Salamander Offshore Wind Farm

Volume AD.A.5, Offshore Planning Statement

SALAMANDER

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Scheme

1.1.1.1 The Applicant, Salamander Wind Project Company Ltd (SWPC) (formerly called Simply Blue Energy (Scotland) Ltd. (SBES)), a joint venture (JV) partnership between Ørsted, Simply Blue Group and Subsea7, is seeking consent to develop a floating offshore wind farm (hereafter known as 'the Salamander Project') approximately 35 km east of Peterhead, Scotland. The proposed floating offshore wind farm will have a capacity of up to 100 Megawatts (MW).

1.1.1.2 The Salamander Project will consist of offshore and onshore infrastructure (hereafter known as the 'proposed Offshore Development' and the 'proposed Onshore Development'), including an offshore generating station (wind farm), export cables to landfall, and connection to the electricity transmission network. This Planning Statement aims to support the Offshore Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report (EIAR) for the proposed Offshore Development of the Salamander Project, seaward of Mean High-Water Springs (MHWS). A separate Onshore EIAR will also be prepared for the proposed Onshore Development and will be supported by two Planning Statements and two separate consenting processes.

1.1.1.3 The proposed Offshore Development includes the offshore components that are required for the operation of the Development, which include:

- Up to seven offshore wind turbine generators (WTGs);
- Floating substructures to support the WTGs;
- Mooring and anchoring systems to connect the structures to the seabed;
- Inter-array Cables (including both dynamic and static cable sections) to collect the power from the WTGs;
- Connection hub(s)/joint(s) on the seabed, and their associated foundations; and
- Up to two static Offshore Export Cable(s) either from the connection hub(s) or as a continuation of the dynamic inter-array cables to bring power ashore.

1.1.1.4 At Landfall, the Offshore Export Cable(s) will be joined to Onshore Export Cables at the Transition Joint Bays (TJBs) which will be located above MHWS. The Onshore Export Cables will form part of the proposed Onshore Development as a separate consenting process.

1.1.1.5 The proposed Onshore Development, which is not part of this Section 36 Consent and Marine Licence applications, will enable the Salamander Project to connect to the national electricity grid. The proposed Onshore Development will include the Landfall, Onshore Export Cables, and Onshore Substation (OnSS) and associated works, which includes Energy Balancing Infrastructure (EBI) containing battery storage. The proposed Onshore Development will be submitted as a planning application to Aberdeenshire Council and a Section 36 Consent application and deemed planning permission to the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) of the Scottish Government.

1.2 The Applicant

1.2.1.1 The Salamander Project is being developed by the Applicant, SWPC Ltd, which is formed in a joint venture (JV) partnership between Ørsted, Simply Blue Group and Subsea7.

1.2.1.2 The Ørsted vision is a world that runs entirely on green energy. Ørsted develops, constructs, and operates offshore and onshore wind farms, solar farms, energy storage facilities, renewable hydrogen and green fuels

facilities, and bioenergy plants. Globally, Ørsted is the market leader in offshore wind and operates the world's biggest offshore wind farm off the East Coast of the United Kingdom (UK). Its UK offshore wind farms generate enough clean electricity for seven million UK homes. Ørsted is recognised on the CDP Climate Change A List as a global leader on climate action and was the first energy company in the world to have its science-based net-zero emissions target validated by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). Headquartered in Denmark, Ørsted employs approx. 8,900 people.

1.2.1.3 Simply Blue Group, headquartered in Cork, Ireland, is a leading blue economy developer focused on replacing fossil fuels with clean ocean energy. It develops pioneering blue economy projects – offshore wind, sustainable fuels, marine energy, carbon dioxide removal and low-impact aquaculture – all in harmony with the oceans. The company has a pipeline of over 10 GW of offshore wind projects across the globe. Simply Blue Group is committed to creating new economic opportunities for coastal communities, and developing projects that co-exist with sustainable fisheries and marine conservation. With a passionate team of over 100 people, Simply Blue Group has offices in Cork, Dublin, Newquay, Pembrokeshire, Edinburgh, Bilbao, and Nova Scotia.

1.2.1.4 Subsea7 is a global leader in the delivery of offshore projects and services for the evolving energy industry. Subsea7 creates sustainable value by being the industry's partner and employer of choice in delivering the efficient offshore solutions the world needs.

1.2.1.5 The Applicant has commissioned Environmental Resources Management Limited (ERM) as the lead consultant on the EIA. ERM is the world's largest sustainability dedicated consultancy, partnering with the world's leading organisations, creating innovative solutions to sustainability challenges, and unlocking commercial opportunities that meet the needs of today while preserving opportunity for future generations.

1.3 Purpose and Structure of Planning Statement

1.3.1.1 This Planning Statement accompanies an application seeking consent for the proposed Offshore Development of the Salamander Project under:

- Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989; and
- A Marine Licence under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 for the offshore works (12 to 200 nm in the Renewable Energy Zone (REZ)) and under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 for the works within 12 nm of the coast.

1.3.1.2 The purpose of this Planning Statement is to consider the immediate and wider implications of the proposed Offshore Development, taking into consideration marine planning, terrestrial planning, and energy policies set out in the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), UK Marine Policy Statement, Scotland's National Marine Plan (NMP), Scotland's Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (SMP) and local policies set out in the Aberdeenshire Council Local Development Plan.

1.3.1.3 This Planning Statement will also set out relevant wider climate change and energy policy anchored into UK and Scottish legislation, that will provide context to demonstrate the overall "needs case" and benefits for the proposed Offshore Development and wider Salamander Project.

1.3.1.4 This Planning Statement provides a summary of the conclusions found within the Offshore EIAR chapters and other supporting documents, and provides a detailed assessment of policy compliance against the relevant policies detailed in the above documents.

1.3.1.5 As highlighted above, a separate Planning Statement will be provided for the proposed Onshore Development, and as such, the onshore infrastructure and components will not be included in this Planning Statement.

1.3.1.6 The Planning Statement is set out as follows:

- **Section 1: Introduction** sets out the background of the wider Salamander Project and the Offshore components of the Project, summarising the consents sought, provides information about the Applicant and sets out the structure of the Planning Statement.
- **Section 2: The Site and Surroundings** sets out the project description, details the site and the wider surroundings and provides a planning history of the site.
- **Section 3: The Need for Development** sets out the overall needs case for the Salamander Project, and details relevant climate and energy legislation and policy
- **Section 4: Wider Benefits of the Development** sets out the benefits the Project aims to deliver in terms of economic, environmental, and social benefits**.**
- **Section 5: Consent and Legislation** details the consenting process for the proposed Offshore Development
- **Section 6: Stakeholder and Community Engagement** details the engagement sought with consenting bodies and stakeholders, the approach to engaging with the local community, detail of the engagement undertaken, and the feedback received from stakeholders and local residents.
- **Section 7: Scottish Planning Policy** sets out relevant marine planning policy detailed in National and Local Development Plan Documents.
- **Section 8: Assessment of Development** provides a detailed assessment of the proposed Offshore Development based on findings from the EIAR, and links these back to marine planning policy to demonstrate compliance.
- **Section 9: Planning Balance and Conclusions** draws upon the policy assessment and balances the positives and negatives of the proposed Offshore Development to justify the Project and its compliance with relevant marine planning policy.

1.4 The Requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment

1.4.1.1 Requirements for an EIA are defined in the European Union (EU) EIA Directive (85/337/EEC as amended by 97/11/EC, 2003/35/EC and 2009/31/EC, codified by 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU), which was brought into Scottish law by the EIA Regulations. In accordance with the EIA Regulations, an EIA is required as follows:

- Under Schedule 2 of the Electricity Works (EIA) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, for the carrying out of development to provide a generating station. Where works fall within the scope of Schedule 2, an EIA is required if they are likely to have significant effects on the environment.
- Under Schedule 2 of the Marine Works (EIA) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (collectively, the 'EIA Regulations') for installations for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (wind farms) if:
- The development involves the installation of more than two Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs); or
- The hub height of any WTG or height of any other structure exceeds 15 m.

1.4.1.2 The proposed Offshore Development would likely result in significant environmental effects, and the number of the WTGs would exceed two and exceed 15 m in height. Therefore, an EIAR has been prepared in support of the proposed Offshore Development.

1.4.1.3 An EIA Scoping Report (Salamander Offshore Wind Farm, Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report (SBES, 2023)) was submitted to the Marine Directorate Licensing and Operations Team (MD-LOT), in February 2023. The EIA Scoping Report identified a number of environmental and human sensitive receptors, and the predicted impacts of the proposed Offshore Development were considered. These receptors were proposed to be either scoped in or scoped out of the EIA through an analysis of available data, lessons learned from previous Scoping Opinions for offshore wind farms, and through pre-scoping consultation workshops.

1.4.1.4 An EIA Scoping Opinion was received in June 2023, from MD-LOT with stakeholder input. Further information on the EIA Scoping Opinion consultation responses is discussed in the relevant EIAR topic chapters detailed below. Where impacts have been scoped out, these are outlined in each chapter.

1.4.1.5 The Offshore EIAR topic chapters are as follows:

- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 7: Marine Physical Processes**
- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 8: Water and Sediment Quality**
- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 9: Benthic and Intertidal Ecology**
- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 10: Fish and Shellfish Ecology**
- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 11: Marine Mammals**
- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 12: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology**
- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 13: Commercial Fisheries**
- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 14: Shipping and Navigation**
- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 15: Aviation and Radar**
- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 16: Seascape, Landscape and Visual Amenity**
- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 17: Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage**
- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 18: Other Users of the Marine Environment**
- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 19: Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism**
- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 20: Climate Change and Carbon**
- **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 21: Major Accidents and Disasters (Offshore)**

2 The Site and its Surroundings

2.1 Site Location

2.1.1.1 The Salamander Project is proposed to be split into several infrastructure locations which can be seen in **Figure 2-1** below. For completeness, this section details both the offshore and onshore infrastructure site locations. The infrastructure locations comprise of:

- **Offshore Array Area:** this is where the offshore wind generating station will be located, which will include the wind turbines, floating foundations and mooring system, subsea hub(s) and/or joint(s), and inter-array cables. At the boundary of the Offshore Array Area, array cables transition to the export cable(s).
- **Offshore Export Cable Corridor (Offshore ECC):** this is where the offshore export cable(s), will be located. The Offshore ECC runs from MHWS to the western boundary of the Offshore Array Area.
- **Intertidal Export Cable Corridor (Intertidal ECC):** this is the area between MLWS and MHWS where the export cable(s) will be installed.
- **Onshore Export Cable Corridor (Onshore ECC):** this is where Landfall occurs at the Transition Joint Bays (TJBs) and the onward onshore export cable(s) will be located. The Onshore ECC runs from the TJBs to the onshore substation.
- **Onshore Substation (OnSS)[1]:** comprising of the Salamander Project OnSS compound and the Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) OnSS compound, and additionally the Energy Balancing Infrastructure (EBI): this is where the energy balancing equipment will be located.

[1] The OnSS will be split into three compounds, one owned by the Salamander Project, one owned by SSEN where the physical connection to the onshore transmission system will be located. The third compound will be for the EBI infrastructure. The three compounds will be located adjacent to each other within the Onshore Development Area.

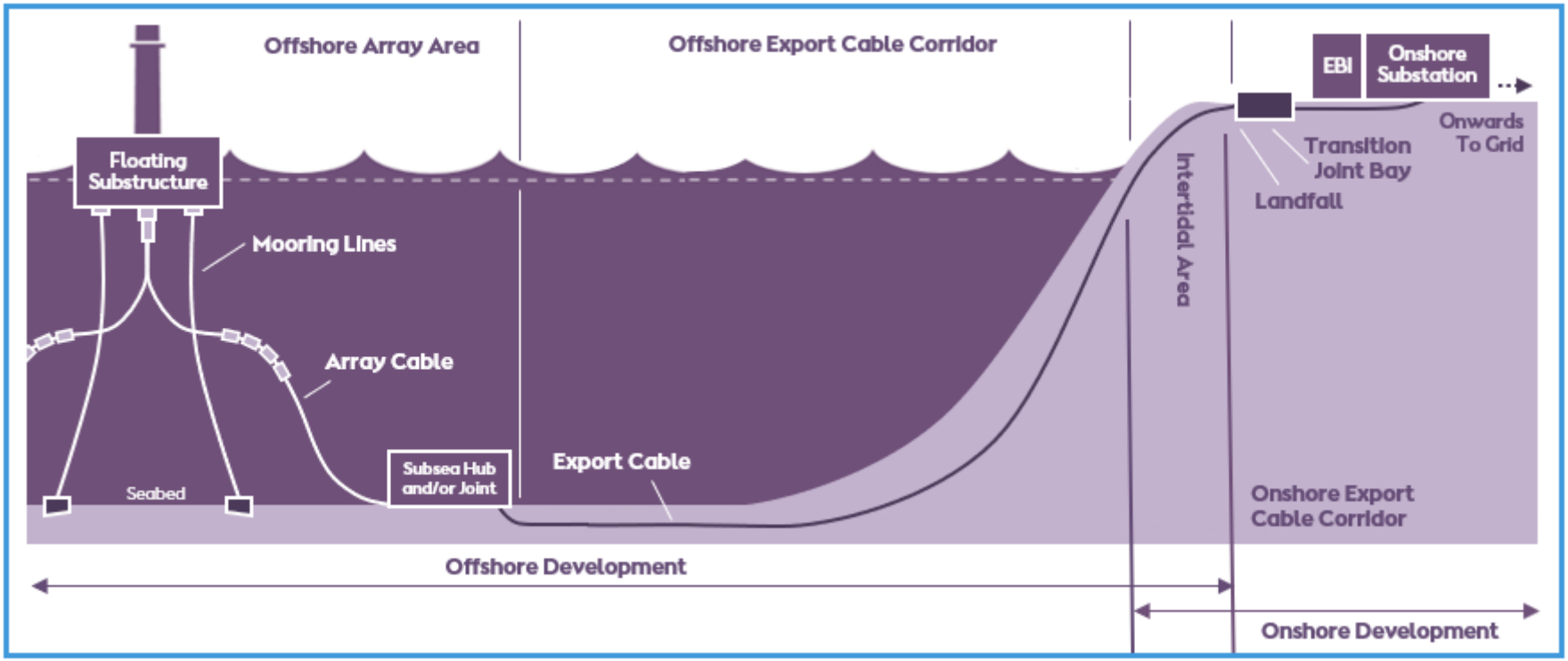


Figure 2-1 Salamander Infrastructure Locations

2.1.1.2 The following sections detail the physical environment of these infrastructure locations:

2.1.1 Offshore Array Area

2.1.1.1 The Offshore Array Area is approximately 35 km due east of Peterhead, at its closest. Water depths vary from around 86 m below Lowest Astronomical Tide (LAT) in the centre to around 102 m below LAT in the south-western corner. Sandwaves and ripples are present within the Offshore Array Area. Surficial sediments across the Offshore Array Area are typically sandy material with small amounts of gravel and muds.

2.1.2 Offshore Export Cable Corridor

2.1.2.1 Depths across the Offshore ECC are similar to the Offshore Array Area, with a maximum depth of 105 m below LAT in the south eastern part of the ECC where it meets the Offshore Array Area, and depths becoming shallower closer to the coastline. Sediments across the Offshore ECC show an increasing gravel content towards the coast, passing through areas of slightly gravelly sand, gravelly sand, and sandy gravel.

2.1.3 Intertidal Export Cable Corridor

2.1.3.1 The Intertidal ECC will be located within the Onshore and Offshore Development Areas where the offshore export cable(s) will cross from MLWS to MHWS. This area has moderate wave exposure and comprises mostly clean mobile sand and some areas of rocky and sedimentary habitats.

2.1.4 Onshore Export Cable Corridor

2.1.4.1 The Onshore ECC will be located within the wider Onshore Development Area which covers a mix of dunes, arable farmland and forestry, and shall be covered within the Onshore application.

2.1.5 Onshore Substation including Energy Balancing Infrastructure

2.1.5.1 The OnSS and EBI including battery storage will be located in an area of arable farmland and forestry within 1.2 km to Landfall. This onshore infrastructure will include all necessary electrical equipment required to transform the power supplied from the wind farm to 132 kilovolt (kV) and to adjust the power quality and power factor, as required to meet the UK Grid Code for supply to the National Grid; this shall be described in more detail and assessed within the Onshore application.

2.1.5.2 The EBI will comprise any of (or a combination of) the following: an energy storage technology such as batteries, energy conversion technology such as power converters, balance of plant equipment such as transformers, switchgear, computing and monitoring equipment, as well as cables or busbars to connect these to the rest of the OnSS.

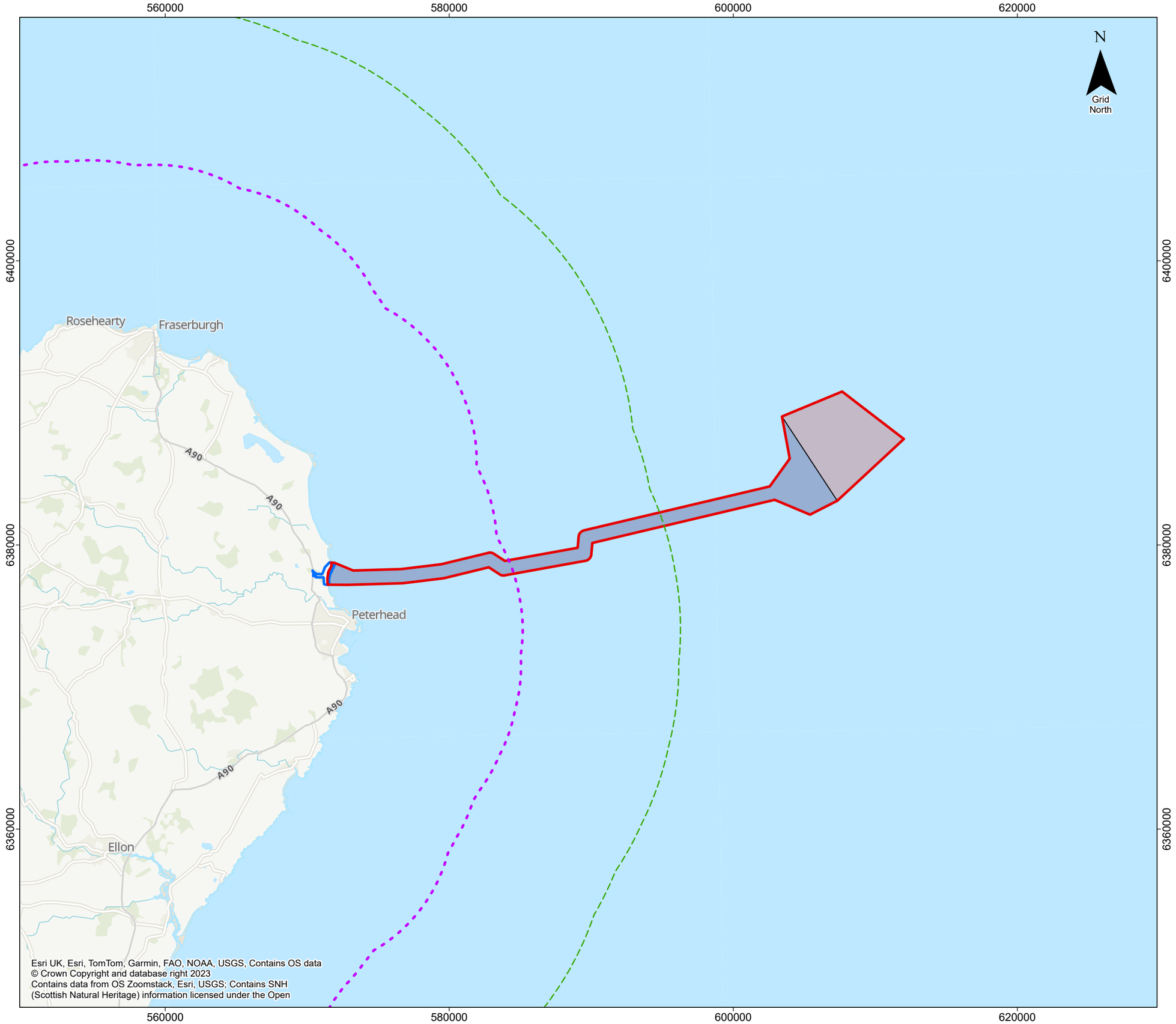
2.1.5.3 The connection onwards from the OnSS to the UK transmission grid does not form part of this application, as it will be brought forward separately by the onshore transmission owner (SSEN), using either underground or overhead lines. This will be subject to a separate Section 37 Consent application to the Electricity Consents Units (ECU).

2.1.5.4 **Figure 2-2** shows the Location Plan and the boundaries of the proposed Offshore and Onshore Development areas for the Salamander Project.

Salamander

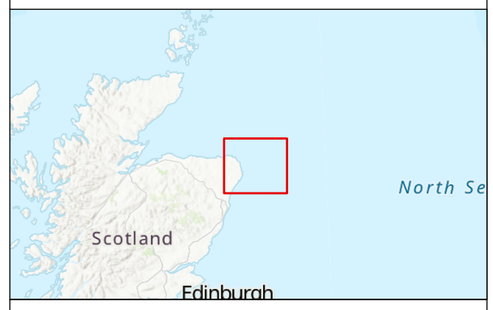
Figure 2- 2

Project Location



Legend

- Offshore Development Area
- Offshore Array Area
- Offshore Export Cable Corridor
- Indicative Onshore Development Area
- 6nm limit
- 12nm limit



Coordinate System: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 30N

Scale @ A3 : 1:259,369

0 7.5 15 Kilometers

0 2 4 8 Nautical Miles

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Created by : NB
Checked by : IW
Approved by : HY

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2.2 Site Selection

2.2.1.1 A comprehensive site selection exercise was undertaken by the Applicant in 2020 to identify the optimal site for the proposed Offshore Development which took into consideration environmental, commercial, socio-economic and technical factors.

2.2.1.2 Engagement with stakeholders has been an important process to ensure that the site selected for the proposed Offshore Development, was the most optimal site to minimise environmental impact, have a positive impact on commercial and socio-economic factors, and takes into account technical factors to ensure the project can be constructed. Following this engagement, a final Area of Search (AoS) was selected which led to options being considered for the Offshore Export Cable routes, and the requirements for the proposed Onshore Development infrastructure and potential future grid connections.

2.2.1.3 Eight potential AoS were identified in the initial site selection which were a suitable size to accommodate a floating offshore wind development of up to 300 MW. Two of these AoS were discounted on the basis that one would be limited to a 100 km^2 area, which would be difficult to accommodate a 300 MW sized floating wind project without causing environmental harm to a number of receptors, and the other would likely have had a negative impact on shipping as well as having other technical constraints identified.

2.2.1.4 Therefore, six AoS were taken to further review to be tested against their environmental, commercial/socio-economic and technical impacts. **Volume ER.A.2, Chapter 3: Site Selection and Consideration of Alternatives** of the EIAR sets out these impacts in more detail.

2.2.1.5 The results from this exercise resulted in three potential AoS for the proposed Offshore Array Area, which then led to consultation with the following key stakeholders to refine the site options:

- Marine Directorate Licensing and Operations Team (MD-LOT) (formerly known as Marine Scotland Licensing Operations Team (MS-LOT);
- Crown Estate Scotland (CES);
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Scotland (RSPB);
- Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF) and Scottish White Fish Producers Association (SWFPA);
- NatureScot (formerly known as Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)).

2.2.1.6 It was envisaged that the stakeholder meetings would provide the opportunity for feedback that would help the selection of the final site out of the top three options. However, the general consensus across the stakeholder meetings was that due to the relatively close proximity and similarities of the three sites, it was not possible to select a single preferential site over the others within the meetings.

2.2.1.7 Following these stakeholder meetings and a final internal workshop held with the Salamander Project team, a final AoS was selected, located approximately 35 km east of Peterhead. The preferred site was chosen as it maximises the potential for renewable energy production, while retaining technical flexibility and minimising environmental impact. Additionally, as a relatively large AoS (approximately 205 km^2) it was considered to provide sufficient opportunity to potentially locate the proposed Offshore Array Area anywhere within the AoS boundary.

2.2.1.8 During the site selection process, preliminary studies were undertaken to identify potentially suitable cable corridors to facilitate either a connection at Peterhead Grange, or St Fergus Gas Terminal.

2.2.1.9 An assessment was undertaken to identify any hard environmental constraints between the AoS and the potential OnSS locations and/or grid connection points. These hard constraints constitute any factor which

would make offshore export cable installation either impossible, or highly unlikely to be consented. These include potential physical barriers to cable installation and any sensitive environmental receptors which could present a consenting risk.

2.2.1.10 Soft environmental constraints were also identified which include any factors which may increase the consenting risk associated with cable installation, but which would not be a significant risk to the Salamander Project. This included receptors that are not particularly sensitive to cabling impacts or those where there is a low likelihood of sensitive receptors being present.

2.2.1.11 **Volume ER.A.2, Chapter 3: Site Selection and Consideration of Alternatives** of the EIAR details these constraints and the approach in further detail.

2.2.1.12 Based on this assessment, three potential cable route corridors were identified:

- Option 1 (AoS to Sandford Bay, south of Peterhead);
- Option 2 (AoS to Scotstown Beach, Lunderton);
- Option 3 (AoS to Scotstown Beach, St Fergus Gas Terminal).

2.2.1.13 Option 1 was discounted as it became apparent that a direct connection would not be feasible, based on available space constraints within the Peterhead substation.

2.2.1.14 Option 3 was also discounted as it would be unfeasible to obtain the required separation distance between the St Fergus Gas Pipeline and the export cable, and the risk of the cable route impacting a potential Annex 1 Reef, containing benthic habitats. Therefore, this would result in both a high technical and environmental risk.

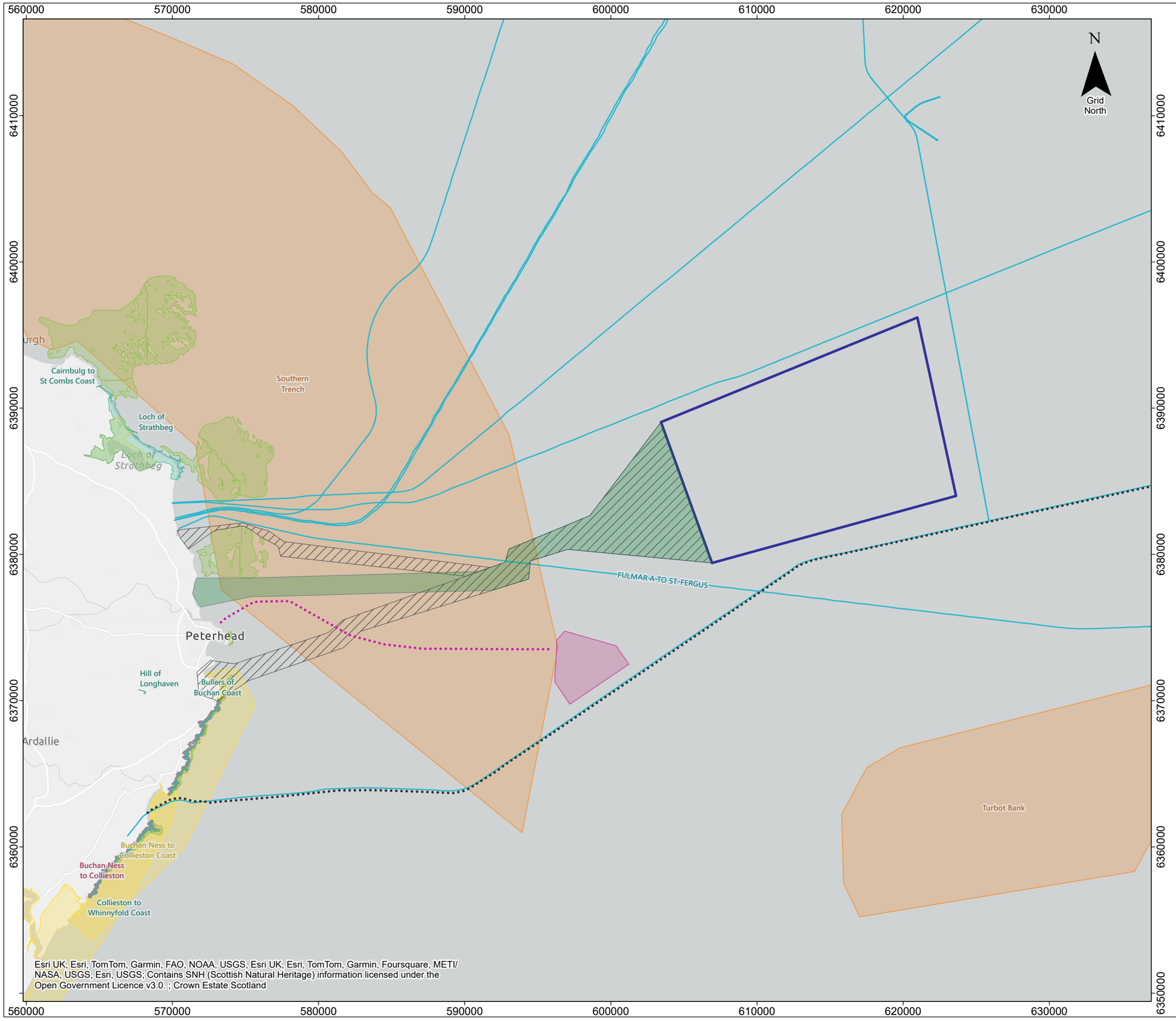
2.2.1.15 As a result, Option 2 presented the most feasible export route option, and is the preferred Export Cable Corridor for the proposed Offshore Development.

2.2.1.16 **Figure 2-3** below shows the preferred AoS for the proposed Offshore Development and the preferred Export Cable Corridor route.

Salamander

Figure 2-3

Offshore Export Cable Corridor Optioneering



- Offshore Array Area of Search
- Cable Corridor Area of Search option (preferred)
- Cable Corridor Area of Search options (other)
- Hywind Scotland Pilot Park
- Pipelines (active)

Cables

- Telecom
- Power

Protected Sites

- NCMPA (Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area)
- SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest)
- SAC (Special Area of Conservation)
- SPA (Special Protection Area)
- Potential Annex 1 Reef

Coordinate System: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 30N

Scale @ A3 : 1:250,000

0 7.5 15 Kilometers

0 1.75 3.5 7 Nautical Miles

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Doc. Title : Offshore Export Cable Corridor Optioneering
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Created by : ES
Checked by : WG
Approved by : MM

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2.2.1.17 Further analysis of the AoS was undertaken, in order to microsite the Offshore Array Area within the AoS to maximise the delivery of energy the proposed Offshore Development would produce. This included considering the energy yield optimisation, water depth, wind conditions, and areas that high intensity fishing levels. The final Offshore Array Area selected was 33.25 km^2, as shown in **Figure 2-4** below; this was the site that was applied for in the Crown Estate Scotland's (CES) Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas Decarbonisation (INTOG) leasing round, as well as being the proposed site presented in the Scoping Report.

2.2.1.18 Prior to submission of the Scoping Report, the preferred Offshore Export Cable Corridor (Option 2 of the potential export cable routes) was slightly modified to reflect the final location of the Offshore Array Area within the AoS for the proposed Offshore Development. As the refinement showed that the optimal location for the proposed Offshore Array Area was in the north west corner of the AoS, the Export Cable Corridor was moved slightly to straighten and shorten the route; this was the Offshore Export Cable Corridor presented within the Scoping Report.

2.2.1.19 **Figure 2-4** below shows the preferred site option for the proposed Offshore Development and the refined Export Cable Corridor route.

2.2.1.20 Overall, there has been no further site refinement to the proposed Offshore Development since the proposal was presented during the Scoping phase. Further engineering studies are ongoing to refine the final WTG layout, which will be finalised and secured post-consent.

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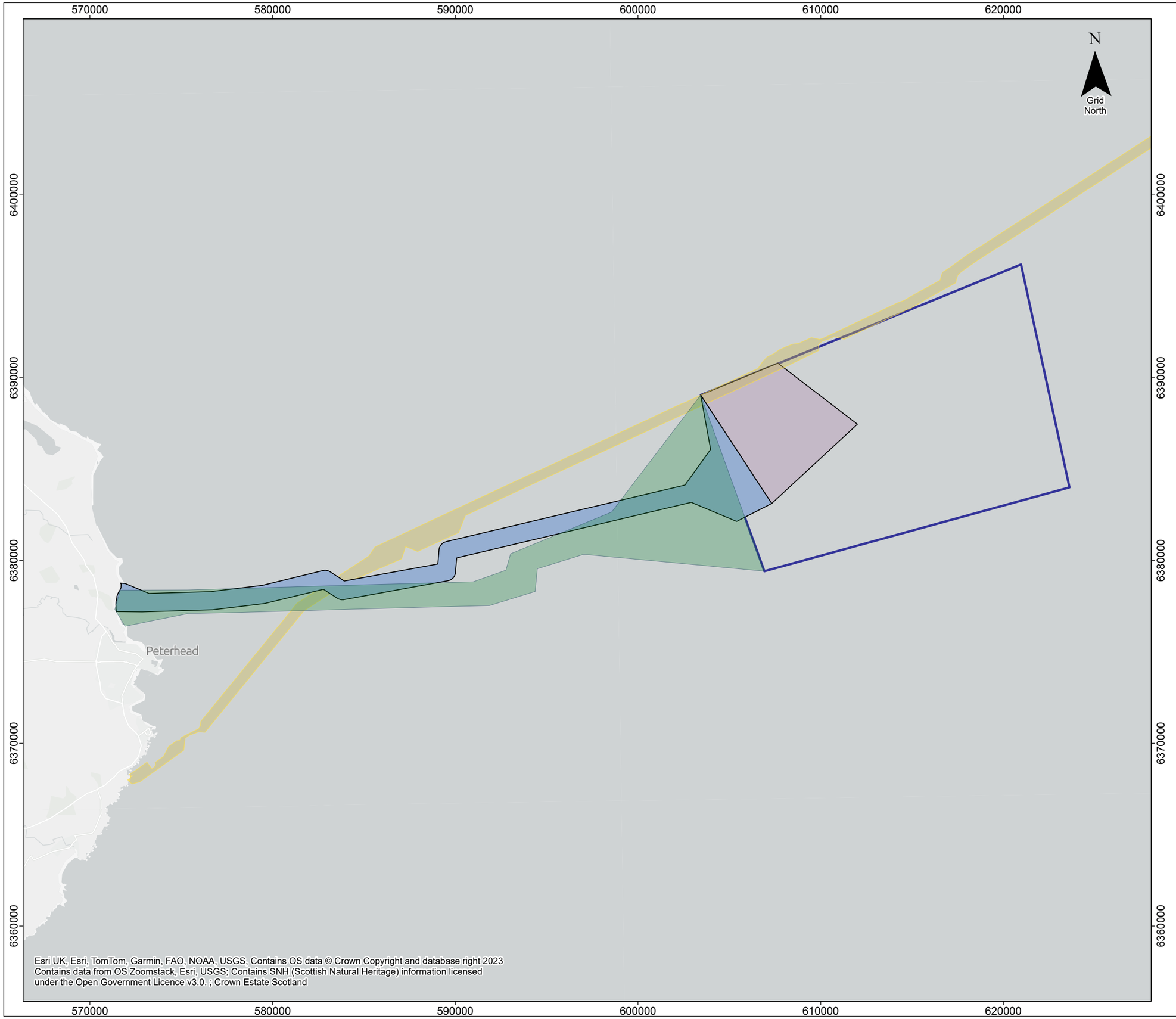
Figure 2-4

Offshore Export Cable Corridor Refinement



- Offshore Array Area
- Area of Search
- Offshore Export Cable Corridor
- Cable Corridor Area of Search (Option 2)
- NorthConnect Interconnector

Coordinate System: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 30N

Scale @ A3 : 1:200,000

0 5 10 Kilometers

0 1.25 2.5 5 Nautical Miles

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Doc. Title : Offshore Export Cable Corridor Refinement
Doc. No : SWF01OR0027
Created by : ES
Checked by : WG
Approved by : MM

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2.3 Development Description

2.3.1.1 The Salamander Project would have an installed capacity of up to 100 MW and comprise of up to seven wind turbines, and all the infrastructure required to transmit the power generated by the turbines to the OnSS. The Salamander Project will also comprise any other infrastructure required to optimise and maintain the wind farm offshore such as wave buoys and wind measurement devices, as well as EBI including battery storage (note, the EBI is onshore infrastructure and not part of this Offshore application). The Salamander Project will use High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) technology to bring the power to shore without the need for an offshore substation.

2.3.1.2 The Salamander Project, as mentioned previously, will be split into separate consenting routes for its offshore and onshore infrastructure. This Planning Statement focuses on supporting the approval for the proposed Offshore Development.

2.3.1.3 The proposed Offshore Development components will include:

- Up to seven offshore WTGs;
- Floating substructures to support the WTGs;
- Mooring and anchoring systems to connect the structures to the seabed;
- Inter-array cables (including both dynamic and static cable sections) to collect the power from the WTGs;
- Connection hub(s)/joints on the seabed, and their associated foundations; and
- Up to two static export cables either from the connection hubs or as a continuation of the inter-array cables connecting to the onshore infrastructure.

2.3.1.4 The Salamander Project has adopted a Design Envelope approach to the designing of the structures for the proposed Offshore Development and proposed Onshore Development. The use of the Design Envelope approach is considered as part of the Marine Scotland's Consenting and Licensing Guidance for Offshore Wind, Wave and Tidal Energy Applications (The Scottish Government, 2018). The Guidance explains the approach under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 and the process for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) set out in The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

2.3.1.5 Section 3.2 of the Guidance states:

"Due to the frequent advances in technology development of equipment, and the nature of the design process, for offshore renewable energy projects, developers may not be able to provide precise design details in their consent applications. Some flexibility in the project description is acceptable, provided that the approach is fully described in the EIA Report to allow Scottish Ministers and consultees to fully understand the implications of the flexibility proposed.

2.3.1.6 The Guidance continues and states:

"At the time of application, any proposed flexibility in scheme parameters should not be so wide ranging as to represent effectively different types of project. The degree of flexibility in design parameters will need to be clearly defined in the application and EIA Report."

2.3.1.7 Further guidance published by Marine Scotland and the Energy Consents Unit on using the design envelope for applications under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 (The Scottish Government, 2022a) states with section 7.2:

"It is expected that applicants ensure that:

- *their approach is explained clearly for the purpose of consultation and publicity, including pre-application consultation;*
- *the application documentation clearly defines the proposal and is sufficiently detailed to enable proper consideration and comment by stakeholders, and determination of the application;*
- *the EIA report explains fully how the flexibility sought has been taken into account in the assessments and why it is required; and*
- *there is consistency across all the application documents including any other relevant environmental assessments."*

2.3.1.8 The Design Envelope approach (also known as Rochdale Envelope) was developed during onshore planning applications to provide flexibility in design options where details of the whole project are not available when the application is submitted, while ensuring the impacts of the final development are fully assessed during the EIA. Consents granted based on the Design Envelope are granted conditional for final details to be approved prior to construction.

2.3.1.9 A Design Envelope approach is applied to provide sufficient flexibility to enable final detailed design within the design options under consideration when the exact engineering parameters are not known.

2.3.1.10 The final project design will depend on factors including ground conditions, wave and tidal conditions, project economics and procurement approach. Due to the complex nature of the development many of the final details of the proposed scheme are likely to be unknown at the time of application such as:

- Precise location and configuration of turbines;
- Floating foundation type;
- Mooring system;
- Inter-array cable layout;
- Exact turbine hub height;
- Cable type and cable route; and
- Exact location of the onshore substation, SSEN infrastructure and any energy balancing infrastructure such as battery storage (this will be detailed and assessed within a separate planning application and Section 36 Consent application for the proposed Onshore Development).

2.3.1.11 **Volume ER.A.2, Chapter 4: Project Description** of the EIAR provides further detail of the design, construction, and installation of the required offshore infrastructure components.

2.4 Project Construction Programme

2.4.1.1 The earliest possible date that onshore construction could commence is January 2027 and the expected start of offshore construction to be a year later in Q2 of 2028. The maximum total construction duration (onshore and offshore) is three years (36 months), and the maximum total duration anticipated for offshore construction (including cable landfall works) is 18 months. The Offshore Array is anticipated to be

commissioned and operational by Q4 2029. The Project Construction Programme is shown in **Figure 2-5** below.

2.4.1.2 The construction methodology and timescales detailed below are indicative at this stage and are subject to the Salamander Project securing Section 36 Consent and other relevant consents/licences, as well as finalisation of procurement and supply chain contracts. The indicative construction programme for construction activities is likely to be shorter than indicated and could be subject to change. Further detail of the construction programme and construction activities for the proposed Offshore Development is provided in **Volume ER.A.2, Chapter 4: Project Description** of the EIAR.

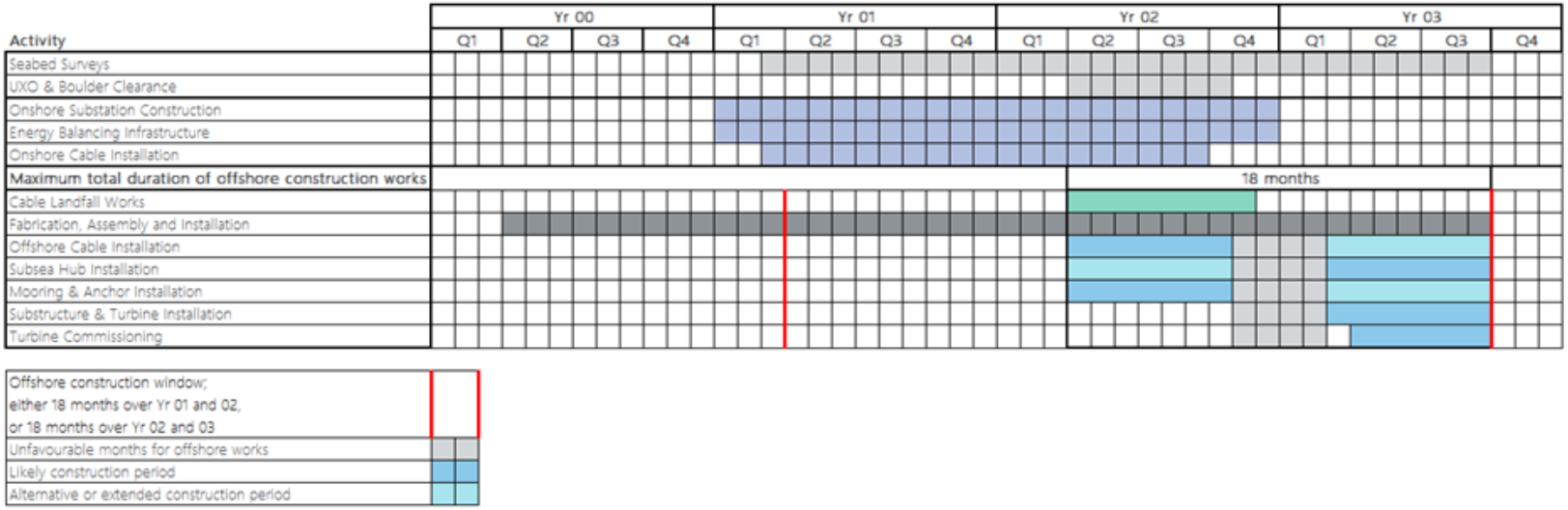

Figure 2-5 Indicative Construction Programme showing the windows within which Construction Activities may take place (noting durations of individual activities are likely to be shorter than the windows themselves, and that the programme is subject to change and will be confirmed in the Construction Programme

3 The Need for Development – Energy, Climate and Renewables Policy Context

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1.1 This section will demonstrate the "Need for Development" based on current UK and Scottish legislation and policy to justify the Salamander Project in the context of the Climate Emergency Declaration (CED 2019), supporting a low carbon future in energy production and achieving net zero by 2045.

3.1.1.2 In May 2019, the Scottish Government declared an environmental and climate change emergency known as the Climate Emergency Declaration (CED 2019a). The CED formally publicised the Scottish Government's concerns about climate change and its consequences to the environment. The resulting outcome of the CED was the production of the Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 which introduced ambitious GHG reduction targets.

3.1.1.3 In November 2021, the UK hosted the 26th United Nations Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland, which focused on accelerating action towards achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The outcome of COP26 was the Glasgow Climate Pact, a series of decisions and resolutions that build on the Paris Agreement and establish what needs to be done to accelerate action on climate change within this decade, to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees in the longer term. Scotland has committed to tackling climate change, and to reaching net zero by 2045 at the latest. This will be achieved in part through the acceleration of the development of alternative sources of energy, to reduce reliance on unsustainable energy sources and improve energy security. The UK Government's British Energy Security Strategy policy paper (April 2022) identified the ambition of delivering up to 50 GW of offshore wind by 2030, including up to 5 GW of innovative floating wind.

3.1.1.4 Scotland and the UK are clear that decarbonisation through electrification is fundamental to addressing climate change, and that offshore wind must make a central contribution to the energy mix. The Climate Change Committee has stated that meeting the UK's legally binding target of net zero by 2050 will require around 95 GW of offshore wind deployment by 2050. Constructing capacity at this level will require a geographical spread of projects to take account of different constraints, including the needs of other maritime sectors, environmental considerations and the need to use deep water sites. Floating wind technology will be key to unlocking these potential deep water sites around the UK, as recognised by Crown Estate Scotland's ScotWind and INTOG leasing rounds which leased a total of 27 sites for floating wind. The Crown Estate's ongoing Leasing Round 5 in the Celtic Sea has identified a further three Project Development Areas specifically for floating offshore wind.

3.1.1.5 What is more, that electricity supply from floating offshore wind must be affordable for consumers and secure. Much of the offshore wind capacity needed in Scotland will require new technologies that in turn require cost-reduction and de-risking at small scale before the larger projects can progress. In parallel to this, both Scottish and UK policy set out the importance of realising the economic opportunity of the transition to renewable energy and net zero, particularly for the Scottish supply chain.

3.1.1.6 The Salamander Offshore Wind Farm is an infrastructure project specifically designed to meet these needs. It aims to facilitate the future build out of offshore wind by de-risking technologies and stimulating the Scottish supply chain, helping to ensure the maximum benefit to Scotland's society, environment and economy.

3.2 Climate Change and Energy Policy

3.2.1.1 The UNFCCC is an international treaty adopted in 1992 by most of the world's countries to address global warming. The UK alongside other countries signed the Kyoto Protocol, anchoring their commitment to address climate change. The Protocol came into effect in 2005 and its commitments were brought into domestic law by the Climate Change Act 2008 and Scottish law by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. These Acts imposed legally binding duties on the UK and Scottish Government's to states that by 2050, they are to reduce GHG emissions to a position at least 80% lower than the baseline level of emissions in 1990. Subsequently, in 2019 the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 was made which amended the targets to ensure a 100% reduction in harmful gas emissions by 2050.The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 amended the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, which aims to go a step further to work to harmful gas emissions being reduced by 100% by 2045, with interim GHG reduction targets for 2030 and 2040

3.2.1.2 The Climate Change Plan (2020) updates the previous Climate Change Plan (2018) and sets out new ambitious targets to end Scotland's contribution to climate change by 2045. Scotland has committed to reduce emissions by 75% by 2030 (compared with baseline level of emissions in 1990) and to achieve net zero by 2045. The Plan commits to rebuild the economy following COVID-19, in a way that delivers a greener, fairer and more equal society. The Plan sets out Scotland's approach to delivering a green recovery, and sets out a pathway to deliver our world leading climate change targets in line with the 2018 plan, with a focus is on the period up to 2032.The Paris Agreement came into effect in 2016 after the Conference of Parties 21 (COP21). 196 countries, including the UK, agreed to adopt the global climate deal and contribute towards limiting an increase in global temperature to less than 2°C. The countries also had agreed to make efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above the pre-industrial average temperature. At COP26 in 2021, it was detailed that globally the targets were being missed. At COP28 in 2023, the Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge was launched, with signatories committing to work collaboratively to triple the global renewable energy generation capacity by 2030; this has been signed by the UK. At COP28, the UK also signed the Joint Statement on Climate, Nature and People, which commits to aligning countries climate and biodiversity agendas, recognizing the interconnectedness of climate change biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.

3.2.1.3 On 3rd January 2020, the UK formally left the EU. The UK Government has maintained its commitment to implement international environmental obligations and to maintain environmental commitments in legislation already in place. On this basis, the existing EU renewable energy targets for the UK, including the EU Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC will remain applicable. Under the Renewable Energy (2009/28/EC) Directive, the EU committed to sourcing 32% of its total energy needs from renewable sources by 2030, for which the UK has committed to remain a part of.

3.2.1.4 The UK Government introduced the Electricity Market Reform (EMR) Policy and the Energy Act 2013. This Act sets out the UK's commitment to enhancing and investing in low carbon energy industries to make low carbon energy sources secure and affordable. The Energy Act 2013 also enables the implementation of a decarbonisation target for electricity for 2030 and the implementation of an EMR. This reform contained measures in the form of the Contracts for Difference (CfD) allocation framework, created to attract £110 billion investment necessary for the transition to a low carbon society.

3.2.1.5 The Electricity Generation Policy Statement (EGPS) 2013 analyses how Scotland generates electricity as well as the changes required to meet Scottish Government targets (Scottish Government, 2013). The Scottish Government aims to deliver a secure electricity supply that is affordable to its users, decarbonised by 2030 and provides a large economic benefit and serves as a competitive advantage for Scotland.

3.2.1.6 In line with the CED 2019 and the associated challenges of climate change, energy supply and the security of energy supply, the Scottish Government adopted the Scotland's Energy Strategy: The Future of Energy in Scotland. This policy sets a commitment to delivering renewable energy developments and sets out a vision for the energy system in Scotland until 2050. The strategy sets a 2030 target for the equivalent of 50% of the energy for Scotland's heat, transport and electricity consumption to be supplied by renewable sources.

3.2.1.7 Recent geopolitical events and socioeconomic trends have also underscored the need for increased domestic energy security and to secure an energy supply. In April 2022, the UK Government published the British Energy Security Strategy which commits to increased support for renewable energy generation, including offshore wind.

3.2.1.8 The Scottish Government published a new Draft 'Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan' ('ESJTP') on 10 January 2023, which replaces the one previously published in 2017. The consultation period on the draft originally ran up until 4 April 2023, but was subsequently extended to 9 May 2023 following the publication of independent analysis of Scotland's energy requirements.

3.2.1.9 The ESJTP presents a vision where Scotland's future energy system will deliver maximum benefits for Scotland, enabling the delivery of a just transition for workers, businesses, communities and regions. The ESJTP has a clear objective of boosting jobs, the domestic supply chain and manufacturing capabilities, and specifically mentions the Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas (INTOG leasing round as key to supporting the scale up of offshore renewable energy in Scotland. The Scottish Government's National Strategy for Economic Transformation also includes supporting Scotland's net zero supply chains as a priority.

3.2.1.10 The ESJTP emphasises the need to transition away from fossil fuels towards renewables, and states that energy generation plays a key role in decarbonisation. In this regard, the ESJTP stresses the need and desirability of expanding the capacity of renewable energy in Scotland.

3.2.1.11 One of the INTOG leasing round's central objectives for its innovation stream was to further develop Scotland as a destination for innovation and technical development which will lead to risk reductions and supply chain opportunity. The need for small scale floating innovation projects to support the scaling up of floating offshore wind has also been recognised in the recent Investor Panel Recommendations to the Scottish Government which recommended:

"A plan needs to be developed for the scaling up of a floating offshore wind pilot scheme to assist in developing other sites at scale. This can leverage learning from the innovation projects emerging from the existing INTOG leasing round to start a practical conversation on the floating offshore wind supply chain opportunity for Scotland."

3.2.1.12 The Scottish Government's response included a commitment to working through the Scottish Wind Energy Council to leverage innovation opportunity from the INTOG leasing round to ensure maximum benefit to the Scottish supply chain and the pipeline of projects which will rely on it.

3.3 Offshore Renewables Policy

3.3.1.1 The Industrial Strategy published by the UK Government in 2017, and its successor Build Back Better: The Plan for Growth published in 2021 placed emphasis for the support for the offshore renewables sector. The Plan for Growth identifies opportunities for up to 60,000 jobs across the UK in the offshore renewables sector, thereby building upon the targets set out in the UK Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, announced in 2020.

3.3.1.2 The UK Government's British Energy Security Strategy (April 2022) sets additional targets for the development of offshore wind, ensuring that the UK will be: "aiming to bring forward up to 5 GW of floating offshore wind by 2030".

3.3.1.3 Due to the current success of the offshore wind industry and future potential, The Offshore Wind Sector Deal (2019) was introduced. This included sector wide targets, one of which, is to generate 50 GW by 2030. Additionally, the Scottish Government's Offshore Wind Policy Statement 2020 sets out ambitions to capitalise on offshore wind development, and the role this technology could play in meeting the net-zero target by 2045. The implementation of the Scottish Offshore Wind Policy Statement 2020 plays an important role in identifying suitable offshore wind farm development areas. The Statement also highlights the floating wind opportunities in Scotland, stating that:

"There is huge economic opportunity attached to floating offshore wind – Crown Estate Scotland's Macroeconomic Benefits of Floating Offshore Wind report suggests that the UK floating offshore wind market has the potential to support 17,000 jobs and £33.6 billion of Gross Value Added (GVA), with particular potential for deployment in Scotland's 462,000 km2 of waters, much of which are more than 60 m in depth. Globally, the market is set to grow to at least 4 GW of capacity by 2030 and 55 GW by 2050, offering an export opportunity to Scotland's supply chain which is estimated at around £550 million per annum by 2050".

3.3.1.4 This policy expands upon the Scottish Energy Strategy 2017 (now replaced by the Draft ESJTP (2023)) and discusses the huge economic opportunities associated with floating offshore wind developments. The Offshore Wind Policy Statement confirms the intention of the Scottish Government to make sure offshore wind has an important role in decarbonisation and achieving net-zero with potentially 11 GW to be achieved in Scottish waters alone by 2030.

3.3.1.5 Scotland has the world's largest pipeline of floating offshore wind projects. Between the ScotWind and INTOG leasing rounds, Crown Estate Scotland awarded seabed exclusivity to over 23 GW of floating wind developments (excluding the five innovation (IN) projects of which The Salamander Project is one) largely due to the abundance of Scotland's deep water. Floating offshore wind is also integral to delivering the targets for decarbonisation of oil and gas assets set out in the North Sea Transition Deal: all seven of the targeted oil and gas (TOG) projects awarded exclusivity agreement through INTOG will use floating foundations. As set out in the INTOG leasing round under which The Salamander Project was awarded an exclusivity agreement, in order to reach net zero emissions by 2045, Scotland will need innovations in offshore wind which go beyond current technologies. This resulting in creating opportunities for developers to test new ideas which is crucial in ensuring technologies for offshore wind continue to evolve. Risk-reduction of new technologies was one of the stated objectives of the INTOG leasing round.

3.4 Conclusion of the Need for Development to Address Climate Change

3.4.1.1 Given the overview of the relevant international policy on climate change and renewable energy, and the context of continued need for renewable energy developments, it is clear that projects such as the Salamander Project must be encouraged due to their environmental, social, and economic benefits.

3.4.1.2 The Salamander Project is a renewable energy project for a floating offshore wind development and aligns with the visions set out in the UK and Scottish Government's climate change and energy related legislation and policy documents. The Salamander Project will have an important role in contributing to ensuring the delivery of low carbon energy future and supporting net-zero emission targets.

3.4.1.3 The Salamander Project, once implemented, will have an important role in achieving the Scottish and UK Government's targets of 11 GW and 5 GW of floating offshore wind by 2030, respectively. The Salamander

Project will also pave the way for future offshore wind projects which will move the UK and Scotland towards a renewable energy, low carbon future, and contribute to energy security.

3.4.1.4 The Salamander Project will make a significant contribution to Scotland and the UK's energy security and decarbonisation needs crucially, through its role in enabling and de-risking the future pipeline of around 23 GW of large scale floating offshore wind in Scotland. Floating offshore wind projects (for which The Salamander Project is part of) will make up a significant proportion of the 95 GW of offshore wind the Climate Change Committee deems necessary by 2050 to meet net zero.

3.4.1.5 Given this context, climate change must be addressed and is a matter which must be given very significant weight in the planning balance when considering proposals for renewable energy development.

4 Wider Benefits of the Salamander Project

4.1.1.1 The Salamander Project is anticipated to provide a wide range of benefits to the local Aberdeenshire area and more widely in Scotland. These are likely to include:

- Mitigating the effects of climate change through avoided emissions and contributing to Scotland's target of Net Zero by 2045.
- Facilitating progress towards technological innovation in future floating offshore wind projects.
- Supporting the development of further large-scale floating offshore wind in Scotland.
- Developing the Scottish supply chain for successful floating offshore wind farm technology, helping to establish Scotland as a global leader in floating offshore wind.
- Economic benefits, including job creation and Gross Value Added (GVA) arising both directly and indirectly.
- Ensuring security of domestic supply of energy and contributing to a diverse and sustainable energy mix.

4.1.1.2 A Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Assessment has been carried out within **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 20: Climate Change and Carbon** of the EIAR. The purpose of this assessment is to establish the impact of the Salamander Project in terms of its GHG emissions during construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning. The assessment concludes that the Salamander Project will provide a benefit to the UK's net zero strategy, and the conclusions show a beneficial impact in an overall reduction GHG emissions. In terms of GHG payback, the assessment concludes that when the Salamander Project is complete, the payback period will be between 2.5 and 4.5 years before the Salamander Project is contributing to the UK net zero targets. Based on a Salamander Project operational life of 35 years, the Salamander Project will therefore be actively contributing to UK targets for net zero emissions for a minimum of 30.5 years.

4.1.1.3 The Salamander Project also has the potential to have an important role in helping facilitate further progress towards technological innovation in offshore wind, that will be important for the development and delivery of future offshore wind developments. The Salamander Project, as a project as part of the INTOG leasing round, offers the opportunity to establish and strengthen the UK and Scottish supply chains for floating offshore wind farms, and help the UK and Scottish Government's achieve the various economic, sustainability and social goals that offshore renewable energy projects can deliver. Larger scale floating wind farms are expected to have an important contribution of Scotland's portfolio of offshore electricity generating assets. For example, in the ScotWind leasing round there are several projects that are envisaged to utilise floating wind farm technologies, including sites with a capacity of up to 3,000 MW. The prospect of successful implementation of such projects and the capturing of the supply chain opportunities for Scotland would both be increased through the successful delivery of INTOG projects such as the Salamander Project, which will be an important 'stepping stone' towards larger floating wind farm projects located further offshore.

4.1.1.4 **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 19: Socio-economics, Tourism and Recreation** of the EIAR has undertaken an assessment, to understand the impact the Salamander Project would have on socio-economics and employment opportunities. The assessment considers the impacts in the wider Aberdeenshire area and Aberdeenshire City, as well as for the rest of Scotland and the UK. The assessment concludes that the Salamander Project would provide positive opportunities in terms of socio-economics. It is predicted that the Project will generate estimated employment opportunities of up to 48 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs per annum within Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City over the three year construction phase, and a net

employment impact of two additional annual FTE jobs over the operational phase. The construction of the Salamander Project will generate approximately £11.3 million GVA annually within Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City over the three year construction period and approximately £4.1 million GVA within Aberdeenshire during the 35 year operational life of the Project.

4.1.1.5 Overall, the Salamander Project is expected to have some beneficial impact for socio-economics and employment opportunities in the Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City area over its construction and operational phases, as well as further afield across the whole of Scotland and the UK. It is likely that the decommissioning phase of the Project would also have beneficial impacts, however, the lack of data available on decommissioning plans and costs at this point prevents accurate estimation of the levels of jobs and GVA that may be generated from decommissioning activities.

4.1.1.6 The Salamander Project will potentially deliver a wide range of benefits which together would help to deliver sustainable economic growth in Scotland. This includes local employment opportunities and would result in the development of workforce skills and training.

4.1.1.7 Paragraph 4.5 of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (2023) sets out the Council's vision to increase and diversify the economy which includes supporting policies to encourage employment in rural areas and stimulate wider economic growth. Given that the Salamander Project will have some benefit to employment opportunities, it is considered the Project would align with one of the key aims of Aberdeenshire Council's Local Development Plan.

5 Scottish Consenting and Legislative Context

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1.1 The proposed Offshore Development lies within the Scottish marine area, and requires a Section 36 Consent and Marine Licences from MD-LOT for the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases. Further details of the consents required are set out in the following sections.

5.2 Overview of Consenting Applications

5.2.1.1 The following consents and authorisations are required for the development of the proposed Offshore Development:

- Section 36 Consents under the Electricity Act 1989 for the wind farm generating station;
- A Marine Licence under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 for the offshore works (12 – 200 nm in the REZ) and under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 for the works within 12 nm of the coast.

5.2.1.2 The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 is applicable to the Scottish marine area (between 0 and 12 nm from MHWS) and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, applicable to the Scottish offshore region for offshore works (between 12 nm and 200 nm). These Acts set out a range of licensable marine activities. A Marine Licence is needed:

- To deposit any substance or object within the Scottish marine area, either in the sea or on or under the seabed
- To construct, alter or improve any works within the Scottish marine area either— (a) in or over the sea, or (b) on or under the seabed.
- To use a vehicle, vessel, aircraft, marine structure or floating container to remove any substance or object from the seabed within the Scottish marine area.
- To carry out any form of dredging within the Scottish marine area (whether or not involving the removal of any material from the sea or seabed).

5.2.1.3 A Marine Licence will be required to:

- deposit the required WTG anchors and mooring lines,
- install the Offshore Export Cable(s) in/on the seabed and associated infrastructure; and
- undertake works to construct and maintain the Offshore Development.

5.2.1.4 Applications for Marine Licences will be made to MD-LOT and an EIAR for the proposed Offshore Development has been produced in accordance with the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007.

5.2.1.5 Consent for any required Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) removal will be sought in a future Marine Licence application when geophysical data of a suitable spatial resolution is available to identify and quantify UXO.

5.2.1.6 A consent under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 is required to construct and operate a generating station with a capacity in excess of 50 MW. This is required for the proposed Offshore Development and will allow for the installation, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of the proposed Offshore Development and inter-array cables associated with the Project.

5.2.1.7 Under Schedules 8 and 9 of the Electricity Act 1989, a generating station shall not be constructed, extended or operated except in accordance with consent granted by the appropriate authority. Schedule 9 requires

that MD-LOT on behalf of the Scottish Ministers, in considering proposals which require Section 36 consent, have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest, as well as the extent to which the proposals include reasonable mitigation for any effect which they would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects. They must also, so far as possible, avoid causing injury to fisheries or to the stock of fish in any waters.

5.2.1.8 Section 12 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 requires that MD-LOT, as the regulator responsible as the determining body, determines marine licence applications on behalf on the Scottish Ministers in the Scottish inshore region (between 0 and 12 nautical miles (nm)) under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, and in the Scottish offshore region (between 12 and 200 nm) under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. Marine Licences are required for 'licensable marine activities' below mean high water spring tide level and in the waters of estuaries, rivers or channels, so far as the tide flows at mean high water spring tide.

5.2.1.9 MD-LOT make decisions on behalf of Scottish Ministers in accordance with the marine plan and the marine policy statement, unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise as required under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. In determining marine licence applications, MD-LOT consider all relevant matters including the need to protect the environment, protect human health and prevent interference with legitimate uses of the sea.

5.2.1.10 The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 has established a new power for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the seas around Scotland to recognise features of national importance and meet international commitments for developing a network of MPAs. This complements the MPA power introduced through the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, for offshore waters around Scotland. MD-LOT must not grant such authorisation unless there is no significant risk of hindering the conservation objectives of an MPA. Therefore, MPA assessments have been undertaken for the Southern Trench MPA and are included within the Offshore EIAR.

5.2.1.11 The Habitats and Birds Directives are transposed into Scottish law under the following with these regulations applied in context of Section 36 applications:

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017;
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended); and
- The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (applies to Marine Licence and Section 36 Consent applications within Scottish waters beyond 12 nm).

5.2.1.12 The European Sites (Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation), or Natura 2000, are known as National Site Network sites within the UK, reflecting the intention of the UK Government that all designated sites across the UK form part of a coherent network. MD-LOT must only grant such authorisation to a plan or project after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of a European Site, unless otherwise subject to a Derogation. Therefore, a Shadow Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) has been prepared which includes a Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA) and Derogation Case with regard to applicable Habitat Regulations.

5.2.2 Safety Zones

5.2.2.1 Safety Zones and Decommissioning Programmes are considered under the Energy Act 2004 which makes provisions for the development, decommissioning and cleaning up different forms of energy generation facilities in the UK, including for nuclear, renewables, pipelines and offshore installations. It also makes

provision for energy connections. The Act facilitates the development, regulation and encouragement of the use of renewable energy sources.

5.2.2.2 Regarding Safety Zones for offshore renewables, the Act grants powers to the Scottish Ministers to create Safety Zones around renewable infrastructure. This provision makes it an offence for vessels to enter the Safety Zone without securing permission. The Salamander Project will apply for Safety Zones during the construction and decommissioning phases, as well as for maintenance activities during the operation and maintenance phase.

5.2.2.3 The Act also grants Scottish Ministers the right to require the preparation of Decommissioning Programmes for renewable energy installations or electric lines within Scottish waters or Renewable Energy Zones. The Salamander Project will submit a Decommissioning Programme to MD-LOT for consultation and approval by the Scottish Ministers, a draft of which would be submitted prior to the construction of the Salamander Project, supported by appropriate financial security. The Decommissioning Programme will be updated during the Salamander Project's lifespan to take account of changing best practice and new technologies. The approach employed at decommissioning will be compliant with the legislation and policy requirements at the time of decommissioning.

5.2.2.4 The Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (as transposed by the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003)) requires Member States to put in place systems for managing their water environments, based on natural river basin districts and underpinning the extensive environmental monitoring and scientific investigation called “river basin management”. The Water Framework Directive is considered as part of the Offshore EIAR within **Volume ER.3, Chapter 8: Water and Sediment Quality.**

5.2.2.5 The Section 36 Consent and Marine Licence applications are supported by the Offshore EIAR, prepared in accordance with the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007.

5.2.2.6 The Offshore EIAR submitted to support this application has been prepared by competent experts in accordance with the EIA Regulations and good industry practice.

5.3 Offshore Development Consent Application Pack

5.3.1.1 The Application pack for the Offshore Development comprises the following:

- Cover letter, comprising an application for Section 36 Consent.
- A Marine Licence application and supporting information for the generating station and offshore transmission infrastructure.
- An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report:
  - ER Volume 1: Non-Technical Summary
  - ER Volume 2: Introductory Chapters to the EIAR
  - ER Volume 3: Technical EIAR Chapters
  - ER Volume 4: Technical Appendices including Pre-Application Consultation Report
  - ER Volume 5: Supporting Visual Materials
  - ER Volume 6: Management Plans
- Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA):

- Apportioning Report
- Site Specific Population Viability Analysis (PVA)

- Derogation Case Documents:
  - HRA Without Prejudice Derogation Case, Part 1-3
  - HRA Derogation Case, Compensation Roadmap
- Consent Application Accompanying Documents:
  - Benthic Features Impact Assessment Southern Trench MPA
  - Marine Mammal Impact Assessment Southern Trench MPA
- Offshore Planning Statement (this document).

6 Stakeholder and Community Engagement

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1.1 Consultation with technical stakeholders has occurred predominantly on a topic-by-topic basis. The Applicant has engaged and sought advice from key stakeholders, such as MD-LOT and NatureScot, on how to address potential impacts on sensitive human and ecological receptors. **Volume ER.A.2, Chapter 5: Stakeholder Consultation** of the EIAR sets out the stakeholder list which includes a combination of statutory, technical, government, fisheries/marine, and industry consultees.

6.1.1.2 Consultation with members of the public and local communities representatives, has been undertaken and mainly focused on providing general information about the Salamander Project in its entirety. Further detail in terms of how public consultation with members of the public and local community was provided is detailed in **RP.A.4.1 - Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report**.

6.2 Policy Requirement for Consultation

6.2.1.1 Regulation 7 of the Marine Licensing (Pre-application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 requires that at least one pre-application consultation event is carried out, to allow members of the public to provide comments to an applicant on a proposed licensable marine activity.

6.2.1.2 Sections 22 to 24 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 also requires pre-application consultation to be undertaken for developments in Scottish territorial waters that are of a certain scale, or involve works with the potential for significant impact on the environment and local communities. This process provides opportunities to receive feedback from the public that can then be addressed in the application, where required.

6.2.1.3 Policy GEN 18: Engagement and Policy RENEWABLES 8 of Scotland's National Marine Plan (NMP) (2014) also places emphasis that developers must actively engage early with the general public and relevant stakeholders to facilitate planning and consenting processes.

6.2.1.4 These requirements have been met, and two rounds of public consultation being have been held during the pre-application stage. A summary and outcomes from these events are provided in **Volume ER.A.2. Chapter 5: Stakeholder Consultation** of the EIAR and within the PAC Report (**RP.A.4.1 - Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report**). Therefore, the requirements of both the Marine Licensing (Pre-application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 and the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 have been met.

6.3 Methodology for Stakeholder Engagement

6.3.1.1 Both statutory and non-statutory stakeholders have been identified and informed about the Salamander Project from an early stage. Ongoing communications and meetings are of importance where feedback from stakeholders is required, and is built into the key milestones of the Salamander Project.

6.3.1.2 The stakeholder engagement and public consultation programme is split into the following phases shown in **Figure 6-1.**

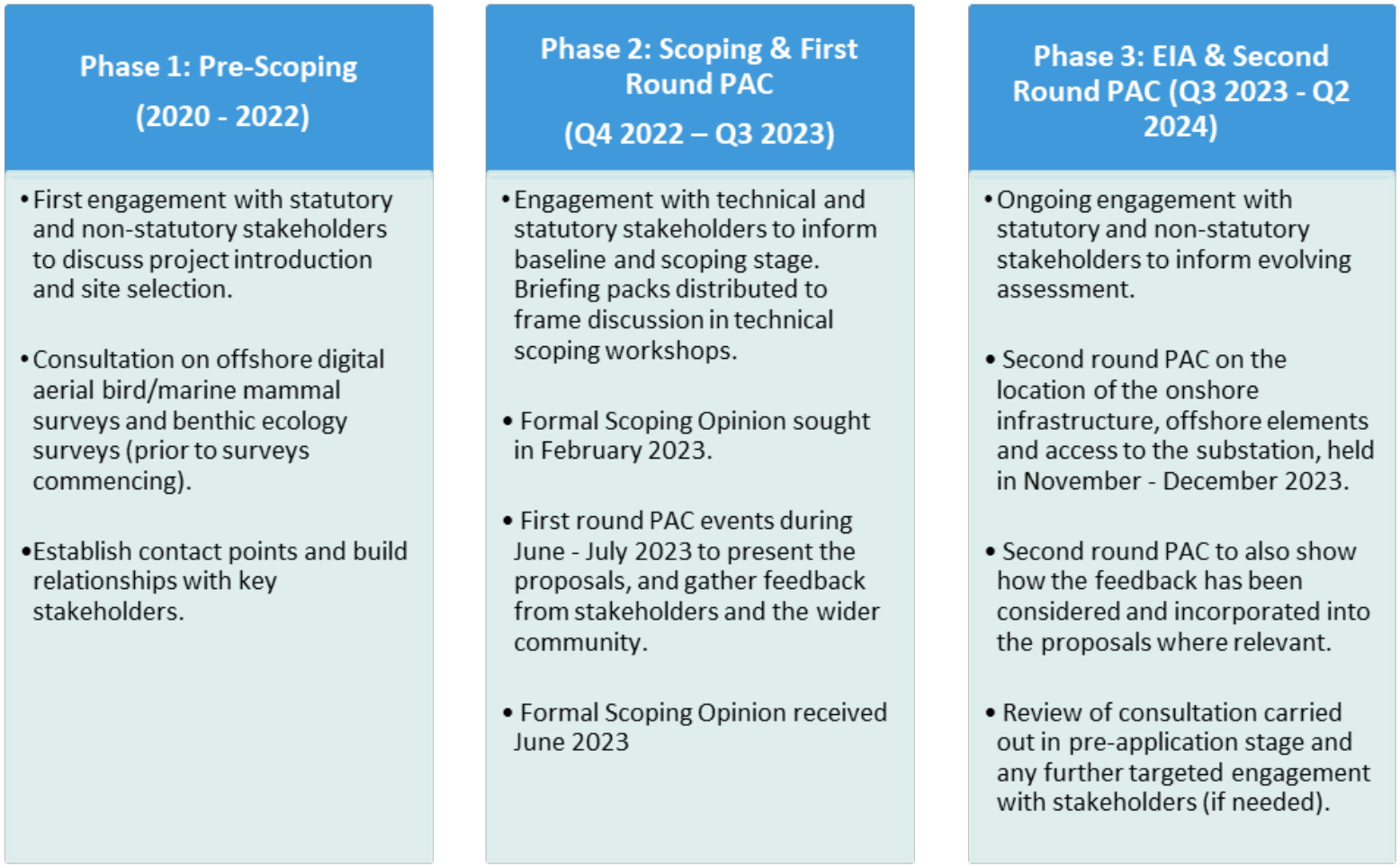

Figure 6-1 Stakeholder engagement and public consultation programme phases

6.3.1.3 The first round of public consultation took place in June - July 2023, to inform and gather feedback on the Salamander Project. The second round of public consultation took place in November – December 2023, to provide an update on the further development of the Salamander Project since the first PAC event. A detailed summary of the public consultation can be found in the PAC Report (**RP.A.4.1 - Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report**).

6.4 Conclusions from Stakeholder Engagement

6.4.1.1 The approach to stakeholder and public engagement has been delivered to ensure a transparent and accessible process, and to ensure the proposed Offshore Development is viewed as favourable by the local community.

6.4.1.2 **Volume ER.A.2, Chapter 5: Stakeholder Consultation** of the EIAR and the PAC Report (**RP.A.4.1 - Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report**) demonstrates that the stakeholder and public engagement process meets regulatory and legislative requirements, and also demonstrates a beyond compliance approach, to ensure that the consultation is inclusive to the wider community. Feedback from stakeholders and the community have been considered as part of the proposals, and the feedback from the second round of PAC events concludes that whilst some remaining concerns are present in the local community, there is largely support for the delivery of the proposed Salamander Project.

7 Scottish Planning Policy Context

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1.1 This section of the Planning Statement sets out the relevant planning policy documents, their status and purpose.

7.1.1.2 In the case for this Section 36 Consent application, the national policies that are material in the decision making of the proposed Offshore Development are the UK Marine Policy Statement, Scotland's National Marine Plan (NMP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPF4). Scotland's Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (SMP) will also be an important consideration when assessing the proposed Offshore Development.

7.1.1.3 The proposed Offshore Development by virtue of the proposed Intertidal ECC would also fall within the administrative boundary of Aberdeenshire Council, and therefore the Aberdeenshire Local Plan is a material consideration in this assessment.

7.1.1.4 The statutory development plan for any given area of Scotland consists of the National Planning Framework and the relevant LDP.

7.2 National Planning Policy

7.2.1 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

7.2.1.1 NPF4 was adopted by the Scottish Government on 13 February 2023, and sets out national spatial strategy for Scotland to 2045. NPF4 sets out Scotland's spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments, and national planning policy. The NPF4 replaces the previous NPF3 and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) documents.

7.2.1.2 The Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) that forms part of NFP4 highlighted that national planning policies would include an infrastructure first approach. The NPF4 strategy, policies and national developments are aligned to the strategic themes of the IIP, which aim to enable the transition to net zero emissions and environmental sustainability; driving inclusive economic growth; and building resilient and sustainable places.

7.2.1.3 The NPF4 has a 'plan-led approach' which is central to supporting the delivery of Scotland's national outcomes and broader sustainable development goals. It is a legislative requirement that planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.2.2 Planning Advice Notes (PANs)

7.2.2.1 Planning Advice Notes (PANs), and Specific Advice Sheets set out detailed advice from the Scottish Government in relation to a number of planning issues. Relevant PANs and Specific Advice Sheets relevant to the proposed Offshore Development are detailed in **Table 7-2** below.

Table 7-1 Relevant PANs and Specific Advice Notes:

Title	Summary of Document	Document Reference
PAN 1/2013 Environmental Impact Assessment	Provides information on the role local authorities and consultees play as part of the EIA process, and how the EIA can inform development management.	Scottish Government (2013) PAN 1/2013: Environmental Impact Assessment [Online] Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/planning-advice-note-1-2013-environmental-impact-assessment/
PAN 51 Planning, Environmental Protection and Regulation (Revised 2006)	Details the role of the planning system in relation to the environmental protection regimes.	Scottish Government (2006) PAN 51: Planning, Environmental Protection and Regulation [Online] Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/planning-advice-note-pan-51-revised-2006-planning-environmental-protection/

7.3 Marine Policy

7.3.1.1 The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) was transposed into UK law under the Marine Strategy Regulations 2010. The UK Marine Policy Statement explains the high-level aims of the MSFD. National and regional marine plans then break these down into detailed activities.

7.3.1.2 Across the UK new systems of marine planning are being introduced through primary legislation. The MPS is the framework for these marine planning systems. It provides the high level policy context within which national and sub-national Marine Plans will be developed, implemented, monitored, amended and will ensure appropriate consistency in marine planning across the UK marine area. The MPS also sets the direction for marine licensing and other relevant authorisation systems.

7.3.1.3 In March 2015, the Scottish Government published Scotland's National Marine Plan (NMP) – a Single Framework for Managing our Seas. The NMP sets out strategic policies for the sustainable development of Scotland's marine resources out to 200 nm.

7.3.1.4 The NMP recognises that sustainable development and the use of the marine environment can provide economic benefits, including growth opportunities, employment, skills development, investment, and trade. Chapter 11 of the NMP identifies key objectives of the marine planning policy for offshore wind, including:

- Sustainable development of offshore wind in the most suitable locations;
- Economic benefits from offshore wind, maximised by securing a competitive local supply chain in Scotland;
- Contribute to achieving the renewables target to generate electricity equivalent to 100% of Scotland's gross annual electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2020;
- Contribute to achieving the decarbonisation target.

7.3.1.5 It is noted that the target to generate electricity equivalent to 100% of Scotland's gross annual electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2020 was narrowly missed. This highlights the increasing importance and urgency for the successful delivery of renewable energy projects, with the NMP identifying

that Scotland's offshore waters provide an opportunity for the further development of an internationally important renewable energy industry.

7.3.1.6 The NMP also provides specific policies in relation to renewable energy. Policy RENEWABLES 3, 4 and 5 are considered relevant in terms of providing guidance to marine planners and decision makers on matters relating to ensuring the test of sustainable development is assessed on a case-by-case basis, and that applications for offshore windfarms that require marine licences accord with the Marine Licensing Manual and Marine Scotland's Licensing Policy. The RENEWABLES Policy also requires that marine planners and decision makers ensure that renewables energy projects demonstrate compliance with the EIA legislative requirements.

7.3.1.7 The Scottish Government has begun working on the NMP2, which will update and replace the existing NMP. A draft NMP2 is currently scheduled for spring/summer 2024, and final adoption is anticipated to be in late 2025. However, at this stage, NMP2 carries no material weight in the determination of this Section 36 Consent application.

7.3.1.8 The first Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (Blue Seas Green Energy) was adopted by the Scottish Government in 2011. In July 2013, Marine Scotland published the Draft Sectoral Marine Plan for offshore wind, wave and tidal energy in Scotland. It identified potential future options for commercial scale (potential to generate greater than 100 MW) offshore wind energy developments. Since then, the Scottish Government published the final Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (SMP) in October 2020 which builds upon the work conducted in the development of the 2011 and 2013 plans. The 2020 SMP also integrates newer policy, regulatory, technological and market developments to create a new strategic planning process. The SMP aims to contribute towards achieving the climate change policy objectives and targets established by the Scottish and UK Governments by using spatial strategy to inform the seabed licensing process for commercial offshore wind developments in Scottish waters. The SMP also aims to maximise the benefits for Scotland's communities and people whilst keeping adverse effects on other marine users, economic sectors and the environment to a minimum. The SMP identified 15 final plan options in four regions in Scotland that have the potential to generate several GW of renewable energy. The SMP has been developed according to the strategic aims of the NMP which addresses the potential interactions between renewable energy development and other marine users. The proposed Offshore Development for the Salamander Project would fall within the East region SMP.

7.4 Local Planning Policy

7.4.1 Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan

7.4.1.1 Whilst the majority of the Offshore Development will occur beyond the administrative boundary of Aberdeenshire Council, part of the Intertidal ECC that will connect to the proposed Onshore Development will fall within the administrative boundary of Aberdeenshire Council.

7.4.1.2 The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (May 2023) is the statutory development plan document that sets out the vision for development in Aberdeenshire. The Development Plan also sets out the policies used for the determination of planning applications and sets out where development is expected to take place up to 2031.

7.4.1.3 Although this Section 36 Consent application will be determined by MD-LOT through the Electricity Act 1989, Aberdeenshire Council will be a statutory consultee during the decision-making process. The proposed Offshore Development will be assessed against relevant policies detailed within Scotland's NMP and SMP as it is a Section 36 Consent application, however, the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan is considered as a material document in the consideration and the assessment of the proposed Offshore Development.

7.4.1.4 The vision of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan is built upon the strategic aims of NPF3 (now replaced by NPF4) and seeks to: *"balance economic growth with the urgent challenges of sustainable development and climate change"*.

7.4.1.5 Section 4 sets out the purpose and outcome of the Local Development Plan, with paragraph 4.3 highlighting the Development Plans aim: *"to take on challenges of sustainable development and climate change"*. Paragraph 4.3 continues and states: *"We have introduced policies and proposals to both tackle and cope with climate change".*

7.4.1.6 Section 13 of the Development Plan sets out Aberdeenshire Council's commitment to *"tackling climate change*" … and … *"promoting energy generation by renewable sources".*

8 Assessment of the Offshore Development Against Scottish Planning Policy

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1.1 This section aims to demonstrate how the proposed Offshore Development complies with relevant planning policy. This section will set out how the proposed Offshore Development would be considered acceptable "in principle" and how the Offshore EIAR and supporting documents complies with relevant policies and paragraphs detailed in the UK Marine Policy Statement, Scotland's NMP, Scotland's SMP, NPF4 and Aberdeenshire Council Local Development Plan. Findings from the Environmental Impact Assessment Report for the proposed Offshore Development are described in **Sections 8.3** to **8.14** and a summary of findings is shown in **Table 8-13.**

8.1.1.2 Section 9 of this Planning Statement will conclude with an overall planning balance to support the proposed Offshore Development and recommend that the Section 36 Consent application is approved.

8.2 Principle of Development

8.2.1 Scotland's National Marine Plan (NMP) (2014)

8.2.1.1 The overall principle of the proposed Offshore Development is supported and established through Scotland's NMP, which is the national plan for development proposals out to 200 nm in Scottish waters. Scotland's NMP builds on the aims and objectives of the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011).

8.2.1.2 Chapter 3: Vision, Objectives and Approach to Policies of Scotland's NMP sets out high level marine objectives to achieve a sustainable marine economy. There are 21 high level objectives that cover a variety of topic area. To establish support for the proposed Offshore Development "in principle", the following are considered relevant:

- Infrastructure is in place to support and promote safe, profitable, and efficient marine businesses.
- The marine environment and its resources are used to maximise sustainable activity, prosperity, and opportunities for all, now and in the future.
- Marine businesses are taking long-term strategic decisions and managing risks effectively. They are competitive and operating efficiently.
- Marine businesses are acting in a way which respects environmental limits and is socially responsible. This is rewarded in the marketplace.
- The coast, seas, oceans and their resources are safe to use.
- The marine environment plays an important role in mitigating climate change.
- Use of the marine environment will recognise, and integrate with defence priorities, including the strengthening of international peace and stability and the defence of the United Kingdom and its interests.
- Marine businesses are subject to clear, timely, proportionate and, where appropriate, plan-led regulation.
- The use of the marine environment is spatially planned where appropriate and based on an ecosystems approach which takes account of climate change and recognises the protection and management needs of marine cultural heritage according to its significance.

8.2.1.3 Policy GEN 1: General Planning Principles states that*: "There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and use of the marine environment when consistent with the policies and objectives of this Plan."*

8.2.1.4 The policy is relevant to all marine activities and specifically highlights renewable energy as a "key growth sector" that is an economic activity Scotland specialises in. Paragraph 4.6 explains that: *"Development and use of the marine area should be consistent with this Plan. This will help activity and businesses to grow while ensuring activities are undertaken in a sustainable manner that protects and enhances Scotland's natural and historic marine environment. It will also provide greater certainty as to how proposals relating to the marine environment, will be considered by planning and consenting authorities."*

8.2.1.5 Policy GEN 2: Economic Benefits and Policy GEN 3: Social Benefits highlights that sustainable development that provides economic and social benefit is encouraged.

8.2.1.6 Paragraph 4.7 states: *"Sustainable development and use of the marine environment can provide multiple economic benefits at a community and national level, including economic growth, skills development, employment, maintaining or increasing population levels and opportunities for investment and trade."*

8.2.1.7 Paragraph 4.10 states: *"Social benefits include those directly associated with economic growth such as increased wealth, improved quality of life and community regeneration…"*

8.2.1.8 Paragraph 4.11 continues and states: *"The social benefit of proposed developments and increasing use should be considered carefully and taken into account, appropriately and proportionately, in marine decision making. Consideration should be given where industries and developers assist in supporting the development of onshore infrastructure…"*

8.2.1.9 Policy GEN 5: Climate Change highlights the importance marine planners and decision makers must take to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

8.2.1.10 Paragraph 4.18 provides further clarity and states: *"Marine planners and decision makers should be satisfied that developers and users have sufficient regard to the impacts of a changing climate, and where appropriate provide effective mitigation and adaptation to its predicted effects. Offshore and coastal developments should be appropriately sited and designed, and use technologies and equipment appropriate for local conditions, now and in the future…"*

8.2.1.11 Paragraph 4.19 continues and requires: *"Developers and users of the marine environment should seek to address climate change through: Mitigation – reducing emissions of carbon and other greenhouse gas. This will be of particular relevance in cases of large scale development and infrastructure projects. Adaptation – strengthening resilience in relation to greater climate variability. Examples include allowing natural coastal change where possible and new developments having regard to possible future climate conditions (giving particular consideration to vulnerability, scale and longevity of operation)."*

8.2.2 Scotland's Sectoral Marine Plan (SMP) for Offshore Wind Energy (2020)

8.2.2.1 Scotland's SMP, adopted in 2020, seeks to contribute to the achievement of Scottish and UK climate change policy objectives and targets, through the provision of a spatial strategy to inform the seabed leasing process for commercial offshore wind energy in Scottish waters. It seeks to maximise the benefits for Scotland, and its communities and people, whilst minimising the potential adverse effects on other marine users, economic sectors and the environment resulting from further commercial offshore wind development. The SMP identifies 15 final plan options across four Scottish regions that have the potential to generate several GW of renewable energy. Furthermore, the SMP has been developed according to the strategic aims of the NMP which addresses the potential interactions between renewable energy development and other marine users.

8.2.2.2 The Scottish Government is currently undertaking an Iterative Plan Review of the SMP to allow for new evidence to be incorporated into the plan. They published the Initial Plan Framework SMP for Offshore Wind for INTOG in 2022 (Scottish Government, 2022) setting out the parameters for capacity and location of innovation projects, defining areas of exclusion and requiring that projects remain at or below 100 MW generating capacity. The updated SMP will provide the planning framework for both the ScotWind and INTOG leasing rounds. The Marine Directorate plans to consult on a draft updated SMP in Autumn 2024 and for the final plan to be adopted in Spring 2025. The proposed Offshore Development for the Salamander Project would fall within the East Region of the SMP.

8.2.3 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (2023)

8.2.3.1 NPF4 replaces Scottish Planning Policy, and contains detailed national policy on a varied scale of planning topics. NPF4 sets out six overarching spatial principles with "Just Transition" relating to the construction of renewable energy and their contribution to achieving net zero. The Sustainable Places section places emphasis on the link to Scotland's Climate Change Plan and sets the approach to achieving net zero emissions by 2045, and making significant progress by 2030. The NPF4 also links to Scotland's Energy Strategy and highlights the importance of land and sea to be critical in delivering offshore renewable energy resources.

8.2.3.2 NPF4 provides detailed policy on Climate Change and Energy and sets out developer expectations to how proposed schemes will accord with the policies set out in the document. The overarching policy intent of the Policy 11 (Energy) is to encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore. In addition the overarching policy intent of, Policy 1 (Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises) is to encourage, promote and facilitate development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crisis.

8.2.3.3 In addition, Annex B of NPF4 set outs 18 national developments which are considered as nationally important to deliver the spatial strategy. These national developments range from single large scale projects or collections and networks of several smaller scale proposals. They are also intended to act as exemplars of the Place Principle and placemaking approaches. Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure is identified as a national development within NPF4 that is considered to be Scotland-wide, rather than being location specific. NPF4 states: *"A development contributing to 'Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission' in the location described, within one or more of the Classes of Development described below and that is of a scale or type that would otherwise have been classified as 'major' by 'The Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009', is designated a national development:*

(a) on and offshore electricity generation, including electricity storage, from renewables exceeding 50 megawatts capacity;

(b) new and/or replacement upgraded on and offshore high voltage electricity transmission lines, cables and interconnectors of 132kv or more; and

(c) new and/or upgraded Infrastructure directly supporting on and offshore high voltage electricity lines, cables and interconnectors including converter stations, switching stations and substations."

8.2.3.4 The proposed Offshore Development would exceed 50 MW in capacity and would therefore be classed as a national development within NPF4 and supported in principle with the national spatial strategy.

8.2.3.5 NPF4 contains relevant policies that are considered as material for establishing and demonstrating support for the principle of the proposed Offshore Development.

8.2.3.6 Policy 1 of the NPF4 states: *"When considering all development proposals significant weight will be given to the global climate and nature crises".*

8.2.3.7 Policy 2 of the NPF4 states: *"Development proposals will be sited and designed to minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions as far as possible. Development proposals will be sited and designed to adapt to current and future risks from climate change. Development proposals to retrofit measures to existing developments that reduce emissions or support adaptation to climate change will be supported."*

8.2.3.8 Policy 11 of the NPF4 states: *"Development proposals for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies will be supported…*and*…these include: (i) wind farms…"*

8.2.3.9 Policy 11 continues and states:

8.2.3.10 *"Deveopment proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities".*

"In addition, project design and mitigation will demonstrate how the following impacts are addressed: impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact, noise and shadow flicker… significant landscape and visual impacts… effects on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk… biodiversity including impacts on birds…impacts on trees, woods and forests… proposals for the decommissioning of developments, including ancillary infrastructure, and site restoration…the quality of site restoration plans including the measures in place to safeguard or guarantee availability of finances to effectively implement those plans; and cumulative impacts."

"In considering these impacts, significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets."

8.2.4 Aberdeenshire Council Local Development Plan (2023)

8.2.4.1 Aberdeenshire Council Local Development Plan provides specific policies relating to renewable energy developments that are important to consider when establishing "in principle" support for the proposed Offshore Development.

8.2.4.2 Policy C2 states that the Council will: "*support renewable energy developments, including…wind…and…energy storage projects, which are in appropriate sites and of the appropriate design".*

8.2.4.3 Policy C2.2 sets out the Council's policy on wind developments and states: *"We will approve wind energy developments in appropriate locations taking into account the spatial framework mapping at the end of this section*.", with Policy C2.3 continuing and stating that*: "All wind farms must be appropriately sited and designed and avoid unacceptable environmental effects, taking into account the cumulative effects of existing and approved wind turbines".*

8.2.4.4 It should be acknowledged that these policies are designed to support onshore wind proposals. However, they are important to consider in the assessment of the proposed Offshore Development as it demonstrates Aberdeenshire Council's commitment to renewable energy technologies, including wind farms.

8.2.5 Conclusion

8.2.5.1 The proposed Offshore Development has been designed to be appropriately sited to achieve sustainable development and its location would support economic and social benefit whilst avoiding and minimising its impact on highly sensitive environmental receptors. The proposed Offshore Development would be sited in the East Region as detailed in the SMP, and whilst environmental constraints have been identified in the

SMP, the proposed Offshore Development would be sited in an appropriate location which is supported at a national policy level.

8.2.5.2 The proposed Offshore Development complies with the strategic policies in association with tackling climate change, which is the fundamental aim of the Project to contribute to the Scottish and UK Government's targets in achieving net zero by 2045/2050.

8.2.5.3 Overall, across all four development plans detailed above, it is considered that the proposed Offshore Development would be considered acceptable "in principle" and would align with the strategic aims, paragraphs and policies of Scotland's NMP (2014), Scotland's SMP (2020), NPF4 (2023) and the Aberdeenshire Council Local Development Plan (2023).

8.3 Marine Physical Processes

Table 8-1 Marine Physical Processes

Policy Context	Policy GEN 8: Coastal Process and Flooding of Scotland's NMP states that: *"Developments and activities in the marine environment should be resilient to coastal change and flooding, and not have unacceptable adverse impact on coastal processes or contribute to coastal flooding."* Paragraph 4.37 of Scotland's NMP states that: *"Marine planners and decision makers should also be satisfied that activities and developments will be resilient to risks of coastal change, climate change and flooding over their lifetime, and will not have an unacceptable impact on coastal change. They should seek to ensure that any geomorphological changes that an activity or development bring about in coastal processes, including sediment movement and wave patterns, are minimised and mitigated, bearing in mind the potential impact on commercial interests such as fisheries and conservation of the natural environment and key coastal heritage sites…"*
Location within EIA Report	**Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 7: Marine Physical Processes** of the EIAR provides an assessment to investigate the potential changes to marine physical processes arising from the proposed Offshore Development.
Impact assessment	The following potential impacts relating to the construction, operational and maintenance, and decommissioning phases are identified as: • Potential increase in suspended sediment concentration (SSC) and associated changes to seabed substrate. • Potential changes to sediment transportation system by changes in wave and current climate. • Potential changes in morphology of the coast. • Potential changes to the morphology of the seabed (including scour). • Potential changes to water column processes. The assessment has been undertaken in three stages. These are: • The determination of the realistic worst-case scenario from the Project Description **Volume ER.A.2, Chapter 4: Project Description** of the EIAR. • The determination of the baseline physical environment (including potential changes over the Project lifetime due to natural variation), and • Assessment of changes to physical processes arising from the realistic worst case both for the Project on its own and in conjunction with other built and consented projects.

Embedded mitigation	Embedded mitigation will be included during the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases to ensure risks to marine physical processes are minimised as far as feasibly possible. Embedded and additional mitigation is presented in detail within **Volume ER.A.4, Annex 6.1 Commitments and Mitigation Register**.
Conclusions	Overall, Marine Physical Processes covers a number of other EIA topic areas, however, the identified potential impacts during construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning of the proposed Offshore Development and the overall cumulative impact are considered to be Minor/Negligible and Not Significant in EIA terms, with no additional mitigation proposed. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed Offshore Development would not adversely harm marine physical processes and would accord with the relevant policies detailed within Scotland's NMP (2014).

8.4 Water and Sediment Quality

Table 8-2 Water and Sediment Quality

Policy Context	Paragraph 2.6.4 of the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) provides detailed considerations that Marine Plans and Development Proposals should consider in relation to water quality. The paragraph states: *"Developments and other activities at the coast and at sea can have adverse effects on transitional waters, coastal waters and marine waters. During the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of developments, there can be increased demand for water, discharges to water and adverse ecological effects resulting from physical modifications to the water environment. There may also be an increased risk of spills and leaks of pollutants into the water environment and the likelihood of transmission of invasive non-native species, for example through construction equipment, and their impacts on ecological water quality need to be considered."* Paragraph 2.6.4.3 states: *"The marine plan authority should satisfy itself where relevant that any development will not cause a deterioration in status of any water to which the Water Framework Directive (WFD) applies"…"Decision makers should also take into account impacts on the quality of designated bathing waters and shellfish waters from any proposed development."* Paragraph 2.6.4.4 states: *"Marine plan authorities will also need to take into account, once developed, any relevant targets, indicators or measures aimed at achieving good environmental status under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). One element of good environmental status involves ensuring that concentrations and effects of contaminants are kept within acceptable limits, so as to ensure that there are no significant impacts on, or risks to, the wider marine environment".* Policy GEN 12: Water Quality and Resources of Scotland's NMP states: *"Developments and activities should not result in a deterioration of the quality of waters to which the Water Framework Directive, Marine Strategy Framework Directive or other related directives apply."* Paragraph 4.66 continues and emphasises that: *"Marine planners and decision makers should be satisfied that impacts of development and use on water have been taken into account. With regards to the Water Framework Directive (WFD), reference should*

	be made to the 'ecological status of the water environment' which includes water quality, quantity, and changes to water level as well as biological aspects such as the impact of non-native species."
Location within EIA Report	**Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 8: Water and Sediment Quality** of the EIAR provides an assessment of the potential impact the proposed Offshore Development may have on the quality of water and sediment. The purpose of the assessment is to ensure that any potential harm to water and sediment quality resulting from activities during the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning phases of the proposed Offshore Development can be avoided or mitigated, if required.
Impact assessment	Four construction related impacts have been assessed which are likely to impact on the three receptors identified (water quality, sediment quality and water quality within designated WFD water bodies). These are: • Remobilisation of sediments causing increased suspended solids concentration in the water column leading to deterioration of water quality. • Remobilisation of sediments and use of drilling muds causing potential resuspension of contaminated sediments into the water column leading to deterioration of water and sediment quality. • Accidental release of pollutants and sewage into the water column from vessels and helicopters during transit and construction operations. • Accidental release of litter and debris into the water column from vessels and helicopters during transit and construction operations. Four impacts have been identified for the operation and maintenance phase of the proposed Offshore Development. These are: • Remobilisation of sediments causing increased suspended solids concentration in the water column leading to deterioration of water quality, • Removal of biofouling from the subsea structures and leeching of antifouling, anticorrosive agents from coated infrastructure leading to water and sediment quality deterioration, • Accidental release of pollutants and sewage waste and into the water column from vessels and helicopters during transit, operations and maintenance, • Accidental release of litter and debris into the water column from vessels and helicopters during transit, operations and maintenance. For the decommissioning phase of the proposed Offshore Development the impacts associated are expected to be similar (or less) to those assessed as part of the construction phase.
Embedded mitigation	Embedded mitigation is proposed to be in place to mitigate the risk of further harm to these receptors during the construction, operational and maintenance, and decommissioning phases. Embedded and additional mitigation is presented in detail within **Volume ER.A.4, Annex 6.1 Commitments and Mitigation Register**.
Conclusions	Overall, the anticipated impacts including cumulative impacts to Water and Sediment Quality receptors during the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning phases of the proposed Offshore Development are assessed as Minor and Not Significant in EIA terms. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed Offshore Development would not adversely harm the water and sediment quality of the marine environment, and would accord with the relevant policies and paragraphs detailed in the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) and Scotland's NMP (2014).

8.5 Benthic and Intertidal Ecology

Table 8-3 Benthic and Intertidal Ecology

Policy Context	Paragraph 2.5.10 of the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) provides a list of directives which Member States must use as the basis for their more detailed characterisation of good environmental status, this includes addressing "*Sea floor integrity is at a level that ensures that the structure and functions of the ecosystem are safeguarded and benthic ecosystems, in particular, are not adversely affected*". Scotland's NMP acknowledges the importance of protecting Benthic Ecology. Policy GEN 9: Natural Heritage states: *"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"* Paragraph 11.30 of Scotland's NMP states: *"Offshore wind and marine renewable energy developments could have a wide range of environmental impacts throughout their project life-cycle…"* Paragraph 11.32 continues and states: *"Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitats Regulations Appraisal and Environmental Impact Assessment will assess key environmental risks which will be taken into account in plan and project development and consenting procedures. A strategic approach to mitigating potential impacts and cumulative impacts on the marine environment forms an integral part of marine planning and decision making".*
Location within EIA Report	**Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 9: Benthic and Intertidal Ecology** of the EIAR provides an assessment of the potential impact the proposed Offshore Development, may have on Benthic and Intertidal Ecology. The purpose of the assessment is to address any potential harm to Benthic and Intertidal Ecology and to provide mitigation measures designed to prevent, reduce or offset adverse effects.
Impact assessment	The assessment provides a summary of all impacts identified during scoping and consultation and has been broken down into the construction, operational and maintenance and decommissioning phases. The following potential construction impacts are identified as: • Temporary habitat loss or disturbance; • Increased suspended sediment concentrations (SSC) and associated deposition; • Increased risk of introduction and spread of invasive non-native species; and • Disturbance of contaminated sediments. The following potential impacts have been assessed during the operations and maintenance phase of the Proposed Offshore Development: • Long-term habitat loss; • Temporary habitat loss or disturbance; • Impact to habitats or species, as a result of pollution or accidental discharge

	• Increased risk of introduction and spread of INNS; • Hydrodynamic changes leading to scour around subsea infrastructure; • Colonisation of hard structures; and • Impact of cable thermal load or EMF on benthic ecology. For the decommissioning phase of the proposed Offshore Development the impacts associated are expected to be similar (or less) to those assessed as part of the construction phase.
Embedded mitigation	Embedded mitigation will be included during the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases to ensure risks to benthic ecology are minimised as far as feasibly possible. Embedded and additional mitigation is presented in detail within **Volume ER.A.4, Annex 6.1 Commitments and Mitigation Register**.
Conclusions	Overall, the anticipated significance of effects and the cumulative impacts to Benthic and Intertidal Ecology during the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning phases of the proposed Offshore Development are assessed as Minor and Not Significant in EIA terms. Based off the assessments conducted, it is therefore considered that the proposed Offshore Development would not cause adverse harm on Benthic and Intertidal Ecology and is in accordance with relevant policies and paragraphs detailed in the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011), Scotland's NMP (2014) and the NPF4 (2023).

8.6 Fish and Shellfish Ecology

Table 8-4 Fish and Shellfish Ecology

Policy Context	Chapter 4: General Policies of Scotland's NMP provides an overview for proposed development considerations to marine activities and key considerations for Marine Planning, in order to protect marine ecology. Policy GEN 1: states: "There *is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and use of the marine environment when consistent with the policies and objectives of this Plan"*. Paragraph 4.5 further states that: *"This principle is relevant to all marine activities, but is especially relevant for the key growth sectors which Scotland specialises in. These include aquaculture and fisheries as food sectors; oil and gas and renewable energy activities; and tourism"*. Paragraph 4.40 states: *"Marine planners and other decision makers should act in the way best calculated to further the achievement of sustainable development and use, including the protection and, where appropriate, enhancement of the health of the Scottish marine area"*. Details relating to species protection are further provided under Policy GEN 9: Natural Heritage with paragraph 4.51 stating: *"The presence (or potential presence) of a legally protected species is an important consideration. If there is evidence to suggest that a protected species is present or may be affected by a proposed development, steps must be taken to establish their presence. The level of protection afforded by legislation must be factored into the planning and design of the development and any impacts must be fully considered prior to the determination of the application"*. Further detailing relating to protected marine species with a reference to basking sharks is stated in paragraph 4.53: *"For certain species deliberate or reckless disturbance or harassment is prohibited and can only be carried out in accordance with the terms of a license. Marine Scotland's Guidance on Protection of Marine European Protected Species from Injury and Disturbance must be followed. The principles in this Guidance may also be of relevance to other species such as basking shark*".

	Chapter 8: Wild Salmon and Diadromous Fish of Scotland's NMP sets out its objectives and policies for the protection of salmon and diadromous fish in Scottish waters. Marine Planning Policy Wild Fish 1 States: "*The impact of development and use of the marine environment on diadromous fish species should be considered in marine planning and decision-making processes. Where evidence of impacts on salmon and other diadromous species is inconclusive, mitigation should be adopted where possible and information on impacts on diadromous species from monitoring of developments should be used to inform subsequent marine decision making*". In relation to Wind Energy paragraph 8.6 states: "*Whilst there is uncertainty around the likelihood and severity, potential impacts include disturbance during construction, noise associated with infrastructure such as turbine bases, electro-magnetic fields of infrastructure such as sub-sea grid and cabling and mortality through strike by tidal turbines. Delayed migration or displacement of migratory routes may have effects on salmon and other diadromous species and continued efforts to better understand potential impacts should be encouraged*". In relation to renewable development Planning Section 11: Offshore Wind and Marine Renewable Energy sets out the key criteria for proposed developments to consider and adhere to. Policy Renewable Energy 1 states: "P*roposals for commercial scale offshore wind and marine renewable energy development should be sited in the Plan Option areas identified through the Sectoral Marine Plan process (Map 9). Plan Options are considered the preferred strategic locations for the sustainable development of offshore wind and marine renewables. This preference should be taken into account by marine planners and decision makers if alternative development or use of these areas is being considered. Proposals are subject to licensing and consenting processes".* Further emphasis is placed on the importance of habitat management with Renewable Energy 5 stating: "*Marine planners and decision makers must ensure that renewable energy projects demonstrate compliance with Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats Regulations Appraisal legislative requirements"*.
Location within EIA Report	**Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 10: Fish and Shellfish** of the EIAR provides an assessment of the potential impact the proposed Offshore Development may have on fish and shellfish receptors and ecology, within the identified Study Area. The purpose of the assessment is to address any potential harm to fish and shellfish that may arise as a result of the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the proposed Offshore Development and to provide mitigation if required.
Impact assessment	An impact assessment was conducted to assess the impact to the receptors stated above for activities associated with construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning. The construction impacts are identified as follows: • Disturbance or damage to sensitive species due to underwater noise generated from construction activities. • Temporary habitat loss or disturbance during the installation of all assets and placement of vessel anchors on the seabed. • Temporary increases in suspended sediment concentrations and potential sedimentation/ smothering of fish and shellfish The following are considered as potential impacts during the operation and maintenance phases: • Disturbance or damage to sensitive species due to underwater noise generated from operation and maintenance activities;

	• Habitat loss due to the presence of infrastructure on the seabed and associated scour protection; • Effects of thermal load and EMFs from subsea and dynamic cables on sensitive species; • Fish aggregation around the floating substructures and associated infrastructure; • Ghost fishing due to lost fishing gear becoming entangled in installed infrastructure. For the decommissioning phase of the proposed Offshore Development the impacts associated are expected to be similar (or less) to those assessed as part of the construction phase
Embedded mitigation	Embedded mitigation will be included during the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases to ensure risks to fish and shellfish ecology are minimised as far as feasibly possible. Embedded and additional mitigation is presented in detail within **Volume ER.A.4, Annex 6.1 Commitments and Mitigation Register**.
Conclusions	Overall, with the implementation of the embedded and additional mitigation measures, the anticipated impacts and cumulative impacts on fish and shellfish ecology due to the activities associated with the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the proposed Offshore Development are assessed having a Minor/Negligible effect, which are considered Not Significant in EIA terms. Therefore, the proposed Offshore Development would not adversely harm fish and shellfish and would accord with relevant policies and paragraphs detailed in the UK Marine Strategy (2011), Scotland's NMP (2015) and the NPF4 (2023).

8.7 Marine Mammals

Table 8-5 Marine Mammals

Policy Context	The UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) provides a high-level strategic approach that should be considered where development proposals could affect marine mammals. Paragraph 2.6.1.3 states: *"As a general principle, development should aim to avoid harm to marine ecology, biodiversity and geological conservation interests (including geological and morphological features), including through location, mitigation and consideration of reasonable alternatives. Where significant harm cannot be avoided, then appropriate compensatory measures should be sought."* Paragraph 2.6.1.5 states: *"The marine plan authority should ensure that appropriate weight is attached to designated sites; to protected species; habitats and other species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity; and to geological interests within the wider environment."* Paragraph 2.6.1.6 states: *"The marine plan authority should ensure that development does not result in a significant adverse effect on the conservation of habitats or the populations of specifes of conservation concern and that wildlife species and habitats enjoying statutory protection are protected from the adverse effects of development in accordance with applicable legislation."* *Paragraph 3.3.24 states:* *"Renewable energy developments can potentially have adverse impacts on marine fish and mammals, primarily through construction noise and may displace fishing activity and have direct or indirect impacts*

	on other users of the sea, including mariners. Certain bird species may be displaced by offshore wind turbines, which also have the potential to form barriers to migration or present a collision risk for birds. Their foundation designs are likely to have an effect on hydrodynamics and consequent sediment movement. This includes potential scouring of sediments around the bases of turbines." Scotland's NMP (2014) provides further policy relating to marine mammals. Policy GEN 9: Natural Heritage states: *"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."* Paragraphs 4.40 and 4.41 builds on Policy GEN 9 and states: *"Nature conservation measures play an integral role in protecting and enhancing the marine natural environment, ensuring it is healthy, biologically diverse, resilient and productive and that ecosystems continue to provide social, economic and wider benefits for people, industry and society."* *"Marine planners and other decision makers should act in the way best calculated to further the achievement of sustainable development and use, including the protection and, where appropriate, enhancement of the health of the Scottish marine area."* Paragraph 4.52 states: *"The presence (or potential presence) of a legally protected species is an important consideration. If there is evidence to suggest that a protected species is present or may be affected by a proposed development, steps must be taken to establish their presence. The level of protection afforded by legislation must be factored into the planning and design of the development and any impacts must be fully considered prior to the determination of the application."* Paragraph 4.55 states: *"Guidance on harassment at designated seal haul out sites should be taken into account. Seal conservation areas should also be taken into account, as should recommended techniques for assessing acceptable levels of man-made pressures."*
Location within EIA Report	**Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 11: Marine Mammals** of the EIAR provides an assessment of the potential impact the proposed Offshore Development may have on marine mammals. The purpose of the assessment is to ensure that any potential harm to marine mammals due to the impact of the proposed Offshore Development by way of construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases can be avoided or mitigated.
Impact assessment	The following points below are the activities associated with construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the proposed Offshore Development and the potential effects that may arise from these activities. • Auditory injury (PTS) from pre-construction and construction geophysical surveys • Disturbance from pre-construction and construction geophysical surveys • Auditory injury (PTS) from UXO clearance • Disturbance from UXO clearance

	• Auditory injury (PTS) from piling of anchors • Disturbance from piling of anchors • Auditory Injury (PTS) from other construction activities • Disturbance from other construction activities • Disturbance from vessels • Indirect impacts on prey • Risk of injury resulting from entanglement with mooring lines or cables • Risk of injury resulting from marine mammal collisions with WTG substructures • Operational noise impacts from operational floating WTGs • Displacement or barrier effects resulting from the physical presence of the offshore array infrastructure • Long-term habitat change due to dynamic cable EMF emissions and indirect impacts on prey items • Auditory injury (PTS) from decommissioning activities • Disturbances from decommissioning activities and vessels
Embedded mitigation	Embedded mitigation will be included during the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases to ensure risks to marine mammals are minimised as far as feasibly possible. Embedded and additional mitigation is presented in detail within **Volume ER.A.4, Annex 6.1 Commitments and Mitigation Register**.
Conclusions	**Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 11: Marine Mammals** of the EIAR provides an assessment to understand how the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the proposed Offshore Development would impact on marine mammals. Overall, the assessment concludes that the impact, including overall cumulative impacts to marine mammals are considered as Negligible and Not Significant in EIA terms. Embedded mitigation will be incorporated to reduce any harm that could arise. The Offshore Development would therefore not harm marine mammals or their habitats and would accord with the relevant policies set out on the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) and Scotland's NMP (2014).

8.8 Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology

Table 8-6 Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology

Policy Context	Paragraph 2.6.1.1 of the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) states: *"Marine plan authorities should be mindful that, consistent with the high level marine objectives, the UK aims to ensure:* *A halting and, if possible, a reversal of biodiversity loss with species and habitats operating as a part of healthy, functioning ecosystems; and* *The general acceptance of biodiversity's essential role in enhancing the quality of life, with its conservation becoming a natural consideration in all relevant public, private and non governmental decisions and policies."* Paragraph 2.6.1.3 states: *"As a general principle, development should aim to avoid harm to marine ecology, biodiversity and geological conservation interests (including geological and morphological features), including through*

	location, mitigation and consideration of reasonable alternatives. Where significant harm cannot be avoided, then appropriate compensatory measures should be sought." Paragraph 2.6.1.6 states: *"The marine plan authority should ensure that development does not result in a significant adverse effect on the conservation of habitats or the populations of species of conservation concern and that wildlife species and habitats enjoying statutory protection are protected from the adverse effects of development in accordance with applicable legislation."* Paragraph 3.3.24 states: *"Renewable energy developments can potentially have adverse impacts on marine fish and mammals, primarily through construction noise and may displace fishing activity and have direct or indirect impacts on other users of the sea, including mariners. Certain bird species may be displaced by offshore wind turbines, which also have the potential to form barriers to migration or present a collision risk for birds. Their foundation designs are likely to have an effect on hydrodynamics and consequent sediment movement. This includes potential scouring of sediments around the bases of turbines."* Policy GEN 9: Natural Heritage of Scotland's NMP (2014) states: *"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."* Paragraphs 4.52 and 4.53 continue and states for species that are protected: *"The presence (or potential presence) of a legally protected species is an important consideration. If there is evidence to suggest that a protected species is present or may be affected by a proposed development, steps must be taken to establish their presence. The level of protection afforded by legislation must be factored into the planning and design of the development and any impacts must be fully considered prior to the determination of the application."* *"Certain activities in territorial waters (e.g. those involving European Protected Species as specified in the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994, and wild birds, protected animals and plants under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) may only be undertaken under licence. Equivalent provisions for birds and European Protected Species under the offshore regulations need to be followed in the Scottish offshore zone in accordance with the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007."* Paragraph 4.58 states: *"Consideration should be given to opportunities to enhance biodiversity and associated ecosystem services, including recovery and/or enhancement of degraded habitats or species populations."*
Location within EIA Report	**Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 12: Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology** of the EIAR provides an assessment to understand how the proposed Offshore Development impacts ornithology. The report assesses the significance of effect on ornithology receptors and provides mitigation, if required, to reduce or remove harm where required.

Impact assessment	During the construction phase, the following potential impacts have been assessed: • Disturbance (vessel related) within the proposed Offshore Development area, including cable laying, helicopter trips as well as tow out events should floating structures be assembled outside and subsequently towed; • Habitat loss (short-term), including impacts to prey species arising from initial installation of infrastructure and cable burial, including scour protection and seabed preparation; • Turbidity (suspended sediment), including impacts to prey species associated with installation of infrastructure as well as any seabed preparation that is required. Under the operation and maintenance phase, the following potential impacts have been assessed: • Disturbance (vessel-related), including helicopter traffic, throughout the operational phase of the Salamander Project; • Distributional responses (displacement and barrier effect), arising from the presence of the WTG structures within the proposed Offshore Development area; • Collision, with the operational WTGs; • Habitat loss (long-term), the spatial extent of which also covers short term habitat loss associated with emplacement of additional scour and cable burial; • Entanglement refers solely to ghost fishing gear. Due to the size and layout of the surface and subsurface infrastructure (cables and mooring lines), there is no potential for direct entanglement to occur. For the decommissioning phase of the proposed Offshore Development the impacts associated are expected to be similar to those assessed as part of the construction phase. Therefore, the overall significance of effect assessed as Minor/Negligible. Not Significant in EIA terms.
Embedded mitigation	Embedded mitigation will be included during the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases to ensure risks to birds are minimised as far as feasibly possible. Embedded and additional mitigation is presented in detail within **Volume ER.A.4, Annex 6.1 Commitments and Mitigation Register**.
Conclusions	The construction, operational and maintenance, and decommissioning phases identified to impact ornithology, and the overall cumulative impacts, for the proposed Offshore Development are considered as overall Minor and Not Significant. Embedded mitigation measures will be included to manage potential impacts as highlighted. A separate Shadow HRA (including RIAA and Derogation Case) will be included as part of the overall Section 36 application pack and has not been included within the EIAR. Overall, it is considered that the proposed Offshore Development would not have a significant adverse impact to ornithology and would accord with the relevant policies detailed within the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) and Scotland's NMP (2014).

8.9 Commercial Fisheries

Table 8-7 Commercial Fisheries

Policy Context	Section 3.8 of the UK Marine Policy Statement provides general guidance for development proposals that may affect fisheries. Paragraph 3.8.2 states: *"The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) provides the main framework for decisions concerning the management of fisheries in EU waters although a Member State may take non-discriminatory measures that are more restrictive than the CFP measures to those fisheries operating within their 0-12 nautical mile zones in respect of national fleets and, with the approval of the Commission and affected Member States, to other EU vessels subject to where historic fisheries rights exist in the 6-12 nautical mile zone."* Paragraph 3.8.3 continues and states: *"Decision makers must therefore have regard to the provisions of the CFP in developing any plans or proposals affecting fisheries. The CFP is currently being reviewed with the aim of introducing a reformed vision by 1 January 2013. The view of the UK Administrations is that the overall aim of the reformed CFP should be to attain ecological sustainability whilst optimising the wealth generation of marine fish resources and their long term prospects."* The UK Marine Policy Statement acknowledges that fishing is a sensitive activity and balancing the economic and environmental impact is important. The Statement also provides guidance to marine development proposals that may affect fisheries. Paragraph 3.8.7 states: *"Fishing activity is sensitive to changes in other sea uses. Marine developments have the potential to prevent, displace or encourage fishing activities. There are potential social, economic and environmental impacts of displacement of fishing activity caused by other sea uses, particularly if from well established fishing grounds. In addition to marine fish stocks associated with commercial sea fishing, the coastal environment is important as a corridor for migrating Atlantic salmon and European eel, and in providing the marine feeding ground for sea trout. These important species that support coastal and inland commercial fishing and recreational angling could be vulnerable to a wide range of coastal activities."* Scotland's NMP builds on the UK Marine Policy Strategy and adds more detailed polices and paragraphs to provide guidance for development proposals and how they interact with commercial fisheries. Paragraph 6.23 of Scotland's NMP states: *"Energy developments can displace fishing. The cabling arrays associated with energy and telecoms developments, and other physical infrastructure associated with development, have the potential for short-term displacement of fishing activity during the installation phase."* Paragraph 6.24 continues and states: *"There is also potential for damage to occur to both infrastructure and fishing equipment as a result of interactions, with obvious safety implications. New developments should take into account the intensity of fishing activity in the proposed development area and any likely displacement activity the development and associated activity could precipitate, with resultant increased pressure on remaining, often adjacent, fishing grounds."* Policy Fisheries 1 of Scotland's NMP states that:

	"Taking account of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy, Habitats Directive, Birds Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive, marine planners and decision makers should aim to ensure: *Existing fishing opportunities and activities are safeguarded wherever possible.* *An eco-system based approach to the management of fishing which ensures the sustainability of fish stocks and avoids damage to fragile habitats.* *Protection for vulnerable stocks (in particular for juvenile and spawning stocks through continuation of sea area closures where appropriate).* *Improved protection of the seabed and historical and archaeological remains requiring protection through effective identification of high-risk areas and management measures to mitigate the impacts of fishing, where appropriate.* *That other sectors take into account the need to protect fish stocks and sustain healthy fisheries for both economic and conservation reasons.* *Delivery of Scotland's international commitments in fisheries, including the ban on discards.* *Mechanisms for managing conflicts between fishermen and/or between the fishing sector and other users of the marine environment."* Policy Fisheries 2 continues and states: The following key factors should be taken into account when deciding on uses of the marine environment and the potential impact on fishing: *"The cultural and economic importance of fishing, in particular to vulnerable coastal communities.* *The potential impact (positive and negative) of marine developments on the sustainability of fish and shellfish stocks and resultant fishing opportunities in any given area.* *The environmental impact on fishing grounds (such as nursery, spawning areas), commercially fished species, habitats and species more generally.* *The potential effect of displacement on: fish stocks; the wider environment; use of fuel; socio-economic costs to fishers and their communities and other marine users."*
Location within EIA Report	**Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 13: Commercial Fisheries** of the EIAR assesses the potential impact the proposed Offshore Development could have on commercial fisheries.
Impact assessment	The following construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning activities are identified to have a potential impact on commercial fisheries. These are: • Loss or restricted access to fishing grounds ; • Displacement of fishing activity into other areas; • Interference with fishing activity as a result of increased vessel traffic; • Increased steaming times; • Safety issues for fishing vessels; • Loss or damage to gear due to snagging or entanglement with offshore and floating infrastructure; • Potential impacts on commercially important fish and shellfish resources; • Supply chain opportunities for local fishing vessels.

Embedded mitigation	Embedded mitigation will be included during the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases to ensure risks to commercial fisheries are minimised as far as feasibly possible. Embedded and additional mitigation is presented in detail within **Volume ER.A.4, Annex 6.1 Commitments and Mitigation Register**.
Conclusions	Overall, the impact the proposed Offshore Development would have on the identified sensitive receptors for commercial fisheries would be Minor/Negligible and Not Significant in EIA terms, with embedded and additional mitigation measures in place. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed Offshore Development would result in minimal harm to commercial fisheries and is in accordance with the Policies and Paragraphs within the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) and Scotland's NMP (2014).

8.10 Shipping and Navigation

Table 8-8 Shipping and Navigation

Policy Context	Paragraph 3.4.7 of the UK Marine Policy Statement (2014) states: *"Increased competition for marine resources may affect the sea space available for the safe navigation of ships. Marine plan authorities and decision makers should take into account and seek to minimise any negative impacts on shipping activity, freedom of navigation and navigational safety and ensure that their decisions are in compliance with international maritime law. Marine Plan development and individual decisions should also take account of environmental, social and economic effects and be in compliance with international maritime law."* Paragraph 13.25 of Scotland's NMP (2014) states: *"Risk to shipping navigation may arise from some developments and may lead to increased collision risk, displacement of anchorages and displacement of fishing or recreational vessels into areas used by commercial shipping. Obstructions can lead to increased voyage distance and time resulting in financial and environmental costs, such as emission increases."* Policy TRANSPORT 1 of Scotland's NMP states: *"Navigational safety in relevant areas used by shipping now and in the future will be protected, adhering to the rights of innocent passage and freedom of navigation contained in UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The following factors will be taken into account when reaching decisions regarding development and use:* *The extent to which the locational decision interferes with existing or planned routes used by shipping, access to ports and harbours and navigational safety.* *Where interference is likely, whether reasonable alternatives can be identified.* *Where there are no reasonable alternatives, whether mitigation through measures adopted in accordance with the principles and procedures established by the International Maritime Organization can be achieved at no significant cost to the shipping or ports sector."* Policy TRANSPORT 2 states: *"Marine development and use should not be permitted where it will restrict access to, or future expansion of, major commercial ports or existing or proposed ports and harbours which are identified as National*

	Developments in the current National Planning Framework or as priorities in the National Renewables Infrastructure Plans." Policy TRANSPORT 3 states: *"Ferry routes and maritime transport to island and remote mainland areas provide essential connections and should be safeguarded from inappropriate marine development and use that would significantly interfere with their operation. Developments will not be consented where they will unacceptably interfere with lifeline ferry services."* Policy TRANSPORT 6 states: *"Marine planners and decision makers and developers should ensure displacement of shipping is avoided where possible to mitigate against potential increased journey lengths (and associated fuel costs, emissions and impact on journey frequency) and potential impacts on other users and ecologically sensitive areas."*
Location within EIA Report	**Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 14: Shipping and Navigation** of the EIAR provides detail of the potential impact the proposed Offshore Development may have on sensitive receptors associated with shipping and navigation. The chapter sets out the baseline condition, identifies the likely sensitive receptors and assess the potential construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning impacts to these sensitive receptors.
Impact assessment	The following construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning related activities have been identified that potentially could impact shipping and navigation: • Vessel displacement; • Increased vessel to vessel collision risk between third-party vessels; • Increased vessel to vessel collision risk between a third-party vessel and a Salamander Project vessel; • Vessel to structure collision risk; • Reduced access to local ports; • Reduction of under keel clearance from cable protection; • Interaction with subsea infrastructure; • Interaction with wet stored subsea infrastructure; • Reduced access to local ports; • Loss of station; • Anchor Interaction with subsea cables; and • Reduction of emergency response capability.
Embedded mitigation	Embedded mitigation will be included during the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases to ensure risks to shipping and navigation are minimised as far as feasibly possible. Embedded and additional mitigation is presented in detail within **Volume ER.A.4, Annex 6.1 Commitments and Mitigation Register**.
Conclusions	Overall, **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 14: Shipping and Navigation** of the EIAR concludes that the impacts, including cumulative impacts, associated with the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the proposed Offshore Development are Not Significant in EIA terms. Embedded mitigation measures are proposed which are detailed within the chapter and Commitments and Mitigation Register to help manage and reduce the likelihood of risks occurring.

	Therefore, it is considered that the proposed Offshore Development would not adversely harm the identified shipping and navigation receptors and would accord with the relevant policies detailed within the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) and Scotland's NMP (2014).

8.11 Aviation and Radar

Table 8-9 Aviation and Radar

Policy Context	The UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) provides guidance for policy makers and developers in terms of how marine based developments interact with aviation and radar constraints. Paragraph 3.2.1 states: *"Marine activities should not prejudice the interest of defence and national security and the MoD should be consulted accordingly"* Paragraph 3.2.9 states: *"The construction and operation of offshore marine infrastructure, installations and activities, as well as policies on conservation designations and the health of the wider environment may impact on defence interests in certain areas. Marine plan authorities and decision makers should take full account of the individual and cumulative effects of marine infrastructure on both marine and land based MoD interests. Marine plan authorities, decision makers and developers should consult the MoD in all circumstances to verify whether defence interests will be affected."* Chapter 11: Offshore Wind and Marine Renewable Energy of Scotland's NMP (2014) sets out how marine renewable energy projects should be delivered taking into account various constraints. Specifically for aviation and radar, Paragraph 11.26 states: *"Key marine sectors can be affected by marine renewable energy development. Physical competition for space, navigational restrictions and the impact of physical structures in the sea may also affect sectors such as fisheries and aquaculture, marine recreation and tourism, shipping and defence, especially where planned development spatially interacts with existing uses. Impacts can be avoided or minimised through an inclusive approach which identifies affected sector contacts, improves communication between developers and these sectors, identifies the impacts and seeks to address these through effective communication and mitigation strategies."* Policy Renewables 8 further reinforces the requirements for engagement with other stakeholders or proposals which affect adjoining areas. The policy states: *"Developers bringing forward proposals for new developments must actively engage at an early stage with the general public and interested stakeholders of the area to which the proposal relates and of adjoining areas which may be affected."* Chapter 15: Defence of the NMP highlights the requirements that proposals should consider in relation to Ministry of Defence (MOD) activity in marine spaces. Specifically, Paragraph 15.10 states that's: *"Oil and gas, CCS and marine renewables including wind and wave and tidal: Ministry of Defence (MOD) activity has little impact on existing infrastructure, although conversely the development of new marine infrastructure may, in some cases, lead to navigational issues and possible disruption to MOD activity. Radar activity can also be affected by some installations and development requires careful consideration.*

	However, mitigation measures such as design considerations and navigation marking can help address some of these issues in certain circumstances." Policy Defence 1 further highlights the requirements for consultation with the MOD to ensure proposed do not interfere with communications, navigations and surveillance. The policy states: *"To maintain operational effectiveness in Scottish waters used by the armed services, development and use will be managed in these areas…Communications: Navigations and surveillance including RADAR: Development and use which causes unacceptable interference with RADAR and other systems necessary for national defence may be prohibited if mitigation cannot be determined. Proposals for development and use should be discussed with the MOD at an early stage in the process."*
Location within EIA Report	**Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 15: Aviation and Radar** of the EIAR provides and assessment to demonstrate how the proposed Offshore Development, would potentially impact aviation and radar communications.
Impact assessment	The below sets out the anticipated impacts the proposed Offshore Development may have during construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases. • Construction, Operation, Maintenance and Decommissioning: Creation of physical obstacle to aircraft operations • Operation and Maintenance: Wind turbines causing interference on civil and military Primary Surveillance Radar (PSR) systems • Operation and Maintenance: Wind turbines causing interference on rainfall radar systems
Embedded mitigation	Embedded mitigation will be included during the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases to ensure risks to aviation and radar are minimised as far as feasibly possible. Embedded and additional mitigation is presented in detail within **Volume ER.A.4, Annex 6.1 Commitments and Mitigation Register**.
Conclusions	Overall, it is concluded that with mitigation as outlined above and **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 15: Aviation and Radar** of the EIAR, the significance of effect, and the overall cumulative impacts, the proposed Offshore Development would have on aviation and radar would be considered as Minor and Not Significant in EIA terms. Therefore, the proposed Offshore Development would not result in significant harm to aviation and radar receptors and would be compliant with the relevant policies set out in the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) Scotland's NMP (2014).

8.12 Seascape, Landscape and Visual Amenity

Table 8-10 Seascape, Landscape and Visual Amenity

Policy Context	The UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) provides guidance in the importance of seascape and how decision makers should assess potential visual impacts from development proposals. Paragraph 2.6.5.2 states: *"When developing Marine Plans, marine plan authorities should consider at a strategic level visual, cultural, historical and archaeological impacts not just for those coastal areas that are particularly important for seascape, but for all coastal areas, liaising with terrestrial planning authorities as*

necessary. In addition, any wider social and economic impacts of a development or activity on coastal landscapes and seascapes should be considered."

Paragraph 2.6.5.3 states:

"In considering the impact of an activity or development on seascape, the marine plan authority should take into account existing character and quality, how highly it is valued and its capacity to accommodate change specific to any development. Landscape Character Assessment methodology may be an aid to this process."

Scotland's NMP builds on the UK Marine Policy Statement and provides policy to guide developers when assessing a proposals visual impact on seascape and landscape.

Policy GEN 7: Landscape/Seascape states:

"Marine planners and decision makers should ensure that development and use of the marine environment take seascape, landscape and visual impacts into account."

Paragraphs 4.28 and 4.29 add to Policy GEN 7 and state:

"The Scottish Government is committed to implementing the principles of the European Landscape Convention, which includes seascapes and applies an 'all landscapes approach' that addresses developed, altered and cultural landscapes as well as more natural scenic areas. This does not preclude development or change but recommends that it is carried out appropriately for the area's landscape character and visual amenity."

Development and use that affect National Scenic Areas, National Parks and World Heritage Sites should only be permitted where:

They will not adversely affect the integrity of the area or its special qualities for which it has been designated; or Any such adverse effects are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance."

Paragraph 4.30 states:

"…planners and decision makers should have regard to the qualities of the location in question, including any designation. More generally, the siting and design of a development should take account of the local landscape/seascape character and quality. Potential effects on landscapes and seascapes, including cumulative effects should be considered and developers should seek to minimise adverse impacts through careful planning and design, considering the services which the natural environment is providing and maximising the potential for enhancement."

Proposed offshore wind developments can have wider visual impacts on terrestrial landscape and therefore it's important that terrestrial planning policy is considered.

Policy 11 of NPF4 requires that:

"…project design and mitigation will demonstrate how the following impacts are addressed…significant landscape and visual impacts, recognising that such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable…"

In addition, Aberdeenshire Council provide policies and guidance for development proposals likely to have landscape visual impacts.

	Policy E2: Landscape states: *"We will refuse development that causes unacceptable effects through its scale, location or design on key characteristics, natural landscape elements, features or the composition or quality of the landscape character as defined in the Landscape Character Assessments produced by NatureScot. These impacts can be either alone or cumulatively with other recent developments. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) may be required to assess the effects of change on a landscape that could be experienced, should a development proposal be approved. Appropriate mitigation should be identified."* *"Development that has a significant adverse impact on the qualifying interests of a Special Landscape Area will not be permitted unless it is adequately demonstrated that these effects are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of at least local importance."*
Location within EIA Report	**Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 16: Seascape, Landscape and Visual Amenity** of the EIAR provides an assessment of the potential impacts the proposed Offshore Development may have on seascape, landscape and visual receptors. The assessment presents the results of construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning activities, and the impact that they may have on identified visual receptors.
Impact assessment	The chapter mainly assesses the proposed Offshore Development's impact during its operation and maintenance phases as this would be where the most visual impact could arise. The visual impacts to identified receptors during construction and decommissioning is likely to be less harmful, given the process of these activities are short term, with the impact not extending beyond what is assessed for the operation and maintenance phases. For the operation and maintenance phase of the proposed Offshore Development, **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 16: Seascape, Landscape and Visual Amenity** of the EIAR provides a detailed assessment of the visual impact on the perceived coastal character and landscape character of the northeast Aberdeenshire coastline, and the views and visual amenity of receptors on land may have a significant effect upon these receptors. Under the operation and maintenance phase, the following potential impacts have been assessed: • Assessment of effects on coastal character; • Assessment of effects on landscape character; • Assessment of effects on designated landscapes; • Assessment of effects on views / visual amenity; • Preliminary assessment of visual receptors; • Detailed assessment of effects on visual receptors; and • Assessment of night-time effects on views.
Embedded mitigation	Embedded mitigation will be included during the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases to ensure risks to seascape, landscape and visual amenity are minimised as far as feasibly possible. Embedded and additional mitigation is presented in detail within **Volume ER.A.4, Annex 6.1 Commitments and Mitigation Register**.
Conclusions	**Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 16: Seascape, Landscape and Visual Amenity** of the EIAR provides further detail describing the characteristics and assessment of each of the identified sensitive visual receptors. However, in summary the impact and cumulative impact is largely assessed as Minor/Moderate with the overall findings being Not Significant. Therefore, the proposed Offshore Development would not present

	a harmful visual impact on the identified landscape and visual receptors and the key viewpoints identified; no additional mitigation measures are therefore proposed. Therefore, the visual impacts are considered to be fully assessed and the proposed Offshore Development would result in minimal harm to identified sensitive receptors. The proposed Offshore Development is considered to accord with the relevant policies and paragraphs within the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011), Scotland's NMP (2014), NPF4 (2023) and the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (2023).

8.13 Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

Table 8-11 Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

Policy Context	Paragraph 2.6.6.6 of the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) provides guidance for marine plans to take into consideration the Historic Environment and states: *"Marine activities have the potential to result in adverse effects on the historic environment both directly and indirectly, including damage to or destruction of heritage assets"* Paragraph 2.6.6.8 continues and states: *"The marine plan authority, working with the relevant regulator and advisors, should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and should adopt a general presumption in favour of the conservation of designated heritage assets within an appropriate setting. The more significant the asset, the greater should be the presumption in favour of its conservation. Substantial loss or harm to designated assets should be exceptional, and should not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the harm or loss is necessary in order to deliver social, economic or environmental benefits that outweigh the harm or loss."* Policy GEN 6: Historic Environment of Scotland's NMP 2015 states that: *"Development and use of the marine environment should protect and, where appropriate, enhance heritage assets in a manner proportionate to their significance."* Paragraph 4.23 of Scotland's NMP builds on Policy GEN 6 and states: *"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…"* Paragraph 4.24 states: *"To achieve this, marine planners and decision makers should consider implications and opportunities for the historic environment taking into account the potential impacts of development and use on:* • ***Designated heritage assets*** *– representing sites of national or international significance for which statutory requirements apply. Designated assets should be protected in situ within an appropriate setting. Substantial loss or harm to designated assets should be exceptional and should only be permitted if this is necessary to deliver social, economic or environmental benefits that outweigh the harm or loss.*

	• ***Undesignated heritage assets*** *– those that meet designation criteria or make a positive contribution should also be protected in-situ, wherever possible, and consideration given to the potential for new discoveries of historic or archaeological interest to arise."* Paragraph 4.25 states: *"Proposals for development and use that may affect the historic environment should provide information on the significance of known heritage assets and the potential for new discoveries to arise. They should demonstrate how any adverse impacts will be avoided, or if not possible minimised and mitigated. Where it is not possible to minimise or mitigate impacts, the benefits of proceeding with the proposal should be clearly set out."* In addition to Scotland's NMP, the NPF4, whilst largely considers development proposals associated with terrestrial planning, Policy 7): Historic Assets and Places states: *"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. The assessment should identify the likely visual or physical impact of any proposals for change, including cumulative effects and provide a sound basis for managing the impacts of change".*
Location within EIA Report	**Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 17: Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage** of the EIAR provides an assessment how the proposed Offshore Development could impact marine heritage assets. The assessment provides baseline findings, identifies specific potential impacts, provides mitigation measures (where appropriate), and provides and overall summary whether the proposed Offshore Development would result in significant harmful effects.
Impact assessment	The proposed Offshore Development would include several construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning processes which may directly and indirectly impact marine archaeology receptors. The following activities are likely to increase suspended sediment concentration (SSC), seabed deposition and changes to sediment transport (including scour). These impacts are detailed further in **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 17: Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage** of the EIAR. • Anchoring, including drilling or piling for anchor installation or use of drag embedment anchors; • Mooring lines, including chain, clump weights and swept area of catenary; • Cable installation, including array cables and export cables; • Seabed preparation, including sandwave levelling, boulder clearance and Pre-lay Grapnel Run (PLGR); • Trenchless landfall activities (such as Horizontal Directional Drilling HDD)) in the nearshore and intertidal area and associated exit pits; • Mooring/anchoring of vessels and ancillary equipment; • Scour associated with installations; and • Cable repair and remediation and decommissioning. Potential impacts to marine archaeology and cultural heritage have been identified for the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning phases. These impacts are as follows: • Construction activities resulting in sub-seabed impacts, including site preparation, cable burial, foundations and anchoring.

	• Operation and maintenance activities which result in impacts beyond extent of construction impacts. • The physical presence of the Offshore Development during the Operation and Maintenance phase creating settings impacts on cultural heritage assets. • Decommissioning activities which result in impacts beyond extent of construction or operation and maintenance impacts.
Embedded mitigation	Embedded mitigation will be included during the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases to ensure risks to marine archaeology and cultural heritage are minimised as far as feasibly possible. Embedded and additional mitigation is presented in detail within **Volume ER.A.4, Annex 6.1 Commitments and Mitigation Register**.
Conclusions	Overall, the assessment as part of **Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 17: Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage** of the EIAR demonstrates that the proposed Offshore Development would not present a harmful impact to the identified non-designated heritage assets, and for the potential discovery of archaeological remains. Embedded mitigation is proposed to ensure that any heritage assets or archaeology remains that should be discovered are recorded and removed safely to avoid damage. The assessment concludes that the overall impact, including cumulative, would be considered as Minor, and Not Significant in EIA terms and therefore the proposed Offshore Development would accord with the relevant policies and paragraphs, detailed in the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) and Scotland's NMP (2014).

8.14 Other Users of the Marine Environment

Table 8-12 Other Users of the Marine Environment

Policy Context	The UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) provides guidance to how marine plans should be developed taking into consideration other users of marine environment. Paragraph 2.3.1.5 states: *"Marine Plans should reflect and address, so far as possible, the range of activities occurring in, and placing demands on, the plan area. The Marine Plan should identify areas of constraint and locations where a range of activities may be accommodated. This will reduce real and potential conflict, maximise compatibility between marine activities and encourage co-existence of multiple uses."* Scotland's NMP (2014) builds on the UK Marine Policy Statement and states within Policy GEN 4: Co-existence: *"Proposals which enable coexistence with other development sectors and activities within the Scottish marine area are encouraged in planning and decision making processes, when consistent with policies and objectives of this Plan."* Chapter 11 of Scotland's NMP provides further guidance for developers and decision makers for renewable energy projects. Paragraph 11.26 states that: *"Key marine sectors can be affected by marine renewable energy development. Physical competition for space, navigational restrictions and the impact of physical structures in the sea may also affect sectors such as fisheries and aquaculture, marine recreation and tourism, shipping and defence, especially where planned development spatially interacts with existing uses. Impacts can be avoided or minimised through an inclusive approach which identifies affected sector contacts, improves communication between*

developers and these sectors, identifies the impacts and seeks to address these through effective communication and mitigation strategies."

Policy REC & TOURISM 3 states:

"Regional marine plans should identify areas that are of recreational and tourism value and identify where prospects for significant development exist, including opportunities to link to the National Long Distance Walking and Cycle Routes, and more localised and/or bespoke recreational opportunities and visitor attractions."

Policy CABLES 1 states:

*"**Cable and network owners should engage with decision makers at the early planning stage to notify of any intention to lay, repair or replace cables before routes are selected and agreed. When making proposals, cable and network owners and marine users should evidence that they have taken a joined-up approach to development and activity to minimise impacts**…"*

Policy CABLES 2 states:

*"**The following factors will be taken into account on a case by case basis when reaching decisions regarding submarine cable development and activities: Cables should be suitably routed to provide sufficient requirements for installation and cable protection; New cables should implement methods to minimise impacts on the environment, seabed and other users, where operationally possible and in accordance with relevant industry practice; Cables should be buried to maximise protection where there are safety or seabed stability risks and to reduce conflict with other marine users and to protect the assets and infrastructure; Where burial is demonstrated not to be feasible, cables may be suitably protected through recognised and approved measures (such as rock or mattress placement or cable armouring) where practicable and cost-effective and as risk assessment direct; Consideration of the need to reinstate the seabed, undertake post-lay surveys and monitoring and carry out remedial action where required.***

Policy 21 of NPF4 states:

"Development proposals which result in the loss of outdoor sports facilities will only be supported where the proposal:

i. is ancillary to the principal use of the site as an outdoor sports facility; or

ii. involves only a minor part of the facility and would not affect its use; or

iii. meets a requirement to replace the facility which would be lost, either by a new facility or by upgrading an existing facility to provide a better quality facility. The location will be convenient for users and the overall playing capacity of the area will be maintained;

iv. or can demonstrate that there is a clear excess of provision to meet current and anticipated demand in the area, and that the site would be developed without detriment to the overall quality of provision."

Policy B3 of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan states:

"We will protect existing tourist sites from being converted to other uses unless there is evidence that the business has been marketed for at least 12 months, including in the local area, and is no longer viable…".

	Policy PR1 of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan states: *"Development will not normally be permitted on any area of open space…"*
Location within EIA Report	**Volume ER.A.3, Chapter 18: Other Users of the Marine Environment** in the EIAR provides an assessment how the proposed Offshore Development would interact with other users of the marine environment. The report is set out to establish the Study Area, the existing baseline environment, potential impacts that may arise with other marine uses and recommended mitigation measures, if required.
Impact assessment	The following construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning activities for the proposed Offshore Development are identified to have a potential impact on the identified receptors: • Obstruction of marine renewable energy activities due to the presence of safety zones and vessels associated during construction and operation and maintenance activities; • Obstruction of other electricity cable installation/maintenance activities due to the presence of safety zones and vessels associated during construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning activities; • Obstruction of oil and gas activities due to the presence of safety zones and vessels associated during construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning activities; • Obstruction of recreational and tourism activities due to the presence of safety zones and vessels associated during construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning activities.
Embedded mitigation	Embedded mitigation will be included during the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases to ensure risks to other users of the marine environment are minimised as far as feasibly possible. Embedded and additional mitigation is presented in detail within **Volume ER.A.4, Annex 6.1 Commitments and Mitigation Register**.
Conclusions	Overall, the identified receptors that are likely to result in impacts from the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning phases of the proposed Offshore Development, and the overall cumulative impacts have been assessed as Minor/Negligible, therefore Not Significant in EIA terms. Embedded mitigation measures are proposed as detailed in the EIAR chapter and Commitments and Mitigation Register, which will be adhered too to ensure that the proposed Offshore Development does not unduly impact other users of the marine environment. It is considered that the proposed Offshore Development would not result in harmful impacts to other users of the marine environment and would not result in a permanent loss of tourism or recreational uses. Therefore the proposed Offshore Development would accord with the relevant policies and paragraphs detailed within the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011),Scotland's NMP (2014), NPF4 (2023) and the Aberdeenshire Local Plan (2023)

Table 8-13 Summary of EIA for the proposed Offshore Development

Receptor	Assessment of effects for the proposed Offshore Development alone	Assessment of effects for proposed Offshore Development cumulatively with other projects
Marine Physical Processes	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects
Water and Sediment Quality	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects
Benthic and Intertidal Ecology	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects
Fish and Shellfish Ecology	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects
Marine Mammals	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects
Offshore and Intertidal Ornithology	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects
Commercial Fisheries	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects
Shipping and Navigation	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects
Aviation and Radar	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects
Seascape, Landscape and Visual Amenity	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects
Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects
Other Users of the Marine Environment	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects
Socio-economics, Tourism and Recreation	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects
Climate Change and Carbon	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects
Major Accidents and Disasters	No Significant Effects	No Significant Effects

9 Planning Balance and Conclusions

9.1.1.1 This Planning Statement has sought to demonstrate the overall need for the proposed Offshore Development, and to demonstrate compliance with UK and Scottish energy, climate, and marine planning legislation and policy.

9.1.1.2 The proposed Offshore Development and the wider Salamander Project aims to deliver 100 MW of renewable offshore wind energy into the National Grid, which will be an important contribution in helping the Scottish Government achieve their carbon neutral target by 2045. As highlighted in this Planning Statement, the urgency to move away from fossil fuel related energy production to more renewable sources is becoming more and more important to reduce carbon emissions, reduce global warming and move the UK into a carbon neutral future.

9.1.1.3 In addition, an important consideration to demonstrate the need for The Salamander Project is anchored into the INTOG leasing round which has the central objectives for its innovation stream 'to further develop Scotland as a destination for innovation and technical development which will lead to risk reductions and supply chain opportunity.'

9.1.1.4 The need for small scale floating innovation projects to support the scaling up of floating offshore wind has also been recognised in the recent Investor Panel Recommendations to the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government's has committed to working through the Scottish Wind Energy Council to 'leverage innovation opportunity from the INTOG leasing round to ensure maximum benefit to the Scottish supply chain and the pipeline of projects which will rely on it'.

9.1.1.5 This Planning Statement has set out each of the Offshore EIAR topic areas and summarised the findings of each chapter. Based on these findings, it is considered that overall, the proposed Offshore Development would have minor impacts to environmental, economic and social receptors. Embedded and additional mitigation measures have been considered and will be implemented to ensure harmful impacts are managed and reduced.

9.1.1.6 On balance, the proposed Offshore Development would have a highly beneficial impact, in terms of its supply of much needed renewable energy and supporting the UK and Scottish Government's in achieving a low carbon future. The "Needs Case" within this Planning Statement fully sets out and justifies the proposed Offshore Development and its accordance with the aims and objectives set out within Scotland's Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition (ESJT) (2023), the Offshore Wind Policy Statement (2020), the Climate Change Plan (2020) and the Electricity Generation Policy Statement (EGPS) (2013). It is considered that the need for the proposed Offshore Development and the resulting benefits would outweigh the minor adverse harm to environmental, social and economic receptors, as assessed in the supporting Offshore EIAR and other technical reports.

9.1.1.7 In addition to the proposed Offshore Development being complaint with relevant Energy and Climate Change Policy, the proposed Offshore Development would also be fully compliant with relevant planning policies as detailed in the UK Marine Policy Statement, Scotland's NMP and SMP, NPF4 and the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan, and we respectively request that Section 36 Consent and the relevant Marine Licences are granted.

10 References

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