

From: [REDACTED]
To: [MD Marine Renewables](#)
Subject: Objection - Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm (MD-00011742 & MD-00011743)
Date: 06 May 2026 19:46:10

I formally object to the above application as it contravenes the following planning policies and guidance:

Lack of Community Engagement: There was no consultation with the communities of west Lewis before Crown Estate Scotland identified and leased the N4 area for development. The plan was imposed on them without consent.

Scotland's National Marine Plan (NMP) GEN 18 'Early and effective engagement should be undertaken with the general public and all interested stakeholders to facilitate planning and consenting processes.'

NMP Para. 4.77 'Engagement with the public and other stakeholders should be appropriate, proportionate and meaningful. It should be undertaken as early as possible in planning and consenting processes.'

NPF4 Spatial Principles - Just Transition. 'We will empower people to shape their places.'

Lack of understanding of Cultural Significance: The EIAR makes no reference to the personal, cultural or historical attachment of the population of Lewis to their landscape and heritage, and fails to assess impacts on the living intangible heritage of the Gaelic community. Until a full assessment addressing impacts on Gaelic language and culture, community wellbeing, and west Lewis communities' relationship with their coastline is completed and publicly consulted upon, this application cannot lawfully be determined.

NMP Para. 4.20 'The historic environment includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time.'

NPF4 Policy 7 a 'Development proposals with a potentially significant impact on historic assets or places will be accompanied by an assessment which is based on an understanding of the cultural significance of the historic asset and/or place.'

Significant Adverse Impacts on Protected Birdlife and Habitats: The development occupies primary foraging grounds for the Lewis Peatlands SPA red-throated divers, falls within the foraging range of the St Kilda gannet colony, and crosses a principal UK migratory corridor for protected species, including whooper swan and pink-footed goose. The EIAR fails to adequately assess the threats of collision, displacement, and barrier effects to these declining populations. Thus, consent would breach the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994, the 2018 Offshore Regulations, the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as the proposal is likely to adversely affect the integrity of the following SPA's: Lewis Peatlands, West Coast of the Outer Hebrides, Seas off St Kilda and St Kilda.

NPF4 Policy 7 l 'Development proposals affecting a World Heritage Site or its setting will only be supported where their Outstanding Universal Value is protected and preserved.'

NPF4 Policy 11 e ix Impact on 'biodiversity including impacts on birds' must be addressed.

Failure to Protect the Integrity and Setting of Scheduled Monuments: The EIAR anticipates significant adverse effects on coastal heritage. It fails to assess the impact on key scheduled monuments such as SM13786. The proposal would harm the Calanais monuments and wider historic landscape by introducing an industrial horizon into their natural surroundings, fundamentally undermining the meaning, experience, and interconnected setting of these sites, directly conflicting with NPF4 Policy 7. There are many alternative sites for offshore wind development and no reasons of over-riding public interest for choosing this site.

NMP Para. 4.22 'Marine planning should help to ensure that future marine activities and developments can be carried out in a way that respects the marine historic environment and the setting of important coastal heritage assets.' Para. 4.23 'Designated assets should be protected in situ within an appropriate setting'.

NPF4 Policy 7 h 'Development proposals affecting scheduled monuments will only be supported where: ii 'significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the setting of a scheduled monument are avoided; or iii exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify the impact on a scheduled monument and its setting and impacts on the monument or its setting have been minimised.'

Unassessed Onshore Impacts and Breach of Statutory Rights of Crofters: Granting offshore consent while onshore impacts on irreplaceable machair and deep peatland remain unassessed, directly contravenes NPF4 Policy 3, which requires biodiversity (including irreplaceable habitats) to be left in a demonstrably better state. In addition the proposal fails to engage the statutory rights of crofters under the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993. NMP Para. 4.77 'There should be a presumption in favour of publicising applications for marine and terrestrial components of a development together during consenting processes.'

Irreparable Harm to the Tourism Economy and Coastal Character: The Spiorad na Mara wind farm would permanently industrialise the unspoiled coastal scenery and dark skies on the Isle of Lewis, destroying the very qualities that attract visitors to the island. Local residents have consistently warned during consultation that this visual impact would decimate the tourist industry on which so many islanders depend. Tourism is built on the area's landscape, seascape, heritage, nature, and dark skies. This development risks long-term damage to local businesses and the wider economy, contrary to NPF4 Policy 30.

NMP, Para. 12.28 'An unspoiled environment, high quality landscape and a sense of closeness to nature are important to many people. Scenery and environmental quality are key factors in attracting visitors to Scotland's coasts.'

Community Opposition and lack of Community Empowerment: The Community Opinion Survey on the Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm Development (N4) published by www.emg-lewis.co.uk in April 2026 found that 88% of residents from Ness to Uig opposed the N4 development. Approving this project against such overwhelming local consensus would directly contravene the National Islands Plan's commitment to community empowerment.

The National Islands Plan, page 65, para. 5 'Our vision is for islanders to be empowered to shape their own priorities, build their futures, and protect what makes their communities unique.'

Significant Adverse Impacts on Marine Mammals and Protected Marine Habitats: The Outer Hebrides are described by the Scottish Government's own scientists as "probably the richest area of the UK for marine mammals with around 20 species of cetacean recorded in the region over the last 30 years" (Scottish Marine and Freshwater Science Vol. 5 No. 9). The site lies adjacent to the Inner Hebrides and Minches SAC - the largest harbour porpoise SAC in Europe - within the wider range of the North-east Lewis MPA for Risso's dolphin, within documented fin and sperm whale migration corridors (Blue Corridors initiative), and within the wider feeding and habitat range of minke, humpback and sei whales, and within the foraging range of the Monach Isles grey seal colony (the largest in Europe). The EIAR fails to reflect this internationally significant baseline in its significance conclusions and cannot demonstrate, to the legal standard required, that adverse effects on these protected sites and species will be avoided. Under the Habitats Regulations Appraisal process, consent must be refused unless Scottish Ministers are satisfied beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the integrity of European sites will not be adversely affected (NatureScot HRA guidance). That standard has not been met.

Construction noise: The developer's own noise modelling (EIAR Appendix 19.2) provides for up to 5.5 hours of percussive piling per day, up to 10,635 strikes per pile per day, hammer energies up to 5,000 kJ, and 1,563 pin piles across two consecutive construction years (April–October). The EIAR itself acknowledges that "harbour porpoises are widely regarded as the most sensitive marine mammal receptor to underwater noise" and that behavioural disturbance can occur up to 70 km from piling (Bailey et al., 2010, cited in Chapter 13). The proposed piling window coincides with peak cetacean seasonal density and with harbour seal pupping (June–July), triggering the prohibition on deliberate disturbance of European Protected Species during breeding and rearing periods under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The developer's own underwater noise modelling (EIAR Appendix 13.3) confirms that, even with noise mitigation applied, percussive piling at the northernmost foundation location generates a PTS (permanent auditory injury) range of up to 1,500 m for low-frequency cetaceans and a TTS (temporary auditory injury) range of up to 49 km. These are the developer's own figures, after mitigation. Low-frequency cetaceans include minke, fin, sei and humpback whales - all species documented in these waters. A 49 km auditory injury zone, repeated across an April–October piling window for two consecutive years, cannot credibly be reconciled with a classification of effects as "not significant."

NMP Policy GEN 13: development should avoid significant adverse effects of man-made noise and vibration on species sensitive to such effects. The EIAR predicts disturbance to 9.186% of the Risso's dolphin management unit population and 27.7% of the coastal bottlenose dolphin population from piling noise, yet classifies these effects as "not significant." GEN 13 sets an avoidance standard, not a tolerance threshold. The developer's own EPS and Basking Shark Risk Assessment (submitted to Marine Scotland, 22 February 2023) formally acknowledges risk of disturbance to minke whale, harbour porpoise, common dolphin, bottlenose dolphin, grey seal and basking shark from survey work alone. Full construction at this scale cannot credibly be claimed to present a lesser risk.

The 2023 Tolsta Stranding: In July 2023, 54 of 55 long-finned pilot whales died on Traigh Mhòr beach while geophysical surveys were being carried out at this lease area. The Scottish Government investigation could not rule out anthropogenic contribution and explicitly acknowledged limitations in the acoustic detection capability

of the recorders used. This recent and devastating event must weigh heavily in this decision.

Priority Marine Features and seabed disturbance: Kelp beds - confirmed present across 10 km² within the Study Area and designated as a PMF and blue carbon habitat - are assessed as sustaining "minor adverse" impact, with no compensatory measures proposed. Maerl beds, horse mussel beds, fan mussel aggregations and cold-water coral reefs (all Scottish PMFs) are either excluded on the basis of decade-old desktop data (Tyler-Walters et al., 2016) or not mentioned at all. The developer concedes that its primary mitigation - micro-siting of turbines and cables - "cannot be quantified until detailed design and further site-specific investigations are complete."

NMP GEN 5: safeguard natural carbon sinks including kelp beds. NMP GEN 9: do not result in significant impact on the national status of Priority Marine Features, and protect and enhance the health of the marine area.

Cumulative and in-combination effects: The Habitats Regulations require assessment of cumulative effects with other plans and projects. The Scottish Government's own 2026 ICIA Screening Report concedes that Scottish offshore wind plans are "likely...to undergo the derogations process under the Habitats Regulations." Spiorad na Mara is one of several large developments proposed in or adjacent to these waters; the cumulative assessment does not rigorously meet this requirement. NMP GEN 21 requires cumulative impacts affecting the ecosystem to be addressed.

Inadequate assessment and deferred mitigation: The joint representation from the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust and Whale and Dolphin Conservation states that baseline cetacean data is "severely lacking." Proposed mitigation (MMOs, PAM, soft-start) is designed to address acute physical injury, not behavioural displacement; JNCC guidance confirms PAM has "limited range" for harbour porpoise and is "not suitable" for seals and baleen whales. Key mitigation is deferred to a post-consent Marine Mammal Mitigation Protocol, preventing Scottish Ministers from assessing adequacy at the point of determination - contrary to the beyond-reasonable-scientific-doubt standard required under the Habitats Regulations. Peer-reviewed monitoring at Scottish offshore wind farm construction sites (Benhemma-Le Gall et al. 2021, *Frontiers in Marine Science*) observed harbour porpoise displacement up to 12 km from pile-driving and 4 km from construction vessels alone - distances that no MMO, PAM or soft-start zone can address.

The EPS licence contradiction: The EIAR identifies that activities may require an EPS licence due to disturbance at a level requiring legal derogation, while simultaneously concluding residual effects are "negligible or minor." Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, an EPS licence can only be granted where no satisfactory alternative exists, imperative reasons of overriding public interest apply, and favourable conservation status is maintained. The EIAR demonstrates none of these.

Basking sharks (IUCN Endangered) were recorded by the developer's own July 2023 aerial survey (EIAR Appendix 13.1). The EIAR does not adequately assess EMF impacts from subsea cables on elasmobranchs, despite Scottish Government ScotMER research identifying this as an unresolved evidence gap (FF.07).

No alternative solutions: Under the Habitats Regulations, consent cannot be granted if alternative solutions exist. Other ScotWind sites are available in waters without the same density of European Protected Species and designated habitats, and the existence of those alternatives is directly relevant to whether consent for this site can lawfully proceed.

Consent would therefore breach or inadequately address the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, NMP Policies GEN 5, GEN 9, GEN 13 and GEN 21, and ASCOBANS Resolution 7.6 (2016) on underwater noise.

My further objection points:

I have lived and worked in Lewis all of my life and I'm 75 years of age. I love my island and I resent it being spoilt in any way by anyone and I believe the proposed N4 turbine project will jeopardise a lot of the things that I cherish in life. I live on the coast that will be impacted by these monstrosities, especially as there is no real gain for the people of the island. If there was any benefit from having this project so near our shoreline we wouldn't be getting it. Our energy cost will still be high as will the damage to our environment in many ways. This message is to briefly also register my disgust and disappointment that an insipid and impotent group of people that we have elected at all levels of government have let us down by not objecting to this project.

This planning decision is about the long-term future and the character of a landscape and community that cannot be replaced once altered at this scale. Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm would cause significant,

cumulative and largely irreversible harm to landscape and seascape character, heritage setting, and the tourism economy.

I respectfully request that this application is rejected.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
To: [MD Marine Renewables](#)
Subject: Objection
Date: 06 May 2026 19:58:39

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the derogations process under the Habitats Regulations." Spiorad na Mara is one of several large developments proposed in or adjacent to these waters; the cumulative assessment does not rigorously meet this requirement. NMP GEN 21 requires cumulative impacts affecting the ecosystem to be addressed.

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My further objection points:
It's vital that we don't disrupt cetacean populations.

This planning decision is about the long-term future and the character of a landscape and community that cannot be replaced once altered at this scale. Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm would cause significant, cumulative and largely irreversible harm to landscape and seascape character, heritage setting, and the tourism economy.
I respectfully request that this application is rejected.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.



Member of Public 2388

From: [REDACTED]
To: [MD Marine Renewables](#)
Subject: Proposal of wind turbines on the west coast of The Island of Lewis.
Date: 06 May 2026 19:55:35

Is wish to register my complete objection to the proposed development on the Island of Lewis .The whole idea is proposperous and unfair on us Islanders.

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
To: [MD Marine Renewables](#)
Subject: Consultation Response - Spiorad na Mara
Date: 06 May 2026 18:58:03
Attachments: [Spiorad na Mara - Consultation Response - 6 May 2026.docx](#)

Good evening,

Please find attached a consultation response for the proposed Spiorad na Mara development (

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

CONSULTATION RESPONSE – Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm



To: Scottish Ministers (Marine Directorate – Licensing Operations Team)

I am writing to object to the proposed Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm. I am frequent visitor to the isle of Lewis, with family living in Ness. It is my view that there are major unaddressed issues with the proposed development and that planning consent should therefore be rejected.

This objection focuses on whether the Scottish Government can lawfully grant consent, taking account of the main legal requirements, including:

- The Electricity Act 1989 (section 36 consent)
- The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009
- The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017
- The Habitats Regulations (including the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 and the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017)
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and
- Planning policies under the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

NPF4 must be read as a whole. While it supports renewable energy development, it also requires that biodiversity is protected and enhanced, and that the character and setting of sensitive coastal landscapes and historic assets are safeguarded. While renewable energy is important, individual developments must still meet these legal requirements. If they are not met, consent should be refused.

Impacts on Protected Sites (Habitats Regulations)

Under the Habitats Regulations, Scottish Ministers must carry out an Appropriate Assessment and be certain that the project will not adversely affect the integrity of protected European sites. This proposal is not located in a remote offshore environment, but in close proximity to a highly sensitive coastal and cultural landscape, and within waters actively used by protected species

The proposed development is unusually close to the coast (approximately 5–13 km offshore), bringing it within the regular foraging range of seabirds associated with a number of internationally important Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in the Outer Hebrides. These include, for example, the Lewis Peatlands SPA, the West Coast of North Uist SPA, the Shiant Isles SPA, and the wider marine Seas off St Kilda SPA, which supports one of the largest seabird assemblages in the North Atlantic.

These sites support species such as northern gannet, Atlantic puffin, black-legged kittiwake, common guillemot and razorbill, and northern fulmar and storm-petrels, as well as red-throated divers, whooper swans, and pink-footed goose.

Seabirds from these colonies routinely travel large distances to forage, including into the waters west of Lewis. This means that even developments located outside SPA boundaries can have direct effects on protected populations. As a result, there is a clear risk of collision mortality from turbine blades, displacement and barrier effects reducing access to feeding areas. These risks are particularly significant in the Outer Hebrides, which support globally important seabird populations, including some of the largest colonies in Europe. Many species, including kittiwake and puffin, are already experiencing population declines linked to food availability and wider environmental pressures.

Under the Habitats Regulations, Scottish Ministers must be certain that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of any protected site, either alone or in combination with other projects. Given the reliance on predictive modelling and assumptions about species behaviour, there is an inherent limitation in the ability to demonstrate the absence of adverse effects with the level of certainty required by law.

If impacts on seabird populations connected to these SPAs cannot be clearly ruled out, particularly when cumulative effects are taken into account, consent should not be granted.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Under the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, consent must not be granted unless a full Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out. This assessment must cover the entire project, including all elements that are functionally linked or interdependent.

The proposed development comprises both offshore infrastructure (turbines and offshore cables), and onshore infrastructure (including landfall, substations and grid connection). These elements form a single project in practice, as the development cannot operate without the associated onshore transmission infrastructure.

There is a risk that these components have been assessed separately or at different stages, rather than as a single integrated development. If that is the case, it would amount to an incomplete EIA.

This is important because EIA case law is clear that developments must not be divided into smaller parts in order to reduce the scope of environmental assessment. This has been tested in Court, with *Raeshaw Farms Ltd v Scottish Ministers* [2026], finding that consent was unlawful where connected grid infrastructure had not been properly assessed as part of the overall development.

If the Environmental Impact Assessment does not assess the full project (offshore, onshore and grid connection together) or fails to consider the combined impacts of these elements, then it does not meet the requirements of the EIA Regulations, and Scottish Ministers should not grant consent.

Marine Ecology and Protected Species

Marine species in Scottish waters are subject to strict legal protection under a number of regimes, in particular under the Habitats Regulations and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These frameworks protect European Protected Species such as whales, dolphins and porpoises, and impose a clear duty on Scottish Ministers to ensure that species are maintained at favourable conservation status. In practical terms, this means that it is an offence to disturb protected species or to impair their ability to survive, breed or reproduce, unless very specific legal tests are met. Consent can only be granted where impacts are either avoided altogether, or where a licence can be issued that meets strict criteria, including that there is no satisfactory alternative and no adverse effect on conservation status.

In this case, the location of the development is particularly important. The waters off the west coast of Lewis form part of an exposed Atlantic environment that supports a high level of ecological activity. These waters are used extensively by mobile species, including cetaceans and seabirds, and are closely connected to nearby protected sites. They function as active feeding and movement areas rather than peripheral habitat, meaning that disturbance here has the potential to affect species at a meaningful ecological scale.

The proposed development would introduce a large offshore structure into this environment, with associated construction and operational effects. In particular, underwater noise from construction activities such as piling has the potential to disturb cetaceans over considerable distances, while ongoing vessel activity and turbine operation may contribute to continued disturbance and displacement. Because these species rely on sound and on access to specific feeding areas, the effects of disturbance are not confined to the immediate footprint of the development.

Assessment of these impacts depends heavily on modelling and assumptions about how species respond to noise and disturbance over time. This introduces uncertainty, both in terms of the geographic extent of effects and the longer-term behavioural responses of affected species. In a location such as the west coast of Lewis, where the marine environment is actively used rather than incidental, that uncertainty is particularly significant.

In these circumstances, a high degree of certainty is required to demonstrate compliance with the legal protections that apply. If it cannot be clearly shown that disturbance will not adversely affect protected species, or that any impacts can be lawfully licensed without affecting their conservation status, then the statutory tests are not met and Scottish Ministers should not grant consent in those circumstances.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Landscape and visual impacts are a material consideration and may justify refusal where they are significant. The west coast of Lewis is a particularly sensitive coastal landscape, characterised by open Atlantic horizons, a strong sense of exposure, and an absence of large-scale offshore development. This setting is integral to the area's cultural heritage, including traditional crofting landscapes and features such as Blackhouses, whose significance depends in part on their relationship with an undeveloped seascape.

A wind farm located 5-13 km offshore would be clearly visible and introduce large vertical structures into what is currently an open horizon. This would fundamentally alter the character of the coastline and the setting of cultural and historical sites, diminishing their sense of remoteness and authenticity.

The effect is not confined to daytime views. Aviation and marine safety lighting would introduce visible illumination at night, creating moving or intermittent points of light across an otherwise dark seascape. In an area where dark skies contribute to its sense of naturalness and to its appeal for visitors, this would represent a further and continuous visual intrusion.

The qualities that underpin the area's cultural value and its attraction to residents and visitors – openness, wildness and continuity with the past – would therefore be materially changed. These impacts arise from the scale and proximity of the development and cannot be meaningfully mitigated.

Where a proposal would result in significant adverse effects on a sensitive coastal landscape and its heritage setting, Ministers are entitled to refuse consent.

Community Engagement

Having made frequent visits to Lewis over the past few years, the local opposition to this proposed development is stark. Alongside this, there are concerns that engagement has been tokenistic and limited in scope and effectiveness, particularly given the scale of the development and its proximity to the west coast of Lewis. This concern is reinforced by evidence of local opinion. For example, a survey undertaken by the community group *Eilean mo Ghaoil* indicates that approximately 81% of respondents oppose the proposed wind farm.

While such surveys do not determine the outcome of the application, they are relevant in demonstrating the extent of local concern and raise questions about whether the engagement

undertaken has been sufficient to reflect community views. For a development with the potential to significantly alter the coastal environment and the setting of cultural heritage assets, a high standard of engagement would be expected.

The Scottish Government's National Islands Plan states that "Our vision is for islanders to be empowered to shape their own priorities, build their futures, and protect what makes their communities unique." In this context, the apparent level of opposition, combined with concerns about the quality of engagement, is a relevant consideration. It suggests that the proposal, in its current form, does not adequately reflect or respond to the views of the affected community.

This reinforces the wider concerns set out above and adds further weight to the conclusion that consent should not be granted.

Kind regards,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact a signature.

Member of Public 2390

From: [REDACTED]
To: [MD Marine Renewables](#)
Subject: Objection to Spiorad na Mara Letter
Date: 06 May 2026 18:42:02
Attachments: [Objection_to_Spiorad_na_Mara_Offshore_Wind_Farm.pdf](#)

Hello,

Please find attached my letter of objection.

Thank you

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Date: 5th May 2026

To:

Marine Directorate – Licensing Operations Team
Marine Laboratory
375 Victoria Road
Aberdeen
AB11 9DB
United Kingdom

Objection To Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm
References: MD-00011742 & MD-00011743

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to you to formally object to the Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm application as it contravenes the following planning policies and guidance laid out in this letter. I am keen to protect the unique characteristics which make the Western Isles what they are, such as: the natural landscapes, wildlife, and culture. The proposal's proximity to the islands and the sheer scale of the proposal puts these things at risk.

Lack of Community Engagement

There was no consultation with the communities of west Lewis before Crown Estate Scotland identified and leased the N4 area for development. The plan was imposed on them without consent.

Scotland's National Marine Plan (NMP) GEN 18 *'Early and effective engagement should be undertaken with the general public and all interested stakeholders to facilitate planning and consenting processes.'*

NMP Para. 4.77 *'Engagement with the public and other stakeholders should be appropriate, proportionate and meaningful. It should be undertaken as early as possible in planning and consenting processes.'*

NPF4 Spatial Principles - Just Transition. *'We will empower people to shape their places.'*

Lack of understanding of Cultural Significance

The EIAR makes no reference to the personal, cultural or historical attachment of the population of Lewis to their landscape and heritage, and fails to assess impacts on the living intangible heritage of the Gaelic community. Until a full assessment addressing impacts on Gaelic language and culture, community wellbeing, and west Lewis communities' relationship with their coastline is completed and publicly consulted upon, this application cannot lawfully be determined.

NMP Para. 4.20 *'The historic environment includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time,'.*

NPF4 Policy 7 a *‘Development proposals with a potentially significant impact on historic assets or places will be accompanied by an assessment which is based on an understanding of the cultural significance of the historic asset and/or place.’*

Significant Adverse Impacts on Protected Birdlife and Habitats

The development occupies primary foraging grounds for the Lewis Peatlands SPA red-throated divers, falls within the foraging range of the St Kilda gannet colony, and crosses a principal UK migratory corridor for protected species, including whooper swan and pink-footed goose. The EIAR fails to adequately assess the threats of collision, displacement, and barrier effects to these declining populations. Thus, consent would breach the **Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994**, the **2018 Offshore Regulations**, the **Marine (Scotland) Act 2010**, and the **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**, as the proposal is likely to adversely affect the integrity of the following SPA’s: Lewis Peatlands, West Coast of the Outer Hebrides, Seas off St Kilda and St Kilda.

NPF4 Policy 7 l *‘Development proposals affecting a World Heritage Site or its setting will only be supported where their Outstanding Universal Value is protected and preserved.’*

NPF4 Policy 11 e ix Impact on *‘biodiversity including impacts on birds’* must be addressed.

Failure to Protect the Integrity and Setting of Scheduled Monuments

The EIAR anticipates significant adverse effects on coastal heritage. It fails to assess the impact on key scheduled monuments such as SM13786. The proposal would harm the Calanais monuments and wider historic landscape by introducing an industrial horizon into their natural surroundings, fundamentally undermining the meaning, experience, and interconnected setting of these sites, directly conflicting with **NPF4 Policy 7**. There are many alternative sites for offshore wind development and no reasons of over-riding public interest for choosing this site.

NMP Para. 4.22 *‘Marine planning should help to ensure that future marine activities and developments can be carried out in a way that respects the marine historic environment and the setting of important coastal heritage assets.’* **Para. 4.23** *‘Designated assets should be protected in situ within an appropriate setting’.*

NPF4 Policy 7 h *‘Development proposals affecting scheduled monuments will only be supported where:’* ii *‘significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the setting of a scheduled monument are avoided; or* iii *exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify the impact on a scheduled monument and its setting and impacts on the monument or its setting have been minimised.’*

Unassessed Onshore Impacts and Breach of Statutory Rights of Crofters

Granting offshore consent while onshore impacts on irreplaceable machair and deep peatland remain unassessed, directly contravenes **NPF4 Policy 3**, which requires biodiversity (including irreplaceable habitats) to be left in a demonstrably better state. In addition the proposal fails to engage the statutory rights of crofters under the **Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993**.

NMP Para. 4.77 *‘There should be a presumption in favour of publicising applications for marine and terrestrial components of a development together during consenting processes.’*

Irreparable Harm to the Tourism Economy and Coastal Character

The Spiorad na Mara wind farm would permanently industrialise the unspoiled coastal scenery and dark skies on the Isle of Lewis, destroying the very qualities that attract visitors to the island. Local residents have consistently warned during consultation that this visual impact would decimate the tourist industry on which so many islanders depend. Tourism is built on the area’s landscape,

seascape, heritage, nature, and dark skies. This development risks long-term damage to local businesses and the wider economy, contrary to **NPF4 Policy 30**.

NMP, Para. 12.28 *'An unspoiled environment, high quality landscape and a sense of closeness to nature are important to many people. Scenery and environmental quality are key factors in attracting visitors to Scotland's coasts,'*

Community Opposition and lack of Community Empowerment

The Community Opinion Survey on the Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm Development (N4) published by www.emg-lewis.co.uk in April 2026 found that 88% of residents from Ness to Uig opposed the N4 development. Approving this project against such overwhelming local consensus would directly contravene the National Islands Plan's commitment to community empowerment.

The National Islands Plan, page 65, para. 5 *'Our vision is for islanders to be empowered to shape their own priorities, build their futures, and protect what makes their communities unique.'*

Summary

This planning decision is about the long-term future and the character of a landscape and community that cannot be replaced once altered at this scale. Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm would cause significant, cumulative and largely irreversible harm to landscape and seascape character, heritage setting, and the tourism economy.

Therefore, a formal request is made for the complete refusal of the application for the Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm.

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted Signature]

I do not consent to publication of my personal data. In accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, and the personal-data exemptions in FOISA s 38 / EIR(S) reg. 11, please redact all personal contact details before publishing. If a name must appear, publish my name only and no contact details. Individual Letter Reference: 83151261

From: [REDACTED]
To: [MD Marine Renewables](#)
Subject: Formal Objection - Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm (MD-00011742 & MD-00011743)
Date: 06 May 2026 18:10:56

RE: MD-00011742 & MD-00011743 - Spiorad na Mara Limited - Isle of Lewis

To the Licensing Operations Team,

I am a crofter in North Shawbost on the Isle of Lewis. I am writing to you because **I object to the Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm application** for the following reasons:

- **Irreparable Harm to the Tourism Economy:** This development will permanently industrialise the unspoiled coastal scenery and dark skies that define the Isle of Lewis. Decimating the visual appeal of our landscape will destroy the tourism industry that local businesses and islanders rely upon, contrary to NPF4 Policy 30.
- **Harmful Effects on Birdlife and Sealife:** The site occupies vital foraging grounds for protected species, including the Lewis Peatlands SPA red-throated divers and St Kilda gannets. The failure to properly assess collision and displacement risks breaches the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 and NPF4 Policy 11.
- **Breach of Crofters' Rights and Land Damage:** The proposal fails to engage the statutory rights of crofters under the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993. Furthermore, the onshore impacts on irreplaceable machair and deep peatland remain unassessed, contravening NPF4 Policy 3.
- **Lack of Community Engagement:** The N4 area was leased without any prior consultation with the communities of West Lewis. This lack of meaningful engagement violates Scotland's National Marine Plan (NMP) GEN 18 and the "Just Transition" principles of NPF4.
- **Disregard for Cultural and Gaelic Heritage:** The application fails to assess the impact on the living intangible heritage of the Gaelic community and our historical attachment to the coastline, violating NPF4 Policy 7.
- **Threat to Scheduled Monuments:** The industrialisation of the horizon will undermine the integrity and setting of the Calanais monuments and other significant coastal heritage assets, such as SM13786.
- **Overwhelming Community Opposition:** As demonstrated by the April 2026 survey showing 88% local opposition, this project lacks a social license and contradicts the National Islands Plan's commitment to community empowerment.

I strongly urge the Marine Directorate to respect the heritage of our crofting community and the integrity of our environment by refusing this application.

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: [MD Marine Renewables](#)
Subject: Fw: Capture and Send Spiorad na Mara
Date: 06 May 2026 17:36:50
Attachments: [REDACTED] [_06-05-2026_17-11-37.pdf](#)

As a member of the [REDACTED] village community who this project is going to impact on I wish you top record my objection .
and acknowledge log of my objection.
Kind regards
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 May 2026 17:13
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Capture and Send

Scan [REDACTED] Capture and Send:

This email is intended for the named recipient only. If you have received it by mistake, please (i) contact the sender by email reply; (ii) delete the email from your system; . and (iii) do not copy the email or disclose its contents to anyone.

Unassessed Onshore Impacts and Breach of Statutory Rights of Crofters: Granting offshore consent while onshore impacts on irreplaceable machair and deep peatland remain unassessed, directly contravenes **NPF4 Policy 3**, which requires biodiversity (including irreplaceable habitats) to be left in a demonstrably better state. In addition the proposal fails to engage the statutory rights of crofters under the **Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993**.

NMP Para. 4.77 *'There should be a presumption in favour of publicising applications for marine and terrestrial components of a development together during consenting processes.'*

Irreparable Harm to the Tourism Economy and Coastal Character: The Spiorad na Mara wind farm would permanently industrialise the unspoiled coastal scenery and dark skies on the Isle of Lewis, destroying the very qualities that attract visitors to the island. Local residents have consistently warned during consultation that this visual impact would decimate the tourist industry on which so many islanders depend. Tourism is built on the area's landscape, seascape, heritage, nature, and dark skies. This development risks long-term damage to local businesses and the wider economy, contrary to **NPF4 Policy 30**.

NMP, Para. 12.28 *'An unspoiled environment, high quality landscape and a sense of closeness to nature are important to many people. Scenery and environmental quality are key factors in attracting visitors to Scotland's coasts,'*

Community Opposition and lack of Community Empowerment: The Community Opinion Survey on the Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm Development (N4) published by www.emg-lewis.co.uk in April 2026 found that 88% of residents from Ness to Uig opposed the N4 development. Approving this project against such overwhelming local consensus would directly contravene the National Islands Plan's commitment to community empowerment.

The National Islands Plan, page 65, para. 5 *'Our vision is for islanders to be empowered to shape their own priorities, build their futures, and protect what makes their communities unique.'*

My further objection points:

This planning decision is about the long-term future and the character of a landscape and community that cannot be replaced once altered at this scale. Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm would cause significant, cumulative and largely irreversible harm to landscape and seascape character, heritage setting, and the tourism economy. I respectfully request that this application is rejected.

Yours sincerely,

Signature:

[Redacted Signature]

Print name:

[Redacted Print Name]



To edit this document in Word, scan this QR code



I have put an X in this box because I want my personal details to be kept confidential.

Member of Public 2393

Please Email to MD.MarineRenewables@gov.scot By 7th May 2026

Or Post to: Marine Directorate, Licensing Operations Team, Scottish Gov, 375 Victoria Road, Aberdeen, AB11 9DB

My address: _____

Postcode: _____ Email: _____ Date: _____ May 6, 2026 _____

MD-00011742 & MD-00011743 - Spiorad na Mara Limited - Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm - Isle of Lewis

I formally object to the above application as it contravenes the following planning policies and guidance:

Lack of Community Engagement: There was no consultation with the communities of west Lewis before Crown Estate Scotland identified and leased the N4 area for development. The plan was imposed on them without consent. **Scotland's National Marine Plan (NMP) GEN 18** *'Early and effective engagement should be undertaken with the general public and all interested stakeholders to facilitate planning and consenting processes.'*

NMP Para. 4.77 *'Engagement with the public and other stakeholders should be appropriate, proportionate and meaningful. It should be undertaken as early as possible in planning and consenting processes,'*

NPF4 Spatial Principles - Just Transition. *'We will empower people to shape their places.'*

Lack of understanding of Cultural Significance: The EIAR makes no reference to the personal, cultural or historical attachment of the population of Lewis to their landscape and heritage, and fails to assess impacts on the living intangible heritage of the Gaelic community. Until a full assessment addressing impacts on Gaelic language and culture, community wellbeing, and west Lewis communities' relationship with their coastline is completed and publicly consulted upon, this application cannot lawfully be determined.

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NPF4 Policy 7 a *'Development proposals with a potentially significant impact on historic assets or places will be accompanied by an assessment which is based on an understanding of the cultural significance of the historic asset and/or place.'*

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NPF4 Policy 11 e ix Impact on *'biodiversity including impacts on birds'* must be addressed.

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NMP Para. 4.22 *'Marine planning should help to ensure that future marine activities and developments can be carried out in a way that respects the marine historic environment and the setting of important coastal heritage assets.'* **Para. 4.23** *'Designated assets should be protected in situ within an appropriate setting'.*

NPF4 Policy 7 h *'Development proposals affecting scheduled monuments will only be supported where:'* ii *'significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the setting of a scheduled monument are avoided; or* iii *exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify the impact on a scheduled monument and its setting and impacts on the monument or its setting have been minimised.'*



Photomontage visualisation by Northland Power - Barvas

Unassessed Onshore Impacts and Breach of Statutory Rights of Crofters: Granting offshore consent while onshore impacts on irreplaceable machair and deep peatland remain unassessed, directly contravenes **NPF4 Policy 3**, which requires biodiversity (including irreplaceable habitats) to be left in a demonstrably better state. In addition the proposal fails to engage the statutory rights of crofters under the **Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993**.

NMP Para. 4.77 *'There should be a presumption in favour of publicising applications for marine and terrestrial components of a development together during consenting processes.'*

Irreparable Harm to the Tourism Economy and Coastal Character: The Spiorad na Mara wind farm would permanently industrialise the unspoiled coastal scenery and dark skies on the Isle of Lewis, destroying the very qualities that attract visitors to the island. Local residents have consistently warned during consultation that this visual impact would decimate the tourist industry on which so many islanders depend. Tourism is built on the area's landscape, seascape, heritage, nature, and dark skies. This development risks long-term damage to local businesses and the wider economy, contrary to **NPF4 Policy 30**.

NMP, Para. 12.28 *'An unspoiled environment, high quality landscape and a sense of closeness to nature are important to many people. Scenery and environmental quality are key factors in attracting visitors to Scotland's coasts,'*

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The National Islands Plan, page 65, para. 5 *'Our vision is for islanders to be empowered to shape their own priorities, build their futures, and protect what makes their communities unique.'*

My further objection points:

As an international youth education and empowerment organization that supports youth in understanding the challenges their generation is inheriting and working collaboratively on solutions, it is shocking that yet another egregious plan is being implemented by a government without consideration for long-term effects holistically. For the sake of the state of the ecosystem already impacted and which our children are inheriting – literally their livelihoods – please reconsider this plan.

This planning decision is about the long-term future and the character of a landscape and community that cannot be replaced once altered at this scale. Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm would cause significant, cumulative and largely irreversible harm to landscape and seascape character, heritage setting, and the tourism economy.

I respectfully request that this application is rejected.

Yours sincerely,

***Signature:**(type your name here) _____

***Note** I confirm that the views expressed in this email are my own and I intend for this typed name to act as my signature

☐

I have put an **X** in this box because I want my personal details to be kept confidential.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [MD Marine Renewables](#)
Subject: Objection - Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm (MD-00011742 & MD-00011743)
Date: 06 May 2026 16:15:22

I formally object to the above application as it contravenes the following planning policies and guidance:

This Is One Of The Richest Marine Mammal Habitats In The British Isles

The waters of the Outer Hebrides are not an ordinary stretch of sea. A Scottish Government scientific report - commissioned specifically in relation to marine renewable energy developments off the west coast of Lewis - states that:

"The Outer Hebrides are probably the richest area of the UK for marine mammals with around 20 species of cetacean recorded in the region over the last 30 years and hold important breeding areas for both harbour seals and grey seals."

[Scottish Marine and Freshwater Science Vol. 5 No. 9 : <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-marine-freshwater-science-volume-5-number-9-strategic-surveys/pages/3/>]

This report was written by the Scottish Government's own scientists in direct consideration of offshore renewable energy in these precise waters. The richness of this environment was known and documented before these turbines were proposed. It must now be the foundation of any honest assessment.

Twenty-three marine mammal species (including seals) have been recorded in the wider Hebridean area. Nine are regular year-round inhabitants: harbour porpoise (*Peileag*), grey seal, harbour seal, bottlenose dolphin (*Muc-bhiorach*), common dolphin (*Leumadair cumanta*), white-beaked dolphin (*Leumadair bàn-ghobach*), Risso's dolphin (*Canà*), minke whale (*Muc-mhara mhionc*), and killer whale (*Madadh-cuain*). These are not occasional visitors. They are here in every season, feeding, breeding, raising young, navigating the same waters year after year. [<https://www.hwdt.org/hebridean-marine-mammal-atlas/>]

This is not background biodiversity. The Inner Hebrides and Minches Special Area of Conservation was specifically designated to protect harbour porpoise in the waters around the Outer Hebrides. NatureScot confirms:

"The west of Scotland is home to a higher density of harbour porpoise than is found elsewhere. The Inner Hebrides and the Minches SAC was created to protect the animals in this region."

[www.nature.scot/plants-animals-and-fungi/mammals/marine-mammals/dolphins-whales-and-porpoises & <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/special-area-conservation/10508/sac-site-selection-harbour-porpoise.pdf>]

It is the largest SAC for this species in Europe.

[<https://www.gov.scot/news/protection-for-harbour-porpoise/>]

The seas off the east coast of Lewis are designated as a Marine Protected Area specifically for the Risso's dolphin - a species recorded in these waters every year, with mothers and calves documented within the MPA.

"Mothers with calves and groups consisting entirely of juveniles have also been recorded within the MPA. This suggests these waters are not only essential for feeding but may also be important for breeding, nursing and raising their young."

[North-east Lewis Marine Protected Area: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/nature-conservation-mpa/10476/mpa-site-summary-english.pdf>]

The Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust's photo-identification programme has identified over 300 individual minke whales in these waters since 1990 - some returning year after year for nearly three decades, establishing sighting histories that are the longest recorded for this species in Europe.

[Minke Whale Longest Known History Of Sightings In Europe: <https://www.hwdt.org/catalogue-minke-whale>]

Basking sharks - already listed in the developer's own risk assessments - are regular summer visitors. NatureScot states that:

"In Scottish waters, large seasonal aggregations occur in shallow coastal areas during summer, particularly within the Sea of the Hebrides."

[<https://www.nature.scot/doc/sharks-and-skates-scotland-report-basking-shark-cetorhinus-maximus>]

The Monach Isles, within the wider Outer Hebrides shelf, support the largest grey seal breeding colony in Europe and tracking data confirms that the shelf waters west of the Outer Hebrides, the precise location of this development, are critical foraging habitat for these seals.

"This IMMA encompasses the continental shelf waters between the Outer Hebrides and the continental shelf edge, and includes the Monach Isles. This area is particularly important for grey seals (Halichoerus grypus), with the Monach Isles supporting the largest breeding colony in Europe, and ~6.5% of global pup production. These rich and productive waters also support a diverse range of additional marine mammal species. These include species associated with the continental shelf slope (sei whales (Balaenoptera borealis), fin whales (Balaenoptera physalus), sperm whales (Physeter macrocephalus), northern bottlenose whales (Hyperoodon ampullatus), long-finned pilot whales (Globicephala melas), Atlantic white-sided dolphins (Lagenorhynchus acutus), common dolphins (Delphinus delphis)), as well as species associated with the shelf itself (humpback whales (Megaptera novaeangliae), white-beaked dolphins (Lagenorhynchus albirostris), harbour porpoises (Phocoena phocoena), bottlenose dolphins (Tursiops truncatus), grey seals, and harbour seals (Phoca vitulina)). Minke whales (Balaenoptera acutorostrata), killer whales (Orcinus orca), and Risso's dolphins (Grampus griseus)."

[Monach Isles And Outer Hebrides Western Continental Shelf Imma:

<https://www.marinemammalhabitat.org/factsheets/monach-isles-and-outer-hebrides-western-continental-shelf-imma/>]

This is a place of extraordinary, internationally significant marine life. It is the kind of habitat that, were it anywhere else in the world, would be the subject of the strongest possible protection. Any honest assessment of this application must start from that baseline.

"This combined research has identified the area as providing important habitat for many other species of cetacean, including harbour porpoise, minke whales, humpback whales and common dolphins. This evidence informed the site selection and designation in 2020, of the north-east Lewis MPA for Risso's dolphins and sand-eels, demonstrating the importance of the sites for the breeding, feeding and social lives of Risso's dolphins and other marine species."

(Whale and Dolphin Conservation joint representation submitted with the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust:

https://marine.gov.scot/sites/default/files/appendix_i_-_consultation_representations.pdf

The waters west of Lewis are also a documented migration corridor for large whale species whose presence is given insufficient weight in the assessment and migration routes not adequately assessed. The HWDT records fin whales off Scotland's west coast during summer migration, sperm whales reported several times each year, and - particularly striking given the timing - sei whales with "a number of sightings reported during 2023 season around Lewis and Harris", the same year as the Tolsta pilot whale stranding. [HWDT species records: <https://www.hwdt.org/news/scotlands-cetaceans-2026/>]

The Blue Corridors initiative maps global whale migration routes using satellite tracking and published research data, and shows fin whale and sperm whale migration corridors running along the west coast of the Outer Hebrides. It visually confirms what the HWDT data demonstrates on the ground: these are not marginal or incidental sightings. These are species undertaking long-distance migrations through some of the most acoustically sensitive marine environments in the northeast Atlantic.

[Blue Corridors interactive map - fin whale and sperm whale corridors off Outer Hebrides: <https://bluecorridors.org/explore/species/>]

The proposed development would place a 140km² field of noise-generating infrastructure directly within those migration routes.
<https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spinrad-na-Mara-EIAR-Chapter-3-Project-Description.pdf>

The EIAR does not adequately assess the barrier and disturbance effects on these large migratory species. Their presence is treated as low-sensitivity precisely because they are wide-ranging - yet it is their wide-ranging, migratory nature that makes disruption to a key corridor so significant. Disrupting a migration route is not a localised impact. It is a threat to the entire annual cycle of the species using it.

It is important to note that while the development site lies to the northwest of Lewis, the marine mammals described here do not recognise such boundaries. These are highly mobile species whose ranges encompass the full waters of the Western Isles - east, west, north and south. The harbour porpoise SAC, the East Lewis MPA for Risso's dolphin, the grey seal foraging habitat, and the feeding grounds of minke whales documented by the HWDT all fall within the broader ecosystem of which this development forms part of. An assessment that treats the array area as an isolated patch of sea, and disregards the connectivity of these species across the wider Hebridean marine environment, would fundamentally misrepresent the nature of the harm being proposed. Noise propagates; animals move; the food web connects. What happens 6km off the northwest coast of Lewis does not stay there.

The Legal Framework Demands More Than Has Been Demonstrated

This is not merely a matter of ecological concern - it is a matter of law. Under the Habitats Regulations Appraisal process, Scottish Ministers are legally required to refuse consent unless it can be ascertained beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of a European site. NatureScot's own guidance is unambiguous on this point:

"A competent authority must not authorise a plan or project unless it can show beyond reasonable scientific doubt - through an appropriate assessment - that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of a European site."

[Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) : <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/planning-and-development/environmental-assessment/habitats-regulations-appraisal-hra>]

The standard is not whether harm is likely. The standard is whether it can be shown, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, that harm will not occur. Given the number of European Protected Species known to regularly use these waters, the proximity of designated SACs and MPAs, and the scale and duration of the proposed construction works, meeting that standard will be exceptionally difficult to demonstrate.

Furthermore, the Habitats Regulations require that cumulative effects with other plans and projects be assessed in combination - not just the footprint of this individual site. The Scottish Government's own policy documents acknowledge that

"due to the scale and potential cumulative impact of existing, proposed and planned offshore wind development in Scotland, it is likely that Scottish offshore wind plans and projects will be required to undergo the derogations process under the Habitats Regulations."

[Conservation Of Habitats And Species (Offshore Wind) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2026: Icia Screening Report
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/island-communities-impact-assessment-icia-screening-report-conservation-habitats-species-offshore-wind-miscellaneous-amendments-scotland-regulations-2026/>]

In other words, the Scottish Government's own analysis concedes that impacts of a kind requiring legal derogation are anticipated, not merely possible. I urge Scottish Ministers to apply the full rigour of the legal test to this application, and not to treat the derogations process as a routine formality.

The Developer's Own Risk Assessment Acknowledges The Threat

I draw the Scottish Ministers' attention to the European Protected Species and Basking Shark Risk Assessment submitted by N4 / Northland Sheena Limited to Marine Scotland on 22 February 2023 in support of licensing for offshore surveys. That document explicitly identifies the risk of disturbance and potential injury to European Protected Species during geophysical and geotechnical surveys. Species listed as potentially affected include minke whale, harbour porpoise, common dolphin, bottlenose dolphin, grey seal and basking shark.

[EPS & Basking Shark Risk Assessment for Geophysical, Geotechnical & Environmental Surveys N4 Offshore Wind Farm and Cable Corridor : https://marine.gov.scot/sites/default/files/n4_pcm_off_eps_riskassessment_v2_redacted.pdf]

This is not the assertion of objectors. It is the developer's own acknowledgement, submitted to the regulator, that survey work alone poses risks to the very animals protected under European and domestic law.

If preliminary survey work - vessels mapping the seabed - carries these formally acknowledged risks, then the question must be asked with complete seriousness: what will the construction of up to 60 turbines, requiring years of foundation installation, boulder clearance, cable burial, trenching and vessel activity, do to this ecosystem? The developer cannot on one hand acknowledge risk from surveys and on the other assert that full construction presents no significant threat. That position is not credible, and it should not be accepted.

The Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust and the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Conservation submitted a joint representation for "Spiorad na Mara" Offshore Windfarm (https://marine.gov.scot/sites/default/files/scoping_opinion_15.pdf) in which they say

"In the North Sea, within and adjacent to designated SACs/MPAs for harbour porpoises, some of the largest offshore windfarms in the world are being developed, with little consideration on the impacts both individually and cumulatively, on these MPAs and the species for which they are designated, despite baseline data demonstrating the importance of these areas for the harbour porpoise, a sensitive and protected species. Of particular concern is the use of pile driving during the construction of offshore windfarms, as the noise can adversely affect the behaviour of whales, dolphins and porpoises over significant distances. Additional sources of disturbance and potential harm to cetaceans will result from construction, support vessels, benthic / prey disturbance, pollution and the need to manage unexploded ordnance clearance."

The assumption that marine mammals will simply relocate does not negate impact. Displacement from established feeding or breeding habitat is itself a recognised ecological effect and may result in increased energetic costs, reduced foraging success, and population-level consequences.

Construction Noise: A Well-Documented And Serious Threat To Cetaceans

The underwater world of the Outer Hebrides is a world of sound. Harbour porpoises navigate and hunt by echolocation. Minke whales communicate over vast distances. Dolphins coordinate feeding in groups using acoustic signals. Every species listed in this objection depends on sound for survival. What pile-driving does to that world is not uncertain - it is well established in the scientific literature.

Pile-driving - the method used to install the foundations for each turbine - generates underwater noise at source levels that can cause behavioural disruption in cetaceans at very significant distances. The developer's own EIA states:

"Harbour porpoises are widely regarded as the most sensitive marine mammal receptor to underwater noise." (Paragraph 13.8.1.19)
and

"Harbour porpoises are highly sensitive to underwater noise, with studies suggesting behavioural disturbance up to 70 km from the pile driving, at which noise generated would be audible over background noise

(Bailey et al., 2010). Current UK guidance assumes total displacement within 26 km of pile driving, however monitoring at a wind farm on the east coast of Scotland/Alba recorded a 50% probability of harbour porpoise response to pile driving within 7.4 km of the first pile location, lowering to 1.3 km at the last pile location with an overall 18% probability of displacement within 26 km

(Graham et al., 2019)" (Paragraph 13.8.2.42)

[EIA Chapter 13: Marine Mammals - <https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiorad-na-Mara-EIA-Chapter-13-Marine-Mammals.pdf>]

Harbour porpoises are among the most acoustically sensitive of all cetaceans. The noise generated by pile-driving is broadband, percussive, and repeated - each foundation taking several hours to drive, with multiple strikes per minute.

[Effects of offshore wind farm noise on marine mammals and fish -

https://teithys.pnnl.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Effects_of_offshore_wind_farm_noise_on_marine-mammals_and_fish-1-.pdf]

The scale of this is made concrete by the developer's own documents. The noise modelling appendix (EIA Appendix 19.2) reveals that percussive piling is planned to occur continuously between April and October across two construction years, using hammer energies of up to 5,000 kJ per blow, with up to 10,635 strikes per pile per day:

"Within the buried channel, 5 m diameter pin piles are proposed, installed using maximum blow energy of 2,500 kJ, 3,500 kJ, or 5,000 kJ and driving for up to 5.5 hours and 10,635 strikes within a day."

The piling programme covers 156[^]3 percussive pin piles across 35 turbine locations (Option 1, 35 WTGs) plus the offshore substation, with airborne sound power levels reaching up to 145 dB(A):

"This assessment of airborne construction noise is based on the maximum design scenario, percussive piling, which can generate airborne sound power levels up to 145 dBA."

The developer further acknowledges that under certain atmospheric and sea surface conditions - estimated to occur up to 14% of the time during the piling season - noise propagates via cylindrical rather than spherical spreading, meaning sound travels further and attenuates more slowly than under standard conditions:

"It is concluded that atmospheric conditions that increase sound propagation occur for up to 14% of the time."

"Multiple reflections (cylindrical spreading) are understood to occur under downwind conditions, for this analysis downwind conditions are taken to be wind directions between 270° and 0°, and for wind speeds between 2.5 m/s and 5.5 m/s; these conditions occur for 6% of the time between April and October."

[EIA Appendix 19.2: Noise Modeling and Prediction - https://marine.gov.scot/sites/default/files/appendix_19.2_-_noise_modelling_and_prediction.pdf]

Crucially, this is not a single or short-term event: the modeling assumes up to 5.5 hours of piling per day, repeated daily across the April–October period, over two consecutive years. This represents prolonged and repeated disturbance during biologically important months, increasing the risk of sustained habitat displacement rather than temporary avoidance.

It is also important to note that the figures above are drawn from what the developer describes as an "indicative piling schedule - Option 1 (smallest WTG type) for noise modelling." This is not the maximum design scenario, but a single configuration selected for modelling purposes. Other turbine configurations within the project design envelope may alter the number of piles, piling duration, and hammer energy requirements, meaning the assessed noise impacts may not reflect a true worst-case scenario.

The EIA also notes that UXO clearance was originally scoped into the assessment but has since been removed from the current design envelope (Chapter 13, Section 13.4.5.1). f UXO clearance proves necessary during construction - which cannot be ruled out given the unpredictability of unexploded ordnance - it would introduce an additional high-intensity impulsive noise source not covered by this assessment. This is another reason why the design envelope approach is incompatible with the beyond-reasonable-scientific-doubt standard required for HRA.

[EIA Appendix 19.2: Noise Modeling and Prediction - https://marine.gov.scot/sites/default/files/appendix_19.2_-_noise_modelling_and_prediction.pdf]

The proposed mitigation does not address the scale of disturbance

Standard mitigation measures - soft-start procedures, passive acoustic monitoring (PAM), and Marine Mammal Observer (MMO) deployment - are acknowledged in guidance as tools designed to address physical injury risk within the immediate exclusion zone. They are not designed to prevent, and cannot prevent, the behavioural displacement that the EIA's own literature review demonstrates occurs at ranges of up to 70 km. The measures proposed in the EIA fall squarely within this category: mitigating for injury, not for disturbance.

The JNCC's own guidance acknowledges the detection limits of these tools directly:

"current PAM systems are not suitable for detecting seals and some cetaceans (e.g. baleen whales) and have limited range for others (e.g. harbour porpoise)"

[JNCC: Marine mammals and noise mitigation - <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/marine-mammals-and-noise-mitigation/>] [JNCC PAM guidance - <https://jncc.gov.uk/resources/fb7d345b-ec24-4c60-aba2-894e50375e33>]

Visual observation by MMOs is similarly constrained by sightlines, weather, and sea state. Neither tool can monitor the full disturbance radius cited in the EIAR's own literature. Their presence in the mitigation framework records disturbance rather than preventing it. Soft-start procedures do not prevent displacement of species from feeding and breeding habitat, and seasonal restrictions - even if applied - do not protect species that are present in these waters year-round. These limitations have been raised by Whale and Dolphin Conservation and the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust in their joint representations to this process.

[HWDT and WDC joint representation - https://marine.gov.scot/sites/default/files/scoping_opinion_15.pdf]

In the absence of a clear and robust assessment of the combined effects of prolonged piling, extended construction seasons, and unmitigated disturbance at scale, it cannot be concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the project will not adversely affect marine mammal populations.

Policy requirements: NMP GEN 13 and ASCOBANS

Scotland's National Marine Plan Policy GEN 13 requires that development should avoid significant adverse effects of man-made noise and vibration, especially on species sensitive to such effects. The developer's own assessment predicts disturbance to 9.186% of the Risso's dolphin management unit population and 27.7% of the coastal bottlenose dolphin population from piling noise alone, yet classifies these effects as "not significant." It is difficult to reconcile that conclusion with a policy that requires effects on acoustically sensitive species to be avoided, not merely documented and downgraded. GEN 13 sets an avoidance standard, not a tolerance threshold.

The Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS) - cited in the EIAR's own legislative framework - requires parties to apply the precautionary principle and to minimise the impact of underwater noise on small cetaceans. ASCOBANS Resolution 7.6 (2016), which addresses underwater noise from anthropogenic activities, is directly relevant to percussive pile-driving of the scale proposed here. The proposed development would place one of the largest construction noise sources in recent Scottish marine experience directly within habitat used year-round by multiple small cetacean species covered by ASCOBANS obligations. The precautionary approach required by ASCOBANS is not reflected in an assessment that predicts significant population-level disturbance and then classifies the effect as not significant. <https://www.ascobans.org/documents/agreement-text>

Operational noise: a 35-year acoustic impact

The focus on construction noise should not obscure the fact that the acoustic impact of this development extends across its entire operational life, estimated at 35 years or more. Wind turbines generate continuous low-frequency underwater noise throughout operation, creating a lasting alteration of the acoustic environment across the 140 km² array area. Peer-reviewed research confirms that "offshore wind turbines are increasingly abundant sources of underwater low frequency noise" whose cumulative contribution raises concern for "possible impact on marine ecosystems." Independent studies report sound pressure levels at 100 m from a single operating turbine of between 105–125 dB re 1 µPa, with most energy below 1,000 Hz - the frequency range overlapping directly with the communication and navigation frequencies of fin whales, sei whales, and minke whales. [Popper et al., Oceanography- <https://tos.org/oceanography/article/acoustic-impacts-of-offshore-wind-energy-on-fishery-resources-an-evolving-source-and-varied-effects-across-a-wind-farms-lifetime>].

The EIAR's operational noise conclusions should be subjected to the same scrutiny as its construction noise assessment: the acoustic signature of this development does not end when the last pile is driven.

[Tougaard, J., Hermannsen, L. & Madsen, P.T. (2020). "How loud is the underwater noise from operating offshore wind turbines?" Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, 148(5): 2885–2893. <https://doi.org/10.1121/10.0002453>]

Peer-reviewed evidence from Scottish offshore wind farm construction directly reinforces this concern. Benhemma-Le Gall et al. (2021) assessed broad-scale harbour porpoise responses to construction at the Beatrice and Moray East Offshore Windfarms using a Before-After Control-Impact design with arrays of echolocation click detectors deployed across 25 km × 25 km impact and reference blocks. Their findings establish the inadequacy of a mitigation framework built around piling injury zones:

- Harbour porpoise occurrence in the impact block declined by 8–17% during pile-driving and other construction activities, compared to baseline.
- Porpoise displacement was observed up to 12 km from pile-driving activities and up to 4 km from construction vessels.
- Displacement was associated not only with impulsive piling noise but with vessel activity from jacket and turbine installation - i.e. it continued outside piling windows.

The 12 km displacement distance from pile-driving exceeds any exclusion zone that soft-start procedures, Marine Mammal Observers or Passive Acoustic Monitoring can create. The 4 km vessel-driven displacement distance is not addressed by any of the mitigation measures proposed in the EIAR. The authors conclude with the "importance of assessing and managing all vessel activities at offshore wind farm sites to minimise potential impacts of anthropogenic noise" - a standard the mitigation framework presented here does not meet.

[BENHEMMA-LE GALL ET AL. (2021), FRONTIERS IN MARINE SCIENCE 8, ARTICLE 664724: <https://www.frontiersin.org/journal/marine-science/articles/10.3389/fmars.2021.664724/full>]

The EIAR does not demonstrate that disturbance at this scale will not result in population-level effects.

Vessel strike risks

Increased vessel traffic during both construction and operation introduces a further, underweighted risk. Vessel strikes are a documented cause of injury and mortality in cetaceans in Scottish waters. The HWDT notes that collision with ships poses a documented threat to minke whales in UK waters.

"Collisions with ships may also pose a threat with some reports of minke whales being killed by ship strikes in UK waters"

[HWDT minke whale species profile: <https://www.hwdt.org/minke-whale/>]

Research at Scottish offshore wind farm construction sites has demonstrated that harbour porpoise detections declined by up to 33% in the 48 hours before piling began, associated with increased vessel and pre-piling activities - showing that construction vessels alone cause significant cetacean

displacement, independent of pile-driving noise, and before any formal mitigation measures are triggered. [Benhemma-Le Gall et al. (2023), Marine Pollution Bulletin: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0195925523002378>]

With construction involving continuous vessel movements across a 140km² site during the period of peak cetacean presence, the cumulative risk of vessel disturbance and strike to the species described in this objection cannot be dismissed as negligible.

Electromagnetic Fields (EMF) / Cable Effects

A further concern specific to elasmobranchs is electromagnetic field (EMF) emissions from subsea cables. Basking sharks, like all sharks and rays, possess highly sensitive electroreceptors (ampullae of Lorenzini) that detect weak electric fields used for navigation, prey detection, and orientation. Scottish Government ScotMER research confirms that benthic elasmobranchs can respond to EMF of the type and intensity associated with subsea cables, with responses varying by species, life stage and exposure level - and identifies critical knowledge gaps that remain unresolved. [Scottish Government ScotMER review - EMF evidence gap FF.07: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/review-fish-fisheries-research-inform-scotmer-evidence-gaps-future-strategic-research-uk/pages/11/>]

Peer-reviewed research further confirms that subsea cable EMFs may intersect with the foraging habitat, migration routes, and reproductive areas of elasmobranchs, with demonstrated behavioural effects including disturbance and displacement depending on cable characteristics and life stage. [Hermans et al. (2024), Environmental Pollution: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0269749124002847>]

The EIA does not adequately assess this pathway for basking sharks. Given their IUCN Endangered status, confirmed seasonal presence in these waters, and the known sensitivity of elasmobranchs to EMF, this represents a gap in the assessment that the precautionary principle requires to be addressed before consent is granted.

[NatureScot basking shark guidance: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/sharks-and-skates-scotland-report-basking-shark-oetorhinus-maximus>]

A related concern is the export cable corridor linking the array to shore, which constitutes a separate zone of physical disturbance and seabed disruption, alongside ongoing electromagnetic field (EMF) emissions during operation. The EIA confirms that installation of the export cable will involve trenching and burial using ploughing, jet trenching, and mechanical cutting techniques, or alternatively surface laying with stabilisation depending on seabed conditions (EIA Chapter 3, paragraph. 3.5.10.11). In addition, where required by seabed conditions or engineering constraints, external cable protection measures may be deployed, including rock placement, rock berms, rock bags, and pre-lay rock carpets.

"Following boulder clearance" ... "The installation will involve either:

- *Burial of the cables below the seabed using a combination of ploughing, jet trenching, and mechanical cutting techniques, depending on the seabed conditions; or*
 - *Surface laying the cables with stabilisation. "*
- "If pinning is required this will be achieved by using rock berms, concrete mattresses or rock bags in the Array Area and rock berms only in the OCAS."*

(Paragraph 3.5.10.11 and 3.5.10.17 <https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiroard-na-Mara-EIA-Chapter-3-Project-Description.pdf>)

Once installed, the cables emit EMF continuously throughout the project's operational life - a permanent pathway of potential disturbance to elasmobranchs including basking sharks. The marine mammal and elasmobranch assessment of impacts along the cable corridor deserves the same level of scrutiny as the array area itself and should not be treated as a lesser or secondary concern.

The 2023 Pilot Whale Stranding: A Warning That Demands Respect

In July 2023, 55 long-finned pilot whales stranded on Traigh Mhòr beach at North Tolsta, Isle of Lewis - one of the largest fatal mass stranding events in the United Kingdom in decades. Fifty-four animals died. Only one survived. Those of us who live here will never forget it.

The Scottish Government's acoustic analysis report confirmed that geophysical surveys were being carried out at the Spiroard na Mara lease area at the time, with two vessels operating to the west of Lewis.

The subsequent Scottish Government investigation concluded that acoustic data at the Tolsta monitoring site did not detect unusual anthropogenic noise, and offered an alternative hypothesis involving social behaviour during a difficult birth. I note, however, that the investigation itself acknowledged significant limitations in the detection range of the acoustic recorders used, and that self-noise in the recordings risked masking some anthropogenic signals. The report does not - and cannot - rule out anthropogenic contribution.

[Investigation into the long-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala melas*) mass stranding event, Tolsta, na h-Eileanan Siar, July 2023: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/investigation-long-finned-pilot-whale-globicephala-melas-mass-stranding-event-tolsta-na-h-eileanan-siar-july-2023/pages/5/>]

The report highlights that mass stranding events occur in this region and remain complex, not fully understood phenomena, demonstrating the vulnerability of cetacean populations in these waters. This is a population already operating at the edge of what the environment here imposes on it. We are being asked to approve an industrial development of unprecedented scale in the very waters where that population lives and forages, while that population's sensitivity to disturbance has just been demonstrated in the most devastating possible terms.

The investigation does not exclude anthropogenic contribution; it explicitly identifies limitations in acoustic detection capability.

Whether or not the 2023 stranding was linked to survey activity, it is a stark, recent, and viscerally local reminder of what is at stake. It must weigh heavily in this decision.

Seabed Disturbance And Irreversible Habitat Degradation

The installation of up to 60 fixed-bottom turbine foundations across miles of seabed will cause direct, large-scale, and in significant areas long-term and in some cases irreversible physical disturbance. This will generate sediment plumes affecting water clarity across a wide area, smother benthic communities - the seafloor invertebrates, worms, and organisms that form the base of the marine food web - and alter local hydrodynamics and sediment transport patterns that have developed over thousands of years. Physical disturbance of seabed habitats through foundation installation and cable works is known to damage benthic communities, with recovery times varying and in some cases being prolonged or uncertain.

The Chapter 9 physical and coastal processes assessment (EIAR Chapter 9, SNM-SNM-PAC-CHP-1009) itself acknowledges changes to hydrodynamics and wave regimes as a result of the development, noting that fixed-bottom foundation designs are likely to influence hydrodynamics and consequent sediment movement. A reduction in significant wave height of up to the maximum percentages modelled is predicted across the array area. These hydrodynamic changes are not merely engineering questions - altered wave and current patterns affect sediment transport, seabed composition, and the productivity of the benthic habitats that underpin the entire food web in this region.

"offshore wind farm (OWF) fixed bottom foundation designs are likely to influence hydrodynamics and consequent sediment movement."

[EIAR Chapter 9: Physical and Coastal Processes: <https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiorad-na-Mara-EIAR-Chapter-9-Physical-and-Coastal-Processes.pdf>]

The shelf seas west of Lewis support productive marine ecosystems that underpin the food web on which fish, marine mammals and seabirds depend. That productivity - which supports the fish stocks upon which whales, dolphins, seals, seabirds, and local fishermen all depend - is a function of the integrity of the benthic and pelagic systems beneath and within it. Disturb the seabed at this scale, and you disturb the food web that every species in this objection relies upon. The JNCC is clear that such benthic impacts from offshore wind development represent significant and in some cases long-term ecological harm.

[Marine habitats and offshore industries: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/marine-habitats-and-offshore-industries/>]

Scotland's National Marine Plan Policy GEN 5 specifically requires the safeguarding of natural carbon sinks, naming kelp beds as an example. Kelp beds are confirmed present across approximately 10 km² within the Study Area

"During the site-specific surveys, kelp beds were mapped across a 10 km² area within the shallow section of the OCAS."

[EIAR Chapter 11, paragraph 11.6.1.29], are designated as a Priority Marine Feature, and are assessed as sustaining minor adverse impact from construction. The developer proposes no compensatory measures for this loss. GEN 5 requires that compensatory habitat creation or enhancement be considered as a last resort where significant harm cannot be avoided. No such consideration is presented in the EIAR. The omission of any compensatory or enhancement proposal for a directly impacted blue carbon PMF habitat is not consistent with GEN 5.

Seabed disturbance, altered hydrodynamics, and displacement of fish aggregations from the array area may reduce the availability of key prey species - including sandeels, herring and whiting - on which marine mammals in these waters depend. The marine mammal assessment (Chapter 13) notes in its cross-references that fish ecology changes have the potential to affect marine mammal receptors, but this indirect pathway is not integrated into the significance conclusions for marine mammals. A reduction in prey availability within a feeding area already used by species as acoustically sensitive and site-faithful as harbour porpoise and Risso's dolphin would compound the direct disturbance effects already identified. These indirect trophic effects represent an additional impact pathway that the assessment has not adequately quantified.

[EIAR Chapter 13, Section 13.1.1.2 cross-references to Chapter 12: Fish Ecology: <https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiorad-na-Mara-EIAR-Chapter-13-Marine-Mammals.pdf>]

Planning Policy Failure on Benthic Habitats

Planning Policy: Scotland's National Marine Plan GEN 9 And Priority Marine Features

Scotland's National Marine Plan Policy GEN 9 Natural Heritage states that 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.

[<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-national-marine-plan/pages/5/>]

The nationally recognised Priority Marine Features (PMFs) include maerl beds, horse mussel beds, fan mussel aggregations, cold water coral reefs, and flame shell beds - all slow-growing, long-lived, and in some cases effectively irreplaceable on any human timescale. The Scottish Government's own PMF review states explicitly that maerl beds are "functionally important, biodiverse, sensitive, slow to recover and if lost completely may not recover." That same review identifies the Outer Hebrides - including "Uists; Lewis & Harris" - as locations where additional protective measures are recommended.

[Scottish Government Priority Marine Features: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/marine-environment/priority-marine-features/>]

[PMF Review - Maerl beds: https://consult.gov.scot/marine-scotland/priority-marine-features/supporting_documents/Review%20of%20PMFs%20outside%20the%20Scottish%20MPA%20network%20%20FINAL%20%20Maerl%20beds.pdf]

PMFs acknowledged but not assessed

The EIAR (Chapter 11, Benthic and Intertidal Ecology) acknowledges that maerl beds have been recorded to the southwest of the project area (paragraph 11.6.1.11), that horse mussel beds and other PMFs have been identified beyond the Study Area (paragraph 11.6.1.18), and that maerl is listed as both an Annex I habitat and an OSPAR habitat of concern (paragraph 11.6.1.13). Yet none of these PMFs appear anywhere in the impact assessment tables as receptors. The developer's basis for excluding them is that they fall outside the defined Study Area boundary.

The difficulty is that the PMF location data relied upon comes entirely from Tyler-Walters et al. (2016) - a desktop dataset now a decade old. No current site-specific survey was conducted to establish the actual present extent or precise location of these beds. The developer cannot confirm with confidence exactly how far these PMFs extend, or whether they are genuinely beyond the reach of all project effects, on the basis of data that is ten years old. Where the national status of a protected feature is at stake under GEN 9(b), reliance on outdated desktop data to justify exclusion from assessment is not an adequate basis for that conclusion.

Two PMFs receive no mention at all

Fan mussel aggregations and cold water coral reefs - both listed Scottish PMFs - receive no mention anywhere in Chapter 11. No explanation is given for their complete omission from an environmental assessment covering seabed habitats in these waters.

Mitigation that cannot be quantified

The document acknowledges (paragraph 11.7.2.4) that its two primary mitigation measures - micro-siting of turbines and cables to avoid sensitive habitats - "cannot be quantified until detailed design and further site-specific investigations are complete," because cable routes within parts of the array area have not yet been finalised. The developer cannot credibly assert compliance with GEN 9(b) while simultaneously acknowledging that the final position of infrastructure in relation to sensitive habitats is not yet known.

GEN 9(c): the developer's own text contradicts the conclusion

Kelp beds - confirmed as present within the Study Area across a 10 km² area (paragraph 11.6.1.29) - are a designated PMF under NatureScot. The

EIAR assesses the impact on kelp beds during construction as "short-term, direct, reversible, Minor adverse" (Table 11-16), then classifies the overall significance as "not significant." Yet paragraph 11.6.1.26 states explicitly that "a major threat to long-term carbon storage is any activity that disrupts the surface layers of sediment such as the installation of subsea cables or the piling of WTG foundations." The developer is acknowledging, in their own words, that the activities they propose represent a major threat to precisely the category of habitat - blue carbon habitats, including kelp beds - that is present and designated as a PMF within the Study Area. A conclusion of no significant effect on the health of the marine area, while simultaneously describing subsea cable installation and piling as a major threat to these habitats, is not internally consistent. GEN 9(c) - the requirement to protect and, where appropriate, enhance the health of the marine area - is not satisfied by an assessment that reaches that conclusion.

Cumulative Impact: The Legal Requirement Being Underweighted

Scotland's National Marine Plan Policy GEN 21 explicitly requires that cumulative impacts affecting the ecosystem be addressed. The cumulative assessment presented here does not adequately meet that requirement for the reasons that follow.

The Habitats Regulations Appraisal process requires that impacts be assessed in combination with other plans and projects that may affect the same European sites. NatureScot's guidance states clearly that this must consider both proposals currently seeking consent and the ongoing effects of already-completed developments.

[Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA): <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/planning-and-development/environmental-assessment/habitats-regulations-appraisal-hra>]

"*Spiorad na Mara*" is one of several large offshore wind developments proposed in or adjacent to waters supporting the Inner Hebrides and Minches SAC, the East Lewis MPA, and populations of numerous European Protected Species. Each of these projects, assessed in isolation, may appear manageable. Assessed honestly in combination - for their cumulative acoustic impact, cumulative seabed disturbance, cumulative displacement of feeding animals from key habitat - the picture may be very different.

I request that the cumulative assessment in this application be subjected to independent scrutiny, and that Scottish Ministers satisfy themselves that it has genuinely and rigorously addressed the in-combination requirements of the Habitats Regulations, rather than treating them as a procedural box to tick.

The cumulative assessment presented in the EIAR is necessarily constrained by defined spatial and project boundaries. This may not fully capture the combined effects of multiple offshore developments and other anthropogenic pressures occurring concurrently within the wider region.

The assessment does not adequately consider temporal overlap of construction activities across multiple projects, which may result in effectively continuous acoustic disturbance across large areas.

[Frontiers in Marine Science- Cumulative Effects Assessment review: <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/marine-science/articles/10.3389/fmars.2022.822467/full>]

Inadequate Environmental Impact Assessment

Concerns raised by Whale and Dolphin Conservation and Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust directly challenge the adequacy of the Environmental Impact Assessment. They explicitly state that baseline data for cetaceans is "*severely lacking*" and that survey methods employed are insufficient in scope, duration and methodology to accurately characterise species presence. This undermines the reliability of the entire assessment. Furthermore, their evidence demonstrates year-round presence of multiple cetacean species, contradicting the developer's assertion that the area is not a significant hotspot. The omission of key impact pathways, including vessel collisions and pollution, alongside reliance on mitigation measures for which there is "*no demonstrated evidence*" of effectiveness, raises serious concerns as to whether impacts have been properly assessed or can be adequately mitigated. In line with the precautionary principle, consent should not be granted where such significant uncertainty and risk to European Protected Species remains. [https://marine.gov.scot/sites/default/files/appendix_i_-_consultation_representations.pdf]

The assessment of barrier effects for migratory whale species is based on a flawed and overly narrow interpretation of impact. The developer concludes that whales would not be significantly affected because there is sufficient physical space between turbines for them to pass through. This ignores the well-established concept of behavioural avoidance, whereby underwater noise, vessel activity and habitat disturbance can cause marine mammals to avoid otherwise accessible areas, effectively creating a functional barrier. Critically, the assessment acknowledges that there are "*limited studies*" and a lack of species-specific evidence, yet proceeds to classify sensitivity as "low" based on assumed behavioural similarity with other marine mammals. This represents an unsupported generalisation and an inappropriate use of uncertainty to minimise risk. The suggestion that species may "adapt" or alter migration routes does not negate impact, but rather confirms the potential for displacement and ecological disruption. In line with the precautionary principle, such uncertainty should result in a more cautious assessment, not a downgraded one.

[*Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm Offshore Project Environmental Impact Assessment Report Chapter 13: Marine Mammals, Volume 2a*
<https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiorad-na-Mara-EIAR-Chapter-13-Marine-Mammals.pdf>]

The EIAR states:

"Considering the size of the largest scoped-in marine mammal receptor, the fin whale, which reaches 17.5-20.5 m in length, there is adequate space between WTGs for whales to pass between them at all depths and tidal heights (Reid, 2003). There is therefore no physical reason that whale species, including minke, humpback and fin whales, would not be able to swim freely in the operating wind farm."

The developer has not demonstrated that whales will continue to use the area in the presence of offshore wind infrastructure. While physical passage between turbines may be possible, there is substantial evidence that cetaceans exhibit avoidance behaviour in response to underwater noise and disturbance. This creates the potential for a functional barrier, even in the absence of a physical obstruction. The EIA acknowledges a lack of species-specific evidence on barrier effects, yet proceeds to classify sensitivity as low. This is not evidence-based, but assumption-driven. In line with the precautionary principle, uncertainty regarding behavioural responses of migratory whale species should not be used to minimise impact.

Barrier effects

The EIAR's barrier effects assessment is limited to the operation and maintenance phase (Table 13-43). No equivalent assessment has been carried out

for the construction phase, despite the fact that construction represents the period of greatest acoustic disturbance and vessel activity. For species following consistent migratory or foraging routes through these waters, the construction-phase disruption to movement patterns may represent a more acute and consequential impact than the operational barrier effect. This omission is a material gap in the assessment.

Adaptation

The EIAR's suggestion that species may adapt or alter migration routes does not constitute evidence of no significant impact- it is an acknowledgement of displacement. The conclusions of no significant effect rest on coarse-scale population data, unverified behavioural assumptions, incomplete impact pathways, and mitigation that has not yet been fully defined. Taken together, these cannot meet the beyond-reasonable-scientific-doubt standard required under the Habitats Regulations.

Behavioural adaptation does not equate to absence of impact. Altered migration routes, displacement from feeding grounds, and increased energetic expenditure are themselves recognised ecological effects.

An assessment document that gives different figures for the same calculation in two different tables - 9.186% versus 9.168% for Risso's dolphin - illustrates exactly the kind of internal inconsistency that undermines confidence in the rigour of the whole assessment. It's a small point but a legitimate one, and it requires no external source to make - the document contradicts itself.

NMP GEN 9(a) requires that development comply with legal requirements for protected areas and protected species. Where the baseline characterisation of those species has been described by expert bodies as "severely lacking," the foundation for demonstrating GEN 9(a) compliance is itself unreliable.

The following additional concerns arise directly from the EIAR:

Survey limitations.

The EIAR acknowledges that site characterisation is based on a combination of survey data and existing datasets, each subject to inherent limitations including detectability, spatial coverage and temporal constraints. The EIAR lists: Surveying schedule, Survey design/sampling, Availability bias, Observer bias, Species identification, Animals present but not recorded, False positives, false negatives and misclassifications, Equipment malfunction/loss. (EIAR Chapter 13, Table 13-10 Data Limitations relating to datasets used for the Assessment for Marine Mammals.).

The data represents a snapshot in time rather than a comprehensive representation of marine mammal usage of the area. Given the mobility and seasonal variability of marine mammals, absence or low density during survey periods does not equate to absence of ecological importance. The EIAR itself notes that marine mammals are highly mobile

"Marine mammals are highly mobile and wide ranging, and some have distributions which overlap multiple jurisdictions."

- yet this characteristic, which should introduce greater caution into the baseline, is not fully reflected in the impact conclusions.

<https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiorad-na-Mara-EIAR-Chapter-13-Marine-Mammals.pdf>

Noise modelling limitations.

The EIAR relies on modelled impact zones for underwater noise, based on assumed source levels and propagation conditions. Such models inherently simplify complex environmental variables. The piling noise assessment (EIAR Appendix 19.2) itself acknowledges a buried channel within the percussive piling area requiring different piling techniques and hammer energies - a site-specific geological feature with the potential to affect sound propagation in ways not fully captured by generic propagation models. Variability in seabed composition, bathymetry, and sound channelling can result in wider impact ranges than predicted. This uncertainty is not adequately reflected in the significance conclusions.

"A geotechnical survey has identified a buried channel within the percussive piling area, dividing the area into 2 distinct regions which require different piling techniques."

<https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiorad-na-Mara-EIAR-Appendix-19.2-Noise-Modelling-and-Prediction.pdf>

Chronic displacement, not just short-term avoidance.

The EIAR frames behavioural disturbance primarily as a short-term and reversible effect. However, repeated disturbance events across two construction years of percussive piling - April to October, with up to 78 piles driven per construction year according to the developer's own indicative programme - have the potential to result in chronic displacement rather than short-term avoidance. For species reliant on specific feeding grounds, chronic displacement carries implications for foraging success and energy budgets that may have population-level consequences. This risk is not adequately addressed.

[EIAR Appendix 19.2, Table 3-2 <https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiorad-na-Mara-EIAR-Appendix-19.2-Noise-Modeling-and-Prediction.pdf>]

The assessment does not address recovery periods between disturbance events- during a two-year piling programme spanning April to October, animals displaced during one piling event may have insufficient time to recover energetically before the next. This cumulative energetic stress is not captured in the significance conclusions.

The EPS licence contradiction.

The EIAR identifies that activities may require a European Protected Species licence due to the risk of disturbance at a level requiring legal derogation. This is an acknowledgement embedded in the document itself that harm to European Protected Species is expected to occur at a legally significant level. This sits in direct and irreconcilable tension with the EIAR's conclusions that residual effects are negligible or minor (EIAR Chapter 13, Table 13-71). Scottish Ministers should require this contradiction to be resolved before any determination is made.

<https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiorad-na-Mara-EIAR-Chapter-13-Marine-Mammals.pdf>

The applicant has previously obtained an EPS licence for survey activities in the area [Marine Scotland, 2026], demonstrating that legal derogation has been sought in practice, albeit for lower-impact activities

<https://marine.gov.scot/?q=node/23771>

Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, an EPS licence can only be granted where three cumulative conditions are satisfied: no satisfactory alternative exists, imperative reasons of overriding public interest apply, and the favourable conservation status of the affected species is maintained. Where the EIAR itself flags the likelihood of EPS disturbance at a level requiring legal derogation, the burden falls on the applicant to demonstrate that all three conditions can be met. The EIAR does not do this. In particular, it does not demonstrate that alternative sites - within the wider ScotWind portfolio - were genuinely considered and found inadequate, nor does it provide species-specific evidence that favourable conservation status will be maintained for the populations affected.

The scale of predicted disturbance requiring EPS licensing raises questions as to how favourable conservation status can be maintained, yet this is not clearly addressed within the EIA.

Seasonal peaks not accounted for

While the EIA recognises seasonal variation in marine mammal presence, it does not clearly demonstrate how peak periods of ecological importance - including summer feeding aggregations of minke whales and basking sharks, and the pupping and breeding seasons of grey and harbour seals - have been factored into the significance of impact conclusions. Notably, piling is planned precisely during April to October - the period of highest marine mammal density and ecological sensitivity in these waters.

"Seasonal aggregations of harbour porpoises (Phocoena Phocoena) are observed regularly in the Minches and Sea of the Hebrides, particularly between June and September "

"Loose groups numbering 100 harbour porpoises have been recorded on occasions in areas such as the Sea of the Hebrides"

"elevated densities of Risso's dolphins (Grampus griseus) persist in the north Minch off the coast of north-east Lewis"

"aggregations of minke whales (Balaenoptera acutorostrata) rarely exceed ten individuals. However, in the Sea of the Hebrides in particular, feeding aggregations of up to 20 individuals have been recorded in late summer"

"The abundance of minke whales within the west coast of Scotland/Hebrides region was 695 animals, "

[\[https://www.marinemammalhabitat.org/factsheets/minches-and-the-sea-of-the-hebrides-imma\]](https://www.marinemammalhabitat.org/factsheets/minches-and-the-sea-of-the-hebrides-imma)

NatureScot Research Report Table 3 shows markedly higher summer sightings of minke whales, harbour porpoises, grey seals, and common dolphins, illustrating clear seasonal peaks coinciding with the proposed April-October piling period.

[\[https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report-1364-hebridean-cetacean-research-programme-2021-2024\]](https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report-1364-hebridean-cetacean-research-programme-2021-2024)

Of particular note is the timing of harbour seal pupping. Harbour seals in Scottish waters pup in June and July - a period that falls squarely within the April-October piling window. This is not a peripheral overlap: June and July represent the most sensitive period of the annual cycle for this species, when disturbance to mothers can result in pup abandonment and separation, with direct consequences for recruitment. Grey seals pup later, primarily in October and November, with some overlap at the tail end of the proposed piling season. The significance conclusions for both seal species do not clearly reflect the ecological weight of this specific temporal overlap between the construction programme and the pupping season.

[\[https://www.nature.scot/plants-animals-and-fungi/mammals/marine-mammals/seals\]](https://www.nature.scot/plants-animals-and-fungi/mammals/marine-mammals/seals) & [https://www.nature.scot/naturescot-urges-watersport-visitors-keep-distance-seals\]](https://www.nature.scot/naturescot-urges-watersport-visitors-keep-distance-seals)

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 specifically prohibit deliberate disturbance of European Protected Species, with particular reference to breeding and rearing periods. Harbour seal pupping in June and July falls squarely within the proposed April-October piling window. Where construction noise is known to cause behavioural disturbance at significant distances, pile driving during pupping season constitutes precisely the kind of disturbance during a rearing period that the Regulations are designed to prevent. The significance conclusions for seal species do not engage with this specific legal standard.

The EIA does not clearly demonstrate how disturbance during sensitive periods (e.g. pupping/breeding) has been accounted for in assessing significance

Basking Sharks: Regular Visitors and an Underestimated Risk

Basking sharks are not incidental visitors to the waters around Lewis. They are a predictable seasonal presence. Observations by local fishers, boat operators, and marine researchers confirm their repeated appearances along the west coast of Lewis and around South Shawbost, particularly during summer months. These large filter-feeding sharks congregate in shallow coastal areas where plankton concentrations are high, overlapping with zones directly affected by the proposed wind farm.

According to Northland's surveys: <https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Sporad-na-Mara-EIA-Appendix-13.1-Digital-Aerial-Bird-and-Marine-Megafauna-Surveys.pdf> Basking sharks were recorded in July 2023, with an abundance estimate of 9 individuals in the Survey Area and 10 km buffer, confirming that they regularly use the waters around the proposed development (EIA Appendix 13.1, Table 73). No individuals were recorded within the immediate array area itself, highlighting the importance of surrounding waters as habitat.

The developer's own risk assessments acknowledge the presence of basking sharks in these waters, yet their EIA downplays the potential for disturbance, displacement, or collision risk. Given that basking sharks are slow-moving and highly sensitive to changes in their environment, repeated exposure to pile-driving noise, increased vessel traffic, and habitat alteration may have consequences for their feeding behaviour and seasonal aggregation patterns.

NatureScot notes:

"In Scottish waters, large seasonal aggregations occur in shallow coastal areas during summer, particularly within the Sea of the Hebrides. "

[\[https://www.nature.scot/doc/sharks-and-skates-scotland-report-basking-shark-cetorhinus-maximus\]](https://www.nature.scot/doc/sharks-and-skates-scotland-report-basking-shark-cetorhinus-maximus)

Inclusion of local observational evidence alongside formal survey data reinforces that these waters support significant basking shark activity and that potential impacts should be assessed with the same precaution as for other European Protected Species.

Especially given that they are officially listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List due to severe population declines caused by historical overexploitation. [\[https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/4292/194720078\]](https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/4292/194720078) [\[https://www.sharktrust.org/basking-shark-threats\]](https://www.sharktrust.org/basking-shark-threats)

Local observation records, including citizen science surveys in west Lewis, confirm regular summer aggregations of basking sharks in waters overlapping the proposed turbine locations.

Basking sharks feed in shallow summer aggregations. Prolonged pile-driving and vessel traffic in these areas risks displacement during critical feeding periods, which could have population-level consequences

Mitigation addresses injury, not ecology

Mitigation measures outlined in the EIA - including Marine Mammal Observers and Passive Acoustic Monitoring - are primarily designed to reduce the

risk of acute physical injury. They do not prevent behavioural disturbance or displacement, and therefore do not fully mitigate ecological impacts. The conclusion that there will be no effect on favourable conservation status relies on broad-scale population assumptions and does not adequately account for the ecological importance of this specific area as a feeding and breeding habitat within the wider west coast ecosystem.

[<https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiorad-na-Mara-EIAR-Appendix-13.2-Passive-Acoustic-Monitoring-Survey-Report.pdf> & <https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiorad-na-Mara-EIAR-Appendix-13.4-Marine-Mammal-Population-Modelling.pdf>]

Proposed measures such as Passive Acoustic Monitoring and Marine Mammal Observers are monitoring tools, not mitigation measures. They detect the presence of animals and document disturbance- they do not prevent it. Their inclusion in the mitigation framework does not reduce the ecological impact; it simply records it. Where the underlying assessment already acknowledges significant uncertainty, the presence of monitoring cannot substitute for robust evidence that impacts will not occur.

Key mitigation is deferred to a post-consent Marine Mammal Mitigation Protocol. This prevents Scottish Ministers from assessing whether mitigation is sufficient at the point of determination, which is inconsistent with the requirement to reach conclusions beyond reasonable scientific doubt prior to consent.

The design envelope approach introduces further uncertainty.

The EIAR adopts a parameter-based design envelope approach (EIAR Chapter 5), explicitly acknowledging that the level of effect assessed may be overstated compared to what is ultimately built.

[<https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiorad-na-Mara-EIAR-Chapter-5-Approach-to-EIA-Volume-1a.pdf>]

However, the design envelope operates in both directions. While the developer suggests the assessed impacts may overstate effects compared to what is ultimately built, the same envelope equally permits construction of larger turbines, additional piles, or greater hammer energies than those modeled. The assertion that the assessment represents a conservative worst case is not guaranteed: the actual build could be more impactful than modeled, not less. Scottish Ministers cannot determine at the point of consent which scenario will materialise, which is a further reason why the design envelope approach is incompatible with the beyond-reasonable-scientific-doubt standard required under the Habitats Regulations.

[<https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/planning-and-development/environmental-assessment/habitats-regulations-appraisal-hra>]

Taken together, the reliance on limited survey windows, modelled noise assumptions, and mitigation measures focused primarily on injury reduction introduces a level of uncertainty that is not fully reflected in the EIAR's conclusions. Given the recognised ecological importance of the west coast marine environment, this raises serious doubt as to whether the assessment has demonstrated, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, that significant impacts on marine mammals can be avoided.

Effect of disturbance from piling noise to Marine Mammals during the construction phase

Beaked whales are among the most acoustically sensitive cetaceans known to science, with a well-documented global association between anthropogenic noise - particularly military sonar but also other impulsive sources - and mass stranding events. The deep waters adjacent to the west Lewis shelf edge are within the known range of several beaked whale species. The EIAR includes noise contours for beaked whales at Figure 13.22, but does not reflect the specific and extreme nature of their acoustic sensitivity in its significance conclusions. Percussive pile-driving produces broadband impulsive noise that overlaps with the frequency ranges known to elicit severe responses in beaked whales. The 0% predicted population impact for beaked whales (Table 13-37) relies on the absence of site-specific density data - but absence of data is not evidence of absence of animals, nor of absence of risk.

[Bailey et al. (2014), Assessing environmental impacts of offshore wind farms - PMC: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4172316/>]

I dispute the conclusion in Table 13-37 that piling noise effects on marine mammals are 'not significant.'

Table 13-36 shows that the assessment predicts disturbance to 9.186% of the Risso's dolphin management unit population, 27.7% of the coastal bottlenose dolphin CWSH population, and 4.3% of harbour porpoises. The long-term iPCoD modelling further predicts a 2.33% change in mean population size for coastal bottlenose dolphins and 0.17% for harbour porpoise. Up to 798 Risso's dolphins are predicted to be disturbed in cumulative scenarios [Table 13-58]. Despite these figures, the assessment classifies effects as non-significant or negligible across all species.

These figures apply to wide management unit populations and do not reflect the potential localised importance of this specific habitat for individual animals. For species such as Risso's dolphin - for which a dedicated MPA exists in adjacent waters precisely because of their site fidelity - disturbance affecting nearly 10% of the management unit population cannot credibly be dismissed as non-significant without much stronger evidence.

A disturbance level of 27.7% of a management unit is substantial, yet the EIAR does not provide a clear evidence-based justification for why this level does not constitute a significant effect.

[Table 13-57 Mean un-impacted and impacted population sizes for the OW MU for bottlenose dolphins in the cumulative iPCoD simulation. & Table 13-58 Number of Risso's dolphin potentially disturbed by cumulative underwater noise & Table 13-36 Summary of magnitude of effect on cetacean and seal species from the assessment of disturbance from piling noise <https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiorad-na-Mara-EIAR-Chapter-13-Marine-Mammals.pdf>]

The assessment simultaneously predicts minimal or zero population impact for humpback, beaked, long-finned pilot, and minke whales - conclusions that rely on limited species-specific data and generalised iPCoD thresholds. Where data is absent or populations are listed simply as 'minimal,' the precautionary principle requires caution, not a default assumption of negligible harm. The EIA does not apply that principle here.

[<https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiorad-na-Mara-EIAR-Chapter-13-Marine-Mammals.pdf>]

These figures apply to wide management unit populations and do not reflect the potential localised importance of this specific habitat.

The EIAR concludes that the Sea of Hebrides MPA - designated for minke whale - is not affected by the proposed development, on the basis that it lies approximately 80km to the south of the array area. However, the EIAR's own cited literature states that pile driving noise is audible at up to 70km, and that behavioural effects on minke whales have been observed at distances of 40–50km from construction activity. The margin between the EIAR's own disturbance range figures and its conclusion of no impact on the Sea of Hebrides MPA is therefore narrow, and the assessment does not adequately explain why that margin is sufficient to exclude any effect on the protected feature of that MPA. This conclusion deserves specific scrutiny in the HRA process.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/consultation-proposals-designate-four-marine-protected-areas-scottish-waters-consultation-analysis-report/pages/2/#>

Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended for Scotland by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011) makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure, take, or disturb any wild animal listed in Schedule 5. All cetacean species - including every species named in this objection - are listed in Schedule 5. Where pile-driving is known to cause behavioural disturbance at distances of up to 70 km in some species, the adequacy of the risk assessment has direct implications under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Section 9, which prohibits reckless disturbance of Schedule 5 species. [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Section 9: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/section/9>] [Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2011/6/contents>]

SCANS data point

The assessment relies on regional SCANS density surfaces that explicitly lack fine-scale resolution at the array level. This is not merely a data limitation; it directly undermines the validity of the IFCoD outputs upon which significance conclusions depend. Where input data is not site-specific, the resulting population impact modelling cannot be considered robust.

[EIAR Chapter 13, Tables 13-30 to 13-35 and Table 13-36: <https://northlandpowerscotwind.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Spiorad-na-Mara-EIAR-Chapter-13-Marine-Mammals.pdf>]

Management Units

By assessing impacts at the scale of Management Units covering vast geographic areas, the assessment dilutes site-specific ecological importance. This is incompatible with the Habitats Regulations test, which requires assessment of effects on the integrity of specific protected sites and populations using them.

It is important to note that the Habitats Regulations test is not whether a species population can withstand disturbance at a regional scale. The test is whether the integrity of the designated site and its function for the qualifying species is maintained. An assessment that relies on Management Unit-level population modelling to reach conclusions about site integrity fundamentally misapplies the legal standard. Population resilience at a UK or west Scotland scale does not demonstrate that the Inner Hebrides and Minches SAC, or the East Lewis MPA, will not be adversely affected by this development.

Why Location Matters

This is not an objection to renewable energy. Scotland needs clean power, and many people on Lewis understand that better than most - we live with the wind every day of our lives.

This objection is about location. And location matters enormously.

The ScotWind process identified this site - N4, northwest of Lewis - as suitable for leasing. But suitability for leasing is not the same as suitability for development. The leasing process was a spatial exercise; this application is the moment where the actual environmental consequences must be confronted. And when they are confronted honestly, the conclusion is hard to avoid: this is one of the worst possible locations in Scottish waters for a development of this scale.

The Outer Hebrides sit at the intersection of some of the most productive marine habitats in Europe. The shelf edge to the west, the complex tidal systems around the islands, and the nutrient-rich waters of the Minches together create conditions that support a density and diversity of marine life unmatched almost anywhere in the British Isles. This is not a coincidence of geography. It is precisely *because* these waters are so biologically rich that they have attracted designation after designation - a harbour porpoise SAC that is the largest in Europe, a Risso's dolphin MPA, an internationally recognised Important Marine Mammal Area. Regulators have already concluded, repeatedly, that these waters deserve the strongest protection available. This application asks Scottish Ministers to approve a development that conflicts directly with those conclusions.

There is no shortage of sea. Scotland has thousands of miles of coastline and vast offshore areas. The question is not whether offshore wind can be built somewhere - it is whether it must be built here, in waters that independent scientific bodies have already designated as internationally important for the very species that would be most harmed. The answer to that question should be no.

Precautionary Principle

The precautionary principle requires that where there is scientific uncertainty about harm to protected species and habitats, the burden of proof lies with the developer to demonstrate safety - not with objectors to prove harm. In a location already designated for its marine mammal importance, that burden is exceptionally high. It has not been met.

No Alternative Solutions

Under the Habitats Regulations, even where imperative reasons of overriding public interest might be argued, consent cannot be granted if alternative solutions exist. Scotland has other ScotWind sites. [<https://www.crownstatescotland.com/scotlands-property/offshore-wind/scotwind-rapid-review/#:~:text=The%20subsequent%20ScotWind%20Leasing%20around%20offshore%20wind%20to%20Scottish%20Government,>] Several are in waters that do not carry the same density of European Protected Species, designated SACs, and internationally recognised marine mammal habitat. The existence of those alternatives is directly relevant to whether consent for this specific site can lawfully proceed. The Scottish Ministers must be satisfied that this location is necessary - not merely that it is convenient or already leased.

What is at stake

The Outer Hebrides are one of the last places in Britain where you can stand on a clifftop and watch a minke whale feeding a few hundred metres from shore. Where harbour porpoises surface in the morning light in the same waters where seals haul out. Where a pod of pilot whales - 55 of them, in July 2023 - came close enough to shore that local people waded in trying to save them. These are not statistics. They are the living reality of these islands. Once an ecosystem of this complexity and richness is industrialised, it cannot be un-industrialised. The question Scottish Ministers must answer is not whether Scotland needs renewable energy. Of course it does. The question is whether it needs it badly enough to sacrifice one of the most extraordinary concentrations of marine life in the British Isles. We do not believe it does. And we do not believe that, on the evidence before them, Scottish Ministers can lawfully conclude otherwise.

Requests To The Scottish Ministers

Given everything set out above, I make the following specific requests:

First, that the marine mammal and benthic ecology sections of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report be referred to an independent expert panel for scrutiny before any determination is made. Marine Scotland has the ability to convene such a panel where difficult or contentious scientific issues require specialist input of international standing. Given the density of European Protected Species in these waters, the specific methodological concerns raised by HWDT and WDC, and the contradictions within the EIA itself, this case clearly meets that threshold.

Second, that the Habitats Regulations Appraisal be held to its proper legal standard - that Scottish Ministers must be satisfied *beyond reasonable scientific doubt* that this development will not adversely affect the integrity of the designated European sites in and adjacent to the development area. Consent should be refused unless and until that standard is met.

Third, that the cumulative assessment be independently verified to confirm it genuinely addresses in-combination impacts with all other plans and projects affecting the same European sites - not merely those within the immediate geographic footprint. I urge the Scottish Ministers to give the fullest possible weight to the irreplaceable nature of the marine environment that would be placed at risk by this development. The Outer Hebrides are not a blank patch of sea awaiting industrial use. They are home to one of the most extraordinary concentrations of marine wildlife in the British Isles - wildlife that is here, that has been here long before this application was submitted, and that has nowhere else to go if this site is industrialised.

Lack of Community Engagement: There was no consultation with the communities of west Lewis before Crown Estate Scotland identified and leased the N4 area for development. The plan was imposed on them without consent.

Scotland's National Marine Plan (NMP) GEN 18 'Early and effective engagement should be undertaken with the general public and all interested stakeholders to facilitate planning and consenting processes.'

NMP Para 4 77 'Engagement with the public and other stakeholders should be appropriate, proportionate and meaningful. It should be undertaken as early as possible in planning and consenting processes.'

NPF4 Spatial Principles - Just Transition 'We will empower people to shape their places.'

Lack of understanding of Cultural Significance: The EIA makes no reference to the personal, cultural or historical attachment of the population of Lewis to their landscape and heritage, and fails to assess impacts on the living intangible heritage of the Gaelic community. Until a full assessment addressing impacts on Gaelic language and culture, community wellbeing, and west Lewis communities' relationship with their coastline is completed and publicly consulted upon, this application cannot lawfully be determined.

NMP Para 4 20 'The historic environment includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time.'

NPF4 Policy 7 a 'Development proposals with a potentially significant impact on historic assets or places will be accompanied by an assessment which is based on an understanding of the cultural significance of the historic asset and/or place.'

Significant Adverse Impacts on Protected Birdlife and Habitats: The development occupies primary foraging grounds for the Lewis Peatlands SPA red-throated divers, falls within the foraging range of the St Kilda gannet colony, and crosses a principal UK migratory corridor for protected species, including whooper swan and pink-footed goose. The EIA fails to adequately assess the threats of collision, displacement, and barrier effects to these declining populations. Thus, consent would breach the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994, the 2018 Offshore Regulations, the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as the proposal is likely to adversely affect the integrity of the following SPA's: Lewis Peatlands, West Coast of the Outer Hebrides, Seas off St Kilda and St Kilda.

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NPF4 Policy 11 e ix Impact on 'biodiversity including impacts on birds' must be addressed.

Failure to Protect the Integrity and Setting of Scheduled Monuments: The EIA anticipates significant adverse effects on coastal heritage. It fails to assess the impact on key scheduled monuments such as SM13786. The proposal would harm the Calanais monuments and wider historic landscape by introducing an industrial horizon into their natural surroundings, fundamentally undermining the meaning, experience, and interconnected setting of these sites, directly conflicting with NPF4 Policy 7. There are many alternative sites for offshore wind development and no reasons of over-riding public interest for choosing this site.

NMP Para 4 22 'Marine planning should help to ensure that future marine activities and developments can be carried out in a way that respects the marine historic environment and the setting of important coastal heritage assets.' Para 4 23 'Designated assets should be protected in situ within an appropriate setting.'

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Unassessed Onshore Impacts and Breach of Statutory Rights of Crofters: Granting offshore consent while onshore impacts on irreplaceable machair and deep peatland remain unassessed, directly contravenes NPF4 Policy 3, which requires biodiversity (including irreplaceable habitats) to be left in a demonstrably better state. In addition the proposal fails to engage the statutory rights of crofters under the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993.

NMP Para 4 77 'There should be a presumption in favour of publicising applications for marine and terrestrial components of a development together during consenting processes.'

Irreparable Harm to the Tourism Economy and Coastal Character: The Spiorad na Mara wind farm would permanently industrialise the unspoiled coastal scenery and dark skies on the Isle of Lewis, destroying the very qualities that attract visitors to the island. Local residents have consistently warned during consultation that this visual impact would decimate the tourist industry on which so many islanders depend. Tourism is built on the area's landscape, seascape, heritage, nature, and dark skies. This development risks long-term damage to local businesses and the wider economy, contrary to NPF4 Policy 30.

NMP, Para 12 28 'An unspoiled environment, high quality landscape and a sense of closeness to nature are important to many people. Scenery and environmental quality are key factors in attracting visitors to Scotland's coasts.'

Community Opposition and lack of Community Empowerment: The Community Opinion Survey on the Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm Development (N4) published by www.emg-lewis.co.uk in April 2026 found that 88% of residents from Ness to Uig opposed the N4 development. Approving this project against such overwhelming local consensus would directly contravene the National Islands Plan's commitment to community empowerment.

The National Islands Plan, page 65, para 5 'Our vision is for islanders to be empowered to shape their own priorities, build their futures, and protect what makes their communities unique.'

Significant Adverse Impacts on Marine Mammals and Protected Marine Habitats: The Outer Hebrides are described by the Scottish Government's own scientists as "probably the richest area of the UK for marine mammals with around 20 species of cetacean recorded in the region over the last 30 years" (Scottish Marine and Freshwater Science Vol 5 No 9). The site lies adjacent to the Inner Hebrides and Minches SAC - the largest harbour porpoise SAC in Europe - within the wider range of the North-east Lewis MPA for Risso's dolphin, within documented fin and sperm whale migration corridors.

(Blue Corridors initiative), and within the wider feeding and habitat range of minke, humpback and sei whales, and within the foraging range of the Monach Isles grey seal colony (the largest in Europe) The EIAR fails to reflect this internationally significant baseline in its significance conclusions and cannot demonstrate, to the legal standard required, that adverse effects on these protected sites and species will be avoided Under the Habitats Regulations Appraisal process, consent must be refused unless Scottish Ministers are satisfied beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the integrity of European sites will not be adversely affected (NatureScot HRA guidance) That standard has not been met

Construction noise: The developer's own noise modelling (EIAR Appendix 19 2) provides for up to 5.5 hours of percussive piling per day, up to 10,635 strikes per pile per day, hammer energies up to 5,000 kJ, and 1,563 pin piles across two consecutive construction years (April–October) The EIAR itself acknowledges that "harbour porpoises are widely regarded as the most sensitive marine mammal receptor to underwater noise" and that behavioural disturbance can occur up to 70 km from piling (Bailey et al , 2010, cited in Chapter 13) The proposed piling window coincides with peak cetacean seasonal density and with harbour seal pupping (June–July), triggering the prohibition on deliberate disturbance of European Protected Species during breeding and rearing periods under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

The developer's own underwater noise modelling (EIAR Appendix 13 3) confirms that, even with noise mitigation applied, percussive piling at the northernmost foundation location generates a PTS (permanent auditory injury) range of up to 1,500 m for low-frequency cetaceans and a TTS (temporary auditory injury) range of up to 49 km These are the developer's own figures, after mitigation Low-frequency cetaceans include minke, fin, sei and humpback whales - all species documented in these waters A 49 km auditory injury zone, repeated across an April–October piling window for two consecutive years, cannot credibly be reconciled with a classification of effects as "not significant "

NMP Policy GEN 13: development should avoid significant adverse effects of man-made noise and vibration on species sensitive to such effects The EIAR predicts disturbance to 9.186% of the Risso's dolphin management unit population and 27.7% of the coastal bottlenose dolphin population from piling noise, yet classifies these effects as "not significant " GEN 13 sets an avoidance standard, not a tolerance threshold The developer's own EPS and Basking Shark Risk Assessment (submitted to Marine Scotland, 22 February 2023) formally acknowledges risk of disturbance to minke whale, harbour porpoise, common dolphin, bottlenose dolphin, grey seal and basking shark from survey work alone Full construction at this scale cannot credibly be claimed to present a lesser risk

The 2023 Tolsta Stranding: In July 2023, 54 of 55 long-finned pilot whales died on Traigh Mhòr beach while geophysical surveys were being carried out at this lease area The Scottish Government investigation could not rule out anthropogenic contribution and explicitly acknowledged limitations in the acoustic detection capability of the recorders used This recent and devastating event must weigh heavily in this decision

Priority Marine Features and seabed disturbance: Kelp beds - confirmed present across 10 km² within the Study Area and designated as a PMF and blue carbon habitat - are assessed as sustaining "minor adverse" impact, with no compensatory measures proposed Maerl beds, horse mussel beds, fan mussel aggregations and cold-water coral reefs (all Scottish PMFs) are either excluded on the basis of decade-old desktop data (Tyler-Walters et al , 2016) or not mentioned at all The developer concedes that its primary mitigation - micro-siting of turbines and cables - "cannot be quantified until detailed design and further site-specific investigations are complete "

NMP GEN 5: safeguard natural carbon sinks including kelp beds NMP GEN 9: do not result in significant impact on the national status of Priority Marine Features, and protect and enhance the health of the marine area

Cumulative and in-combination effects: The Habitats Regulations require assessment of cumulative effects with other plans and projects The Scottish Government's own 2026 ICIA Screening Report concedes that Scottish offshore wind plans are "likely...to undergo the derogations process under the Habitats Regulations " Spiorad na Mara is one of several large developments proposed in or adjacent to these waters; the cumulative assessment does not rigorously meet this requirement NMP GEN 21 requires cumulative impacts affecting the ecosystem to be addressed

Inadequate assessment and deferred mitigation: The joint representation from the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust and Whale and Dolphin Conservation states that baseline cetacean data is "severely lacking " Proposed mitigation (MMOs, PAM, soft-start) is designed to address acute physical injury, not behavioural displacement; JNCC guidance confirms PAM has "limited range" for harbour porpoise and is "not suitable" for seals and baleen whales Key mitigation is deferred to a post-consent Marine Mammal Mitigation Protocol, preventing Scottish Ministers from assessing adequacy at the point of determination - contrary to the beyond-reasonable-scientific-doubt standard required under the Habitats Regulations Peer-reviewed monitoring at Scottish offshore wind farm construction sites (Benhemma-Le Gall et al 2021, Frontiers in Marine Science) observed harbour porpoise displacement up to 12 km from pile-driving and 4 km from construction vessels alone - distances that no MMO, PAM or soft-start zone can address

The EPS licence contradiction: The EIAR identifies that activities may require an EPS licence due to disturbance at a level requiring legal derogation, while simultaneously concluding residual effects are "negligible or minor " Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, an EPS licence can only be granted where no satisfactory alternative exists, imperative reasons of overriding public interest apply, and favourable conservation status is maintained The EIAR demonstrates none of these

Basking sharks (IUCN Endangered) were recorded by the developer's own July 2023 aerial survey (EIAR Appendix 13 1) The EIAR does not adequately assess EMF impacts from subsea cables on elasmobranchs, despite Scottish Government ScotMER research identifying this as an unresolved evidence gap (FF 07)

No alternative solutions: Under the Habitats Regulations, consent cannot be granted if alternative solutions exist Other ScotWind sites are available in waters without the same density of European Protected Species and designated habitats, and the existence of those alternatives is directly relevant to whether consent for this site can lawfully proceed

Consent would therefore breach or inadequately address the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, NMP Policies GEN 5, GEN 9, GEN 13 and GEN 21, and ASCOBANS Resolution 7.6 (2016) on underwater noise

This planning decision is about the long-term future and the character of a landscape and community that cannot be replaced once altered at this scale Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm would cause significant, cumulative and largely irreversible harm to landscape and seascape character, heritage setting, and the tourism economy

I respectfully request that this application is rejected

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

Please can my name and address be redacted from anything public Thank you

From: [REDACTED]
To: [MD Marine Renewables](#)
Subject: Spiorad na Mara - Objection
Date: 06 May 2026 16:22:30

I formally object to the above application as it contravenes the following planning policies and guidance:

Lack of Community Engagement: There was no consultation with the communities of west Lewis before Crown Estate Scotland identified and leased the N4 area for development. The plan was imposed on them without consent.

Scotland's National Marine Plan (NMP) GEN 18 'Early and effective engagement should be undertaken with the general public and all interested stakeholders to facilitate planning and consenting processes.'

NMP Para. 4.77 'Engagement with the public and other stakeholders should be appropriate, proportionate and meaningful. It should be undertaken as early as possible in planning and consenting processes.'

NPF4 Spatial Principles - Just Transition. 'We will empower people to shape their places.'

Lack of understanding of Cultural Significance: The EIAR makes no reference to the personal, cultural or historical attachment of the population of Lewis to their landscape and heritage, and fails to assess impacts on the living intangible heritage of the Gaelic community. Until a full assessment addressing impacts on Gaelic language and culture, community wellbeing, and west Lewis communities' relationship with their coastline is completed and publicly consulted upon, this application cannot lawfully be determined.

NMP Para. 4.20 'The historic environment includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time.'

NPF4 Policy 7 a 'Development proposals with a potentially significant impact on historic assets or places will be accompanied by an assessment which is based on an understanding of the cultural significance of the historic asset and/or place.'

Significant Adverse Impacts on Protected Birdlife and Habitats: The development occupies primary foraging grounds for the Lewis Peatlands SPA red-throated divers, falls within the foraging range of the St Kilda gannet colony, and crosses a principal UK migratory corridor for protected species, including whooper swan and pink-footed goose. The EIAR fails to adequately assess the threats of collision, displacement, and barrier effects to these declining populations. Thus, consent would breach the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994, the 2018 Offshore Regulations, the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as the proposal is likely to adversely affect the integrity of the following SPA's: Lewis Peatlands, West Coast of the Outer Hebrides, Seas off St Kilda and St Kilda. NPF4 Policy 7 I 'Development proposals affecting a World Heritage Site or its setting will only be supported where their Outstanding Universal Value is protected and preserved.'

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impact on key scheduled monuments such as SM13786. The proposal would harm the Calanais monuments and wider historic landscape by introducing an industrial horizon into their natural surroundings, fundamentally undermining the meaning, experience, and interconnected setting of these sites, directly conflicting with NPF4 Policy 7. There are many alternative sites for offshore wind development and no reasons of over-riding public interest for choosing this site.

NMP Para. 4.22 'Marine planning should help to ensure that future marine activities and developments can be carried out in a way that respects the marine historic environment and the setting of important coastal heritage assets.' Para. 4.23 'Designated assets should be protected in situ within an appropriate setting'.

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Tourism is built on the area's landscape, seascape, heritage, nature, and dark skies. This development risks long-term damage to local businesses and the wider economy, contrary to NPF4 Policy 30.

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Freshwater Science Vol. 5 No. 9). The site lies adjacent to the Inner Hebrides and Minches SAC - the largest harbour porpoise SAC in Europe - within the wider range of the North-east Lewis MPA for Risso's dolphin, within documented fin and sperm whale migration corridors (Blue Corridors initiative), and within the wider feeding and habitat range of minke, humpback and sei whales, and within the foraging range of the Monach Isles grey seal colony (the largest in Europe). The EIAR fails to reflect this internationally significant baseline in its significance conclusions and cannot demonstrate, to the legal standard required, that adverse effects on these protected sites and species will be avoided. Under the Habitats Regulations Appraisal process, consent must be refused unless Scottish Ministers are satisfied beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the integrity of European sites will not be adversely affected (NatureScot HRA guidance). That standard has not been met.

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heavily in this decision.

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My further objection points:

All listed above.

This planning decision is about the long-term future and the character of a landscape and community that cannot be replaced once altered at this scale. Spiorad na Mara Offshore Wind Farm would cause significant, cumulative and largely irreversible harm to landscape and seascape character, heritage setting, and the tourism economy.

I respectfully request that this application is rejected.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

Sent from [Outlook for iOS](#)