Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm

Offshore Project

Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment

Appendix F: Environmental Impact Assessment Definitions

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

1.1.1.1 This appendix of the **Offshore Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA)** outlines the key terms applied to the assessment process within the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposed Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm (hereafter referred to as the 'Offshore Project') in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance.

1.1.1.2 This appendix should be read in conjunction with the **Offshore RIAA** and **Offshore Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) Chapter 5: Approach to EIA, Volume 2a**.

1.1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1.1.1 Spiorad na Mara Limited (hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant') is proposing to develop the Project. The Project is an offshore wind farm (OWF) that will consist of up to 60 fixed-bottom wind turbine generators (WTGs).

1.1.1.2 The Project will include both offshore and onshore infrastructure. The Offshore EIAR and Offshore RIAA supports the application for the offshore components of the Project as outlined in **Offshore EIAR Chapter 1: Introduction, Volume 1a**. The offshore components of the Project (the Offshore Project) includes all infrastructure and activities located seaward of Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) within the Array Area and Offshore Cable Area of Search (OCAS) (see **Offshore EIAR Figure 1.2: Offshore Project Location, Volume 1b**). Further detailed information is provided in **Offshore EIAR Chapter 3, Volume 1a**.

1.1.1.3 The Offshore Project is situated off the northwest coast of Isle of Lewis/*Eilean Leòdhais* and the Array Area is located approximately 5-13 km offshore and is approximately 161 km^2 in size. It will comprise WTGs, foundations, Offshore Cables, Offshore Substation Platform (OSP) (if required), and Landfall. The Array Area combined with the OCAS is defined as the Offshore Project Boundary. The water depths across the Array Area range from 37 m-67 m with the southwest corner of the Array Area reaching 72 m. The proposed WTGs and fixed foundations will be located within a Turbine Area of approximately 140 km^2, within the Array Area.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS APPENDIX

1.2.1.1 The information set out in this appendix is presented in full in **Offshore EIAR Chapter 5, Volume 2a**. The assessment presented within the **Offshore RIAA** in places draws on assessment conclusions within the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), in the context of the site based assessment and conservation objectives. EIA definitions are therefore included in this appendix to define the meaning of the terms used.

2 ASSESSMENT MATRICES APPLIED WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1.1 This section provides an overview of the method applied within the **Offshore EIAR**, for identifying and evaluating potential impacts and significance of potential environmental effects, including how receptors sensitivity and magnitude is defined and significance is assigned by combining the value or sensitivity and magnitude of change. For further details refer to **Offshore EIAR Chapter 5, Volume 2a**.

2.1.1.2 While assessing significance of effect is inherently subjective, a defined methodology aims to enhance objectivity and consistency across aspects. Given the variability of environmental factors, some differences in the process may occur, and any deviations are noted in the aspect-specific chapters in the **Offshore EIAR**, where relevant.

2.2 VALUE OR SENSITIVITY OF RECEPTOR

2.2.1.1 For the Offshore Project, value or sensitivity is categorised as either negligible, low, medium, or high (in accordance with the general definitions provided in **Table 2-1**), unless otherwise stated.

Table 2-1 Sensitivity definitions

Value/Sensitivity	Description
Negligible	Very low importance and rarity, local scale, very high potential for recovery
Low	Low or medium importance and rarity, local scale, high potential for recovery
Medium	Medium or high importance and rarity, regional scale, limited potential for recovery
High	High importance and rarity, national and/or international scale, limited potential for recovery

2.3 MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE

2.3.1.1 For the Offshore Project, magnitude of change is categorised as either negligible, low, medium, or high unless otherwise stated (see **Table 2-2**).

Table 2-2 Impact magnitude

Impact Magnitude	Description
Negligible	Very slight/no change to baseline conditions
Low	Minor loss/divergence from baseline conditions
Medium	Partial loss and/or alteration to qualifying/key elements and features of the receptor or receiving environment
High	Complete loss and/or alteration to qualifying/key elements and features of the receptor or receiving environment.

2.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS

2.4.1.1 The magnitude of change/impact does not necessarily equate to significance of effect in the **Offshore EIAR**. As part of the evaluation, significance of effect in the **Offshore EIAR** is determined as either negligible, minor, moderate, and major with definitions provided in **Table 2-3**.

Table 2-3 Significance of effect definitions

Category	Definition	Significance
Negligible	No detectable change in the environment or receptor and no significant effect	Not Significant
Minor	A detectable but small-scale change to environment or receptor with no significant effect	Not Significant
Moderate	A detectable and fundamental change to environment or receptor resulting in a possible significant effect	Potentially Significant
Major	A fundamental change to environment or receptor resulting in a significant effect	Significant

2.4.1.2 As a general rule for the EIAR, the following applies:

- 'Major' effects are considered to be Significant;
- 'Moderate' effects are considered to be Potentially Significant;
- 'Minor' and 'negligible' effects are considered to be Not Significant.

2.4.1.3 However, professional judgement is applied, where appropriate, to determine significance of effect. Where effects are assessed, according to the matrix in **Table 2-4**, to be moderate and 'Potentially Significant' in EIA terms, professional judgement is applied to determine whether they are Significant or Not Significant.

2.4.1.4 Significance of effect in each of the aspect-specific chapters is described based on the general approach set out in the matrix provided in **Table 2-4**. Variations to the approach, which may be

applicable to specific environmental aspects, for example based on specific standards and guidance, are detailed in each aspect-specific chapter where appropriate.

Table 2-4 Significant of effect matrix

		Sensitivity of Receptor/Receiving Environment to Change/Effect			
		Negligible	**Low**	**Medium**	**High**
Magnitude of Change/ Effect	**Negligible**	Negligible (Not Significant)	Negligible (Not Significant)	Negligible (Not Significant)	Negligible (Not Significant)
	Low	Negligible (Not Significant)	Negligible (Not Significant)	Minor (Not Significant)	Minor (Not Significant)
	Medium	Negligible (Not Significant)	Minor (Not Significant)	**Moderate** (Potentially Significant)	**Moderate** (Potentially Significant)
	High	Negligible (Not Significant)	Minor (Not Significant)	**Moderate** (Potentially Significant)	**Major** (Significant)

3 GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

3.1.1.1 A list of key terms and acronyms used in this Appendix are provided in **Table 3-1** and **Table 3-2**.

Table 3-1 Acronyms and abbreviations

Term	Definition
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
EU	European Union
MHWS	Mean High Water Springs
OCAS	Offshore Cable Area of Search
OSP	Offshore Substation Platform
RIAA	Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment
UK	United Kingdom
WTG	Wind turbine generators

Table 3-2 Glossary

Term	Meaning
Effect	Term used to express the consequence of an impact. The significance of an effect is determined by correlating the magnitude of the impact with the importance, or sensitivity, of the receptor or resource in accordance with defined significance criteria.
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	The process of evaluating the likely significant environmental effects of a proposed project or development over and above the existing circumstances (or 'baseline').
Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)	The Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) prepared to assess the likely significant effects of the Project on the environment.
Impact	Change that is caused by an action; for example, foundation installation (action) during construction which results in habitat loss (impact).
Magnitude (of Change)	A term that combines judgements about the size and scale of the effect, the extent of the area over which it occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is short term or long term in duration'. Also known as the 'degree' or 'nature' of change
Offshore Project	The offshore components of the Spiorad na Mara offshore wind farm (the Project) located seaward of Mean High Water Springs (MHWS).

Term	Meaning
Project	The Spiorad na Mara offshore wind farm development. This term describes the whole development, including all offshore and onshore components.
Ramsar	A wetland site designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
Sensitivity	A term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value associated to that receptor.
Receptor	Any physical, biological or anthropogenic element of the environment that may be affected or impacted by the Project. Receptors can include natural features such as the seabed and wildlife habitats as well as man-made features like fishing vessels and cultural heritage sites.
Significance	A measure of the importance of the environmental effect, defined by criteria specific to the environmental aspect.
Significant effect	It is a requirement of the EIA Regulations 2017 to determine the likely significant effects of the development on the environment, which should relate to the level of an effect and the type of effect. Where possible significant effects should be mitigated. The significance of an effect gives an indication as to the degree of importance (based on the magnitude of the effect and the sensitivity of the receptor) that should be attached to the impact described. Whether or not an effect should be considered significant is not absolute and requires the application of professional judgement. Significant – 'noteworthy, of considerable amount or effect or importance, not insignificant or negligible' (The Concise Oxford Dictionary). Those levels and types of landscape and visual effect likely to have a major or important / noteworthy or special effect of which a decision maker should take particular note
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	An area designated under the EC Habitats Directive to ensure that rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats or species of community interest are either maintained at or restored to a favourable conservation status
Special Protection Area (SPA)	An area designated under the Wild Birds Directive (Directive74/409/EEC) to protect important bird habitats. Implemented under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

4 REFERENCES

European Parliament and Council. (2011). Directive 2011/92/EU of The European Parliament and of The Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.