



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

LICENCE TO DISTURB MARINE SPECIES

Public Case Handling Report for Licence Number: EPS-00011906

<b>Site</b>	Pentland Floating Offshore Wind Farm Geophysical survey site
<b>Company</b>	Highland Wind Limited  10 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2PF
<b>Brief Description of Project</b>	Geophysical survey campaigns utilising Acoustic Zoom, Sub-Bottom Profiler and Ultra High Resolution Sonar
<b>Associated Licences</b>	EPS-00011906 BS-00011910

<b>Species</b>	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> );Cuvier's beaked whale ( <i>Ziphius cavirostris</i> )
<b>Inshore/Offshore</b>	Inshore

<b>TEST 1</b>	<b>Purpose of licence</b>
	Imperative reasons of overriding public interest (including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment)
<b>Comments</b>	
<p>The proposed geophysical surveys and anchor trials are required to determine seabed conditions and profile within the Pentland Floating Offshore Wind Farm (“PFOWF”) survey area ensuring safety, efficiency and cost effectiveness of the project. Additionally, results from surveys and anchor trials will contribute meaningfully to the wider learning objectives of the PFOWF, supporting innovation in floating offshore wind design and construction. The information gained will assist in de-risking future largescale offshore floating wind farm developments across Scotland and the UK, including those planned under ScotWind and INTOG, by improving understanding of seabed conditions in deeper waters and informing industrywide best practice. By enabling PFOWF to progress, the surveys and anchor trials will also support national energy security, diversify the renewable energy mix, and contribute to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore the benefits for the economy and environment are considered to be long-term.</p> <p>Without carrying out the geophysical surveys and anchor trials Highland Wind Limited will be unable to demonstrate the feasibility of innovative floating offshore wind farm infrastructure within Scottish waters. Also meaning the generation of renewable energy contributing to UK and European targets and policy would not be possible.</p> <p>PFOWF will contribute meaningfully to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>The proposed geophysical surveys and anchor trials support key national and regional climate and renewable energy policies as ultimately they will contribute to the construction of the PFOWF, these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UK policy: The Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended) commits the UK to Net Zero by 2050, with offshore wind development essential to meeting this legally binding target;</li> <li>- Scottish policy: The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 (as amended) and Scotland’s climate framework showcases the requirement to achieve Net Zero by 2045 and includes fiveyear carbon budgets (2026–2045), with renewable energy deployment central to achieving these statutory reductions; and</li> <li>- Wider policy context: The EU’s updated Renewable Energy Directive (EU/2023/2413) sets a 2030 target of at least 42.5% renewable's, demonstrating ongoing international policy commitment to expanding renewable generation, which PFOWF contributes to.</li> </ul> <p>Highland Wind Limited is not undertaking a statutory function.</p>	
<b>Test 1 satisfied?</b>	YES

<b>TEST 2</b>	<b>Satisfactory alternatives</b>
<b>Comments</b>	
<p>The works, equipment and methods proposed will provide Highland Wind Limited with the information required on the seabed and sub-seabed information required to finalise the engineering design for the consented PFOWF. This method also means the work is carried out safely, efficiently and cost effectively.</p> <p>Alternative equipment such as Piezocone penetration tests were considered in place of selected geophysical equipment but were deemed to be only discrete points of the consented area of works. The Acoustic Zoom system produces the better quality than others currently available on the market.</p> <p>It is considered that at present the methods proposed (sub bottom profiler, side scan sonar, multibeam echo sounder etc) that might require an EPS licence are industry standard and that currently there are no alternative means of gathering the data provided by these methods.</p> <p>The location and timing of the proposed works are to meet the consented PFOWF area and it would not be appropriate at another location and timing to meet the consented activity.</p> <p>If the marine geophysical surveys are not undertaken, HWL would be unable to obtain the detailed seabed and sub-seabed information required to finalise the engineering design for the PFOWF. Without this data, the design and installation approach for the Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs), foundations, moorings, and subsea infrastructure could not be refined, introducing significant technical and construction risk. Not progressing the surveys would also limit the Project's ability to function as a test and demonstrator for floating offshore wind, and would hinder progress towards Scotland's and the UK's wider energy security and net zero commitments. HWL does not consider this an appropriate option for the PFOWF as a consented project that is instrumental to the delivery of innovation in floating wind farm developments and progression to net zero targets.</p>	
<b>Test 2 satisfied?</b>	YES

<b>TEST 3</b>	<b>Favourable conservation status</b>
<b>Comments</b>	
<p>NatureScot confirmed: provided all mitigation measures are adhered to, the proposed activities would not have an adverse impact on the favourable status of the EPS concerned.</p>	
<b>Test 3 satisfied?</b>	YES

**Date application received:** 13/03/2026

**Consultation start date:** 30/03/2026

**Consultation end date:** 20/04/2026

**Notes**

Date	title	Text
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National Marine Plan considerations:

The decision is: In accordance and no further action required
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Comments:

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