Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm, Offshore EIA Report

Planning Statement

TWP-BOW-ERM-CON-RPT-00007 | April 2026

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Glossary

Defined term	Definition
Additional Mitigation	Also referred to as secondary mitigation which is defined by Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) as: Actions that will require further activity in order to achieve the anticipated outcome. These may be imposed as part of the planning consent, or through inclusion in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report (sic).
Applicant (the)	Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm Limited (BOWFL).
Array Area	The Array Area is the area in which the Offshore Generation Assets will be located and is shown shaded in purple in Figure 1.1 of this Offshore EIA Report.
Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm Limited (BOWFL)	A Special-Purpose Vehicle (SPV) (legal entity) for the purpose of developing the Project. Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm Limited will be the Applicant for the Offshore Application.
Benthic	Living on or in the seabed.
Contracts for Difference (CfD)	The UK Government's main mechanism for supporting low-carbon electricity generation.
Crown Estate Scotland (CES)	Public corporation responsible for the management of land and property in Scotland owned by the monarch.
Draft Plan Option (DPO)	Draft Plan Option areas identified in the 2019 Draft Sectoral Marine Plan (SMP).
Embedded Mitigation	Measures that are adopted as part of the Proposed Development and therefore assessed within the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The proposed approach for the EIA for the Proposed Development is that Embedded Mitigation includes both primary mitigation and tertiary mitigation. These are defined by the IEMA as follows: Primary: Modifications to the location or design of the development made during the pre-application phase that are an inherent part of the project, and do not require additional action to be taken. Tertiary: Actions that would occur with or without input from the EIA feeding into the design process. These include actions that will be undertaken to meet other existing legislative requirements, or actions that are considered to be standard practices used to manage commonly occurring environmental effects.
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	Assessment of the potential likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the physical, biological, and human environment during construction, Operations and Maintenance (O&M) and decommissioning.
Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (EIA Regulations)	Terminology used in this Offshore EIA Report to refer to three sets of regulations: • 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.

Defined term	Definition
Export Cable Corridor	The area of seabed seaward of Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) outlined in blue on Figure 1.1, which connects the Array Area with the Landfall area within which the Offshore Export Cables will be installed.
Habitats Regulations	A term that refers to the collective legislation that translates the Habitats Directive into specific legal obligations in Scotland, namely: the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994; the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017; and the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (in each case as amended).
Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA)	An assessment carried out under the Habitats Regulations to determine if a plan or project could adversely affect the integrity of a European site.
High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC)	A system of power transmission and distribution that utilises alternating current at voltages typically exceeding 1000 volts, as defined by the International Electrotechnical Commission (2015). HVAC systems are designed to efficiently deliver electricity over long distances with minimal losses, leveraging transformers to modify voltage levels.
Inter-Array Cables (IAC)	Cables which link the Wind Turbines to each other and with the Offshore Substation Platforms (OSPs).
Interconnector Cables	Cables which will connect individual OSPs to each other to provide redundancy against cable failure elsewhere.
Intertidal area	The area between MHWS and Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS).
Landfall	The area in which the Offshore Export Cables make landfall and is also the transitional area between the Offshore Transmission Assets and the Onshore Transmission Assets. Located in the intertidal area (see definition above) at Benholm.
Marine Directorate (MD)	The Marine Directorate of the Scottish Government, formerly known as Marine Scotland. The planning and licensing authority for Scotland's seas and custodian of Scotland's National Marine Plan (NMP). The Marine Directorate - Licensing and Operations Team (MD-LOT) are specifically responsible for managing Section 36 Consent and Marine Licence Applications seaward of MHWS.
Marine Directorate – Science, Evidence, Data and Digital (MD-SEDD)	The scientific division of the MD, which provides expert scientific, economic and technical advice and services on issues relating to marine fisheries, aquaculture, marine renewable energy, and the aquatic environment and its flora and fauna.
Marine Licence	A Marine Licence permits the undertaking of different activities in the marine environment, including construction, the deposition or removal of substances or objects, and dredging. The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 requires Marine Licences to be obtained for licensable activities taking place within Scottish Territorial Waters (MHWS to 12 nm). The Marine and Coastal Access Act (MCAA) 2009 requires a Marine Licence to be obtained for licensable marine activities within the Scottish offshore region (12 nm – 200 nm).

Defined term	Definition
Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)	MPAs are designated under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Marine and Coastal Access Act (MCAA) 2009. The MPA network protects nationally and internationally important marine wildlife, habitats, geology, and underwater landforms. Scotland's MPAs are significantly important for European, North-East Atlantic, and global MPA networks.
Maximum Design Scenario (MDS)	The scenario within the design envelope likely to result in the greatest impact on a particular topic receptor, and therefore the one that should be assessed for that topic receptor.
Mean High Water Springs (MHWS)	The average tidal height throughout the year of two successive high waters during those periods of 24 hours when the range of the tide is at its greatest.
Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS)	The average tidal height throughout the year of two successive low waters during those periods of 24 hours when the range of the tide is at its greatest.
Mitigation	Measures to avoid, prevent, reduce or control effects on the environment. See also definitions for Additional Mitigation and Embedded Mitigation.
National Grid	The national electricity transmission network.
Offshore Application	Term used to refer to the applications associated with the Proposed Development. The Applicant will apply for: • A Section 36 Consent under the Electricity Act 1989; and • Marine Licence(s) under Marine Scotland Act 2010 and Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.
Offshore Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report (hereafter, 'Offshore EIA Report')	Document prepared to report the findings of the EIA for the Proposed Development and produced in accordance with the EIA Regulations. An Offshore EIA will be submitted to support the Offshore Application for the Proposed Development.
Offshore Export Cables	Subsea cables used to transmit electricity generated offshore by the Wind Turbines from the OSPs to shore. The Transition Joint Bay (TJB) is the location where the Offshore Export Cables terminate, and the onshore cabling begins.
Offshore Generation Assets	The infrastructure of the Proposed Development required to generate electricity comprising of the Wind Turbines, Wind Turbine foundations and associated infrastructure e.g. IACs.
Offshore Infrastructure	All of the Offshore Infrastructure associated with the Proposed Development that is located seaward of MHWS, comprising the Offshore Generation Assets and the Offshore Transmission Assets.
Offshore Scoping Report (BOWFL, 2024)	The Report that presents the findings of the EIA scoping process undertaken for the Proposed Development with the purpose of obtaining a Scoping Opinion. The Offshore Scoping Report, which was submitted to MD-LOT in August 2024, defines what is intended to be assessed and reported as part of the EIA.
Offshore Substation Platform(s) (OSPs)	OSPs comprise the support structure, topside and electrical components used for collecting and/or converting electricity generated by the Wind Turbines for transmission by the Offshore Export Cables.

Defined term	Definition
Offshore Transmission Assets	The infrastructure of the Proposed Development required to transmit the generated electricity comprising of the OSPs, Offshore Export Cables and associated infrastructure up to MHWS.
Onshore Scoping Report	Document prepared to comply with The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 in order to provide information on the potential impacts of the Onshore Transmission Assets
Onshore Substation	Part of an electrical transmission and distribution system. Substations transform voltage from high to low, or the reverse by means of electrical transformers.
Onshore Transmission Assets	The transmission infrastructure associated with the Project above MLWS which will be covered by the Onshore Scoping Report and subsequent EIA Report.
Operation and Maintenance (O&M)	The phase of the Proposed Development following completion of construction. This phase of development includes routine inspections, repairs and replacement of infrastructure and equipment (including interconnector and IACs), scour protection replenishment or replacement, major component replacement, painting and/or other coating works, removal of marine growth, replacement of access ladders and geophysical surveys.
Option to Lease Agreement (OLA)	An agreement between CES and a developer, permitting the future development of offshore wind within an agreed area.
Physical processes	The collective term for the following: hydrodynamics (water levels and currents); winds and waves; stratification and frontal systems; geology and seabed sediments (including sediment transport); seabed geomorphology; and coastal geomorphology.
Plan Option Area (POA)	A location identified in the Sectoral Marine Plan (SMP) as a preferred area for commercial scale offshore wind development.
Pre-Application Consultation (PAC)	Statutory pre application consultation with communities and stakeholders with regard to the consent applications for the Project.
Project (the)	An overarching term for the Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm (Bowdun OWF) comprising the offshore and onshore infrastructure required to generate and transmit electricity from the Array Area to the onshore Grid Connection Point (GCP). The Project includes the Offshore Generation Assets, the Offshore Transmission Assets and the Onshore Transmission Assets.
Project Design Envelope (PDE)	A description of the range of possible elements that make up the design options for the Proposed Development under consideration when the exact engineering parameters are not yet known.
Proposed Development	Term used to define the Offshore Infrastructure associated with the Project seaward of MHWS for which consent is being sought. Further details of the parameters are included in Chapter 3: Project Description.
Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA)	The RIAA provides detailed information to support the process of Appropriate Assessment (undertaken by the competent authority) as part of the HRA, which evaluates the potential impacts of a project or plan on European sites.

Defined term	Definition
Scottish local authority	A council constituted under Section 2 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, providing public services, including planning, and is accountable to their local electorates.
Scottish Ministers (the)	The decision makers with regard to Marine Licence(s) and Section 36 Consent applications in Scottish Offshore and Territorial Waters.
Scottish Offshore Waters	The area between the seaward boundary of Scottish Territorial Seas and the seaward boundary of the Scottish part of the EEZ.
Scottish Territorial Seas	The territorial waters of Scotland that extend from MHWS out to 12 nm, as defined by the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.
ScotWind Leasing Round	A seabed leasing round run by CES to grant property rights for the seabed in Scottish waters for new commercial scale offshore wind project development. ScotWind Leasing must be sited within POA of the SMP.
Section 36 Consent	Scottish Ministers' consent under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 required for the generating assets of the Proposed Development.
Site Boundary	The boundary within which all elements of the Proposed Development will be located. The Site Boundary comprises the Array Area and Export Cable Corridor which ends at MHWS. This area may be refined through future site selection work, with details presented in this Offshore EIA Report.
Study Area	For each environmental topic, the baseline environment will be characterised, and the potential environmental impacts will be described within a topic-specific study area. Specific study areas are defined for each topic and are based on the maximum spatial extent across which potential impacts of the Project may be experienced by the relevant receptors (i.e. Zone of Influence).
Thistle Wind Partners (TWP)	The Joint Venture (JV) of DEME Concessions, Qair Marine, and Aspiravi International that have partnered to develop the Proposed Development.
Wind Turbines	Structures comprising of a tubular tower, rotor blades, and a nacelle which houses the Wind Turbine generator.

Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AD	Air Defence
ADD	Acoustic Deterrent Device
BOWFL	Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm Limited
ATC	Air Traffic Control
ATM	Air Traffic Management
BSI	British Standards Institution
CEA	Cumulative Effects Assessment
CES	Crown Estate Scotland
CRM	Collision Risk Management
DCO	Development Consent Order
DECC	Department of Energy & Climate Change
EcIA	Ecological Impact Assessment
ECoW	Environmental Clerk of Works
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EMEC	European Marine Energy Centre
EMI	Electromagnetic Induction
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
EPCI	Engineering, Procurement, Construction, and Installation
EPS	European Protected Species
ES	Environmental Statement
EU	European Union
FEED	Front End Engineering Design
FLOWW	Fishing Liaison with Offshore Wind and Wet Renewables Group
FMMS	Fisheries Management and Mitigation Strategy
GCP	Grid Connection Point
GIS	Geographic Information System
HRA	Habitat Regulations Appraisal
HVAC	High Voltage Alternating Current
IAC	Inter-Array Cable
IEMA	Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment
ISO	International Organization for Standardisation
JV	Joint Venture
LMP	Lighting and Marking Plan
MD-LOT	Marine Directorate-Licensing Operations Team
MDS	Maximum Design Scenario
MHWS	Mean High Water Springs

Acronym	Definition
MD-SEDD	Marine Directorate – Science, Evidence, Data and Digital
MLWS	Mean Low Water Springs
MMMP	Marine Mammal Mitigation Plan
MMO	Marine Management Organisation
NETS	National Electricity Transmission System
NNG	Neart na Gaoithe
NOREL	Nautical and Offshore Renewable Energy Liaison
NRW	National Resources Wales
NSVMP	Navigational Safety and Vessel Management Plan
NTS	Non-Technical Summary
ORJIP	Offshore Renewables Joint Industry Programme
OSP	Offshore Substation Platform
OWF	Offshore Wind Farm
PAC	Pre-Application Consultation
PAD	Protocol for Archaeological Discoveries
PDE	Project Design Envelope
POA	Plan Option Area
PVA	Population Viability Analysis
RAG	Regional Advisory Groups
ROV	Remotely Operated Vehicle
RIAA	Report to inform Appropriate Assessment
SBP	Sub Bottom Profiler
SC	Subsea Collector
SDI	Scottish Development Institution
SMP	Sectoral Marine Plan
SNCB	Statutory Nature Conservation Body
SPMP	Scour Protection Management Plan
SPV	Special Purpose Vehicle
SSE	Scottish and Southern Energy
SSS	Side Scan Sonar
TWP	Thistle Wind Partners Limited
UK	United Kingdom
UKOG	United Kingdom Oil and Gas
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

Table of Units

Units	Definition
GW	GigaWatt
km	Kilometre
MW	MegaWatt
nm	Nautical mile

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview of Scheme

1.1.1 This Planning Statement supports an application to the Marine Directorate Licensing and Operations Team (MD-LOT), acting on behalf of Scottish Ministers, for the offshore elements of the Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm (OWF) (hereafter known as the 'Proposed Development'). The Proposed Development covers the Option Lease Area (OLA) comprises of the Array Area, which is located in the E3 Plan Option Area (POA) detailed in the Scottish Sectoral Marine Plan (SMP) (Scottish Government, 2020), and the Export Cable Corridor. The Array Area is located 38 km from the Aberdeenshire coast at its closest point, covering an area of 187 km^2. The Proposed Development will comprise of Wind Turbines (fixed foundations), Inter-Array Cables (IACs), Offshore Substation Platforms (OSPs), Interconnector Cables, Offshore Export Cables and any necessary scour/cable protection. The Export Cable Corridor will include a maximum of three High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) Offshore Export Cables, each with a length of up to 70 km and will make Landfall at Benholm, Aberdeenshire.

1.1.2 The Site Boundary has been established through the ScotWind leasing process and refined through a review of the environmental and engineering constraint analysis, together with outputs from site surveys and subsequent design.

1.1.3 The overall capacity for the Project is up to 1,008 MW but is dependent on the number and capacity of the Wind Turbines installed within the parameters of the Project Design Envelope (PDE), defined for this assessment and application. The most appropriate locations for the Wind Turbines will be determined through detailed site investigation works and this will further improve understanding of the extent of the area for development. This will allow for the refinement and confirmation of the Proposed Development generating capacity before construction.

1.1.4 IACs will be used to connect the Wind Turbines to up to three OSPs located within the Array Area. There will be up to three Interconnector Cables between the OSPs. Electricity will be transmitted to shore by up to three Offshore Export Cables, which will run from the OSPs to Landfall at Benholm, Aberdeenshire. From there the onshore Export Cable will connect to the Grid Connection Point (GCP) which forms part of the National Electricity Transmission System (NETS). The GCP however, does not form part of this consent submission and is subject to a separate planning application with Aberdeenshire Council, the details of which are found in the Onshore EIA Report. Minimum and maximum water depths of the Array Area are 55 m to 75 m respectively, with an average water depth of 65 m. The Offshore Export Cables will be brought onshore via three cable ducts constructed using trenchless technology, such as Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) or pipe jacking.

1.1.5 The proposal began from 2020, when Crown Estate Scotland (CES) launched the ScotWind leasing process to facilitate the increase in offshore wind capacity to support the Scottish Government's 2045 Net Zero target (Scottish Government, 2024a). The Climate Change Committee (CCC) estimates that around 88 GW of offshore wind by 2040 will be needed to deliver Net Zero, with the combined capacity of the ScotWind leasing round (27.6 GW) covering a significant portion of this (CCC, 2025; CES, 2022). On top of the progression towards the 2045 Net Zero and 2050 offshore wind capacity targets (43-50 GW by 2030), the ScotWind leasing round also has wider benefits such as creating Scottish jobs and investment, supporting the supply chain and providing additional revenue for the Scottish Government.

1.1.6 Following the ScotWind leasing round in 2022, Thistle Wind Partners (TWP), as the development company for Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm Limited (BOWFL) (hereafter referred to as the 'Applicant'), was successful in securing the option to develop a commercial scale Offshore Wind Farm (OWF) project in the E3 POA as defined in the Scottish Government's Sectoral Marine Plan (SMP) for Offshore Wind Energy (Scottish Government, 2020).

1.1.7 Further details of the site selection process and design evolution of the Proposed Development are provided within the Offshore EIA Report, Volume 1, Chapter 6: Site Selection and Consideration of Alternatives. A detailed project description for the Bowdun OWF is included in Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description.

1.1.8 Construction activities associated with the Proposed Development are anticipated to last for a period of five years and are expected to commence in 2031. Pre-construction surveys, such as further geophysical and geotechnical investigations, would be undertaken in advance of construction activities. The Applicant is seeking consent for a 30-year operational period. The decommissioning process will follow a similar programme to construction, although in a reverse manner.

1.2 The Applicant

1.2.1 BOWFL is the Applicant for the Project and is owned by DEME and Aspiravi. DEME is a Belgium based global solutions provider and a world leader in the highly specialised fields of offshore energy, dredging, marine infrastructure, and environmental works with almost 150 years of experience. DEME have a wealth of experience in fixed foundation installation having installed over 2,700 offshore Wind Turbines to date, having a strong global portfolio, being involved in over 70 offshore wind projects. Capabilities of DEME cover everything from Site Investigation to the full Engineering, Procurement, Construction, and Installation (EPCI) scope. Local examples include the Moray East 950 MW offshore wind project (foundations EPCI and IACs installation, completed

2021), and Neart na Gaoithe (NNG) 450 MW (EPCI cable installation, completed 2024).

1.2.2 Aspiravi International, a subsect of the Aspiravi Group, develops, implements and operates renewable energy projects with a total installed capacity of over 1.7 GW (Aspiravi, 2024). The Aspiravi projects primarily consist of wind energy (both onshore and offshore), however the Aspiravi Group also own and operate biomass installations, biogas engines and hydro-electric installations (Aspiravi, 2024).

1.2.3 TWP is an offshore wind developer founded in 2020 by a Joint Venture (JV) between of three companies -DEME, Qair Marine and Aspiravi International. Together, the founding companies and the TWP team have a strong background in offshore renewable energy development and delivery, and associated port developments. TWP is the development company for the Project on behalf of the Applicant.

1.3 Purpose and Structure of the Planning Statement

1.3.1 The Proposed Development is a generating station with a capacity of greater than 50 MW located in Scottish Offshore Waters (between 12 nm to 200 nm). This Planning Statement accordingly accompanies an application seeking the following consent and licences as part of this application:

- Section 36 consent under the Electricity Act 1989 for an offshore generating station in the Scottish offshore region (12 to 200 nm);
- Marine Licence covering the Offshore Generation Assets; and
- Marine Licence covering the Offshore Transmission Assets.

1.3.2 The Applicant may also apply later for further consents, licences and permissions, including but not limited to:

- Safety zone declarations during construction and operation under the Energy Act 2004; and
- Decommissioning scheme under the Energy Act 2004

1.3.3 The purpose of this Planning Statement is to provide a description of the Proposed Development and consider the immediate and wider need and requirements of the Proposed Development, taking into consideration marine planning, terrestrial planning, and energy policies including those set out in the following:

- UK Marine Policy Statement (UK Government, 2011);
- National Policy Statement for energy infrastructure (EN-1);
- National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure (EN-3);
- Scotland's National Marine Plan (NMP);
- Scotland's Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (SMP);

- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4); and
- Local policies set out in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2023)

1.3.4 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 Development and wider Project.

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

1.4 The Requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment

1.4.1 The requirement for EIA in Scotland originates from the European Union (EU) Directive on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (EIA Directive) (2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU), which has been transposed into Scottish law through the following regulations (collectively referred to hereafter as the EIA Regulations):

- 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.

1.4.2 Due to the size, nature and location of the Proposed Development, it was considered that an EIA was required, and the Offshore Application for the Proposed Development is therefore supported by an EIA Report.

1.4.3 When applying for a Section 36 consent or a Marine Licence, an EIA Report is required to be prepared and submitted to support these applications if the Proposed Development is likely to have a significant effect on the environment due to its size, nature or location.

1.4.4 The nature and potential impacts of the Proposed Development mean that this is an EIA development and therefore the EIA Report, and this Planning Statement that draws upon it, have been prepared in support of the Proposed Development.

1.4.5 An Offshore Scoping Report, (BOWFL, 2024) was submitted to MD-LOT, in August 2024. The Offshore Scoping Report identified a number of environmental and human sensitive receptors, and the predicted impacts of the Proposed 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 OWFs, and through pre-scoping consultation workshops.

1.4.6 A Scoping Opinion was received in November 2024, from MD-LOT (MD-LOT, 2024) with statutory consultee and stakeholder input. Further information on the Scoping Opinion consultation responses is discussed in the relevant EIA Report topic chapters detailed below. Where impacts have been scoped out, these are outlined in each chapter.

1.4.7 The Offshore EIA Report topic chapters are included in Volume 2 and are as follows:

- Chapter 7 Physical Processes
- Chapter 8 Benthic Ecology
- Chapter 9 Fish and Shellfish Ecology
- Chapter 10 Marine Mammals
- Chapter 11 Ornithology
- Chapter 12 Offshore Bats
- Chapter 13 Commercial Fisheries
- Chapter 14 Shipping and Navigation
- Chapter 15 Aviation and Radar
- Chapter 16 Infrastructure and Other Users
- Chapter 17 Major Accidents and Disasters
- Chapter 18 Socio-economics, Tourism and Recreation
- Chapter 19 Marine Archaeology
- Chapter 20 Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Chapter 21 Cultural Heritage
- Chapter 22 Climate Change

1.4.8 This Planning Statement summarises that detailed EIA work presented in the EIA Report and presents the planning case for the Proposed Development.

Application Documents

1.4.9 The full application consists of the following documentation:

- Section 36 and Marine Licence Application Forms
- This Planning Statement
- The Offshore EIA Report

2 Description of Site and Proposed Development

2.1.1 The Project is comprised of offshore and onshore elements. As with the Offshore EIA Report, this Planning Statement supports the consent for the offshore elements of the Project.

2.2 Location and Site Information

2.2.1 The Site Boundary comprises of the Array Area, which is an area of 187 km^2 detailed as E3 POA in the Scottish Sectoral Marine Plan (Scottish Government, 2020), and the Export Cable Corridor. The Array Area is located 38 km from the Aberdeenshire coast (Figure 2.2). The Export Cable Corridor extends from the Array Area and will make Landfall at Benholm, Aberdeenshire.

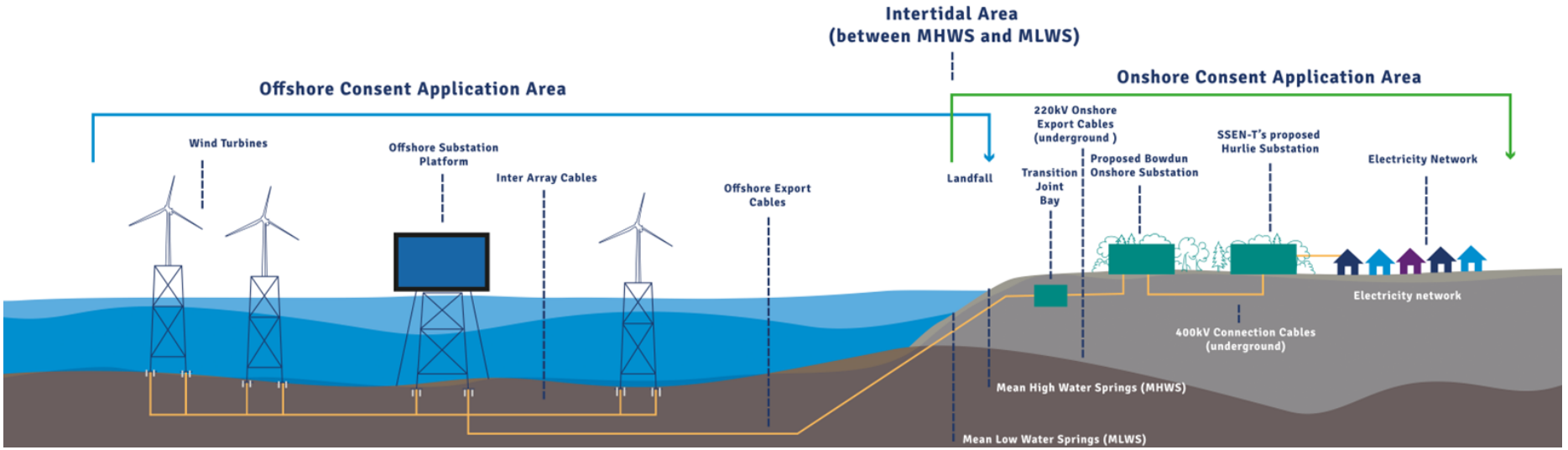

Figure 2.1: Project Overview

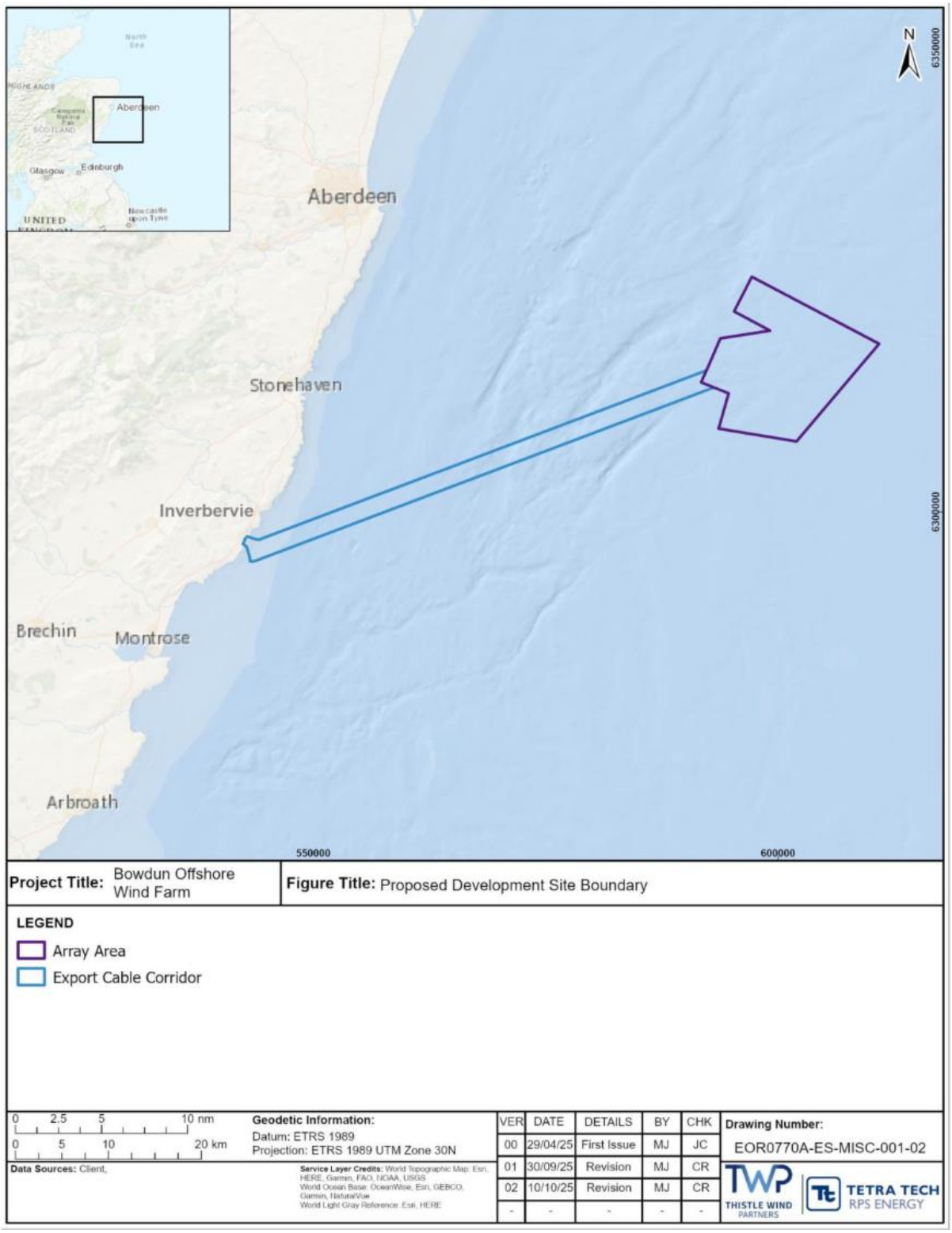

Figure 2.2: Proposed Development Site Boundary

2.3 Proposed Infrastructure

2.3.1 The following Offshore Infrastructure components are relevant to this Planning Statement:

- Up to 67 Wind Turbines;
- Wind Turbine foundations (fixed bottom);
- Up to three OSPs;
- OSP foundations (fixed bottom);
- Offshore cables IAC, Interconnector Cables, and Offshore Export Cables); and
- Scour protection, cable protection and utility crossings.

2.3.2 The main infrastructure components for which consent is sought (Figure 2.1), are:

Offshore Generation Assets

Wind Turbines

2.3.3 The Proposed Development will comprise up to 67 Wind Turbines, with the final number determined by turbine capacity and the findings of environmental and engineering surveys. Consent is sought for a flexible design envelope that accommodates future technological advances, with maximum turbine dimensions defined within the Project Design Envelope. These include parameters such as a maximum rotor diameter of 326 m, blade tip height of up to 359.12 m above LAT, and a hub height of up to 196 m above LAT. Turbines will consist of a tower, nacelle, hub and three blades, installed on fixed foundations (Figure 2.3).

2.3.4 The turbine layout will be optimised to maximise wind resource and respond to seabed conditions, while also minimising environmental effects and avoiding conflicts with other marine users, including fisheries, shipping, and subsea infrastructure. Layout development will take account of agreed buffers around existing and planned cables, including Southern Electricity Network (SSEN) and National Grid for the Eastern Green Link (EGL) 2 High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) cable, with final layouts subject to confirmation at the post-consent design stage and approval by MD-LOT. Several indicative layouts are provided, including configurations for 67, 50 and 40 turbines, each with a number of spare turbine locations and up to three OSP locations. These spare positions offer flexibility where seabed conditions require micro-siting, although the final built layout will not exceed 67 turbines Figure 2.4).

Wind Turbine Foundations and Support Structures

2.3.5 The Proposed Development will use fixed foundations, with monopiles, piled or drilled jackets or suction-bucket jackets included within the design envelope to retain flexibility pending turbine selection and detailed geotechnical investigation. Monopiles comprise a single steel tube

installed by piling or drive-drill-drive techniques, while jacket foundations use three- or four-leg lattice structures fixed to the seabed with driven or drilled pin piles; suction-bucket jackets use suction caissons instead of piling, avoiding underwater noise during installation. All foundation types would be fabricated onshore and installed using specialist vessels, with Scour Protection—typically rock placement—applied as required to prevent seabed erosion. Up to 67 foundations of each type are assessed within the PDE. Installation methods, hammer energies and any noise-mitigation measures (such as soft-start procedures) will be refined through engineering design and environmental assessment.

Inter-array cables

2.3.6 Electricity will be exported from turbines to OSPs using IACs arranged in strings, with optional backlinks for redundancy. Static IACs will be installed via J-tubes or cable entry holes and either buried to target depths of around 1.5 m (subject to Cable Burial Risk Assessment (CBRA)) or protected with external systems—such as rock placement, grout bags, concrete mattresses or Cable Protection Systems (CPS) —where burial is not feasible. Interconnector Cables between OSPs will follow similar installation and protection principles. External protection may also be required at cable crossings, where berms, mattresses or rock/grout bags will be deployed as appropriate. Cable burial, external protection and seabed preparation (e.g., trenching, jetting, dredging or rock placement) will be confirmed post-consent once ground conditions and environmental constraints are fully defined.

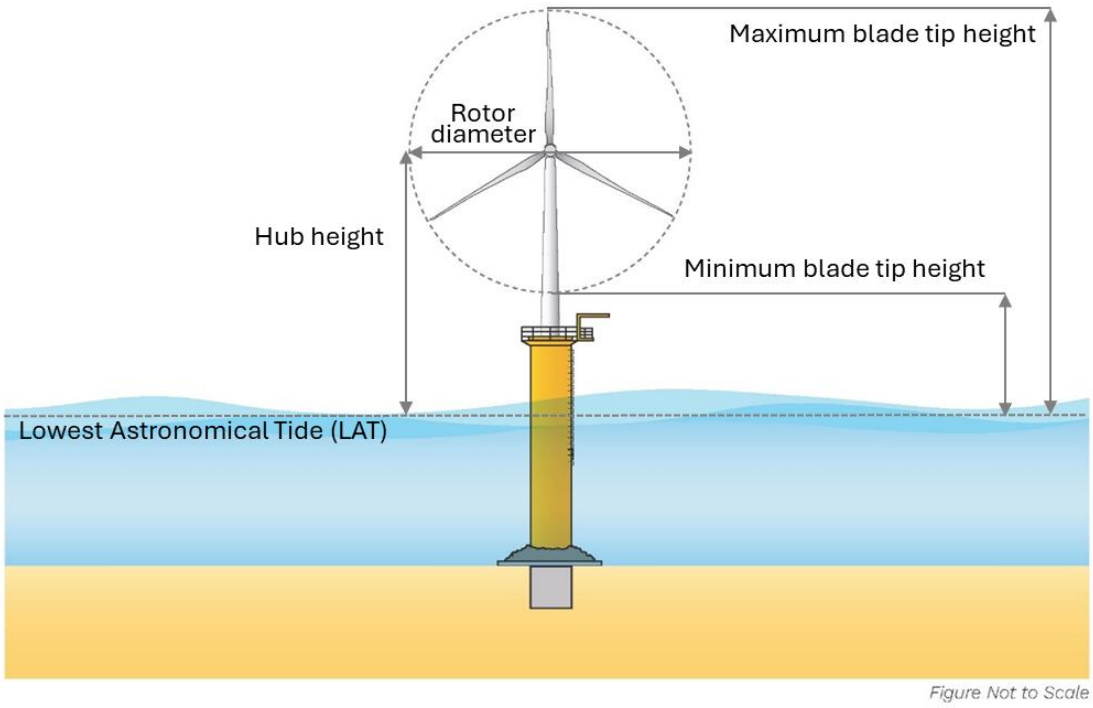

Figure 2.3 Indicative Schematic of a Generic Fixed Wind Turbine

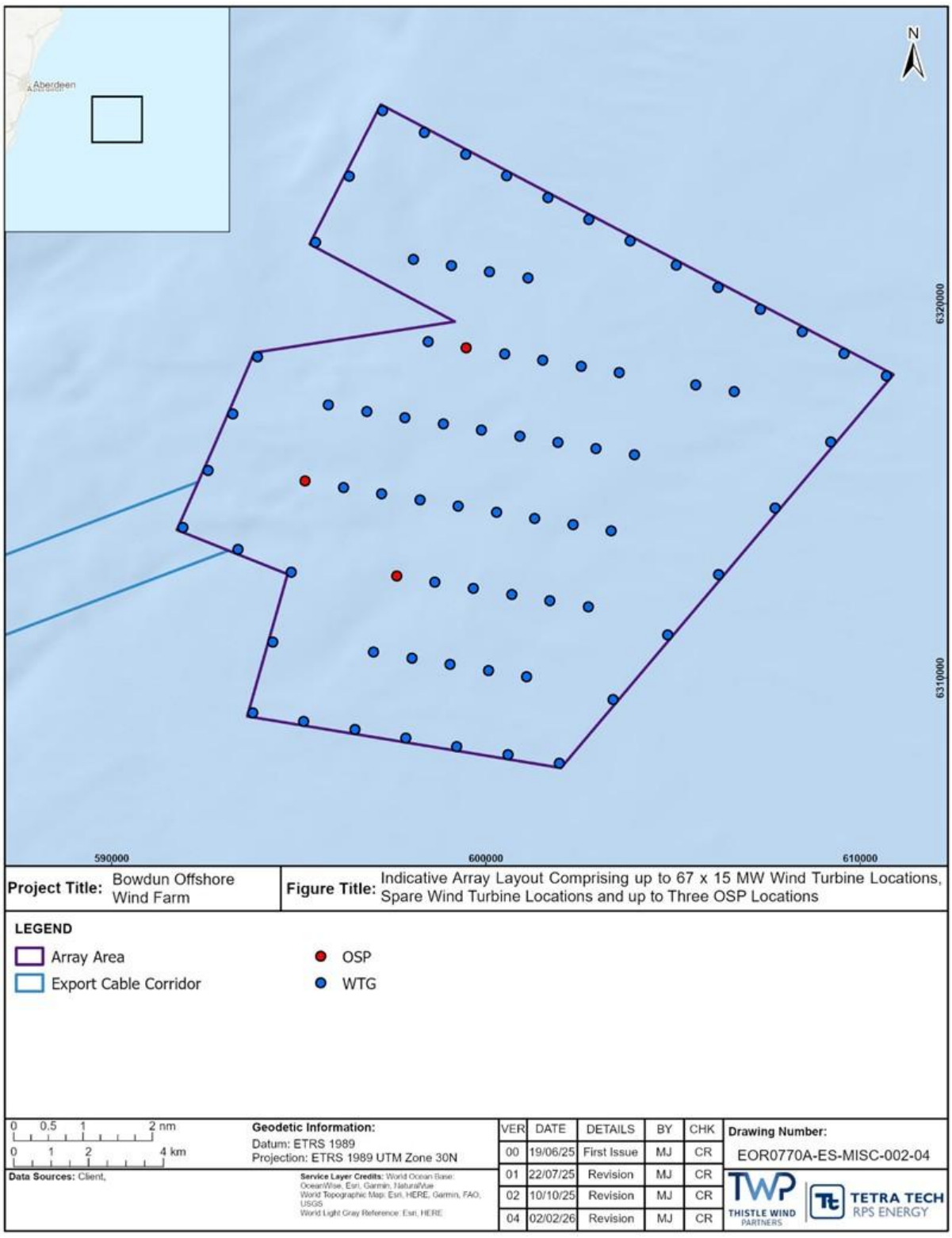

Figure 2.4: Indicative Array Layout Comprising up to 67 x 15 MW Wind Turbine Locations, Spare Wind Turbine Locations and up to 3 OSP Locations

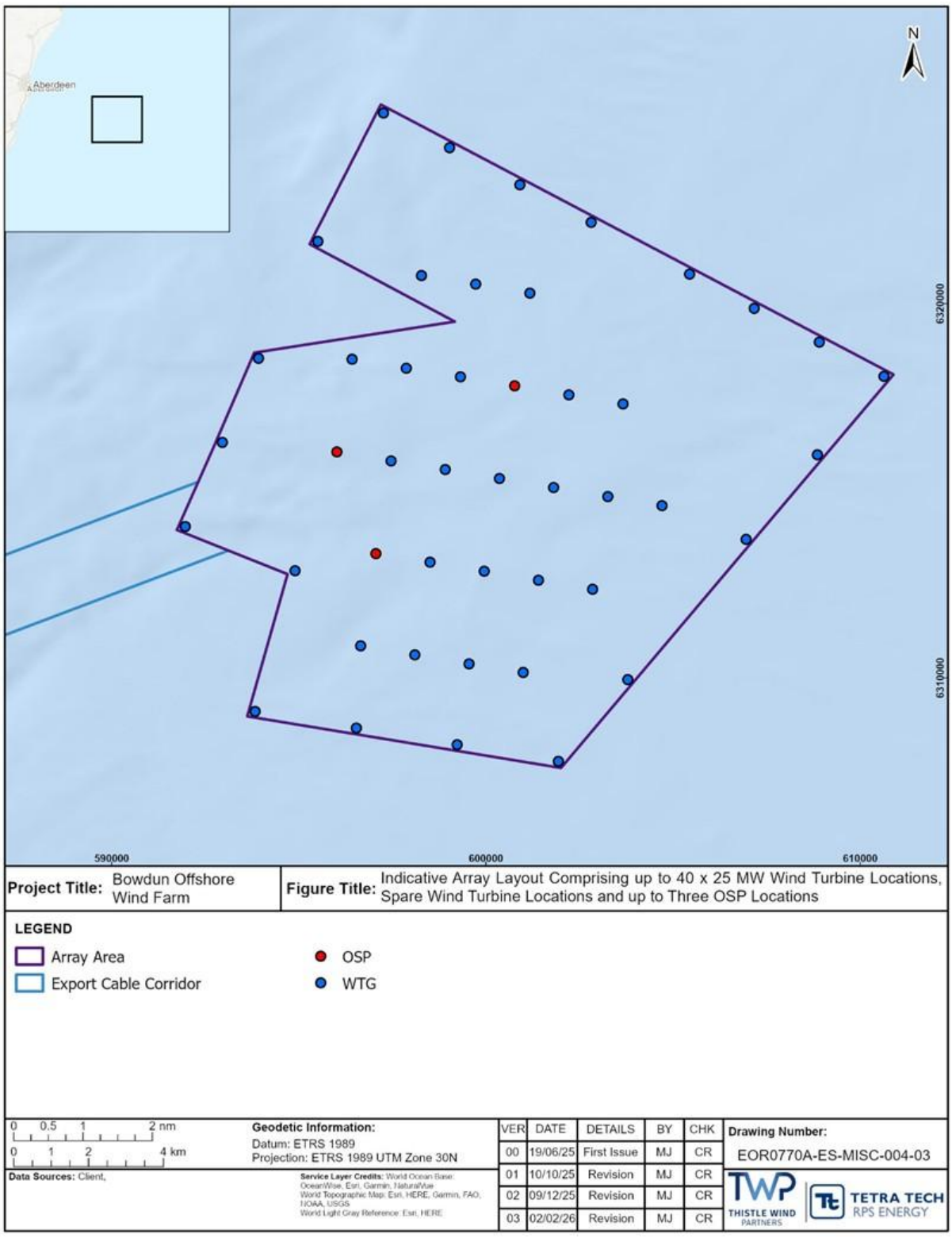

Figure 2.5: Indicative Array Layout Comprising up to 40 x 25 MW Wind Turbine Locations, 4 Spare Wind Turbine Locations and up to 3 OSP Locations

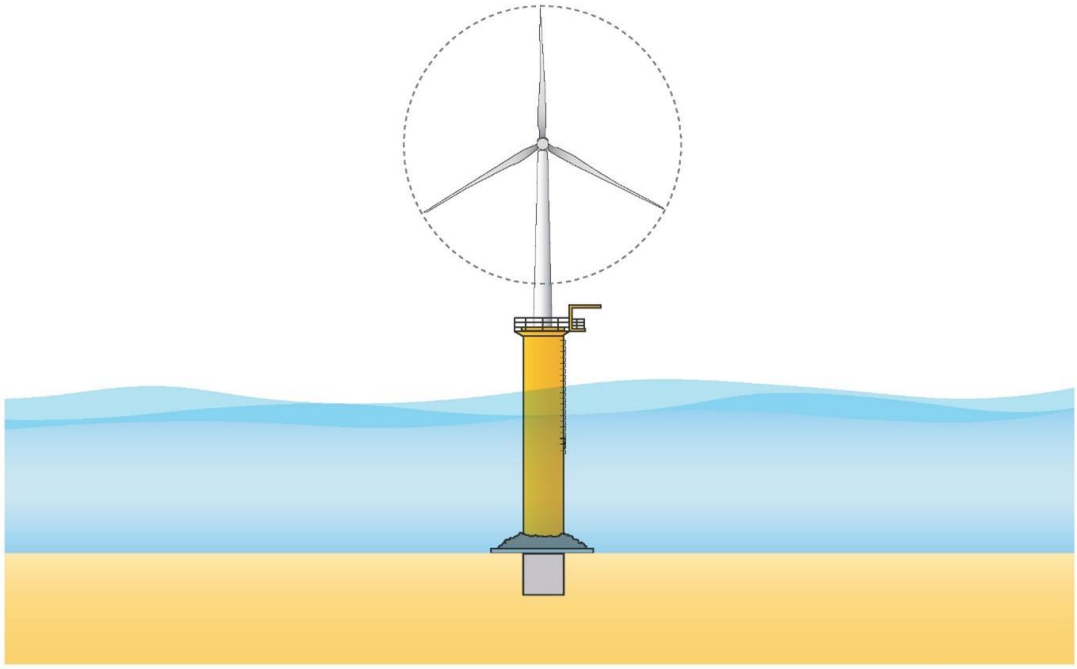

Figure 2.6: Monopile Foundation Design

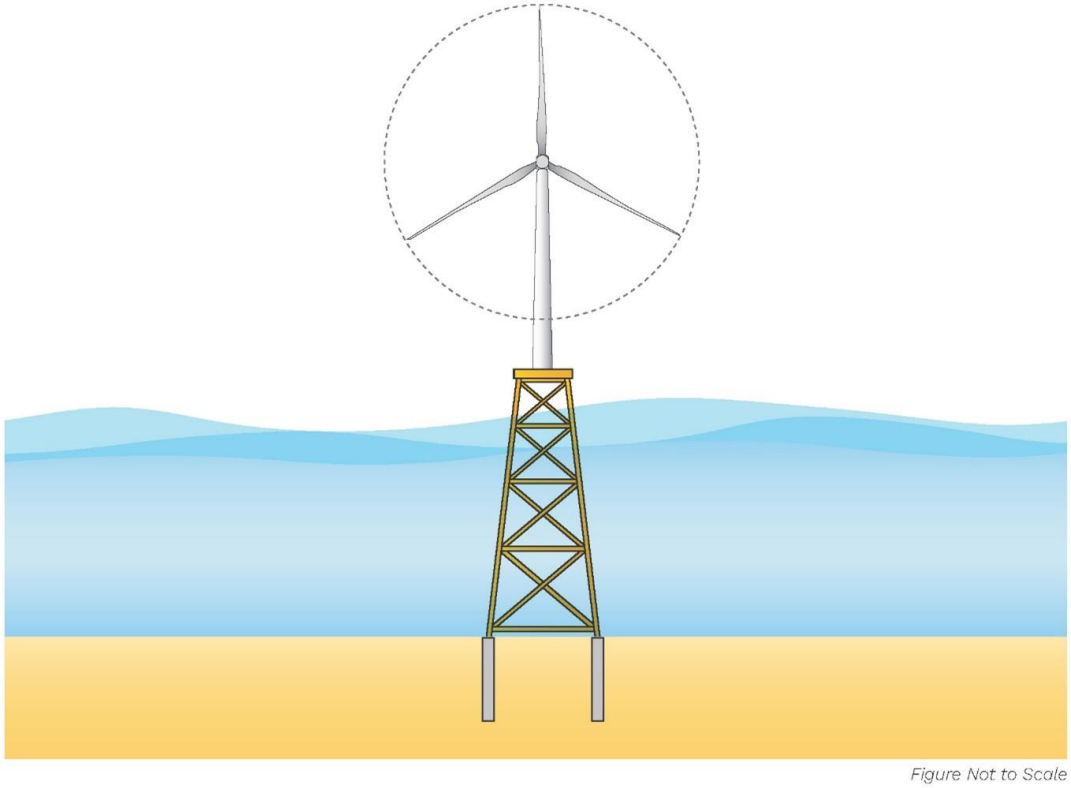

Figure 2.7: Piled Jacket Foundation Design

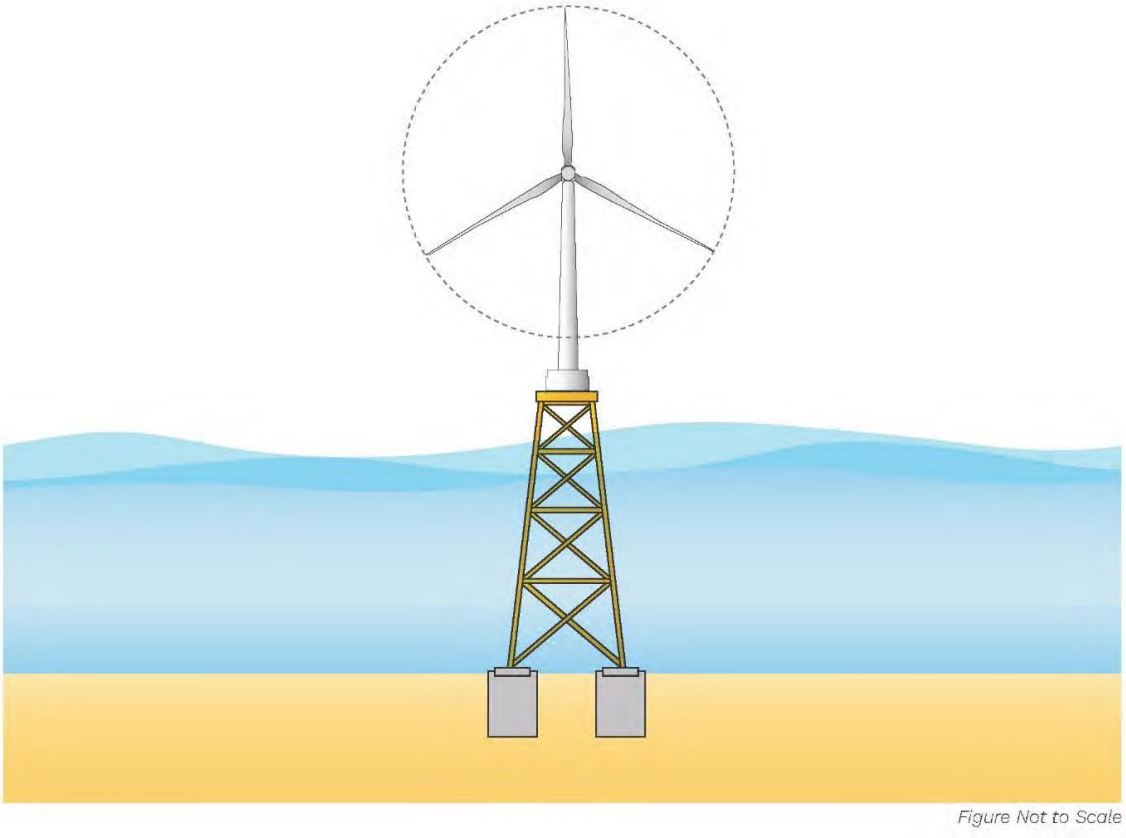

Figure 2.8: Jacket Foundations with Suction Buckets Design

Offshore Transmission Assets

Offshore Substation Platforms

2.3.7 OSPs are required to collect power generated by the Wind Turbines and transform it to a higher voltage for efficient transmission to shore. The Proposed Development may require up to three OSPs, all of which will be located within the Array Area.

2.3.8 HVAC transmission technology will be used. The final number, locations and specifications of the OSPs will be confirmed during detailed design (post-application). All OSPs will be marked appropriately for aviation and navigation, including lighting and paint finishes. A typical illustrative OSP design is shown in Figure 2.9.

2.3.9 The PDE for the OSP topsides and foundations is presented in the following subsections.

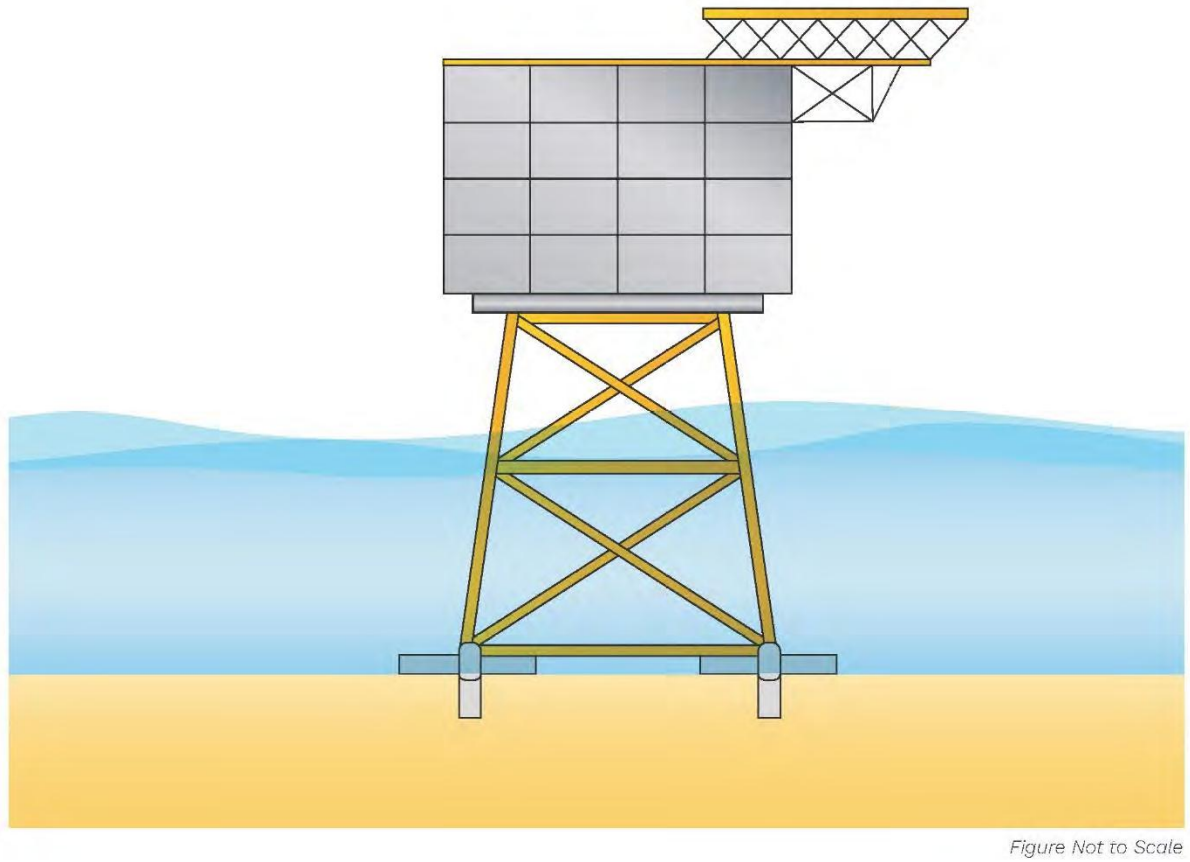

Figure 2.9: Illustrative OSP on a typical jacket foundation

Offshore Platform Topsides

2.3.10 Up to three OSP topsides are included within the design envelope, with maximum dimensions of 100 m in length, 80 m in width, and a height of approximately 60 m above LAT (excluding lightning protection).

Offshore Platform Foundations

2.3.11 Each OSP will be installed on a piled jacket foundation, with up to eight legs per foundation, fabricated onshore and transported offshore for installation. Pile installation will use similar techniques to turbine foundations—hydraulic hammers, vibration, drilling, or drive-drill-drive depending on seabed conditions.

2.3.12 Under OSP Option 1 (two OSPs), each foundation may require up to 18 piles, with a maximum of 36 piles needed for two the OSPs. For OSP Option 2 (one OSP), a maximum of 18 piles will be required for the foundation of a single OSP. For OSP Option 3 (three OSPs) a maximum of eight piles per OSP foundation with up to 24 piles for three OSPs. Scour Protection requirements mirror those described for Wind Turbine foundations. The PDE has up to two concurrent piling/drilling events for OSP foundations.

Offshore Export Cables

2.3.13 Electricity will be transmitted from the OSPs to Landfall via up to three HVAC export cable circuits, each with an indicative maximum length of 70 km. Landfall is located at Benholm, Aberdeenshire, where a trenchless installation method (e.g. HDD) will bring the cables ashore. Where possible, export cables will be buried to a target depth of 1.5 m, informed by a CBRA, with deeper burial in areas of higher fishing or shipping activity. Installation will use a range of trenching or jetting techniques, and a combination of burial and external protection (e.g. concrete mattresses, rock placement, cast-iron shells, PU/PE sleeving) may be required where burial is constrained. Up to six cable crossings may be required within the Export Cable Corridor, each incorporating appropriate additional protection.

Scour Protection

2.3.14 Hydrodynamic conditions within the offshore site—such as wave action, currents and storm events—can mobilise seabed sediments and create localised erosion, resulting in scour around wind turbine foundations. The extent and behaviour of scour are influenced by factors including the shape and profile of seabed structures, the nature of the underlying sediments, and prevailing metocean conditions.

2.3.15 To manage this risk, Scour Protection will be installed around turbine foundations. The most common approach involves placing layers of graded rock to stabilise the seabed and prevent erosion. In some circumstances, flexible rock-filled mesh bags may be used, allowing the protection material to conform to the seabed and the foundation structure. The precise type and quantity of protection required will depend on the final foundation design and will be informed by geotechnical investigations, meteorological and oceanographic conditions, water depth, and maintenance considerations.

Interconnector Cables

2.3.16 Interconnector Cables will link the OSPs, providing redundancy within the electrical network. These cables will generally be buried to a target depth of around 1.5 m, with deeper burial in areas subject to greater risk, such as busy shipping zones. Where burial is not feasible—for example at foundation interfaces, or where the cable route crosses bedrock, existing pipelines or cables—alternative protection measures will be used. These may include protection systems such as polyurethane, polyethylene, steel or iron cable protection shells, rock placement, grout bags, concrete mattresses, or protective sleeves.

2.3.17 Interconnector cable installation will follow similar methodologies to those used for IACs, with final installation methods confirmed during detailed design.

Onshore Elements

2.3.18 Regarding the onshore elements, a Planning Permission in Principle application, under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), was submitted to Aberdeenshire Council on the 10 December 2025 (Ref. No: APP/2025/1952) for the onshore elements of the Project, which includes transmission infrastructure above Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS). Therefore, the onshore elements do not form part of this application.

Design and Engineering Evolution

2.3.19 The design and engineering options available for the Proposed Development were influenced by the specific conditions and environmental factors within the Site Boundary. The Applicant has carried out several studies in the early development stage to address existing unknowns and to refine the design parameters. Further studies are expected to be completed beyond the planning phase and into procurement and contracting to acquire further site-specific information which will inform the final design of the Proposed Development. This includes determining final Wind Turbine numbers, size and layout, and foundation design. The detailed design will be confirmed post-consent, subject to further site investigation and technical design studies.

2.3.20 Once additional information becomes available from the further site investigations, the final detailed design will be further developed, with commercial availability of technologies also impacting future design. It should be noted that the final detailed design for the Proposed Development will be within the PDE parameters presented in this report, a standard approach for large scale energy projects, such as the Proposed Development.

2.3.21 Since the submission of the Bowdun OWF Offshore Scoping Report (BOWFL, 2024), the Applicant has developed and refined the PDE for the Offshore EIA Report using the results of early engineering studies and information gained through stakeholder consultation. A description of the

PDE refinements for the Proposed Development is provided within Volume 1, Chapter 6: Site Selection and Consideration of Alternatives, however, in summary, the following parameters have changed:

- Refinement in Wind Turbine foundations to fixed, with floating foundations no longer considered;
- Reduction in fixed Wind Turbine foundation options to monopiles, piled jackets (3 or 4-legged), or suction bucket jackets (3-legged);
- Refinement of piling parameters for Wind Turbine foundations and OSPs;
- Increasing the Air Gap from 25.36 m to 33.12 m above Lowest Astronomical Tide (LAT); and
- Refinement of Offshore Export Cable installation at Landfall to trenchless technology only (e.g. HDD).

2.3.22 This evolution is reflected in the Offshore EIA Report Chapter 3 and in this Planning Statement.

2.4 Consideration of Alternatives and Site Selection

2.4.1 The site selection process and the consideration of alternatives is detailed in full in Volume 1, Chapter 6: Site Selection and the Consideration of Alternatives of the Offshore EIA Report. A summary is presented below.

Site Selection Process

2.4.2 The Applicant undertook a detailed assessment of the potential sites available in the 2020 ScotWind leasing round where developers were able to apply for rights to develop OWFs in Scottish Waters. The available POAs are shown in Figure 2.10.

Assessment Criteria

2.4.3 Sites were then assessed under the following stages to select the site and refine the Proposed Development:

- Stage 1: SMP POAs: assessment and selection of preferred POA;
- Stage 2: Refinement of Array Area Site Boundary;
- Stage 3: Identification of Offshore Export Cable Corridor and Grid Connection Point;
- Stage 4: Proposed Development and PDE - EIA Scoping; and
- Stage 5: Proposed Development and PDE – Offshore EIA and Application

Stage 1: SMP POAs

2.4.4 Following the announcement of the ScotWind leasing process and in parallel with preparation of the SMP, the Applicant undertook detailed analysis of the POAs to understand the development constraints, risks,

and to support a strong ScotWind bid submission for a consentable and buildable project.

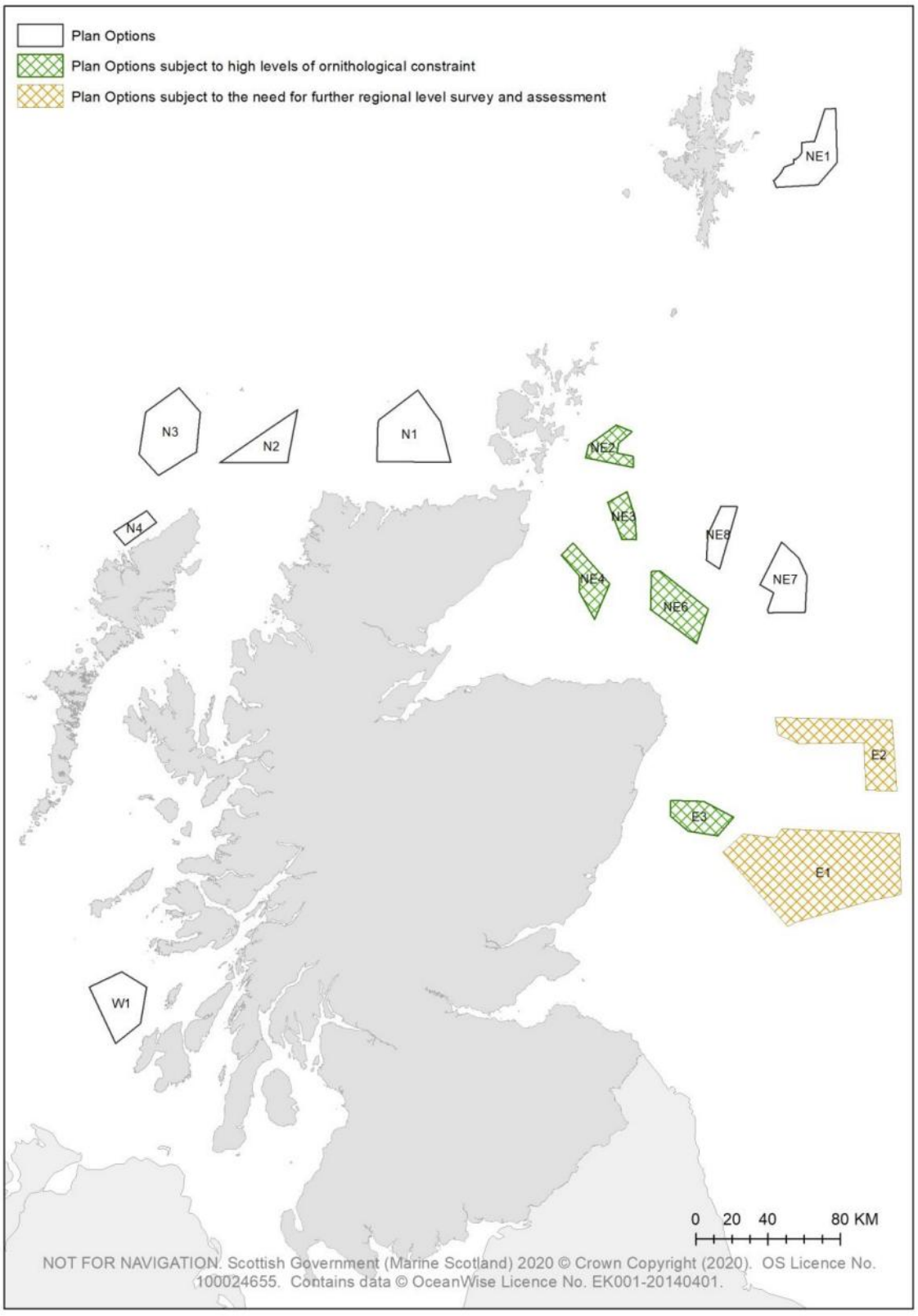

Figure 2.10: Sectoral Marine Plan Option Areas (Scottish Government, 2020b)

Stage 2: Refinement of Array Area Site Boundary

2.4.5 Following selection of the E3 POA as the preferred site, further assessment and constraint heat-mapping were undertaken to refine the spatial extent of the Array Area within the POA for the ScotWind bid application.

2.4.6 The outcome of the SMP plan-level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)concluded that in order to avoid an Adverse Effect on Site Integrity (AEOSI) development within individual plan options would be restricted to the scenarios assessed in the HRA, otherwise known as 'maximum realistic development scenarios'. The SMP concluded a maximum realistic development scenario of 1 GW for the E3 POA (equating to 42% of the total area of the POA) and assumed a deployment density of 5 MW/km². Additionally, the SMP and accompanying documents highlighted that several key environmental and technical sensitivities were known to exist within, and around, the E3 POA. These included potential socio-economic interactions with commercial fisheries and power interconnectors, higher levels of ornithological constraint (notably kittiwake and in-combination seabird effects), important fish spawning grounds (e.g. herring, cod, whiting, plaice, sandeel), and areas of high shipping density. The analysis concluded the eastern E3 sector was least constrained, and a refined Array Area of ~187 km² formed the basis of the bid. An Option to Lease was awarded in January 2022.

Stage 3: Identification of Offshore Export Cable Corridor and Grid Connection Point

2.4.7 At bid stage, a provisional cable route was identified to Peterhead. Post-bid, optioneering continued in anticipation of outcomes from the Holistic Network Design Follow-Up Exercise (HNDFUE), initially considering:

- six GCP options (Peterhead, “New Deer 2”, “New Deer–Hatton”, Fetteresso, Fiddes, Teeling);
- 19 potential Landfalls grouped into seven coastal zones between St Fergus and Tealing; and
- seven offshore corridors to Landfall, and two corridors to potential offshore hub GCPs (E1a Morven, E1b Bellrock).

2.4.8 As HNDFUE progressed, offshore hub solutions were dropped in favour of a radial onshore connection. Taking account of SSEN updates and the Beyond 2030 transmission programme, the expected GCP became Hurlie (a new substation in Fetteresso Forest). The preferred Landfall was identified at Haughs Bay, Benholm, meeting the technical and environmental criteria and offering trenchless feasibility. The preferred Offshore Export Cable Corridor, together with the Array Area, defined the Scoping Boundary.

Stage 4: EIA Scoping

2.4.9 To support offshore scoping, the Applicant developed a base-case PDE covering Wind Turbines, foundations (floating and fixed at scoping), OSPs, IACs and Export Cables, and protection measures. A pre-Scoping workshop was held in April 2024 with statutory consultees and key stakeholders to agree topics to scope in/out.

2.4.10 Key scoping parameters included:

- Up to 1,008 MW capacity;
- Up to 67 wind turbines on floating and/or fixed foundations;
- Maximum blade tip 369.36 m above LAT;
- Rotor diameter up to 326 m;
- Hub height 206.36 m above LAT;
- Up to three fixed-jacket OSPs;
- Up to four Offshore Export Cables.

2.4.11 The Scoping Boundary included a ~4 km wide Landfall area between Gourdon and Benholm, with Offshore Export Cable alignment towards the centre of the Array Area to reduce cable length and interactions with IACs.

2.4.12 Feedback from the workshop informed the Offshore EIA Report, with consultation outcomes documented in Volume 2, Chapters 7–23.

Stage 5: Offshore EIA and Application

2.4.13 Following submission of the Offshore EIA Scoping Report in August 2024, the Site Boundary and PDE were refined to enable a proportionate, realistic EIA:

2.4.14 Site Boundary and Landfall: the Export Cable Corridor funnels to a narrower swathe (~900 m) at Benholm to align with refined onshore routing; the remainder of the Array Area remained as scoped.

2.4.15 PDE refinements:

- Floating foundations removed in favour of fixed foundations only;
- Piling parameters refined (including max hammer energy 6,250 kJ for monopiles);
- Air Gap increased to 33.12 m LAT;
- Offshore Export Cables reduced from four to three;
- IAC network increased (c. 156 km to 167 km) and static IACs only adopted; and
- Open-cut at Landfall was removed as an option and only a trenchless technique will be used in the Intertidal Area.

2.4.16 Indicative layouts were developed to align with Marine Guidance Note (MGN) 654 (MCA, 2021) and to maintain buffers to EGL2 HVDC, Search and Rescue patterns, existing subsea cables and fishing access considerations.

2.4.17 These refinements ensure the PDE is realistic, consentable, and technically viable, forming the basis of the Offshore EIA Report and this Planning Statement.

Decommissioning

2.4.18 In accordance with Section 105 of the Energy Act 2004, the Applicant will prepare a Decommissioning Programme for approval by Scottish Ministers. This will include cost estimates, financial securities, and adherence to current legislation and industry best practice. A draft will be submitted prior to construction and updated throughout the Project's life.

2.4.19 At the end of the Proposed Development's operational lifetime, it is expected that all Offshore Infrastructure will be fully removed where feasible and practicable. Legislation, guidance and good practice will be kept under review throughout the lifetime of the Proposed Development and will be followed at the time of decommissioning. Environmental conditions and sensitivities will also be considered since removal of structures may result in greater environmental impacts in comparison to leaving them in situ.

2.4.20 The sequence of decommissioning is likely to be the reverse of the construction sequence, and similar types and numbers of vessels and equipment are expected to be involved.

2.4.21 This process is entirely in accordance with the CES lease agreement requiring full decommissioning at the end of the Project's life.

Site Selection and Reasonable Alternatives Conclusion

2.4.22 The process for site selection and the consideration of reasonable alternatives for the Proposed Development have the following key conclusions:

- Site selection of the Array Area was primarily informed by the SMP, ScotWind Leasing process and the Applicant's appraisal of POAs and how they met the Project objectives.
- The Export Cable Corridor and Landfall location was largely driven by the HND exercise (and the Applicant's GCP), and subsequently informed by Export Cable Corridor constraints analysis, option appraisal and Landfall feasibility studies.

2.4.23 The Offshore Infrastructure, including design options and range of parameters which forms the PDE, have been refined during pre-application based upon:

- Increased understanding of site conditions including seabed/ground conditions;

- Further design and engineering studies;
- Feedback from stakeholders including during scoping; and
- A reduction in potential environmental impacts from the Proposed Development, e.g. increased Air Gap and avoidance of open trench at Landfall.

2.4.24 When refining and finalising the PDE, consideration has been made to decommissioning at the end of life, and all design options included in the PDE are considered to be feasible for decommissioning.

2.4.25 Overall, the Site Selection process has involved a detailed and rigorous approach to selection of the chosen option and its attendant Export Cable Corridor and Landfall location.

3 The Need for Development and the Legislative and Policy Context

3.1.1 This chapter assesses the Proposed development with regards to the following legislation, regulations and policies:

International Commitments

- Kyoto Protocol (UNFCC, 2005) and Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol (UNFCC, 2012);
- Paris Agreement (UNFCC, 2016);
- COP28 Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge (UNFCC, 2023a, 2023b);
- COP29 Baku Climate Unity Pact – New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (UNFCCC, 2024); and
- COP30 Baku–Belém Roadmap on Climate Ambition and Finance (UNFCCC, 2024).

European Legislation and Policy

- EU Withdrawal Act 2018 (HM Government, 2018);
- European Union (Future Relationship) Act 2020;
- UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA); and
- UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021.

UK Energy Legislation and Policy

- Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended by the 2050 Target Amendment Order 2019);
- Carbon Budget Delivery Plan (HM Government, 2023b);
- Energy Act 2013 and the Energy Act 2023;
- UK Offshore Wind Sector Deal (HM Government, 2019);
- British Energy Security Strategy (HM Government, 2022);
- National Policy Statement for energy infrastructure (EN-1) (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), 2023b);
- National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure (EN-3) (DESNZ, 2023c);
- Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (HM Government, 2021);
- Offshore Wind Net Zero Investment Roadmap (HM Government, 2023a);
- Powering Up Britain Policy Papers (DESNZ), 2023a); and

- Planning and Infrastructure Act (UK Parliament, 2025).

Scottish Energy Legislation and Policy

- Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 (as amended by the Emission Reduction Targets (Scotland) Act 2019)
- Scottish Energy Strategy: The Future of Energy in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2017)
- Offshore Wind Policy Statement (OWEPS) (Scottish Government, 2020a)
- Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (Draft) (Scottish Government, 2023b)
- Scotland's Blue Economy Approach (Scottish Government, 2021b)
- Planning and Infrastructure Act as it relates to the Electricity Act and regulations (UK and Scottish Governments, 2025)
- Draft Aberdeenshire Council Route Map 2030 and Beyond (Aberdeen Council 2022)
- Aberdeenshire Council Climate Change Adaption Plan 2025 – 2030 (Aberdeenshire Council, 2025)

Marine Planning and Licensing

- Marine (Scotland) Act 2010
- Marine and Coastal Access Act (MCAA) 2009
- UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) (UK Government, 2011)
- Scottish National Marine Plan (NMP) (Scottish Government, 2015)
- National Marine Plan 2 (NMP2) – Planning Position Statement (Scottish Government, 2024a)
- Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (Scottish Government, 2020b)
- Draft Updated Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy 2025 (Scottish Government, 2025b)
- Marine Licensing (Pre-Application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013

National, Regional and Local Planning

- North East Regional Marine Plan (NEMP)
- Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 (Aberdeenshire Council, 2023)
- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (Scottish Government, 2023a)

Consenting and Environmental Assessment

- Electricity Act 1989 (Section 36 Consent)
- Planning and Infrastructure Act (UK Parliament, 2025)
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations:
- Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017
- Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017
- Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007

Habitats and Species Protection

- EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) & EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)
- Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended)
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
- Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
- Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (EU Exit) (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations
- Ramsar Convention Sites Protection (Scottish Government Policy)

Marine Biodiversity and Protected Areas

- Priority Marine Features Guidance (NatureScot, 2020)
- Scottish Government Strategy for Marine Nature Conservation in Scotland's Seas (Scottish Government, 2010)
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) (2008)
- Marine Strategy Regulations 2010
- Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 (Section 83)
- MCAA 2009 (Section 126)

Other Relevant Legislation

- Energy Act 2004 (as amended)
- Energy Act 2008
- Scotland Act 2016
- Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997

3.2 Climate Change Policy, Legislation and the Need for Development

International Commitments

3.2.1 The Kyoto Protocol, which came into effect in 2005 sets international binding Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission reduction targets set by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC). The Kyoto Protocol introduced legally binding targets for 37 industrialised nations and economies, including the reduction of GHG emissions by an average of 5% below 1990 levels from 2008 to 2012 (UNFCC, 2005). The Doha amendment introduced further reduction of GHG emissions to at least 18% below 1990 levels from the period of 2012 to 2020 (UNFCC, 2012).

3.2.2 The Paris Agreement 2016 (Paris Agreement under the UNFCC) is an international treaty, agreed at the Paris Climate Conference (Conference of the Parties (COP) 21) in December 2015 and entered into force in November 2016. This agreement aims to improve resilience to climate change impacts and provide support to developing countries to implement climate change mitigation. The targets in this agreement supersede those made in the Kyoto Protocol, aiming to keep the global temperature to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and limit global warming to 1.5°C (UNFCC, 2016).

3.2.3 In December 2023, COP28 was held in Dubai and focused on the start of the transition towards renewable means of energy generation such as wind and solar (UNFCC, 2023a). This collective move towards renewable energy generation was acknowledged by 133 countries (including the UK) signing the Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge which was a committal to tripling the global renewable energy capacity by 2030 through:

- Accelerating permitting of renewable projects and infrastructure;
- Developing and expanding grid connections;
- Providing clarity on market design and incentive schemes in renewables and energy efficiency;
- Promoting energy efficiency, electrification and energy demand management;
- Raising public awareness and encouraging behaviour change;
- Encouraging private investment; and
- Enhancing new technological solutions (UNFCC, 2023b).

3.2.4 COP29 took place in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November 2024 and centred on progressing international climate finance and completing outstanding elements of the Paris Agreement's implementation framework. A key outcome was agreement on a new New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for global climate finance, with developed countries committing to

mobilise at least USD 300 billion per year by 2035, supported by a broader ambition to scale public and private finance to USD 1.3 trillion per year for developing nations. COP29 also finalised the remaining operational guidance for Article 6 of the Paris Agreement relating to international carbon markets, effectively completing the Paris Rulebook. Additional outcomes included renewed commitments to gender equality initiatives, adaptation cooperation, and operational arrangements for the Loss and Damage Fund; however, Parties were unable to agree how to advance the outcomes of the Global Stocktake adopted at COP28, with consideration deferred to COP30.

3.2.5 COP30 was held in Belém, Brazil, in November 2025 and marked a shift towards implementation-focused climate action, particularly with respect to adaptation, resilience, and nature-based climate solutions. Parties agreed a commitment to triple global adaptation finance, alongside the establishment of new work programmes to align financial flows with low-emission, climate-resilient development, and the creation of a new Just Transition Mechanism to support workforce and community transitions. COP30 also advanced the monitoring framework for climate adaptation and strengthened recognition of the role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in climate governance. Despite these developments, no formal agreement was reached on fossil fuel phase-out or deforestation roadmaps, with these issues instead taken forward through voluntary initiatives outside the formal UNFCCC negotiation process. The conference nonetheless reinforced progress on carbon market cooperation following the completion of Article 6 guidance at COP29 and maintained momentum in international climate cooperation at a critical point in the run-up to 2030.

European Legislation and Policy

EU Exit

3.2.6 The UK officially left the EU (hereafter referred to as 'EU Exit') on 31 January 2020 after triggering Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty. Since the EU Exit, the UK Government has been committed to maintain any environmental commitments made, along with the legislation enacted after the departure of the UK from the EU, according to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (HM Government, 2018). The relationship with EU is currently governed by the European Union (Future Relationships) Bill and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement which together reaffirm the commitment to democratic principles, rule of law, human rights and the collective fight against the changing climate (HM Government, 2021a; HM Government, 2021b).

3.2.7 The Scottish Government's alignment with EU law is detailed in the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021 which outlines the Scottish Ministers' ability to make supporting legislation on devolved Scots law (of which environment is included), wherever appropriate, to align with EU law (Scottish Government, 2021a).

3.2.8 This chapter sets out where specific legislation has been implemented to guarantee legislative instruments continue to operate in a similar way after the EU Exit.

UK Energy Legislation and Policy

The Climate Change Act 2008

3.2.9 The Climate Change Act 2008, as amended by the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019, sets an emission reduction target of 100% against the 1990 baseline for carbon dioxide (CO_2) and other GHGs (HM Government, 2008). The establishment of this act marked the start of the UK's adopted policies to address the climate emergency and made the UK the first Group of Seven (G7) nations to set a climate change goal in reference to the Kyoto Protocol.

3.2.10 As required by the Climate Change Act 2008, the Carbon Budget Delivery Plan (HM Government, 2023b) outlines a package of measures and associated timings, and details how they will contribute to meeting the UK's 4th to 6th Carbon Budget. The ability to meet future Carbon Budgets requires the delivery of further offshore wind development including floating wind capacity.

The Energy Act 2013

3.2.11 To support the Climate Change Act 2008, the Energy Act 2013 encourages low-carbon electricity generation within the UK and aids the goals set for low-carbon industries. The act provides the framework for setting a decarbonisation target of 2030 for electricity generation within the UK and includes a framework for Energy Market Reform (EMR) to help deliver low-carbon electricity generation while reducing costs for consumers. The EMR included the implementation of Contracts for Difference (CfD) which aims to provide long term price stabilisation and low-carbon energy investment. To further support the Climate Change Act 2008, the Energy Act 2023 encourages the development of hydrogen, Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) and heat infrastructure within the UK. The Energy Act 2023 is anticipated to be accompanied by a raft of secondary legislation and guidance, expected to be published in 2025, which will provide further details on the implementation and operation of the new regimes and measures, and which will have relevance to offshore wind.

UK Offshore Wind Sector Deal 2019

3.2.12 In March 2019 the UK Government and the Offshore Wind Industry Council signed the UK Offshore Wind Sector Deal (HM Government, 2019). The Sector Deal is a long-term strategy which sets out an ambitious partnership between government and industry to raise the productivity and competitiveness of UK companies to ensure the UK continues to play a leading role as the global market grows in the decades to come. The Sector Deal aims to maximise the advantages for UK industry in the shift to net zero by providing clarity on future CfD rounds, increasing UK content of offshore wind to 60% by 2030 and increasing investment in UK

supply chain. The ongoing development of the renewable energy sector will be required to meet these targets, with offshore wind playing a significant role as the development and operation costs are reduced.

British Energy Security Strategy 2022

3.2.13 In 2022, UK Government published the British Energy Security Strategy (HM Government, 2022) in response to global rises in energy costs. It sets out the UK ambition to deliver 50 GW of offshore wind energy by 2030, including 5 GW of floating wind. This is an increase of 4 GW of floating wind when compared to the Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener policy set out in 2021 (HM Government, 2021a). The British Energy Security Strategy also sets out steps that the UK Government aims to take to reduce the time taken to develop and deploy offshore wind projects (HM Government, 2022).

National Policy Statements

3.2.14 Although National Policy Statements were developed under the Planning Act 2008, which primarily applies to England and Wales, and carry no binding or statutory weight in Scotland they can still be referred to as background and contextual policy. In Scotland, where Scottish Ministers have functions, the Secretary of State will have no functions under the Planning Act 2008 in relation to consenting energy infrastructure projects. However, energy policy is generally a matter reserved to UK Ministers and National Policy Statement for energy infrastructure (EN-1) and National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure (EN-3) may therefore be relevant considerations in planning decisions in Scotland, as confirmed in Paragraph 1.4.2 of EN-1 and Paragraph 1.4.4 of EN-3.

3.2.15 The National Policy Statement for energy infrastructure (EN-1) sets out national policy for energy infrastructure. It outlines the policy context for the development of nationally significant energy infrastructure, explains the urgent need for significant quantities of large-scale energy infrastructure to meet government's energy objectives and sets out the general policies for the submission and assessment of energy infrastructure applications.

3.2.16 The National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure (EN-3) supports the overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) and relates to nationally significant renewable electricity generating stations, including offshore wind >100 MW. EN-3 sets out the general principles that should be applied in the assessment of development consent applications across the range of energy technologies and also sets out policy on the assessment of impacts which are common across a range of these technologies

3.2.17 The Offshore Wind Net Zero Investment Roadmap, published by the UK Government in 2023 emphasised the UKs ambitions to reach up to 50 GW of offshore wind deployment by 2030 and how it aims to ensure investments will further support the sector through streamlining of

planning, supporting sustainability and development of facilitatory infrastructure (HM Government, 2023a).

3.2.18 The DESNZ published the Powering Up Britain Policy papers including an Energy Security Plan and Net Zero Growth Plan in 2023 (DESNZ, 2023a). These policies aim to encourage the use of renewable energies, including from Offshore Wind Farms (OWFs), as part of a solution to the climate emergency and details how the UK Government will improve energy security, take advantage of the economic opportunities of the transition to low-carbon energy generation and deliver on the commitment to achieving net zero by 2050. Offshore wind is a key element of these publications which includes the commitment to developing 50 GW of offshore wind by 2030, and to helping expand and increase the benefits of offshore wind projects by making funding available to support major port and manufacturing infrastructure through the Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme.

Scottish Energy Legislation and Policy

3.2.19 The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, as amended by the Climate Change (Emission Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2024 sets out a legally binding target to decrease GHG emissions by 100% by 2045 from 1990 levels. The Act relies on the Scottish Ministers and other public entities to ensure that future developments are made sustainably and that low emission options are encouraged. This Act is also in accordance with the Paris Agreement goals of limiting global warming levels to below 2°C, whilst pursuing efforts to stop them reaching over 1.5°C. The Scottish Emissions Reductions Targets encompass reducing GHG emissions by 80% by 2040, and fully to net zero by 2045.

3.2.20 The Climate Change Plan (Scottish Government, 2018) is a strategy document which outlines how the Scottish Government intends to meet emissions reduction targets across all portfolio areas and sectors of the economy. An update to the 2018 plan is undergoing consultation in alignment with the Climate Change (Emission Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2024.

3.2.21 The Scottish Energy Strategy: The Future of Energy in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2017), presented the plan for decarbonising and improving energy infrastructure within Scotland including a 2030 and 2050 vision for Scotland to deliver secure, affordable, clean energy for Scotland's households, communities and businesses. In setting out this vision the strategy relies on future delivery of renewable energy with a target of the equivalent of 50% of the energy for Scotland's heat, transport and electricity consumption to be supplied from renewable sources by 2030. The strategy also emphasises the importance of CfD auctions for Scottish offshore wind projects and outlines how the same process can be used and expanded upon for future marine energy developments.

3.2.22 In April 2019, the First Minister of the Scottish Government declared a climate emergency, followed by the UK Parliament's declaration of an environment and climate emergency in May 2019. These symbolic announcements signalled political intent to address climate change, which is further reflected in the policies outlined within this chapter.

3.2.23 The challenges associated with climate change, energy supply and security of supply are driving government policy and decision making on renewable energy developments. There are now a significant number of national and international policies, strategies and regulations relating to climate change and the development of renewable energy in Scotland.

3.2.24 The OWPS (Scottish Government, 2020a) details expectations for offshore wind developments in the future and how they can help the Scottish Government reach its Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 goals. The OWEPS builds on the renewable energy targets outlined in the Scottish Energy Strategy (Scottish Government, 2017).

3.2.25 An update to the OWPS was published for consultation in June 2025 (Scottish Government, 2025a) which recognised the significant increase in the number of potential offshore wind developments due to the ScotWind and the Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas (INTOG) leasing rounds. Furthermore, with the policy and planning landscape evolving the ambition has changed and the Scottish Government has therefore reset the aim to develop up to 40 GW by 2035-2040 in addition to the existing operational capacity.

3.2.26 After the UN warned that global temperatures were likely to breach the 1.5°C of global warming during the next five years, the Scottish Government released a statement that Scotland is committed to making steps towards becoming a net zero country and working towards a climate resilient future (Scottish Government, 2023b). Offshore wind generation has been identified as being capable of providing a significant contribution towards such commitments (Scottish Government, 2024a).

3.2.27 On 10 January 2023, the Scottish Government published the draft 'Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan' for consultation, which will eventually replace the Scottish Energy Strategy (Scottish Government, 2023b). The Draft Strategy and Plan sets out a "clear policy position and a route map of actions with a focus out to 2030 that the Scottish Government will take and the changes that the UK Government must deliver", while establishing a vision that by 2045 "Scotland will have a flourishing, climate friendly energy system that delivers affordable, resilient and clean energy to Scottish households, communities and business". Consultation on the draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan closed in May 2023 with the final version of the document yet to be published as of Spring 2026.

Local Energy Legislation and Policy

3.2.28 In March 2020, Aberdeenshire Council committed to working towards a carbon free society by reducing emissions by 75% by 2030 and Net Zero by 2045 (Aberdeenshire Council, 2021). The draft Aberdeenshire Council Route Map 2030 and Beyond (Aberdeenshire Council, 2022) and associated Action Plan (Aberdeenshire Council, 2025) outline the actions and financial investment required across the Council to reach emission reduction targets.

3.2.29 The Aberdeenshire Council Climate Change Adaptation Plan (2025 – 2030) was developed following recommendations from the Route Map to 2030 and Beyond Action Plan (Aberdeenshire Council, 2025). The plan sets out the councils long-term vision, outcomes and priorities for adaptation up until 2030 (Aberdeenshire Council, 2025). The plan vision for adaptation is based around five key outcomes:

- Nature connects;
- Communities;
- Public services;
- Employees and infrastructure; and
- Economy, businesses and industry.

3.2.30 Informed by the Strategic Development Plan, the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (ALDP) (Aberdeenshire Council, 2023) outlines a vision for the entire Aberdeenshire Council administrative area and promotes sustainable economic growth while safeguarding the environment. The ALDP is most relevant to the onshore elements of the Project (those landward of MLWS) which will be subject to the separate onshore planning application but will be considered where relevant to the Proposed Development (i.e. in the Intertidal area). The ALDP is in the process of being reviewed and is set to update in 2029 which will cover the period between 2029 and 2039 (Aberdeenshire Council, 2025).

3.3 Marine Planning Framework

3.3.1 Scottish marine planning is governed by two acts: the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 for Scottish Territorial Seas (out to 12 nm); and the Marine and Coastal Access Act (MCAA) 2009 for Scottish Offshore Waters (between 12 nm to 200 nm).

3.3.2 The two Acts (referred herein as the Marine Acts) established a legislative framework for marine planning to enable demands on the marine environment to be managed in a sustainable way, while providing a regulatory framework for licensing marine developments.

3.3.3 The Marine Acts set out a tiered approach to developing marine planning in the UK and Scotland. The framework includes the following elements:

- UK MPS;

- Scottish NMP;
- SMP for Offshore Wind Energy; and
- Regional Marine Plans (RMPs).

UK Marine Policy Statement

3.3.4 The UK MPS (UK Government, 2011), prepared under MCAA (2009), was created by the UK Government and adopted by the devolved administrations including Scottish Government. The UK MPS provides a framework for preparing marine plans within the UK and for taking decisions on matters affecting the marine environment in the absence of adopted marine plans.

Scotland's National Marine Plan (2015)

3.3.5 The Scottish Government adopted and published the first NMP (Scottish Government, 2015) in March 2015. Within the NMP, policies are provided for developments and use of marine resources in Scottish Offshore Waters up to 200 nm from the coast. The Scottish NMP, which is compatible with the UK MPS (UK Government, 2011) and other marine plans, supports marine development in Scottish Offshore Waters while incorporating appropriate protections and safeguards for the environment, other sea users and existing marine activities. There are a number of strategic objectives which aim to deliver a robust approach to managing Scotland's marine area including:

- Achieving a sustainable marine economy;
- Living within environmental limits;
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
- Promoting good governance; and
- Using sound science responsibly.

3.3.6 The NMP provides both general policies to support delivery of strategic objectives, and specific sectoral objectives which may be achievable over the plan period or set direction for longer term goals. The objectives for offshore wind and other marine renewables are:

- Sustainable development of offshore wind, wave and tidal renewable energy in the most suitable locations;
- Economic benefits from offshore wind, wave and tidal energy developments maximised by securing a competitive local supply chain in Scotland;
- Alignment of marine and terrestrial planning and efficient consenting and licensing processes including but not limited to data sharing, engagement and timings, where possible;
- Aligned marine and terrestrial electricity transmission grid planning and development in Scottish Offshore Waters;

- Contribute to achieving the renewables target to generate electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2020;
- Contribute to achieving the decarbonisation target of 50 gCO2/kWh by 2030 (to cut carbon emissions from electricity generation by more than four-fifths);
- Sustainable development and expansion of test and demonstration facilities for offshore wind and marine renewable energy devices; and
- Coordinated government and industry-wide monitoring.

3.3.7 The NMP has been reviewed and the effectiveness of its implementation has been reported on twice since its adoption. The latest review in 2021, identified that while the plan is still effective, it needs to be updated to account for significant national and global developments, which impact the use and management of Scottish marine resources. Key developments include the withdrawal of the UK from the EU on 31 January 2020, the Global Climate Emergency, Scottish Government's commitment to net zero by 2045, the COVID-19 pandemic, rapid pace of change and interest in the marine sphere and the delivery of the Scotland's Blue Economy approach (Scottish Government, 2021b). The second iteration of the NMP (NMP2), which is currently in preparation, is likely to take into account the key elements highlighted in the 2021 review, particularly around the climate emergency. The NMP2 will be supported by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), and will be informed by the SEA Scoping Report consulted upon in 2023 (Scottish Government, 2024a). It is anticipated that it will be published in the summer of 2026. Until adopted, decision-making continues to rely on the existing National Marine Plan (2015), alongside the emerging policy in NMP2 as a material consideration where relevant.

3.3.8 On 15 August 2024, Scottish Ministers announced an update to the NMP2 development timeline (NMP2 - Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and Statement of Public Participation) (Scottish Government, 2024b). The updated timeline introduces further opportunity for stakeholder engagement as the plan is developed, including consultation on the Planning Position Statement which was released in Autumn 2024 (Scottish Government, 2024b). The Planning Position Statement sets out the intended policy direction for NMP2 in relation to all stakeholder feedback and provides stakeholders with an early opportunity to help shape the plan policies prior to consultation on the draft plan in late 2025. After considering stakeholder feedback, the Planning Position Statement laid out 12 draft high-level objectives, alongside associated policy ideas generated through extensive engagement. These 12 high-level draft objectives can be found in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: High-Level Draft Objectives from National Marine Plan 2 Planning Position Statement (Scottish Government, 2024a)

Theme	Draft High-Level Objective
Climate Mitigation and Adaptation	Respond to the Global Climate Emergency, achieving net zero by 2045 and realising adaptation opportunities
Ecosystem health, protection and restoration	Respond to the Global Biodiversity Crisis, protecting Scotland's marine and coastal biodiversity
	Restore and enhance Scotland's marine and coastal ecosystem services in line with Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy
Sustainable marine economy	Enable multi-use of Scotland's seas to reduce conflict for marine space
	Safeguard opportunities for marine economic sectors to operate, based on available evidence and in line with Scotland's ambitions
	Enable use of Scotland's seas to support the development of Net Zero sectors in line with Scotland's ambitions
Island and coastal community development	Enhance and safeguard opportunities for sustainable, resilient and diverse marine economies within Scotland's island and coastal communities
Cultural Heritage	Protect, and where appropriate, enhance access to – and appreciation of –Scotland's marine and coastal cultural heritage
Social and Cultural Wellbeing	Facilitate equitable access to Scotland's seas and shared stewardship to benefit wellbeing and to support thriving communities
Implementation	Use evidence-based decision-making to manage marine space in line with Scotland's wider ambitions
	Contribute to monitoring and evaluation of NMP2 implementation
Food production	Support the growth and development of sustainable marine food production which supports thriving and resilient communities across Scotland

3.3.9 The Planning Position Statement highlighted the Scottish Government's maintained support for sectoral planning for marine renewables (including offshore wind) and a plan-led approach to leasing. Extensive work aims to maximise the benefits of offshore wind and address the social and environmental issues highlighted in Table 3.1. Consultation on the Planning Position Statement ran from 05 November 2024 to 07 February 2025, with the report of the findings being published 29 August 2025 (Scottish Government, 2025a). This consultation feedback demonstrated that the general feeling was that offshore wind development should be prioritised, however, offshore developments had to pay special consideration to:

- cumulative impacts on fishing industry due to offshore development;

- potential displacement of fishers; and
- visual impacts of offshore developments (Scottish Government, 2025a).

3.3.10 Consultation on the draft NMP2 has been postponed to allow for further consideration of the feedback received on the Planning Position Statement, and the intended approach to the draft NMP2. In the interim, the NMP team will be exploring options for how to support forthcoming offshore wind applications through the implementation of the current NMP.

Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind

3.3.11 The first SMP for Offshore Wind Energy (Blue Seas Green Energy) (Marine Scotland, 2011) was adopted in 2011, following which, draft SMPs for wind, wave and tidal were produced in 2013 and adopted in 2020 (Scottish Government 2020b).

3.3.12 Subsequently, in 2017, the CES announced their intention to run a leasing round for commercial scale offshore wind energy projects in Scottish Offshore Waters, which was named the ScotWind Leasing Round. To inform the spatial development of this leasing round, the Marine Directorate-Licensing Operations Team (MD-LOT), as Planning Authority for the area, undertook a planning exercise to identify areas suitable for the development for offshore wind.

3.3.13 The SMP for Offshore Wind Energy (Scottish Government, 2020b) builds upon the work undertaken in the 2011 and 2013 plans, and incorporated technological, policy, regulatory and market development to create a new strategic planning process. The SMP seeks to contribute to achieving Scotland's energy and climate change objectives by providing a spatial strategy and was used to inform the ScotWind leasing process which concluded in 2022. A SEA, HRA and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) were carried out for the SMP.

3.3.14 In the recent ScotWind Leasing Round process, a total of 20 proposed OWF projects were awarded option agreements within 15 POAs, for a total of 27.6 GW of capacity. This includes 17 proposed OWF projects awarded in January 2022, with a further three sites awarded in August 2022 as part of the 'Scotwind Clearing Round'. The SMP identified that E3 (the POA applicable to the Proposed Development) was a site suitable for offshore wind development.

3.3.15 The SMP is subject to the Iterative Plan Review (IPR) process to ensure that it is underpinned by best available evidence, taking into account updates and progression of developments (e.g. detailed site survey results and assessments for projects, the construction of projects, Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas (INTOG) leasing round and further changes to policy and regulatory context). Work on the next iteration of the SMP is underway, consultation commenced in early 2025, and the updated SMP

delivered in late 2025. Consultation on the draft of the updated SMP for Offshore Wind Energy commenced in early 2025 and closed on 22 August 2025. Consultation analysis commenced on the 25 August 2025, with anticipated adoption of the plan expected in summer 2026. The updated SMP for Offshore Wind Energy will deliver the planning framework for ScotWind and INTOG leasing rounds, supporting deployment in Scottish Waters whilst protecting marine users and the environment.

Regional Marine Plans

3.3.16 In addition to the NMP, the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 set the requirement for local stakeholders to prepare statutory RMPs at the local level. Eleven Scottish Marine Regions (SMRs) have been created covering sea areas extending out to 12 nm. RMPs are being developed at a regional level within SMRs where there is an established Marine Planning Partnership. Unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise, they are required to be in accordance with the NMP and MPS to ensure they are consistent with national objectives and priorities and are subject to adoption by Scottish Ministers (Scottish Government, 2015).

3.3.17 The Proposed Development lies within the North East SMR. The North East Regional Marine Plan (NEMP) will form the statutory framework guiding sustainable development within the North East Marine Region, which covers the coastal and inshore waters off Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire—including the area landward of the E3 ScotWind leasing zone where the Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm is located.

3.3.18 For the Proposed Development, the NEMP is significant as it seeks to ensure integrated marine and land-use planning, aligning marine decision-making with Local Development Plans, NPF4, and national sectoral strategies. RMPs in Scotland are designed to influence the management of all marine activities out to 12 nm, providing statutory guidance to regulators and forming an essential part of the consent assessment process for offshore renewables, ports, cables, and related infrastructure.

3.4 Onshore Plans and Policies

3.4.1 The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) was approved by the Scottish Parliament on 11 January 2023, before being formally adopted in February 2023. The NPF4 is Scotland's terrestrial national spatial strategy and sets out spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy in support of achieving Scotland's net zero target date of 2045 (Scottish Government, 2023a). Within the NPF4, net zero energy solutions are identified as a key contributor to net zero emissions by 2045, with national planning policies to achieve this aim (such as the Climate Emergency Policy and the Green Energy Policy) also included. These policies that are included within the NPF4 aim to encourage and promote developments that address the current global climate

emergency as well as encourage and promote all forms of renewable energy developments, both onshore and offshore. Furthermore, the NPF4 also categorises any offshore renewable development that has a generating capacity of over 50 MW as a 'national development'.

3.4.2 The onshore elements of the Project (those landward of MLWS) is subject to the separate onshore planning application within the Aberdeenshire Council administrative area, as such the ALDP is the applicable Local Development Plan. The ALDP outlines a vision which promotes sustainable economic growth while safeguarding the environment (Aberdeenshire Council, 2023).

3.5 Consenting Process and Associated Legislation

Consenting Process for Infrastructure in Scottish Offshore Waters

3.5.1 The Proposed Development is a generating station with a capacity of greater than 50 MW located in Scottish Offshore Waters (between 12 nm to 200 nm), as well as partially located within Scottish Territorial Waters (between Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) and 12 nm), and therefore it requires the following consent and licences:

- A Section 36 Consent under the Electricity Act 1989 which covers the Offshore Generation Assets located in the Array Area;
- A Marine Licence for the Offshore Generation Assets under the MCAA 2009; and
- A Marine Licence for the Offshore Transmission Assets under the Marine (Scotland) 2010 and MCAA 2009.

3.5.2 A decommissioning scheme as well as any additional pre-construction licences or safety zone declarations will be discussed and agreed with the relevant consenting authority during the pre-construction phase of the Proposed Development as required.

The Electricity Act 1989

3.5.3 Under the Electricity Act 1989, a Section 36 Consent is required for the construction and operation of an energy generation station of capacity greater than 50 MW where it is located between 12 nm and 200 nm off the Scottish coast. The Proposed Development is estimated to have a generating capacity of approximately 1 GW, and therefore a Section 36 Consent is required. An application for consent has been submitted to MD-LOT, which acts on behalf Scottish Ministers to process the application.

Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 – Reforms to Electricity Consenting in Scotland (Section 36/37)

3.5.4 The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025 and introduces targeted reforms to the Electricity Act 1989 consenting regime in Scotland for Section 36 generating stations (including offshore wind) and Section 37 overhead lines. The Act's purpose

is to deliver a more efficient and predictable process for critical energy infrastructure while maintaining robust scrutiny. At the time of writing the Scottish Government is expected to introduce the new regulations during the course of 2026.

3.5.5 Key changes (with further detail to follow via secondary regulations) include:

- Removal of the automatic public inquiry trigger where a planning authority objects: instead, a Scottish Government Reporter determines the appropriate examination procedure (written reps, hearing(s), inquiry sessions, or hybrid), aligning with Scottish planning appeals practice.
- Flexible variation powers: a new procedure to vary Section 37 consents, and a new power for Scottish Ministers to vary Section 36 or 37 consents (with the consent-holder's agreement) to respond to technological or circumstantial changes—particularly relevant to offshore wind where turbine ratings, layouts and transmission solutions evolve.
- Correction of non-material errors in decision documents, improving administrative clarity.
- Judicial Review time limit reduction to six weeks for onshore Electricity Act decisions, tightening challenge windows and signalling a system-wide emphasis on timely decision-making (noting offshore regimes remain separately defined).
- Regulation-making powers for Scottish Ministers to introduce: pre-application requirements, acceptance/non-acceptance stages, minimum application information standards, and fee frameworks for Section36/37 applications—modernising case intake and improving application quality.

3.5.6 These reforms sit within a joint UK–Scottish Government programme to modernise consenting, acknowledging that Scottish electricity consents have historically taken up to four years in some cases; the policy intent is to maintain rigorous assessment while improving predictability and throughput to meet 2030 clean power objectives.

3.5.7 The Proposed Development will be determined under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 and associated marine licensing legislation. The reforms described above are material in understanding the expected examination route (no automatic inquiry), the potential to vary consents to accommodate technology updates, the administrative corrections power, and the prospective pre-application/acceptance stages that may be introduced by regulation during the Project's determination period.

3.5.8 As the Bowdun OWF was submitted in the April 2026 the Applicant has been mindful of the elements within the Act that apply to this submission. In particular the need to include high quality information that will assist

in the determination process, the revised Public Enquiries/New Examination Process and with Stakeholder and community relationships.

Marine (Scotland) Act 2010

3.5.9 The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 provides the legislative provisions for the management of the marine environment in Scottish Territorial Waters between MHWS to 12 nm off the Scottish coast. This includes the designation of the MPAs, and the requirement to produce RMPs. The Act also requires the granting of Marine Licences to control and regulate certain marine development.

3.5.10 Part 4 (Marine Licensing) of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 includes a list of licensable marine activities (Section 21) which apply to the Proposed Development activities including:

- Depositing objects within the Scottish marine area from a vehicle, marine structure or floating system;
- Construction or alteration of offshore structures within the Scottish marine area in the sea, over the sea, on the seabed or under the seabed;
- Removal of an object or substance from the seabed through the use of a vehicle, marine structure or floating system; and
- Any form of dredging within the Scottish marine area.

3.5.11 Marine Licence applications are managed and processed by MD-LOT on behalf of Scottish Ministers, with consideration of input and recommendations from consultees.

Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

3.5.12 The MCAA 2009 applies to all UK offshore waters out to 200 nm, except Scottish Territorial Waters which are covered by the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. Under the MCAA 2009 (Part 4) there is the requirement for a Marine Licence to be obtained prior to the construction, alteration or improvement of any works or deposit any object in or over the sea, or on or under the seabed.

3.5.13 The licensable activities are broadly the same as listed in Part 4 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. Scottish Minsters may grant a Marine Licence under Part 4 of the MCAA 2009 with consideration of input and recommendations from MD-LOT. Separate Marine Licences will be sought for Offshore Generation Assets and Offshore Transmission Assets of the Proposed Development.

Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations

3.5.14 Under the EIA Regulations, an EIA Report is required to be prepared and submitted to support applications for a Section 36 consent, a Marine Licence or planning permission relating to offshore renewable energy developments. The primary objective of EIA is to protect the environment

by ensuring that the likely significant environmental effects of a project are properly understood and mitigated where appropriate before relevant consents are granted. An EIA Report is necessary for installations aiming to harness the power of wind for energy production (wind farms) if the project is likely to have significant effects on the environment. As the Proposed Development meets both criteria, an EIA was required as part of the application and has been submitted in conjunction with this Planning Statement.

3.5.15 The assessment considers the impact of the Proposed Development on:

- Population and human health;
- Biodiversity, in particular species and habitats protected under the Habitats Directive;
- Land, soil, water, air and climate; and
- Material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape[1].

3.5.16 These requirements are further detailed within Volume 1, Chapter 4: EIA Methodology where relevant.

3.5.17 The main stages of the EIA process have included the following:

- Decision to undertake an EIA (screening);
- Scoping to determine the subject matter of the EIA and to identify potentially significant effects;
- Data review involving compiling and reviewing available baseline data and/or undertaking of baseline surveys to generate site-specific data;
- Production of a PDE and identification of topic-specific MDS, from which the likely significant environmental effects of the development during the construction, O&M, and decommissioning stages of its life are assessed. Feedback is provided to the design and engineering team(s) to modify the design of the development where practicable in order to avoid, prevent, reduce and/or offset any significant adverse effects on the environment;
- Identifying any further mitigation requirements;
- Identifying residual effects;
- Preparing the EIA Report (i.e. reporting on the EIA process and continuing with design iteration and consultation);
- Consultation with the regulatory bodies, stakeholders and the community, in accordance with all relevant requirements (the

[1]Regulation 22 (c) of The Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007. Regulation 4 of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and Schedule 3 of the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

Electricity Act 1989, the MCAA 2009, Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, The Marine Licensing (Pre-application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013, EIA Regulations and the associated regulations and guidance);

- Consideration of the EIA Report by the Marine Directorate; and
- Controlling and, where necessary, monitoring the effects of the project during construction, O&M, and decommissioning in accordance with the mitigation measures identified in the EIA Report and/or the requirements identified in the relevant licences which have been drawn from the findings of the EIA.

3.6 Other Consents and Legislation

The Energy Act 2004 (as Amended)

3.6.1 The Energy Act 2004 (as amended) makes provision for, among other aspects, the development, regulation and encouragement of the use of renewable energy sources and giving effect to international agreements relating to pipelines and offshore installations.

3.6.2 Under Section 95 of the Energy Act, where a renewable energy installation is proposed to be constructed, and the Scottish Ministers consider it appropriate for safety reasons, designated areas may be declared as Safety Zones.

Safety Zones

3.6.3 Safety Zones are intended to ensure the safety of the renewable energy installation or other installations in the vicinity during construction, O&M and decommissioning. Safety Zones may exclude non-OWF vessels from navigating through a designated Safety Zone area for a specific period.

3.6.4 The Proposed Development expects to apply for Safety Zones during construction and major maintenance activities during the O&M phase.

3.6.5 Scottish Ministers have the power to declare safety zones around offshore renewable energy developments in Scottish Offshore Waters devolved through the Scotland Act 2016, which amended the Energy Act 2004.

Decommissioning

3.6.6 The statutory requirements for the decommissioning of Offshore Renewable Energy Installations (OREIs), and their respective electricity lines, are contained within Sections 105 to 114 of the Energy Act 2004 (as amended by the Energy Act 2008 and the Scotland Act 2016). Under the terms of the Energy Act, any persons responsible for these installations or lines in Scottish Waters or in a Scottish part of a Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) can be requested by the Scottish Minsters to prepare, and carry out, a costed decommissioning programme. This decommissioning programme will be prepared for submission to, and approval from, Scottish Ministers (Scottish Government, 2022).

3.6.7 Since April 2017 the responsibilities and the powers that are associated with decommissioning for OREIs within Scottish Waters lie with the Secretary of State to Scottish Ministers. Marine Directorate have established robust policies and procedures covering decommissioning, which include securities for offshore wind, wave and tidal projects. This included consultation on future plans for decommissioning for OREIs in Scottish waters in 2020 with subsequent guidance published in 2022.

3.6.8 The offshore renewable energy decommissioning guidance (Section 5 – Submission, approval and review of decommissioning programmes) states that *"an indication of the decommissioning proposals should be included as part of the statutory consenting or licensing process so that the feasibility of removing the infrastructure can be assessed as part of the application process"*. Additionally, it states that *"a full description should be provided, supported by diagrams, of all items associated with the generating station to be decommissioned"* prior to construction, and that *"the Scottish Ministers expect that decommissioning programmes should be submitted for approval no later than six months in advance of construction, and that the first drafts should be submitted about 18 months in advance"* (Scottish Government, 2022b).

3.6.9 The power to determine specific approaches to decommissioning is held by Scottish Ministers, including specifying what form, timing and size of financial securities are necessary. The content expected within decommissioning programmes includes:

- Decommissioning standards;
- Financial security;
- Residual liability; and
- Industry cooperation and collaboration.

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997

3.6.10 The Electricity Act 1989 allows for deemed planning permission to be granted for the onshore elements of the Project. Consent for the Onshore Infrastructure will be secured through a separate application to Aberdeenshire Council for planning permission under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended). A separate Onshore Scoping Report was submitted to Aberdeenshire Council in September 2024 and the onshore application is supported by a separate Onshore EIA Report and associated planning documents which was submitted in November 2025. There will be some overlap between the two applications, covered in both the Onshore and Offshore EIA Report's, within the Intertidal area.

Habitats Regulations in Practice

3.6.11 Article 3 of EU Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild flora and fauna (hereafter referred to as the 'Habitats Directive') required the establishment of a European network of

conservation sites, referred to as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), in order to help protect and conserve habitats and species identified in Annex I and II of the Directive. These habitats and species (excluding birds) were considered to be most at risk at a European level.

3.6.12 Under Article 4 of the EU Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (hereafter referred to as the 'Birds Directive') lists of vulnerable bird species (detailed in Annex I of the Birds Directive) are provided protection through the implementation of Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

3.6.13 The requirements of the Habitats and Birds Directive relevant to the Proposed Development are transposed into the following pieces of legislation (hereafter referred to as the 'Habitats Regulations'):

- Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended);
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017; and
- Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

3.6.14 By virtue of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (EU Exit) (Scotland) (amendment) Regs, functions relating to habitats, marine habitats and species conservation have been transferred to the appropriate authorities in the UK/Scotland, with SACs and SPAs in the UK no longer forming part of the EU Natura 2000 Network. There is now a UK-wide network of protected sites, including both the inshore and offshore marine areas in the UK, which retain the same protections as previous Natura 2000 sites and is referred to as the National Site Network. It includes all existing SACs and SPAs, and any subsequent new SACs and SPAs which may be designated and are referred to as European Sites. Furthermore, under Scottish Government policy, Ramsar Sites (wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention) are also protected under the same statutory regimes.

3.6.15 Under the Habitats Regulations, Scottish Ministers must consider whether any plan or project, is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site before it can be authorised or carried out. If there is potential for a Likely Significant Effect (LSE) to occur, then an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the implications on that site and its conservation objectives must be undertaken by the competent authority. This process is known as the HRA.

3.6.16 The HRA process, comprising Stage 1 (HRA screening) and, if required, Stage 2 (AA), must be carried out before consent or authorisation can be given for the Proposed Development. Permission should only be granted at Stage 2 by the competent authority where it is determined that the plan or project will not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of a designated site either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, unless a HRA Derogation process including the identification of compensation measures can be agreed and implemented.

3.6.17 A HRA Screening Report was submitted to MD-LOT on the 18 September 2024, detailing the outcome of HRA screening on the qualifying features of relevant European Sites for the Proposed Development (BOWFL, 2024). The Screening Response was received on the 11 October 2024. The RIAA, which accompanies this Offshore EIA Report, takes account of the Screening Response and provides information to the competent authority to allow it to assess if there are likely to be any significant effects, and to carry out the AA (and any subsequent stages of the HRA), where necessary, as part of an HRA.

Habitats Regulations Appraisal Compliance

3.6.18 The Proposed Development is subject to assessment under the Habitats Regulations, specifically the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In accordance with these regulations, a Shadow HRA has been prepared, comprising a RIAA and a Derogation Case. This assessment has been undertaken in line with Scottish Government policy, including the NMP and relevant guidance from NatureScot and Marine Directorate.

3.6.19 The RIAA evaluates potential impacts on designated sites, particularly SPAs and SACs, and considers both project-level and in-combination effects. Where adverse effects on site integrity cannot be ruled out, the Derogation Case sets out the justification for proceeding, including demonstration of no alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), and appropriate compensatory measures. This approach aligns with precedent from recent Scottish offshore wind projects and ensures the application is robust and legally compliant.

European Protected Species

3.6.20 European Protected Species (EPS) are species of plants and animals (other than birds) protected by law throughout the EU. They are listed within Annex IV of the Habitats Directive. It is an offence, with certain exceptions, to deliberately or recklessly capture/collect, disturb or injure an EPS.

3.6.21 Certain activities likely to cause disturbance or injury which would otherwise constitute an offence, can be carried out legally under an EPS Licence, as follows:

- Within Scottish Territorial Waters, an EPS Licence may be required under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994 (as amended) where there is potential for activities to injure or cause disturbance to an EPS. NatureScot is responsible for the administration of most licences in relation to EPS in Scotland. The exception is for purely marine species for purposes under regulation 44(2)(e) to (f), where MD-LOT on behalf of the Scottish Ministers, is the licensing authority.

- Scottish Offshore Waters (the area between the seaward boundary of Scottish Territorial Seas and the seaward boundary of the Scottish part of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)), an EPS Licence may be required under the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 where there is potential for activities to injure or cause significant disturbance to an EPS (defined as a population level effect rather than at the level of individuals). MD-LOT is the licensing authority for these EPS Licences.

Priority Marine Features

3.6.22 Scottish Ministers formally adopted a list of 81 Priority Marine Features (PMFs) in 2014. The PMFs cover a variety of habitats and species that are a priority for conservation in Scottish Offshore Waters. PMFs include a range of intertidal and continental shelf habitats, deep sea habitats, mammals, fish and shellfish and other invertebrates.

3.6.23 The Priority Marine Features Guidance (NatureScot, 2020) addresses the policy requirement to conserve and protect PMFs, included in The Scottish Government Strategy for Marine Nature Conservation in Scotland's Seas (Scottish Government, 2010), and the NMP (including via policy Gen 9 Natural heritage) (Scottish Government, 2015).

3.6.24 It should be noted that some PMFs are already protected as qualifying features of European Sites, or via EPS legislation, and therefore will be considered from the HRA perspective as well as in the EIA where relevant.

Marine Strategy Framework Directive

3.6.25 On 15 July 2008 the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) came into force and was officially written into UK law by the Marine Strategy Regulations in 2010. The UK's Good Environmental Status (GES) targets, as well as the approach for achieving these, were outlined in a "UK programme of measures" (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2015).

3.6.26 When determining whether to grant approval for developments, Scottish Ministers must ensure that in doing so it would not compromise achieving or maintaining GES. This is currently implemented in the UK through the Marine Strategy Regulations 2010. It should be noted that there have been some interpretation amendments have been made to this guidance after EU Exit.

Marine Protected Areas

3.6.27 The management of Nature Conservation MPAs is aided by arrangements that are laid out in both the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and the MCAA 2009. Under Section 83 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and Section 126 of the MCAA 2009 (please note that in s126 MCAA2009 to MCZ means MPA in Scotland by virtue of s116 MCAA2009), MD-LOT, as the public authority, are obligated to consider if an activity is capable of affecting (other than insignificantly) a protected feature of a Nature Conservation MPA, or any

ecological or geomorphological process, on which the conservation of any protected feature of a Nature Conservation MPA is dependent.

3.6.28 Full authorisation for the activity must not be granted by MD-LOT unless the person applying for the authorisation satisfies MD-LOT that either:

- There is no significant risk of the activity hindering the achievement of the conservation objectives for the Nature Conservation MPA; or
- If there is a significant risk of the activity hindering the achievement of the conservation objectives for the MPA, that: (i) there is no other means of proceeding with the activity which would create a substantially lower risk of hindering the achievement of those objectives, (ii) the benefit to the public of proceeding with the act clearly outweighs the risk of damage to the environment that will be created by proceeding with it, and (iii) the person will undertake measures of equivalent environmental benefit to the damage which the act will or is likely to have on the Nature Conservation MPA concerned.

3.6.29 If MD-LOT are of the belief that there is, or could be, a significant risk of the proposal hindering the achievement of the conservation objectives, then they are obliged to notify the appropriate statutory nature conservation bodies (NatureScot for MPAs within 12 nm or the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) for MPAs out with 12 nm) of that fact.

3.6.30 The assessment of effects upon EPS, PMFs and MPAs as a result of the Proposed Development are included within the Offshore EIA Report, with the findings summarised in Section 7.

Pre-Application Consultation

3.6.31 The Marine Licensing (Pre-application Consultation (PAC)) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 apply whenever an activity is planned within the Scottish Territorial Seas. As part of the Export Cable is within the 12 nm limit the Proposed Development was therefore required to undertake a PAC event to satisfy those regulations.

3.6.32 However, these requirements are not applicable in respect of relevant applications in the Scottish Marine Region and the Scottish Offshore Region due to their being no provision for statutory PAC in the MCAA 2009. Any consultation that takes place during the pre-application stage for Section 36 is not a statutory requirement. However, the principles of the PAC regulations have been followed for all offshore components of the Proposed Development in line with those that were statutorily required. Volume 1, Chapter 5: Consultation and Engagement, as well as Section 5 detail the stakeholder engagement and public consultation that has been carried out relative to the Proposed Development.

4 Wider Benefits of the Bowdun Wind Farm Project

4.1.1 The Project is anticipated to provide a wide range of benefits to the local areas which it is situated in proximity to, being Aberdeenshire, as well as 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.
- Developing the Scottish supply chain and helping to establish Scotland as a global leader in 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.

4.1.2 A Climate Change and GHG Assessment has been carried out within the EIA Report Volume 1, Chapter 22, Climate Change. The purpose of this assessment is to establish the impact of the Project in terms of its GHG emissions during construction, O&M, and decommissioning. The assessment concludes that the Project will provide a benefit to the UK's net zero strategy, and the conclusions show a beneficial impact in an overall reduction in GHG emissions. In terms of GHG payback, the assessment concludes that when the Project is complete, the payback period will be two years at the earliest before the Project is contributing to the UK net zero targets. Based on an anticipated operational life of 30 years, the Project will therefore be actively contributing to UK targets for net zero emissions for a minimum of 28 years, with the predicted net emissions of up to - 35,121,026 tCO2e, which is approximately 0.09% of the Fifth and Sixth UK Carbon Budgets.

4.1.3 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. This approach is in line with UK and Scottish Governmental policies regarding sustainable economic development.

4.1.4 The 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.

4.1.5 The up to 1,008 MW capacity of the Project is expected to be capable of powering more than 1.2 million homes once operational.

4.1.6 While Aberdeenshire Council's Local Development Plan does not specifically address offshore wind development, it supports sustainable economic growth, the transition to a low-carbon economy, and the creation of employment and skills opportunities. In this context, the

Project aligns with the LDP's strategic objectives through the onshore economic and supply-chain benefits it can deliver within Aberdeenshire, including employment, skills development and wider economic activity associated with offshore wind deployment.

5 Stakeholder and Community Engagement

5.1.1 The Applicant has taken a comprehensive approach to consultation and engagement during the pre-application phase for the Proposed Development. This has informed the evolution of the project leading up to this submission.

5.2 Policy Requirements for Consultation

5.2.1 Regulation 5 of the Marine Licensing (Pre-application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 requires that the prospective applicant for a Marine Licence who considers that the activity in respect of which a licence may, or is to, be sought which may, or is to, be of a class or description prescribed in regulation 4 may notify the Scottish Ministers requiring a pre-application consultation statement from them.

5.2.2 Regulation 6 of the Marine Licensing (Pre-application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 requires that the prospective applicant for a Marine Licence must give notification that an application for a Marine Licence is to be submitted to:

- the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses (Northern Lighthouse Board);
- the Maritime and Coastguard Agency;
- the Scottish Environment Protection Agency;
- Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot); and
- any delegate for a marine region where the application for a marine licence is for an activity which is to be carried out wholly or partly in that region.

5.2.3 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.

5.2.4 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.

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

5.2.6 A summary and outcomes from these events are provided in Volume 1 Chapter 5: Consultation and Engagement of the Offshore EIA Report and within the PAC Report Volume 3, Appendix 5.2 Pre-Application Consultation Report. Therefore, the requirements of both the Marine Licensing (Pre-application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 and the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 have been met. Engagement with stakeholders will continue through the consenting process and through post consent to inform design and implementation.

5.3 Methodology

5.3.1 Both statutory and non-statutory stakeholders have been identified and informed about the Bowdun OWF 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 Project.

5.3.2 The consultation process can broadly be broken down into the following elements:

Pre-Scoping (Q1 2022 - 2023)

- Initial engagement with statutory and non-statutory stakeholders to introduce the project and discuss site selection and project issues.
- Consultation on offshore aerial bird/marine mammal surveys and benthic ecology surveys (prior to commencement).
- Establishment of contact points and relationship-building with key stakeholders.

Scoping and First Round Public Consultation (2024 –2025)

- Engagement with technical and statutory stakeholders to inform baseline data and the scoping workshop.
- Distribution of briefing packs to support technical scoping workshops.
- Formal Scoping Opinion requested in August 2024 and received in November 2024.

Environmental Impact Assessment and PAC (Q4 2024 – Ongoing)

- Continued engagement with stakeholders to inform the evolving assessment.
- First round Offshore PAC events held in October 2025 to present proposals and gather feedback.
- Second round Offshore PAC held in January 2026.
- Review of PAC and further targeted engagement as needed. Review of pre-application consultation and further targeted engagement as needed.

5.4 Conclusions

5.4.1 The approach to stakeholder and public engagement has been delivered to ensure a transparent and accessible process for the local community and stakeholders.

5.4.2 The Offshore EIA Report Volume 2, Chapter 5: Consultation and Engagement and Volume 3, Technical Appendix 5.2: Pre-Application Consultation 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.

5.4.3 Feedback from stakeholders and the community have been considered as part of the proposals. Examples of stakeholder input include:

- Ornithology Surveys: The Applicant led regional seabird surveys (2023–2025) on behalf of the North-Eastern and Eastern Ornithological Group. These data were used in the EIA and HRA assessments.
- Commercial Fisheries: Feedback from fisheries stakeholders about the dissemination of project timelines and updates. A Company Fisheries Liaison Officer is in place and details of communication are detailed within the Fisheries Mitigation, Monitoring and Communication Plan. Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm is a member of the Eastern Developers Commercial Fisheries Working Group, where we work with other projects to engage with commercial fisheries stakeholders.

5.4.4 The Applicant has delivered an extensive, transparent and accessible stakeholder engagement and consultation process. Consultation has continued through to submission and the steps undertaken were in excess of the minimum requirements and ultimately led to a successful and beneficial process, which allowed for both information to be given to stakeholders but also for feedback to assist in shaping the Proposed Development and design.

5.4.5 The report has followed the correct procedures to provide MD-LOT with the necessary information to assess the PAC that has been undertaken prior to the submission of this application.

5.4.6 There remains further opportunity to comment on the proposals and the proposed flexibility of design will aid in facilitating a responsive design in line with the requirements of consultees.

6 Planning Assessment of the Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This section demonstrates how the Proposed Development complies with relevant planning policy and should be considered acceptable 'in principle' and how the accompanying Offshore EIA Report and other supporting documents comply with relevant policies in the UK Marine Policy Statement, Scotland's NMP, Scotland's SMP, the Draft Updated Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind, NPF4 and the ALDP.

6.1.2 Findings from the Offshore EIA Report are described in Sections 7.1 to 7.17 of this Planning Statement.

6.1.3 Section 9 of this Planning Statement concludes with an overall planning balance to support the Proposed Development and recommend that the Section 36 Consent application is approved.

6.2 The Principle of Development

National Policy Statement for Energy Infrastructure (EN-1)

6.2.1 Offshore Wind is a known generation technology that is included within the scope of NPS EN-1 and classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project above 100 MW. The need for offshore wind infrastructure is established within the NPS and noted as an important generation technology, in combination with other generation technologies, urgently required for both energy security and Net Zero.

6.2.2 The UK government has concluded that there is a critical national priority for the provision of nationally significant low carbon infrastructure (including renewable generation).

National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3)

6.2.3 Offshore Wind is a known generation technology that is included within the scope of NPS EN-3 and classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project above 100 MW. NPS EN-3 sets out approaches to assessments, environmental standards and application expectations.

Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and Updated Electricity Act Consenting Framework

6.2.4 The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, which received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025, introduces a series of reforms to the consenting of electricity infrastructure in Scotland under the Electricity Act 1989, including for offshore wind generating stations requiring Section 36 consent.

6.2.5 These reforms are discussed at length in Section 3.5. They intended to improve the efficiency, predictability and proportionality of the consenting process while maintaining robust environmental and community safeguards.

6.2.6 The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 reinforces the strong policy imperative established in EN-1 and EN-3 by ensuring that large-scale renewable energy projects such as offshore wind farms are supported by a consenting system capable of delivering timely, proportionate and high-quality decisions. The reforms therefore strengthen the policy basis that the principle of an offshore wind farm development is acceptable and that the consenting system is now better aligned with the urgency of delivering renewable energy infrastructure required to support the transition to Net Zero.

6.2.7 The updated consenting framework introduced by the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 reinforces strong national support for offshore wind development and ensures the Proposed Development will be considered under a modernised, proportionate and efficient Section 36 process.

Scotland's National Marine Plan (2015)

6.2.8 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).

6.2.9 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.

6.2.10 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*."

6.2.11 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.*'

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

6.2.13 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*".

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

6.2.15 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…*"

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

6.2.17 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..."*

6.2.18 Paragraph 4.18 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.*"

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

6.2.19 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 POA across four Scottish regions that have the potential to generate several gigawatts 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.

Draft Updated Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy

6.2.20 The consultation period for the Updated Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind concluded in August 2025. Whilst only in draft form it should be noted that can be used as a material consideration to inform decisions with regards to offshore wind in Scottish waters. The Draft Updated SMP provides an integrated spatial planning framework for the ScotWind and INTOG leasing rounds, alongside consideration of additional capacity for test and demonstration (T&D) projects. It builds upon the 2020 SMP by refining existing POAs and incorporating new Option Areas (OAs) based on the outcomes of recent leasing rounds. The updated plan reflects Scotland's increased ambition for offshore wind development and integrates the latest environmental, socio-economic, and technical evidence to support sustainable marine planning.

6.2.21 The plan introduces a consolidated Sustainability Appraisal (SA) that assesses the cumulative impacts and benefits of ScotWind, INTOG, and T&D developments. It places greater emphasis on coexistence with other marine users, including fisheries and coastal communities, and aligns with the strategic aims of the NMP. The updated SMP is a material

consideration in the planning and consenting process, guiding MD-LOT decisions. The Bowdun site remains within the E3 region, with refined spatial parameters and updated environmental baselines that may influence the scope and mitigation requirements of planning assessments for offshore wind proposals in this area.

Draft North East Marine Plan

6.2.22 The NEMP will form the statutory framework guiding sustainable development within the North East Marine Region, which covers the coastal and inshore waters off Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire—including the area landward of the E3 ScotWind leasing zone where the Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm is located. Regional Marine Plans sit beneath Scotland's NMP and are prepared under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, ensuring that once adopted, public authorities must make decisions in accordance with their policies.

6.2.23 The plan is being developed through structured stakeholder engagement informed by the North East of Scotland Regional Marine Plan Key Issues Report, which highlights the environmental, social, economic, and climate-related pressures along the East Grampian coast and identifies the challenges most relevant to marine activities influencing Aberdeenshire's waters. This evidence base is intended to shape policy areas including ecosystem protection, coastal change, cumulative impacts, climate adaptation, and the spatial pressures associated with new offshore industries.

6.2.24 For the Proposed Development, the NEMP is significant as it seeks to ensure integrated marine and land-use planning, aligning marine decision-making with Local Development Plans, NPF4, and national sectoral strategies. RMPs in Scotland are designed to influence the management of all marine activities out to 12 nm, providing statutory guidance to regulators and forming an essential part of the consent assessment process for offshore renewables, ports, cables, and related infrastructure.

6.2.25 Although still emerging and not yet prescriptive in spatial terms, the NEMP establishes a robust policy context for assessing proposals such as Bowdun OWF. It emphasises sustainable development, climate resilience, biodiversity protection, responsible use of marine resources, and compatibility with local community and economic interests. These principles closely align with The Project's environmental assessment commitments within the E3 leasing zone, which lies 38 km off the Aberdeenshire coast and is designated for fixed-foundation offshore wind development.

6.2.26 As the Proposed Development progresses through marine licensing and associated consent processes, compliance with the emerging NEMP will help demonstrate that the offshore infrastructure—turbine arrays, inter-array cabling, and export routes—responds to regional priorities,

avoids significant adverse effects on marine users and ecosystems, and contributes positively to Scotland's net-zero transition and wider marine policy objectives.

6.3 National Planning Framework 4

6.3.1 NPF4 (2023) is a statutory part of the development plan and a material consideration for all onshore elements of the Proposed Development up to the MLWS tide. These onshore components - such as Landfall infrastructure, substation, GCP, and access arrangements - are subject to a separate planning application to the Aberdeenshire Council.

6.3.2 NPF4 replaces previous Scottish Planning Policy and sets out a national spatial strategy underpinned by six overarching spatial principles, including a Just Transition and net zero. It aligns with Scotland's Climate Change Plan and Energy Strategy, recognising the critical role of both land and sea in delivering offshore renewable energy.

6.3.3 NPF4 provides strong policy support for offshore wind through:

- Policy 1: Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises – Significant weight is given to proposals that address the global climate emergency and nature crisis.
- Policy 2: Climate Mitigation and Adaptation – Development should minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate risks.
- Policy 11: Energy – Actively supports all forms of renewable energy, including offshore wind, and expects proposals to maximise socio-economic benefits and address environmental impacts.

6.3.4 In addition, Annex B of NPF4 identifies Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure as a national development, which includes:

- Offshore electricity generation from renewables exceeding 50 MW;
- Offshore high-voltage transmission infrastructure (≥132 kV); and
- Supporting infrastructure such as converter stations and substations.

6.3.5 The Proposed Development exceeds 50 MW and therefore qualifies as a national development, supported in principle by the national spatial strategy.

6.3.6 While NPF4 is not the primary policy framework for determining offshore elements (which fall under marine planning and consenting regimes), it provides clear national-level support for the principle of offshore wind development and its contribution to Scotland's net zero targets.

Alignment with Marine Policy Framework

6.3.7 While NPF4 primarily applies to terrestrial planning matters, it is closely aligned with the marine policy framework that governs offshore

development, including the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) and Marine Scotland's Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (SMP-OWE).

UK Marine Policy Statement

6.3.8 The MPS provides the overarching framework for marine planning across the UK and supports the achievement of sustainable development in the marine area. It sets out the UK's vision for clean, healthy, safe, productive, and biologically diverse oceans and seas. The MPS recognises the importance of offshore renewable energy in meeting climate change and energy security objectives. NPF4 complements this by embedding climate and nature priorities into terrestrial planning and by supporting renewable energy infrastructure, including offshore wind, as a national development.

Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy

6.3.9 The SMP-OWE, most recently updated in 2025, provides a spatial and policy framework for the sustainable development of offshore wind in Scottish waters. It identifies OAs for development through the ScotWind and INTOG leasing rounds and supports test and demonstration projects. The Plan is underpinned by environmental, social, and economic assessments and aims to balance offshore wind development with other marine interests.

6.3.10 NPF4 and the SMP-OWE are strategically aligned in their shared objectives to:

- Tackle the climate emergency and deliver net zero;
- Promote a just transition to a low-carbon economy;
- Maximise socio-economic benefits for communities and supply chains; and
- Ensure development is sustainable and environmentally responsible.

6.3.11 The Proposed Development is consistent with both frameworks. It contributes to national and UK-wide renewable energy targets, aligns with the spatial strategy of NPF4, and is located within areas identified as suitable for offshore wind under the SMP-OWE.

Aberdeenshire Council Local Development Plan

6.3.12 The ALDP 2023 sets the statutory framework for terrestrial planning decisions within the Aberdeenshire administrative area and is therefore relevant to the onshore and intertidal interfaces of the Proposed Development (e.g. Landfall infrastructure, cable transition works and any related access or construction compounds).

6.3.13 While offshore generation is determined under the Electricity Act and marine regimes, the alignment of onshore elements with ALDP 2023 policies on climate change, renewable energy, infrastructure delivery, environmental protection and placemaking supports the overall policy basis for the Project. In particular, the ALDP 2023's emphasis on

facilitating net-zero infrastructure, supporting renewable energy supply chains and ensuring environmental safeguards is consistent with NPF4 national development status for strategic renewable and transmission infrastructure and the Scottish Government's wider energy transition policy. Accordingly, the Proposed Development's onshore components will be advanced in a manner that is consistent with ALDP 2023 policies and the associated guidance, with detailed compliance addressed in the separate onshore application to Aberdeenshire Council.

7 Review of EIA Chapters

7.1 Marine Physical Processes

7.1.1 The assessment of likely significant environmental effects on marine physical process is detailed in Volume 2, Chapter 7: Physical Processes of the Offshore EIA Report.

Summary of Impacts, Mitigation, Likely Significant Environmental Effects and Monitoring

7.1.2 Information on the physical marine environment within the Physical Processes Study Area was collected through a combination of desktop reviews, site surveys and consultation with stakeholders.

7.1.3 The summary of the potential impacts, the Embedded Mitigation and the conclusion of likely significant environmental effects in EIA terms in respect to physical processes can be found in EIAR Volume 1, Chapter 7. The impacts assessed include:

- Potential changes to Suspended Sediment Concentrations (SSCs), bed levels and sediment type;
- Potential impacts to seabed morphology;
- Potential impacts to coastal morphology;
- Potential changes to the tidal regime;
- Potential changes to the wave regime;
- Potential changes to the sediment transport regime;
- Potential changes to stratification and frontal systems; and
- Potential for scour of seabed sediments.

7.1.4 Overall, it is concluded that there will be no likely significant environmental effects on Physical Processes arising from the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M or decommissioning phases.

7.1.5 No likely significant transboundary effects on physical processes have been identified regarding the potential effects of the Proposed Development.

7.1.6 Overall, it is concluded that there will be no likely significant cumulative effects from the Proposed Development alongside other projects/plans in relation to physical processes.

7.1.7 As all of the potential effects to physical processes receptors are identified as not significant, no monitoring is proposed.

Marine Physical Effects Conclusion

7.1.8 Overall, Marine Physical Processes covers a number of other EIA topic areas, however, the identified potential impacts during construction, O&M and decommissioning of the Proposed 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 Development would not adversely harm marine physical processes and would accord with the relevant policies detailed within Scotland's NMP (2015).

7.2 Benthic Ecology

7.2.1 Volume 2, Chapter 8: Benthic Ecology of the Offshore EIA Report details the assessment of the likely significant environmental effects on benthic ecology, that may potentially occur as a result of the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases.

Summary of Impacts, Mitigation, Likely Significant Environmental Effects and Monitoring

7.2.2 Information on benthic ecology within the Local Benthic Ecology Study Area was collected through a detailed desktop study and through site-specific surveys.

7.2.3 In terms of potential impacts, embedded measures and the conclusion of likely significant environmental effects in EIA terms in respect to benthic ecology the full examination can be found in the Offshore EIA Report Volume 2, Chapter 8: Benthic Ecology. The impacts assessed include:

- Temporary habitat loss and/or disturbance;
- Long term habitat loss and/or disturbance;
- Changes to SSC, bed levels and sediment type;
- Changes in physical processes;
- Increased risk of introduction and spread of Invasive Non-Native Species;
- Colonisation of hard substrates;
- Removal of hard substrates; and
- Impacts to benthic ecology due to Electromagnetic Fields (EMFs).

7.2.4 Overall, it is concluded that there will be no likely significant environmental effects arising from the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M or decommissioning phases.

7.2.5 Overall, it is concluded that there will be no likely significant cumulative effects from the Proposed Development alongside other projects.

7.2.6 In addition, no likely significant transboundary effects have been identified in regard to effects of the Proposed Development.

Benthic Ecology Effects Conclusion

7.2.7 The Proposed Development will have Embedded Mitigation included during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases to ensure

risks to benthic ecology are minimised as far as feasibly possible that it is unlikely that it will have any significant effects on benthic ecology.

7.2.8 Overall, this design and deployment approach facilitates the conclusion that the anticipated significance of effects and the cumulative impacts to Benthic and Intertidal Ecology during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development can be assessed as Minor and Not Significant in EIA terms. Based off those assessments, it is therefore considered that the Proposed 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 (2015) and the NPF4 (2023a).

7.3 Fish and Shellfish Ecology

7.3.1 Volume 2, Chapter 9: Fish and Shellfish Ecology of the Offshore EIA Report details the assessment of the likely significant effects on fish and shellfish ecology that may potentially occur as a result of the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases.

Summary of Impacts, Mitigation, Likely Significant Environmental Effects and Monitoring

7.3.2 Information on fish and shellfish ecology within the Local Fish and Shellfish Ecology Study Area was collected through a detailed desktop and through site-specific surveys.

7.3.3 A number of potential impacts on fish and shellfish ecology were identified, across the construction, O&M, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. These included:

- Temporary habitat loss and/or disturbance;
- Long term habitat loss and/or disturbance;
- Introduction of artificial habitat and subsequent colonisation of hard structures;
- Increased SSCs and associated deposition;
- Subsea noise impacting fish and shellfish receptors; and
- Impacts to fish and shellfish receptors due to EMF.

7.3.4 With the proposed Embedded Mitigation in place, the majority of these impacts were concluded to be either negligible or minor adverse significance for all Important Ecological Features (IEFs), which are not significant in EIA terms. However, a moderate adverse significance of impact was concluded for herring due to piling in the construction phase. Therefore, prior to the commencement of piling at the Proposed Development, appropriate Additional Mitigation measures will be discussed and agreed with stakeholders. These may include the use of noise abatement systems or site-specific surveys to determine key

herring spawning periods. Appropriate Additional Mitigation will be secured through the Piling Strategy as a condition of the Section 36 Consent and Marine Licence. Once the Additional Mitigation measures as described above are in place, the significance of this impact will be reduced to minor adverse for herring, which is not significant in EIA terms.

7.3.5 Overall, the assessment therefore concluded that there will be no likely significant environmental effects arising from the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M or decommissioning phases. This conclusion also applies to cumulative effects and transboundary effects.

7.3.6 As all of the potential effects to fish and shellfish receptors are identified as not significant, no monitoring is proposed.

Fish and Shellfish Effects Conclusion

7.3.7 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, O&M, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development are assessed having a Minor/Negligible effect, which are considered not significant in EIA terms. Therefore, the Proposed 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), Scotland's SMP (2020b) and the NPF4 (2023a).

7.4 Marine Mammals

7.4.1 Volume 2. Chapter 10: Marine Mammals of the EIA Report presents the assessment of the likely significant environmental effects on marine mammals, that may occur as a result of the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases.

Summary of Impacts, Mitigation, Likely Significant Environmental Effects and Monitoring

7.4.2 Information on marine mammals within the Marine Mammals Study Area was collected through a detailed desktop and through site-specific surveys.

7.4.3 A number of potential impacts on marine mammals were identified, across the construction, O&M, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. These included:

- Injury and disturbance from subsea noise generated during piling
- Injury and disturbance from subsea noise generated during unexploded ordnance clearance
- Injury and disturbance from subsea noise generated during site-investigation surveys

- Injury and disturbance from subsea noise generated by vessel use and other noise producing activities
- Injury to marine mammals due to collision with vessels
- Injury and disturbance from subsea noise generated by Wind Turbine operation
- Effects on marine mammals due to altered prey availability

7.4.4 Overall, it is concluded that there will no likely significant environmental effects arising from the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M or decommissioning phases. In addition it was assessed that no likely significant transboundary effects have been identified in regard to the effects of the Proposed Development.

7.4.5 The cumulative effects assessment assessed the impact associated with the Proposed Development together with other relevant projects and activities. The exception to this was two assessed cumulative significant effects on harbour porpoise from injury and disturbance from subsea noise generated during piling and noise generated during unexploded ordnance clearance, from the cumulative impact of anticipated activity in the Regional Marine Mammal Study Area.

7.4.6 In addition, it was assessed that no likely significant transboundary effects have been identified in regard to the effects of the Proposed Development.

Marine Mammal Effects Conclusion

7.4.7 Overall, the assessment concludes that the impact, including overall cumulative impacts to marine mammals are considered as Negligible and Not Significant in EIA terms, with the one identified exception of harbour porpoise. It should be noted that the Proposed Development makes a relatively small contribution to the activity taking place within the Regional Marine Mammal Study Area. These results indicate that the potential cumulative impact arises from the simultaneous aggregation of multiple projects rather than from any single project in isolation. As a result, the cumulative significance conclusion was moderate, which is significant in EIA terms. However, additional modelling was conducted, which indicated that the population decline due to the combined impact of the CEA projects is not driven by the Proposed Development, as the results were the same, with or without the Proposed Development.

7.4.8 The Offshore Development would therefore not significantly harm marine mammals or their habitats and would accord with the relevant policies set out in the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011), Scotland's NMP (2015) and Scotland's SMP (2020b).

7.5 Ornithology

7.5.1 Volume 2, Chapter 11: Ornithology of the EIA Report presents the assessment of the likely significant environmental effects on offshore ornithology that may occur as a result of the Proposed Development during its construction, O&M and decommissioning phases.

Summary of Impacts, Mitigation, Likely Significant Environmental Effects and Monitoring

7.5.2 Information on offshore ornithology within the Offshore Ornithology Study Area was collected through a desktop review of existing studies and datasets and a suite of site-specific surveys, including DAS, LiDAR, intertidal and nearshore bird surveys.

7.5.3 A number of potential impacts on offshore ornithology were identified, across the construction, O&M, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. These included:

- Collision risk mortality due to collision with rotor blades;
- Distributional responses, displacement and barrier effects from Offshore Infrastructure;
- Disturbance and displacement from vessel movements;
- Disturbance to prey species and their habitats;
- Temporary habitat loss and/or habitat disturbance;
- Attraction to light;
- Indirect impact from UXO clearance; and
- Indirect impacts from construction/decommissioning noise.

7.5.4 Overall, it was concluded that there would be no likely significant environmental effects arising from the Proposed Development alone during the construction, O&M or decommissioning phases.

7.5.5 With the proposed Embedded and Additional Mitigation measures in place, all these impacts result in negligible to minor adverse effects which are not significant in EIA terms for the Proposed Development for all key bird species.

7.5.6 Although there will be no likely significant effects from the Proposed Development alone, there is a significant effect cumulatively with other OWFs for herring gull and great black-backed gull in relation to collision risk, razorbill and guillemot in relation to distributional responses and for kittiwake for the inter-related effect of collision risk and distributional responses.

7.5.7 As the impact on population size is comfortably within the margin of error for all species and all impacts, and this approach is highly precautionary, it is considered that the impact is not significant in EIA terms. These impacts were assessed both with, and without, Berwick Bank Offshore

Wind Farm whose application was still being considered by the MD-LOT at the time of the submission of this document.

7.5.8 No likely significant transboundary effects were predicted regarding offshore ornithology from the Proposed Development on the interests of EEA states.

7.5.9 As likely significant effects from the Proposed Development, cumulatively with OWFs, was concluded the following monitoring has been proposed. Prior to construction of the Proposed Development starting, a strong, statistically robust and strategic bird monitoring programme will be devised and agreed in liaison with NatureScot and the Marine Directorate, considering foraging patterns, population trends and productivity for guillemot, razorbill, puffin, great-black-backed gulls and kittiwake at the key colonies on the east coast of Scotland.

Offshore Ornithology Effects Conclusion

7.5.10 The construction, O&M, and decommissioning phases identified to impact offshore ornithology for the Proposed Development are considered as overall Minor and Not Significant. Embedded Mitigation measures will be included to manage potential impacts as highlighted.

7.5.11 Although significant effects were identified for ornithological receptors cumulatively, it was found that the Proposed Development alone contributed less than 2.50% of the total annual mortalities, for great black-backed gull (0.23%), razorbill (2.30%) and kittiwake (1.26%). Thus, for these species any significant effects are likely a result of the additive nature of this assessment with the presence of the Proposed Development unlikely to alter the outcomes. 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 Offshore EIA Report.

7.5.12 Overall, it is considered that the Proposed 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), Scotland's NMP (2015) and Scotland's SMP (2020b).

7.6 Offshore Bats

7.6.1 Volume 2, Chapter 12: Offshore Bats of the Offshore EIA Report details the assessment of the likely significant environmental effects on migratory bats, that may potentially occur as a result of the Proposed Development during the O&M phase.

Summary of Impacts, Mitigation, Likely Significant Environmental Effects and Monitoring

7.6.2 Information on offshore bats within the Offshore Bats Study Area was collected through a detailed desktop study and literature review.

7.6.3 One potential impact on offshore bats was identified, across the O&M phase of the Proposed Development. This included:

- Collision risk due to collision with rotor blades

7.6.4 Overall, it is concluded that there will be no likely significant environmental effects arising from the Proposed Development during the O&M phase.

7.6.5 Overall, it is concluded that there will be no likely significant cumulative effects from the Proposed Development alongside other projects.

7.6.6 In addition, no likely significant transboundary effects have been identified in regard to effects of the Proposed Development.

Offshore Bats Conclusion

7.6.7 The Proposed Development will have Embedded Mitigation included during the O&M phase to ensure risks to offshore bats are minimised as far as feasibly possible that it is unlikely that it will have any significant effects on offshore bats.

7.6.8 Overall, this design and deployment approach facilitates the conclusion that the anticipated significance of effects and the cumulative impacts to offshore bats during the O&M phase of the Proposed Development can be assessed as Minor in EIA terms. Based off the assessment, it is therefore considered that the Proposed Development would not cause adverse harm on offshore bats and is in accordance with relevant policies and paragraphs detailed in the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011), Scotland's NMP (2015) and the NPF4 (2023a).

7.7 Commercial Fisheries

7.7.1 Volume 2. Chapter 13: Commercial Fisheries of the EIA Report presents the assessment of the likely significant environmental effects on commercial fisheries, that may potentially occur as a result of the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases.

7.7.2 Information on commercial fisheries within the Local and Regional Commercial Fisheries Study Areas was collected through a detailed desktop review and stakeholder engagement.

Summary of Impacts, Mitigation, Likely Significant Environmental Effects and Monitoring

7.7.3 A number of potential impacts on commercial fisheries were identified, across the construction, O&M, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. These included:

- Reduction in access to, or exclusion from established fishing grounds from within the Array Area;
- Reduction in access to, or exclusion from established fishing grounds from within the Export Cable Corridor;

- Displacement leading to gear conflict and increased fishing pressure on adjacent grounds;
- Disturbance of commercially important fish and shellfish resources leading to displacement or disruption of fishing activity;
- Increased vessel traffic associated with the Proposed Development within fishing grounds leading to interference with fishing activity;
- Additional steaming to alternative fishing grounds for vessels that would otherwise fish within the Proposed Development; and
- Increased snagging risk, which could result in loss or damage to fishing gear.

7.7.4 Overall, it is concluded that there will be no likely significant environmental effects arising from the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M or decommissioning phases.

7.7.5 The cumulative effects were also assessed with moderate adverse effects on the demersal seine and otter trawl fleets, and the scallop dredge fleet associated with cumulative reduced access to or exclusion from fishing grounds in the Array Area, and associated displacement.

7.7.6 The assessment identified no significant transboundary effects with regards to the proposed development.

7.7.7 Monitoring will include regular analysis of Marine Management Organisation (MMO) landings data by port and species, supplemented by vessel monitoring system (VMS) and automatic identification system (AIS) data, marine traffic surveys, Offshore Fisheries Liaison Officer (OFLO) and guard vessel records, and consultation with the fishing industry via the Commercial Fisheries Liaison Officer (CFLO).

7.7.8 Monitoring will be undertaken for three years in advance of construction, and then re-evaluated and future monitoring requirements during construction and beyond will be identified and agreed through the FMMC

Commercial Fisheries Effects Conclusion

7.7.9 The assessment concluded that the Proposed Development would result in moderate adverse effects on demersal seine and otter trawl fleets during all phases due to reduced access to or exclusion from fishing grounds and associated displacement. However, the implementation of Additional Mitigation measures via the FMMCP reduces the significance of these effects to minor adverse, which is not significant in EIA terms. Cumulative effects were also assessed and found to be moderate adverse for demersal seine, otter trawl, and scallop dredge fleets, while no significant transboundary effects were identified.

7.7.10 The Applicant regards coexistence as the joint presence of both industries, working together within and around the Proposed Development and believes that application of measures set out in the FMMCP support opportunities for coexistence.

7.7.11 In light of the conclusions of the EIA and the commitment to supporting coexistence with the commercial fishing industry through the implementation of the FMMCP, the Proposed Development is therefore in accordance with the relevant policies set out within the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011), Scotland's NMP (2015) and Scotland's SMP (2020b).

7.8 Shipping and Navigation

7.8.1 Volume 2, Chapter 14: Shipping and Navigation of the Offshore EIA Report presents the assessment of the likely significant environmental effects on shipping and navigation, that may potentially occur as a result of the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases.

Summary of Impacts, Mitigation, Likely Significant Environmental Effects and Monitoring

7.8.2 Information on shipping and navigation within the Shipping and Navigation Study Area was collected through a detailed desktop and through site-specific surveys.

7.8.3 A number of potential impacts on shipping and navigation were identified, across the construction, O&M, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. These included:

- Deviation of commercial vessels
- Increased collision risk
- Increased contact/allision risk
- Increased grounding risk
- Impact to SAR capability
- Interference with Radar, communications and positioning systems
- Reduction in Under Keel Clearance due to subsurface Offshore Infrastructure
- Potential impact on ports/harbours and other nearshore operations
- Potential impact on small vessel activity (including fishing and recreation)

7.8.4 Overall, it is concluded that there will be no likely significant effects arising from the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M or decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development with the same conclusion being reached for cumulative and transboundary effects.

7.8.5 The EIA concluded that all identified hazards are managed to As Low As Reasonably Practicable and are deemed tolerable, with no impacts assessed as significant in EIA terms.

7.8.6 As the potential effects to shipping and navigation receptors were identified as not significant, no project specific monitoring is proposed.

Shipping and Navigation Effects Conclusion

7.8.7 Overall, the assessment concludes that the impacts, including cumulative impacts, associated with the construction, O&M, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development are not significant in EIA terms. Therefore, it is considered that the Proposed 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), Scotland's NMP (2015) and Scotland's SMP (2020b).

7.9 Aviation and Radar

7.9.1 Volume 2, Chapter 15: Aviation and Radar of the Offshore EIA Report presents the assessment of the likely significant environmental effects on aviation and radar, that may potentially occur as a result of the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases.

Summary of Impacts, Mitigation, Likely Significant Environmental Effects and Monitoring

7.9.2 Information on aviation and radar within the Aviation and Radar Study Area was collected through a detailed desktop review and consultation with key stakeholders.

7.9.3 This process identified a number of potential impacts on aviation and radar receptors across the construction, O&M, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development, including:

- Potential impact on Aberdeen Airport's Instrument Flight Procedures;
- Potential Impact on the National Air Traffic Services (NATS) Allanshill and Perwinnes Primary Surveillance Radars; and
- Potential Impact on the MoD Buchan Air Defence PSR and military low flying and United Kingdom Search and Rescue (SAR) helicopter operations.

7.9.4 Overall, it is concluded that with the implementation of Additional Mitigation measures, such as amending and re-publishing Aberdeen Airport's IFPs and 3-Dimensional Non-Automatic Initiation Zones, there will be no likely residual significant environmental effects arising from the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M or decommissioning phases.

7.9.5 In terms of cumulative impacts, any potential impact on an aviation receptor is treated as a standalone impact and considered on a case-by-case basis. Following the implementation of Embedded Mitigation measures for the Proposed Development there is no potential for the predicted impacts to interact with impacts from other developments and activities that can lead to a cumulative effect on receptors.

7.9.6 No likely significant transboundary effects with regard to aviation and radar from the Proposed Development on the interests of EEA States were predicted.

Aviation and Radar Effects Conclusion

7.9.7 Overall, it is concluded that with the Additional Mitigation measures proposed, the significance of effect, and the overall cumulative impacts, the Proposed Development would have on aviation and radar would be considered as Minor and not significant in EIA terms. The Proposed Development therefore 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 (2015) and Scotland's SMP (2020b).

7.10 Infrastructure and Other Users

7.10.1 Volume 2, Chapter 16: Infrastructure and Other Uses of the EIA Report presents the assessment of the likely significant environmental effects on Infrastructure and Other Users that may potentially occur as a result of the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases.

Summary of Impacts, Mitigation, Likely Significant Environmental Effects and Monitoring

7.10.2 A number of potential impacts on infrastructure and other sea users were identified, across the construction, O&M, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. These included:

- Displacement of recreational activities (including recreational sailing, cruising and recreational fishing)
- Impacts to development cables or pipelines or restrictions on access to cables or pipelines

7.10.3 Overall, it is concluded that there will be no likely significant environmental effects on infrastructure and other sea users arising from the Proposed Development, or cumulatively with other planned projects, during the construction, O&M or decommissioning phases.

7.10.4 No likely significant transboundary effects on infrastructure and other sea users have been identified regarding the potential effects of the Proposed Development.

7.10.5 As all of the potential effects to infrastructure and other sea users receptors are identified as not significant, no monitoring is proposed.

Infrastructure and Other Users Effects Conclusion

7.10.6 Overall, infrastructure and other users activities that are likely to be impacted from the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development, and the overall cumulative impact, were assessed as Minor, and therefore Not Significant in EIA terms.

7.10.7 It is considered that the Proposed 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 Development would accord with the relevant policies and paragraphs detailed within the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011), Scotland's NMP (2015), NPF4 (2023a) and the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (2023).

7.11 Major Accidents and Disasters

7.11.1 Volume 2, Chapter 17: Major Accidents and Disasters of the Offshore EIA Report details the assessment of the potential likely significant environmental effects on the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to Major Accidents and Disasters (MADS) during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases.

7.11.2 The assessment of MADS considers potential interactions of the Proposed Development with existing and future Offshore Infrastructure and activities, including offshore cables, CCS, oil and gas operations, fisheries, aviation, and maritime navigation. The assessment drew on baseline information from several technical chapters within the Offshore EIA Report, including physical processes, commercial fisheries, shipping and navigation, aviation and radar, and infrastructure and other users. Additionally, information on Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) near the Proposed Development informed the assessment.

7.11.3 Guidance defines a major accident as an event that threatens immediate or delayed serious environmental effects on human health, welfare and/or the environment (IEMA, 2020). Additionally, major accidents can be caused by disasters which are anthropogenic or environmental. Disasters can, therefore, be external (i.e. an act of terrorism) or a natural phenomenon (i.e. extreme weather) both with the potential to create a scenario that meets the definition of a major accident.

7.11.4 The main risks presented by OWFs are related to the safety of personnel (with fire accidents a particular focus), failure of infrastructure (such as corrosion or blade failure) and equipment and obstructions to navigation. Other key risks to OWFs are related to the weather (such as gale-force winds and lightning strikes), shipping disruption, and interactions with subsea cables (Mou et al., 2021). The risk of sabotage, although remote, was also considered.

7.11.5 The assessment concludes that the Proposed Development will not reasonably lead to a MADS after consideration of the Embedded Mitigation adopted as part of the Project. As the risk of MADS has been effectively mitigated through Embedded Mitigation, the Proposed Development is not expected to result in such events. Consequently, a cumulative, effects assessment specific to MADS has not been undertaken with same conclusion applied to transboundary effect.

Major Accidents and Disasters Effects Conclusion

7.11.6 The assessment concluded that the potential for MADS was minimal and effectively mitigated as far as was reasonable. This approach in accord with the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) and Scotland's NMP (2015).

7.12 Socio Economics, Tourism and Recreation

7.12.1 Volume 2, Chapter 18: Socio Economics, Tourism and Recreation of the Offshore EIA Report considers the potential impact of the Project on socio-economics, tourism and recreation during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases.

Summary of Impacts, Mitigation, Likely Significant Environmental Effects and Monitoring

7.12.2 A number of potential impacts on socio-economics, recreation and tourism were identified, across the construction, O&M, and decommissioning phases of the Project. These included:

- Increase in employment and GVA;
- Demographic changes;
- Changes to housing demand;
- Changes to other local public and private services;
- Changes to tourism receptors;
- Changes to recreation receptors; and
- Socio-cultural impacts.

7.12.3 The assessment concludes that the Project has the potential to deliver significant beneficial socio-economic effects, particularly in relation to Gross Value Added (GVA) and employment, across the construction, operation and maintenance (O&M), and decommissioning phases. These benefits are expected to arise at local, regional and national levels and are considered significant in EIA terms within the Regional Socio-Economics Study Area.

7.12.4 The Project is anticipated to support substantial economic activity throughout its lifecycle, contributing to Scotland's and the UK's net-zero objectives while stimulating economic output and employment through project expenditure and supply-chain engagement. The assessment demonstrates that these effects would be beneficial overall, with positive contributions to livelihoods, skills development and economic resilience.

7.12.5 Potential effects relating to demographic change, housing demand and local services are more dependent on the location of construction and O&M ports, which have not yet been confirmed. As a result, the magnitude and significance of these effects cannot be fully defined at this stage. Indicative assessment suggests that effects may range from negligible to major, depending on whether ports are located in urban or more sensitive

rural locations. The Applicant has committed to undertaking further assessment once port locations are known and to implementing appropriate mitigation where required.

7.12.6 No significant adverse effects have been identified in relation to tourism and recreation or socio-cultural impacts, including effects arising from disruption or displacement of fishing activity. While changes to community character and cohesion could occur in proximity to port locations, these effects are expected to be managed through engagement, mitigation and enhancement measures, with positive effects also anticipated through employment and supply-chain opportunities.

7.12.7 The cumulative assessment identifies that potential cumulative effects on demographics, housing demand and local services would similarly depend on the selection of ports and therefore cannot be confirmed at this stage. No significant cumulative effects have been identified in relation to GVA and employment, tourism and recreation, or fishing-related socio-economic effects. No likely significant transboundary effects have been identified.

Socio-economic, Tourism and Recreation Effects Conclusion

7.12.8 The assessment has demonstrated that the Project has the potential to deliver a positive range of economic benefits for the local economy and more widely in Scotland and the UK through all its phases. This approach is in line with UK and Scottish Governmental policies regarding sustainable economic development, especially the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011), Scotland's National Marine Plan (2015), Scotland's SMP (2020b), National Planning Framework 4 (2023a), and the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (Aberdeenshire Council, 2023).

7.13 Marine Archaeology

7.13.1 Volume 2, Chapter 19: Marine Archaeology of the Offshore EIA Report presents the assessment of the potential effect the Proposed Development on marine archaeology, this is defined as the traces of human existence located in the marine environment and includes wrecks, aircraft and submerged landscapes.

7.13.2 The marine archaeology of the Proposed Development was characterised via site-specific geophysical surveys and desk-based assessment. These surveys and desk-based assessment indicated that within the Proposed Development there are:

- Four geophysical anomalies of high archaeological potential;
- Nine geophysical anomalies of medium archaeological potential;
- Further geophysical anomalies of low archaeological potential and numerous magnetic anomalies;
- Records of known wrecks and obstructions;

- Records of recorded losses of wrecks and aircraft;
- Intertidal heritage receptors;
- Potential for unknown wrecks, aircraft and intertidal heritage receptors; and
- Existence of submerged landscapes with archaeological potential.

7.13.3 A number of potential impacts on marine archaeology receptors, associated with the construction, O&M, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development, were identified. These included increased SSCs and deposition, direct damage and alteration of sediment transport regimes. With the proposed mitigation measures in place, none of these impacts result in effects of significance in EIA terms.

7.13.4 The cumulative impacts from cables and pipelines were assessed and predicted as likely to result in effects of minor significance (not significant in EIA terms) upon marine archaeology receptors. In addition, the assessment did not identify any likely significant transboundary effects with regard to marine archaeology from the Proposed Development on the interests of EEA States were predicted.

Marine Archaeology Effects Conclusion

7.13.5 The Proposed Development would not represent a harmful impact to the identified archaeology assets and areas, and for the potential discovery of archaeological remains. Embedded Mitigation is proposed to ensure that any archaeological 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 (2015).

7.14 Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

7.14.1 Volume 2, Chapter 20: Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of the Offshore EIA Report presents the Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact assessment of the Proposed Development during construction, O&M and decommissioning phases.

7.14.2 Information on Seascape, Landscape and Visual within the Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Study Area was collected through a detailed desktop and through site-specific surveys.

Summary of Impacts, Mitigation, Likely Significant Environmental Effects and Monitoring

7.14.3 A number of potential impacts on seascape and landscape character were identified, across the construction, O&M, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. These included:

- Temporary, indirect and direct seascape, landscape and visual effects arising because of the works associated with the Offshore Export Cable, Interconnector Cables and Landfall connection site;
- Temporary indirect and direct seascape, landscape and visual effects arising because of the construction works associated with the installation of Wind Turbines and OSPs; and
- Long-term direct and indirect seascape, landscape and visual effects arising because of the presence of Wind Turbines and OSPs.

7.14.4 The assessment concludes that temporary seascape, landscape and visual effects arising during the construction and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development would be limited in extent and duration. Effects associated with vessel activity, cable installation and offshore works are not predicted to give rise to significant effects on identified seascape character types, landscape character types or visual receptors and are therefore not significant in EIA terms.

7.14.5 During the O&M phase, the assessment identifies that of the 20 representative viewpoints assessed, eight viewpoints are predicted to experience long-term significant visual effects as a result of the visibility of the offshore infrastructure. The remaining 12 viewpoints are not predicted to experience significant visual effects. The assessment is based on a worst-case visibility scenario, recognising that actual visibility of the Proposed Development will frequently be reduced by prevailing weather and atmospheric conditions.

7.14.6 Decommissioning effects are anticipated to be broadly similar to those identified during construction, albeit of shorter duration. As offshore infrastructure is progressively removed, visual effects would reduce over time and are assessed as minor and beneficial, and not significant in EIA terms.

7.14.7 A cumulative assessment has been undertaken taking account of other operational, consented and reasonably foreseeable offshore wind developments within the study area. Overall, it is concluded that the Proposed Development would not give rise to any likely significant cumulative visual effects.

7.14.8 No significant transboundary effects have been identified regarding effects of the Proposed Development.

7.14.9 The assessment of potential indirect effects arising because of the Proposed Development upon seascape and landscape receptors are identified as not significant in terms of the EIA Regulations, and accordingly no monitoring is required.

Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Conclusions

7.14.10 Overall, the assessment demonstrates that the majority of seascape, landscape and visual effects are not significant in EIA terms, with significant effects limited to a small number of viewpoints during the O&M

phase only. With Embedded Mitigation in place, the Proposed Development is considered to result in limited harm to sensitive seascape, landscape and visual receptors and no Additional Mitigation or monitoring is required.

7.14.11 The seascape, landscape and visual impacts are therefore considered to be fully assessed and the Proposed Development would result in minimal harm to identified sensitive receptors.

7.14.12 The Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with the relevant policies and paragraphs within the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011), Scotland's NMP (2015), Scotland's SMP (2020b), NPF4 (2023a) and the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (2023).

7.15 Cultural Heritage

7.15.1 Volume 2, Chapter 21: Cultural Heritage of the Offshore EIA Report details the relationship of the Proposed Development to onshore cultural heritage assets. The assessment identified cultural heritage assets as receptors where the Proposed Development might conceivably result in change that would substantively affect their cultural significance during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases.

Summary of Impacts, Mitigation, Likely Significant Environmental Effects and Monitoring

7.15.2 One potential impact on cultural heritage was identified, across the O&M phase of the Proposed Development. This included:

- Long term visual change in the setting of cultural heritage receptors (daytime)

7.15.3 The assessment, informed by appropriate visualisations, concluded that the Proposed Development will result in visual change in the setting of the cultural heritage receptors, but that in all cases this will result in effects of minor significance, which is not significant in EIA terms.

7.15.4 The potential for cumulative effects to arise from the Proposed Development in combination with other offshore wind farms within 60 km was considered. It is considered that there is no potential for significant cumulative effects to occur.

7.15.5 No likely significant transboundary effects with regard to cultural heritage from the Proposed Development on the interests of other European Economic Area States were predicted.

7.15.6 No significant effects are predicted in respect of cultural heritage. No monitoring is proposed.

Cultural Heritage Effects Conclusion

7.15.7 Overall, the assessment concludes that the overall impact, including cumulative, would be considered as Minor, and not significant in EIA terms and therefore the Proposed Development would accord with the relevant

policies and paragraphs, detailed in the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011), Scotland's NMP (2015) and Scotland's SMP (2020b).

7.16 Climate Change

7.16.1 Volume 2, Chapter 22: Climate Change of the Offshore EIA Report assesses the likely significant environmental effects on and from climate change, that may potentially occur as a result of the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases.

Summary of Impacts, Mitigation, Likely Significant Environmental Effects and Monitoring

7.16.2 A number of potential impacts on climate change were identified, across the construction, O&M, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. These included:

- The impact of GHG emissions arising from the disturbance of Blue Carbon systems and seabed change, including benthic and subtidal/intertidal ecology, during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases;
- The impact of GHG emissions arising from the manufacturing and installation of the Proposed Development;
- The impact of GHG emissions arising from the consumption of materials and activities required to facilitate the O&M phase of the Proposed Development and estimated abatement of National Grid emissions;
- GHG emissions arising from decommissioning works of the Proposed Development; and

7.16.3 Climate resilience of the Proposed Development. Overall, with the application of Embedded and Additional Mitigation, the assessment concluded that there will be no likely significant residual adverse environmental effects arising from the Proposed Development during the construction, O&M and decommissioning phases with respect to climate change.

7.16.4 The impact of the Project on climate change was also assessed with the following impacts quantified:

- Emissions resultant from the Proposed Development together with (enabled by) the Onshore Transmission Assets, resulting in lifetime emissions for the Project; and
- Net cumulative GHG impacts of the Project.

7.16.5 Overall, it concluded that there will be likely significant beneficial cumulative effects from the Project due to the avoided emissions resultant from the Project. By providing approximately 1,008 MW of renewable electricity generation capacity, the Project will contribute to the achievement of local and national net zero goals, and is in keeping

with Scottish and UK energy and climate policy. In particular, the UK's Net Zero Strategy and Scotland's Energy and Just Transition Plan highlight the need for phase-out of unabated fossil fuel generation whilst also substantially ramping up electricity generation capacity to meet the demands of increased electrification of transport, heat and industry. As such, UK and Scottish Government policy dictates that large-scale deployment of renewable energy generation capacity, such as the Project, is necessary in order to meet net zero goals.

7.16.6 It should also be noted that no likely significant transboundary effects were identified.

Climate Change Effects Conclusion

7.16.7 It is very clear from the assessment that the Proposed Development will have significantly beneficial effects on the issue of climate change through the generation of renewable energy that will strongly contribute to assisting the UK and Scottish Governments meet their national and international climate obligations. The UK Government is legally bound to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and the Scottish Government has a statutory target to achieve this by 2045. 'Net zero' means that the total GHG emissions produced would be equal to or less than the amount removed from the atmosphere, through a combination of GHG emission reduction and removal. The UK Government has introduced a series of carbon 'budgets' for five-year periods, which act as stepping-stones to achieve the overall reduction in GHG emissions by 2050. The five-year budgets are currently set up to 2037 and the UK is 'off track' with later budgets within this range. The Proposed Development will strongly contribute to those objectives and assist the UK in getting back 'on track' as evidenced in the table below.

Table 7.1 Cumulative GHG Impacts in the context of the UK's Fifth and Sixth Carbon Budgets

	2028-2032*	2033-2037	Total
UK Carbon Budget (tCO2e)	690,000,000	965,000,000	1,655,000,000
Cumulative GHG Impacts (tCO2e)	676,165	948,668 to -2,040,019	1,624,834 to -1,363,854
Cumulative emissions as percentage of UK Carbon Budget (%)	0.10 %	0.10 % to -0.21 %	0.10 % to -0.08 %

*This accounts for only two years of construction emissions and associated carbon budget, owing to the commencement of construction in 2031

7.16.8 In addition, the Proposed Development will generate over an estimated 30 year operating life 83,481,611 MWh, which will save an estimated between 1,941,314 tCO_2e and - 35,121,026 tCO_2e. That saving of carbon emissions translates into an estimated carbon 'payback' period of two

years, meaning that for 28 out of an anticipated 30 year operation life it will be contributing to Scottish and UK climate change GHG reduction priorities. Clearly these are significant benefits over the life of the Proposed Development that meet a broad range of climate policy objectives.

7.17 Inter-Related Effects

7.17.1 Volume 2, Chapter 23: Inter-Related Effects of the Offshore EIA Report presents a comprehensive assessment of inter-related effects of the Proposed Development across multiple receptor groups. It also includes an ecosystem-based effects assessment focusing on predator-prey dynamics and ecosystem functioning.

Part one: Receptor-Based inter-related effects assessment

7.17.2 Physical Processes: Across all phases of the Proposed Development, changes to SSC, bed levels, tidal and wave regimes, and scour are considered pathways rather than direct receptor impacts. These impacts, when considered across the project lifetime, do not interact in a way that increases their significance. No receptor-led effects were identified, as each receptor relates to a single impact pathway. Therefore, no significant inter-related effects are anticipated.

7.17.3 Benthic Ecology: Temporary and long term habitat loss, changes to SSC, and the introduction of artificial structures are predicted to be highly localised and recoverable. These impacts, when considered across the project lifetime, do not interact in a way that increases their significance. Receptor-led effects may arise from overlapping habitat disturbance and SSC changes, but these are also predicted to be of Minor adverse significance and not significant in EIA terms.

7.17.4 Fish and Shellfish Ecology: Impacts such as habitat loss, SSC changes, subsea noise, and EMF exposure are expected to be short term, intermittent, and recoverable. The cumulative footprint across phases is proportionally small, and no significant inter-related effects are anticipated. Although multiple impacts may interact spatially and temporally, they are not expected to result in greater significance than when considered individually.

7.17.5 Marine Mammals: Subsea noise from piling, UXO clearance, vessel activity, and operational infrastructure were assessed across all phases. These impacts are considered Minor adverse and reversible. Receptor-led effects, including cumulative noise exposure and prey availability changes, may occur but are mitigated and not expected to result in significant effects. Overall, no significant inter-related effects are predicted.

7.17.6 Offshore Ornithology: Impacts such as collision risk, displacement, vessel disturbance, prey changes, and light attraction are expected to be temporary and localised. These do not interact across phases in a way that increases their significance. While receptor-led effects from collision

and displacement are acknowledged, no other significant interactions are identified. All effects are considered Minor adverse and not significant in EIA terms.

7.17.7 Commercial Fisheries: Loss of access to fishing grounds, displacement, gear conflict, and vessel interference are mitigated and expected to be temporary or long term but not cumulative. Receptor-led effects from combined access loss and displacement are considered, but do not exceed the significance of individual impacts. No significant inter-related effects are anticipated across the project lifetime.

7.17.8 Shipping and Navigation: No project lifetime effects are predicted, as impacts such as snagging, deviation, collision risk, and radar interference are assessed comprehensively in the NRA. Receptor-led effects are considered within the NRA, and no additional significance arises from interactions across phases or with other receptors.

7.17.9 Aviation and Radar: Effects on aviation receptors increase during construction but remain constant during operation. These do not interact across phases to create greater significance. Receptor-led effects related to lighting and marking requirements are coordinated with maritime needs, and no other significant inter-relationships are identified.

7.17.10 Infrastructure and Other Users: Recreational displacement and access restrictions to cables and pipelines are temporary and mitigated through agreements. These impacts do not interact across phases to increase significance. Receptor-led effects from overlapping recreational restrictions are possible but are Minor and not significant in EIA terms.

7.17.11 Socio-economics, Tourism and Recreation: Tourism and recreation impacts depend on changes in other environmental factors and are not significant when considered cumulatively. Socio-economic impacts, such as employment and GVA, are beneficial and do not interact in a way that multiplies effects. No significant inter-related effects are anticipated.

7.17.12 Marine Archaeology: SSC and sediment transport changes may interact to further bury archaeological receptors, but these effects are short term and potentially beneficial. Receptor-led effects are predicted to be Minor adverse and not significant in EIA terms. No significant project lifetime effects are identified.

Part two: Ecosystem-Based assessment

7.17.13 The ecosystem assessment highlights the importance of mid-trophic species (e.g. sandeel, herring and sprat) in maintaining food web stability. These species are vulnerable to climate change and commercial fisheries pressure.

7.17.14 Subsea noise from piling is the only impact predicted to have a likely significant effect on herring, with potential ecosystem-level implications. However, Embedded and Additional Mitigation are expected to reduce this risk to non-significant levels.

7.17.15 Artificial structures may enhance habitat complexity and support biodiversity, offering potential ecosystem benefits.

7.17.16 Climate change is identified as the dominant pressure shaping future ecosystem baselines, affecting species distributions, prey availability, and ecological resilience.

Inter-Related Effects Conclusion

7.17.17 This assessment concludes that the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in significant adverse effects across receptor groups or at the ecosystem-level. Most impacts are localised, temporary, and reversible, with Embedded and Additional Mitigation measures in place to manage risks.

7.17.18 The only significant effect identified is subsea noise on herring during piling, which is expected to reduce to Minor adverse effect with Embedded and Additional Mitigation. Predator species, including piscivorous fish, marine mammals, and seabirds, are generally resilient due to their mobility and dietary flexibility.

7.17.19 The transition to renewable energy infrastructure is expected to contribute beneficially to climate mitigation, indirectly supporting marine ecosystem resilience. Overall, the Proposed Development is not predicted to cause significant ecological disruption and may offer some beneficial effects through habitat creation and reduced reliance on fossil fuels.

7.18 Planning Policy Conclusions

7.18.1 The Proposed 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 Development will be sited in the East Region as detailed in the SMP, and whilst environmental constraints have been identified in the SMP, the Proposed Development would be sited in an appropriate location which is supported at a national policy level.

7.18.2 The Proposed 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.

7.18.3 Overall, across all four development plans detailed in this assessment, it is considered that the Proposed Development would be considered acceptable "in principle" and would align with the strategic aims, paragraphs and policies of Scotland's NMP (2015), Scotland's SMP (2020b), the NERMP, NPF4 (2023) and the ALDP (2023).

8 Planning Balance and Conclusions

8.1.1 This Planning Statement seeks to demonstrate compliance with UK and Scottish energy, climate, and marine planning legislation and policy.

8.1.2 The Proposed Development aims to deliver up to 1,008 MW of renewable offshore wind energy into the National Grid, which will be an important contribution in helping the Scottish Government achieve their carbon net zero target of 2045. The Project's capacity is expected to be capable of powering more than 1.2 million homes once operational. 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 net zero future.

8.1.3 This Planning Statement has set out each of the Offshore EIA Report topic areas and summarised the findings of each chapter. Based on these findings, it is considered that overall, the Proposed Development would have minor impacts to environmental, economic and social receptors. Embedded and Additional Mitigation measures have been developed in conjunction with key stakeholders and will be implemented to ensure harmful impacts are managed and reduced. It can therefore be stated that from this assessment, all of the predicted and residual significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development are considered to be very limited. When considered in the context of the relevant policy and legislative considerations, it is clear that the Proposed Development, on the whole, meets the relevant policy requirements which can be summarised as working to achieve increased renewable energy capacity, whilst at the same time reducing the effects of development on human health and the environment as far a reasonably practicable and ensuring that conflicts with other users of the marine environment are kept to a minimum.

8.1.4 The Project will make a material beneficial contribution to the economy of Scotland and the UK through employment and wider benefits that are entirely in keeping with the sustainability policy objectives of both Governments. Of note are the important employment and GVA benefits where, across the full project lifecycle (construction, O&M and decommissioning), it is expected that under the 'Commitments' scenario (AKA the 'worst case' scenario), the Project would support:

- 23,478 aFTEs (2,087 FTEs), and generate £1,934 million GVA in Scotland; and
- 34,224 aFTEs (5,083 FTEs) and generate £2.5 billion GVA across the UK.

8.1.5 In particular it should be noted that it assists in meeting the objectives of the ScotWind leasing round to facilitate the development of new, large-

scale offshore wind farms in Scottish waters to support the country's net-zero emissions targets, and to generate significant economic benefits.

8.1.6 The Project strikes an appropriate balance between the clearly stated benefits and reported likely adverse significant effects. It is strongly supported by the overarching marine policy framework in both the UK and Scotland. The UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) sets out a clear presumption in favour of sustainable development in the marine area, particularly for renewable energy projects that contribute to climate change mitigation and energy security. The Project aligns with the UK's vision for clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas, and supports the delivery of low-carbon energy infrastructure in line with national objectives. Similarly, the Scottish National Marine Plan (2015) provides a robust policy basis for offshore wind development, identifying it as a key growth sector and promoting its sustainable expansion in suitable locations. The Project meets the Plan's general and sectoral policies, including those relating to climate change, economic benefit, social benefit, and environmental protection. Taken together, these marine policy documents provide a clear and consistent framework that supports the principle of the Proposed Development and reinforces its strategic fit within Scotland's and the UK's marine planning system.

8.1.7 The Proposed Development is located within the E3 Plan Option Area identified in Scotland's SMP for Offshore Wind Energy (2020b), which confirms the area's suitability for commercial-scale offshore wind development. The Plan provides a spatial strategy that balances environmental protection with the need to deliver national renewable energy targets, and the Proposed Development has been designed to align with its strategic objectives.

8.1.8 In addition to the Proposed Development being complaint with relevant Energy and Climate Change Policy, the Proposed 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 ALDP.

8.1.9 The Proposed 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. This Planning Statement fully sets out and justifies the Proposed Development and is in accordance with the aims and objectives set out within Scotland's Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition (2023), the Offshore Wind Policy Statement (2020) and the Climate Change Plan (2018). It is considered that the need for the Proposed Development and the resulting benefits would outweigh the minor adverse harm to environmental, social and economic receptors, as assessed in the supporting Offshore EIA Report and other technical reports.

8.1.10 This Planning Statement makes a compelling case for the Project for which consent under the Electricity Act 1989 should be granted.

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