchus albirostris</i>)
Inshore/Offshore	Inshore

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TEST 1	Purpose of licence
	Imperative reasons of overriding public interest (including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment)
Comments	
<p>Is a specific need being met? The proposed surveys are to carry out investigation work to inform the safe, efficient and appropriate design and construction of a windfarm. This windfarm is proposed to contribute to the decarbonisation of energy production.</p> <p>What benefit does the activity provide or what need does it address? The surveys are required in order to facilitate the safe design and construction of the windfarm. The windfarm is to utilise a recognised wind resource to deliver a low-cost, low carbon supply of electricity. Power generated from this site is intended to supply oil and gas assets in the North Sea, decarbonising the production process.</p> <p>Why is the activity essential? The survey activity prior to the construction of the windfarm is essential as it is not possible to safely construct a wind farm without understanding ground conditions to enable appropriate design and installation of foundation structures or subsea cables. The proposed surveys are also required to understand environmental receptors and enable an effective and proportionate EIA.</p> <p>What public interest is served? The public interest served is the development of new generation capacity to maintain a secure, affordable supply of power. Public interest will be served socioeconomically through financial support to the supply chain, significant contribution towards national climate change policies and delivery of multi-billion pound investments and jobs locally. This project is intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by providing a minimum of 600 MW of electricity.</p> <p>Is the activity in relation to any government targets or policies? The activity is in relation to the Scottish Government's Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.</p> <p>Is the applicant undertaking a statutory function? NO but the proposed surveys will facilitate infrastructure which will play a role in meeting the UK targets for net zero and the Scottish Government's net zero targets for 2045.</p>	
Test 1 satisfied?	YES

TEST 2	Satisfactory alternatives
Comments	
<p>Consideration was given to 4 alternatives to the current proposal were included. These were do nothing, alternative location, equipment alternatives and alternative coverage scenarios.</p> <p>The do nothing approach was discounted as there is a strong need for offshore electricity production to be developed. In order to do this safely, surveys are required to ensure the suitability of the site for the array areas and cable corridors. Additionally surveys allow environmental assessment of the sites to better understand the seabed ecosystem, to minimise impacts on environmental receptors and to validate desk-based assessments.</p> <p>The second alternative considered is a shift in the location of the survey activities but this was discounted as the survey must cover the lease area of the proposed sites. The survey area will however be kept to a minimum within those lease areas.</p> <p>The third option considered was to utilise alternative survey equipment. The proposed survey has been designed to meet specific data required to meet the EIA and engineering requirements of this project. It was not felt that alternative equipment would have the capability to produce this same data.</p> <p>The final option considered was that of alternative coverage scenarios. This would mean reduced coverage of the proposed survey area. This was discounted as it was considered that this would produce insufficient data resolution to understand the ground conditions and enable appropriate design and safe construction of the project.</p>	
Test 2 satisfied?	YES

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TEST 3	Favourable conservation status
Comments	
<p>NatureScot provided advice to MD-LOT on 11 March 2024 with further clarification provided on 15 March 2024.</p> <p>NatureScot advised that under The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 an EPS licence for disturbance is not required as a result of the activities.</p> <p>NatureScot advised that under The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 an EPS licence for disturbance is required.</p> <p>NatureScot acknowledged the proposed mitigation measures outlined in section 9 of the Cerulean Winds - EPS and Protected Species Risk Assessment dated February 2024 and advised that provided these measures are secured, an EPS licence for injury is not required. The proposed mitigation measures have been secured by condition of the licence.</p> <p>NatureScot advised that due to the scale of the activities, this is unlikely to have a detrimental effect on the favourable conservation status of any of the EPS concerned.</p>	
Test 3 satisfied?	YES

Date application received:

Consultation start date: 12/02/2024

Consultation end date: 11/03/2024

Notes

Date	Text	Created By
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Awaiting Information

Start date	End date	Duration (days)	Waiting for	Waiting on Information From
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Licence issue date: 27/03/2024

Date report due: 30/04/2025

Licence start date: 01/04/2024

Licence end date: 31/03/2025

National Marine Plan considerations:

<p>The decision is: In accordance and no further action required</p>
<p>Comments: Policy Gen 13 Noise has been considered for the proposed geophysical, geotechnical and benthic surveys. NatureScot were consulted and advised that the activities are not capable of having an adverse impact</p>

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on the favourable
conservation status of the EPS concerned and that all species have been correctly identified. Mitigation is also in
place to minimise any impact to EPS.

Reviewed and signed by:

Signed:



Date: 27/03/2024