

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

LICENCE TO DISTURB MARINE SPECIES

Public Case Handling Report for Licence Number: EPS/BS-00011224

Site	Inch Cape Offshore Windfarm Development Area and Export Cable Corridor
Company	Inch Cape Offshore Limited New Clarendon 114-116 George Street Edinburgh EH2 4LH
Brief Description of Project	Boulder Clearance and Unexploded Ordnance Identification, including use of Ultra-Short Baseline.
Associated Licences	Marine Licence No. 00011225

Species	harbour porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>); bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>); minke whale (<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>); Risso's dolphin (<i>Grampus griseus</i>); white sided dolphin (<i>Lagenorhynchus acutus</i>); short beaked common dolphin (<i>Delphinus delphis</i>); killer whale (<i>Orcinus orca</i>); white-beaked dolphin (<i>Lagenorhynchus albirostris</i>); humpback whale (<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>); fin whale (<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>); long-finned pilot whale (<i>Globicephala melas</i>); sei whale (<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>)
Inshore/Offshore	Inshore

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 addressed?</p> <p>The applicant states the proposed boulder relocation and UXO investigation work is required for the development of the Inch Cape Offshore Wind Farm.</p> <p>What benefit does the activity provide or what need does it address – social, economic, environmental, health and safety etc? (they should give some details)</p> <p>The activity is part of a larger project, which the applicant states will create employment during all phases for the population of the east of Scotland and wider UK.</p> <p>Why is the activity essential?</p> <p>The applicant states that in order to delivery the renewable energy generation in Scotland, boulder relocation and pUXO target investigation work is required so that construction of the Inch Cape OWF can be started. The proposed boulder relocation work will achieve this by clearing the Project area (DA and ECC) of boulders. The proposed pUXO target investigation work will achieve this by identifying cUXOs to inform UXO clearance work (required to make the Project area safe for construction to begin).</p> <p>What public interest is served?</p> <p>This activity is part of a larger project, which the applicant states the installation of the Inch Cape windfarm will assist in meeting UK and Scottish Government climate change targets, which will provide long term economic and environmental benefits.</p> <p>Is the activity in relation to any government targets or policies?</p> <p>The activity is part of a larger project, which the applicant states will contribute to the Scottish Government's aims of achieving Net Zero by 2045 and make a significant contribution to meeting the targets set out in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019. Contributing to meeting the aims of tackling climate change and reducing emissions will benefit the wider population.</p> <p>The applicant states this project is in accordance with Scotland's Offshore Wind Policy Statement (2020) and the Scottish Energy Strategy (2017). One of the targets outlined in this strategy is that 50% of the energy for Scotland's heat, transport and electricity consumption is to be supplied from renewable sources. Inch Cape OWF will contribute to the delivery of renewable energy generation in Scotland, and assist in meeting Scotland's climate change targets. As highlighted above, the delivery of the project will contribute to meeting the emissions reduction targets and the aims of achieving Net Zero, as set out in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019.</p> <p>Is the applicant undertaking a statutory function?</p> <p>n/a</p>	
Test 1 satisfied?	YES

TEST 2	Satisfactory alternatives
Comments	
Has the applicant demonstrated that reasonable effort has been made to consider alternatives that would achieve the same result but with less / no impact on EPS?	

This activity is part of a larger project. The applicant has outlined 4 options in Section 7 of the application form.

- Option 1 – Do not undertake the work

The boulder relocation and pUXO target investigation work are key for the continued development of the Inch Cape OWF. There will be no effect on EPS from the proposed work if it is not undertaken. However, not undertaking the work is not a suitable option/satisfactory alternative because both aspects of the work are required for the construction of the Inch Cape OWF. Boulder relocation is required to clear the project area (DA and ECC) of boulders prior to construction. Without doing so construction of the offshore substation platform (OSP), WTGs, and inter-array and export cables is not possible.

pUXO target investigation work is required to identify any confirmed UXOs (cUXO) within the project area (DA and ECC) to inform cUXO clearance. Using existing data on pUXOs in the project area is not a suitable alternative because they are not sufficiently detailed or fine-scale to suitably inform cUXO clearance. The project therefore proposes to apply the mitigation outlined under option 4 while it undertakes the proposed work to negate and reduce potential effects on EPS (PTS and behavioural responses respectively).

- Option 2 – Conduct the surveys when marine EPS are not present

This is not a satisfactory alternative because marine EPS, e.g., harbour porpoise, are present in the North Sea year round. This is also the case for the dolphin (and seal) species. Minke whales are present seasonally (between April and October). Although basking sharks are also present seasonally, they occur very infrequently at this latitude in the North Sea. It will not be possible to use an alternative location because the location of the Plan Option Area is fixed, and this is the location from which work needs to be undertaken. The location of the cable corridor is driven by the location of suitable grid connection options, and is constrained by other factors. There is therefore no time of year when marine EPS are not present in the area surrounding the proposed work location (or any area within the North Sea). Therefore, conducting the proposed boulder relocation and pUXO target investigation work when marine EPS are not present is not an option. The project therefore proposes to apply the mitigation outlined under option 4 while it undertakes the proposed work to negate and reduce potential effects on EPS (PTS and behavioural responses respectively).

- Option 3: Do not use equipment which emits sound

The equipment proposed is industry standard and there are no suitable non-sound-emitting alternatives which could be used to undertake the same work. Not using equipment which emits sound equates to not undertaking the work because it cannot be obtained using alternative (i.e., non-sound-emitting) methods e.g., using divers for all of the offshore pUXO target investigation work instead of WROVs. Therefore, not using work methods and equipment which emits sound is not an option. The project therefore proposes to apply the mitigation outlined under option 4 while it undertakes the proposed work to negate and reduce potential effects on EPS (PTS and behavioural responses respectively).

- Option 4: Restrict/reduce sound emitted by the equipment

The equipment that will be used is standardly used, and the noise emitted is a function of its purpose and therefore not able to be reduced if the objective of the work is to be met. The Project does however intend to adhere to the following:

- o High frequency equipment such as MBES and Imaging Sonar to be operated at frequencies above the hearing range of marine mammals where possible i.e., above 200 kHz. This will negate the potential for effect (PTS or behavioural response).

- o USBLs will only be used with a maximum source pressure level of <202 dB re 1 μ Pa @ 1 m.

- In addition, watches for marine mammals, turtles and basking sharks will be conducted during all transits to and from work sites and actions in line with the Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code taken. This will

reduce the potential for collisions with EPS and basking sharks.

They should explain what alternatives were considered and justification for considering they are unsatisfactory.
See above outlined options

They should always consider the 'do-nothing' alternative.
See above outlined Option 1

Possible alternatives may be equipment, methods, locations and timing.
See above outlined Option 3

Test 2 satisfied?	YES
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TEST 3	Favourable conservation status
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Comments

NatureScot has advised there will be no impact on FCS for any EPS. Therefore, test 3 passed.

Test 3 satisfied?	YES
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Date application received: 24/04/2025

Consultation start date: 01/07/2025

Consultation end date: 29/07/2025

Notes

Date	title	Text
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National Marine Plan considerations:

The decision is: In accordance and no further action required

Comments: The boulder clearance and UXO ID activities are necessary to build out the Inch Cape windfarm project and align with the following NMP policies:

GEN1,2,3 – the Inch Cape windfarm is a sustainable development which will provide social and economic benefits for Scotland and these activities are necessary to secure these benefits

GEN4 – co-existence with other users of the sea will be carried out through appropriate notifications as conditioned on the marine licence

GEN5 – these activities are essential to the building of the wind farm which will mitigate the effects of climate change

GEN7 – there will be limited seascape, landscape and visual impacts of the boulder clearance activities and the impacts of these of the development as a whole have been assessed through the EIA Report

GEN13 – impacts on noise from the wider Inch Cape project have been assessed through the EIA Report. the noise impacts of these activities have been licenced through the EPS licence with appropriate conditions

attached to avoid AEOSI for protected sites.

REN5 – the application is in line with what was assessed in the EIA Report for the wider project. HRA was carried out for these activities and, through conditions on the licences, there will be no AEOSI.

The application aligns with the objectives of the Renewables section of the NMP as it is necessary to develop the Inch Cape windfarm which will contribute to Scotland's renewable energy targets.

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