

# **Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution**

## **Operation, Inspection, Maintenance and Decommissioning Strategy**

### **ED2 Eriskay-Barra**

# CONTENTS

1	Definitions and Abbreviations .....	3
2	Introduction .....	4
3	Operation strategy .....	4
4	Inspection strategy.....	4
5	Maintenance strategy .....	6
6	Decommissioning strategy .....	7

# 1. Definitions and Abbreviations

The following definitions are used within this document:

SHEPD	Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution plc
SSEN	Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks
Cable	SHEPD submarine electricity cable network
Coiling	Where the submarine cable is wrapped in a circular manner for storage or transportation
Mechanical Strength	The physical capacity of the submarine cable to undergo forces generally in tension (horizontal, lifting) or compression (vertical weight above the cable)

The following abbreviations and definitions may be used within this document:

AUV	Autonomous Underwater Vehicle
CFLO	Company Fisheries Liaison Officer
HDD	Horizontal Directional Drill
KIS-ORCA	Kingfisher Information Service Offshore Renewables and Cable Awareness
LAT	Lowest Astronomical Tide
MBES	Multibeam Echosounder
MCA	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
MLWS	Mean Low Water Spring
NLB	Northern Lighthouse Board
ROV	Remotely Operated Vehicle
RPL	Route Position List
SBP	Sub Bottom Profiler
SSS	Side Scan Sonar
UKHO	United Kingdom Hydrographic Office
USV	Unmanned Surface Vehicle

## 2. Introduction

2.1. SHEPD propose to install a new 33kV cable across the Sound of Barra between Eriskay and Barra.

2.2. The purpose of this document is to outline our strategy in relation to the following aspects of the project:

- Operation: Following installation of the cables, connection and energisation to the SHEPD network.
- Inspection: The visual inspection or tracking of the cables following installation.
- Maintenance: Remedial works driven by condition-based information following inspections in the marine, inter-tidal and/or land environments.
- Decommissioning: Follows de-energisation of the cables at the end of its operational life.

2.3. This document should be read in conjunction with the Marine Construction Licence application pack.

### 3. Operation strategy

3.1. Following successful completion of the cable installation within both marine and land environments, the cable will be commissioned and energised onto the SHEPD network. Under normal operation, the cables will remain energised until replaced or following a fault occurrence on the cable or network itself (this includes onshore faults). The cable(s) may also be de-energised to carry out planned maintenance on the cable or SHEPD network.

3.2. The effects of cable operation on the environment are covered within the *Marine Environmental Appraisal*.

### 4. Inspection strategy

#### General

4.1. As part of the cable installation, as-built records will be prepared and recorded as part of the project handover documentation. This will form the baseline data for each cable. This is also applicable for any planned maintenance or emergency repairs on the cables.

4.2. Following installation of the cables, our inspection strategy will be used to monitor the behaviour and integrity of each cable. Each subsequent inspection will help to build a better understanding of operational risk and condition of the cable. This will therefore dictate the ongoing maintenance plan and influence cable replacement decisions.

#### Cable inspections - Offshore

4.3. The cable inspection in the marine environment allows us to record:

- accurate cable position
- any degradation, damage, exposure, suspensions, burial or other significant events which may affect the integrity of the cable
- external condition of the cables, including any external protection in place
- condition of any cable crossings including third party crossings
- depth of burial, both in terms of adjacent seabed levels and absolute levels
- visibly locate any debris in contact or close proximity to the cable

4.4. Asset monitoring inspections include geophysical surveys comprising the following methods:

- Multibeam Echosounder (MBES)
- Side Scan Sonar (SSS)
- Video and still images
- Magnetometer
- Cable tracker

4.5. The surveys and inspections will utilise either vessel-based instruments or traditional methods such as divers. Survey platforms may also include Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs), Unmanned Surface Vehicles (USVs) or Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs) which have been equipped with suitable sensor packages.

4.6. The frequency of marine inspections will be risk dependant; based on ongoing gathering of asset data and network operational risks. We typically undertake an as-built survey as part of cable installation activities to firstly ensure the installation meets the expectations of our own internal standards and specifications and those of Marine Directorate but also to ensure the safety of navigation for legitimate users of the sea.

4.7. All subsequent inspections are proposed to take place within a period of four to eight yearly intervals. Following any evidence of wear/abrasion or interference, the frequency of inspections may be increased. No repeat surveys will be conducted on cables already determined to be in critical condition and where previous surveys have demonstrated that no useful data can be acquired due to environmental conditions.

4.8. Survey timing within any year may be influenced by restrictions relating to environmental considerations including breeding seasons for marine and coastal ecological features. An assessment of potential impacts of survey operations on marine and coastal ecological features and designated sites will be undertaken with appropriate mitigation measures identified where necessary. The assessment will be used to support applications for European Protected Species (EPS) and Basking Shark (BS) licences where a requirement for these has been identified.

4.9. Route Position Lists (RPLs) of cables and landfall locations will be communicated to the UKHO and KIS-ORCA in order that relevant charts are updated and disseminated.

4.10. Prior to the commencement of, during and after any route surveys or cable inspections, the Company Fisheries Liaison Officer (CFLO) shall establish and maintain effective communications between SHEPD, any contractors or sub-contractors, and legitimate sea users and this is documented in the *Fishing Liaison Mitigation Action Plan*.

## Cable inspections – Onshore

4.11. We will ensure that shore end condition inspections are undertaken for all our cable locations. This will include the warning signs/beacon. For cable shore ends, or landfalls, inspections are proposed to take place once per year throughout the operational life of the cable. The inspection will be undertaken during a period of low water after spring tides to ensure that any cable exposure has been captured down to the MLWS limit.

4.12. During this inspection, the cable warning markers at the landing sites will be inspected for condition to ensure that they are fit for purpose and if necessary, replaced and thereafter maintained in good condition.

4.13. Where we observe a requirement for increased shore end inspection frequencies, we shall modify our practices as required.

## 5. Maintenance strategy

5.1. Maintenance requirements are driven by physical information gathered on our assets. This information is obtained through inspections of our cables both in the marine environment and at shore end landfall locations where the cables come ashore.

5.2. Maintenance solutions will be project dependant on the nature of the issue. We will enter into discussion with Marine Directorate and relevant parties to determine the licencing and communication requirements for undertaking any maintenance or remedial works where necessary through the operational life of the cable.

5.3. Where our inspection programme identifies that a cable has become a danger to navigation or protection of legitimate users of the sea, we will immediately inform Marine Directorate, Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), UKHO, Northern Lighthouse Board (NLB) and KIS-ORCA to communicate the hazard to the maritime community.

5.4. Where shore end landfall inspections reveal that either cable is exposed down to the tidal level of MLWS, we will enter into discussion with Marine Directorate and relevant parties to determine the licencing and communications required for undertaking any remedial works where necessary.

5.5. We will ensure that appropriate steps are taken to minimise disruption and damage to the beach, foreshore and seabed by any remedial works and aim to restore to the current condition prior to the works commencing.

## **6. Decommissioning strategy**

6.1 For the Eriskay-Barra cable which is subject to the present Marine Licence application, a decommissioning plan shall be developed at the end of its economic life. This shall be submitted to the regulator for their approval.

6.2 The existing Eriskay – Barra cable has been verified through recent inspections to be a candidate for proactive replacement but as of February 2026 remains a viable in-service cable. Upon commissioning of the proposed new cable the existing cable will remain connected to the network with the potential to be used should a fault develop on the replacement cable.