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Ms Sarah Edwards
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Date: 12 November 2020

Dear Ms Edwards,

SCREENING OPINION UNDER THE THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017 (AS AMENDED) & MARINE WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2007 (AS AMENDED)

Thank you for your screening opinion request dated 25 August 2020 in regards to the proposed changes to the Moray Offshore Windfarm (West) Limited ("Moray West") Section 36 Consent, and to the offshore generating station marine licence (Marine Licence 06763/19/0), granted 14 June 2019.

The proposed changes encompass the increase of the maximum blade width to Wind Turbine Generators ("WTGs") under the scenario to install 72 WTGs, from 6 metres to 6.6 metres within the Section 36 consent and the generating station marine licence; and to remove reference to a maximum generating capacity of around 850 MW within the Section 36 consent (collectively known as "the Proposed Works").

The Scottish Ministers consider the Proposed Works fall under paragraph 3 of Schedule 2 of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (as amended) ("the 2017 EW Regulations"), and paragraph 89 of Schedule A2 of the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2007 (as amended) ("the 2007 MW Regulations").

Under regulation 8(5) of the 2017 EW Regulations, the Scottish Ministers have consulted with the planning authorities Aberdeenshire Council, Moray Council and The Highland Council, on whether the Proposed Works would constitute an EIA project.

Under Schedule 2 paragraph 4 of the 2007 MW Regulations, the Scottish Ministers have consulted with NatureScot for their view on whether the Proposed Works would constitute an EIA project.

When making a determination as to whether Schedule 2 projects under the 2017 EW Regulations, and Schedule A2 projects under the 2007 MW Regulations, are an EIA project, the Scottish Ministers must take into account the selection criteria set out in schedule 3 of the EW 2017 Regulations and schedule 1 of the 2007 MW Regulations, as are relevant to the Works. In this regard, Scottish Ministers have considered the following:

Characteristics of the Works

Moray West has been granted Section 36 consent and an offshore generation station marine licence to install WTGs on the following basis:

“85 WTG scenario”

No more than 85 three-bladed horizontal axis WTG each with:

- a. a maximum rotor tip height of 230 metres (measured from Highest Astronomical Tide (“HAT”));
- b. a maximum rotor diameter of 195 metres;
- c. a maximum hub height of 132.5 metres (measured from HAT);
- d. a minimum blade tip clearance of 35 metres (measured from HAT);
- e. blade width of up to 6 metres; and
- f. a minimum spacing of 1,050 metres crosswind and 1,200 metres downwind.

or

“72 WTG scenario”

If the rotor tip height of the WTGs exceeds 230 metres (measured from HAT), no more than 72 WTGs each with:

- a. a maximum rotor tip height of 265 metres (measured from HAT);
- b. a maximum rotor diameter of 230 metres;
- c. a maximum hub height of 150 metres (measured from HAT);
- d. a minimum blade tip clearance of 35 metres (measured from HAT);
- e. blade width of up to 6 metres; and
- f. a minimum spacing of 1,050 metres crosswind and 1,200 metres downwind;

The Section 36 consent and offshore generating station marine licence applications were supported with an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (“EIA Report”), an Addendum Report and an Information to Inform HRA – Great Black-Backed Gull Report (“GBBG Report”). The 72 WTG scenario which covers the parameters of the largest WTG model was considered the Worst Case Scenario (“WCS”) when considering environmental impacts with the exception of collision impacts where the 85 WTG scenario was considered the WCS.

It has become apparent to Moray West that large WTG models being considered under the 72 WTG scenario, have larger rotor diameters which result in a corresponding increase in blade

width which would increase to 6.6 metres. No change to any of the consented parameters under the 85 WTG scenario is proposed by Moray West.

The Section 36 consent includes reference to a maximum generating capacity of around 850MW, which Moray West seeks to remove as it brings uncertainty to the ability to maximise generating capacity. The earliest target date for commissioning of the wind farm is 2024 and there remains opportunity for existing WTGs to increase their rated outputs and, as WTG technology develops, for new designs to enter the market. Moray West would like to remove the reference to a maximum generating capacity to enable flexibility and the ability to accommodate new and improved WTGs that may become available in the future.

WTG blade width was considered in the Section 36 and marine licence application for its impact on ornithology, and specifically in regards to collision mortality. Conclusions were presented in the EIA Report, the application Addendum Report and the GBBG Report. The model consented under the 85 WTG scenario, which has a maximum blade width of 6 metres, became the WCS with regards to Collision Risk Modelling ("CRM") and the assessment of impact on ornithology receptors. However, as models under the 72 WTG scenario will now require a longer blade width, additional CRM has been carried out by Moray West under these parameters, with the varied blade width of 6.6 metres.

CRM was carried out to assess the collision mortality impacts on kittiwake, great black-backed gull, gannet and herring gull. The CRM within the EIA Report, the Addendum Report and the GBBG Report submitted with the Section 36 consent and marine licence applications, concluded that effects on all four species were not significant.

The additional CRM carried out under the parameters of 72 WTG scenario with the proposed increase in WTG blade width to 6.6 metres concluded there would be a small decrease in the predicted annual collision mortality for each of the four species in comparison to the 85 WTG scenario.

No assessment of the cap for maximum generating capacity of 850MW was undertaken for the EIA Report. It noted that EIA assessments are not linked to or affected by WTG capacity.

NatureScot confirmed that the CRM showed that the predicted collisions under the 72 WTG scenario with an increase in blade width, are slightly lower than those predicted in the modelling for the consented application, and agreed that the conclusions reached by Moray West and Scottish Ministers in the original Section 36 consent and marine licence applications remain valid.

Aberdeenshire Council stated that their primary interest related to the Sea and Landscape Visual impact of the consented wind farm design and did not consider that the increase in blade width would lead to any significantly different impacts. The removal of the 850MW generating capacity and allowing for a higher output did not raise any concerns.

The Highland Council responded that they were satisfied that, based on the information provided, the increase in blade width does not affect any of the conclusions presented in the EIA or the Habitats Regulation Assessment in relation to ornithology, and landscape, seascape and visual amenity.

Moray Council responded that in terms of visual effects, the increase in blade width from 6 metres to 6.6 metres will be so minimal as not to constitute an EIA development. It considered that the removal of the generating capacity limit raised no EIA implications.

Based on the information provided and advice received, the Scottish Ministers are of the opinion that the characteristics of the Proposed Works are unlikely to have significant effects on the environment.

Location of the Development and Works

The Moray West Offshore Wind Farm will be located in close proximity of the East Caithness Special Protected Area (“SPA”) which was identified in the EIA Report as an area where effects are likely to occur. Kittiwake, great black-backed gull and herring gull are features of the East Caithness SPA.

The EIA Report, Addendum Report and GBBG Report submitted with the Section 36 consent and marine licence applications, assessed the predicted annual collision mortality for all three species for the Moray West project alone and in combination with the other Moray Firth projects of Moray East and Beatrice offshore wind farms. It was concluded that there would be no adverse effects from the Moray West project alone or in-combination with the other Moray Firth projects.

The additional CRM results to assess the impacts of the increase in blade width under the 72 WTG scenario, have been presented by Moray West on a project level impact only. The analysis concluded that, given the reduction in predicted annual collision mortality, the effect on kittiwake, great black-backed gull and herring gull remained not significant. It was also concluded that as the increase in blade width made no change to the significance of effect for the project alone, it can be concluded that there will be no change or implications for the conclusion of the in- combination/cumulative effect significance.

NatureScot confirmed that the CRM showed that the predicted collisions under the 72 WTG scenario with an increase in blade width, are slightly lower than those predicted in the modelling for the consented application, and agreed that the conclusions reached by Moray West and Scottish Ministers in the original Section 36 consent and marine licence applications remain valid.

Based on the information provided and advice received, the Scottish Ministers are of the opinion that the Proposed Works are unlikely to have significant effects on the environment.

Characteristics of the potential impact

A supporting Screening Report has been prepared by Moray West which reviewed the proposed changes and receptors assessed in the EIA Report, Addendum Report and GBBG Report, and provided consideration on whether there will be any new potential impacts and/or changes of significance of impact to what was described in the original application.

The Proposed Works have reduced the predicted collision risk mortality rate to ornithology receptors in comparison to the consented 85 WTG scenario, and bring no change to the significance of effect to ornithology receptors at a project level or in-combination/cumulatively. No significant impact to the visual impacts of the wind farm design have been identified and the increase in maximum generating capacity to allow for a higher output has raised no concerns.

Scottish Ministers are therefore of the opinion that the CRM conclusions that supported the Section 36 consent and offshore generation station marine licence applications remain valid, and the Proposed Works are unlikely to have significant effect on the environment.

Conclusion

The Scottish Ministers consider the Proposed Works are not an EIA project under the 2017 EW Regulations and the 2007 MW Regulations and therefore an EIA is not required to be carried out in respect of the Proposed Works.

If you increase, alter or extend the Proposed Works, you are advised to contact Marine Scotland - Licensing Operations Team again to confirm if the screening opinion is still valid.

A copy of the screening opinion has been forwarded to Aberdeenshire Council, Moray Council and The Highland Council planning departments. The screening opinion has also been made publicly available through the [Marine Scotland Information](#) website.

If you require any further assistance or advice on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Debbie England
Marine Scotland - Licensing Operations Team