



THE CONSERVATION (NATURAL HABITAT, &c.) REGULATIONS 1994 (AS AMENDED)

LICENCE TO DISTURB MARINE SPECIES

Public Case Handling Report for Licence Number: BS-00012088

Site	Ayrshire to Scottish / Northern Irish Area Border
Company	SP Transmission PLC 320 St. Vincent Street Glasgow G2 5AD
Brief Description of Project	Western Link 2
Associated Licences	EPS-00012089

Inshore/Offshore	Inshore
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TEST 1	Purpose of licence
	Social, economic or environmental purpose
Comments	
The application addresses a specific and defined need for offshore geophysical, geotechnical and benthic survey works to inform the safe routing and design of the Western Link 2 (WL2) High Voltage Direct Current subsea electricity transmission link between Scotland and Wales. The activity provides significant public benefit by enabling nationally important electricity transmission infrastructure that supports integration of increased renewable energy generation, particularly offshore wind, thereby delivering longterm environmental benefits through decarbonisation, alongside economic benefits such as increased energy security, network resilience and support for supplychain activity. The surveys are essential because, without baseline seabed and geological data, cable routing and construction would be unsafe and environmentally unjustifiable; failure to proceed would prevent delivery of the WL2 project entirely due to unacceptable engineering, environmental and health and safety risks associated with unknown seabed conditions. The activity serves a clear overriding public interest by enabling nationally strategic electricity transmission reinforcement required to support the transition to a lowcarbon energy system. The proposed activity is directly aligned with government targets and policies, including UK and Scottish netzero commitments, national electricity system planning through the Holistic Network Design and Beyond 2030 programme, and policies within Scotland's National Marine Plan relating to submarine cable and renewable energy infrastructure. The applicant is undertaking works that support statutory electricity transmission functions, as the surveys are a necessary precursor to the delivery of infrastructure required to meet statutory climate change, energy security and electricity network obligations.	
Test 1 satisfied?	YES

TEST 2	Satisfactory alternatives
Comments	
Alternatives considered include the use of different or lowerimpact survey equipment, survey methods, adjustments to location or timing, and the donothing option. The applicant has provided clear justification as to why these alternatives are not satisfactory. In particular, alternative equipment or methods would either fail to provide the data necessary to safely design and route the cable or would still require an EPS licence and therefore cannot be considered satisfactory. Alternative locations or timing would not eliminate the presence of EPS within the survey corridor, and the donothing option would prevent delivery of the Western Link 2 project entirely by leaving seabed conditions unknown and resulting in an unsafe and nonviable development.	
Test 2 satisfied?	YES

TEST 3	Favourable conservation status
Comments	
The proposed activities are not capable of having an adverse impact on the favourable conservation status of the European Protected Species concerned or capable of having an adverse impact on basking sharks. NatureScot advised that on the information presented in the risk assessment, this activity is not likely to have an adverse effect on basking shark. We are satisfied that a Basking Shark disturbance licence has been applied for.	
Test 3 satisfied?	YES

Date application received: 21/04/2026

Consultation start date: 08/05/2026

Consultation end date: 05/06/2026

Notes

Date	title	Text
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National Marine Plan considerations:

The decision is: In accordance and no further action required

Comments: GEN 9 Natural heritage: Development and use of the marine environment must:

- (a) Comply with legal requirements for protected areas and protected species.
- (b) Not result in significant impact on the national status of Priority Marine Features.
- (c) Protect and, where appropriate, enhance the health of the marine area.

No requirement for Appropriate Assessment or Marine Protected Area Assessment.

GEN 19 Sound evidence: Decision making in the marine environment will be based on sound scientific and socio-economic evidence.

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