



4. Marine Environmental Assessment Approach and Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This section describes the approach to the Marine Environmental Appraisal (MEAp) that will be prepared to support the Marine Licence applications for the Project. The MEA will report on the approach taken, and the findings and conclusions of the wider Marine Environmental Assessment (MEA) process. It will also set out the mitigation measures proposed to avoid or reduce the significance of effects to an acceptable level. This section describes the stages taken in the MEA process (screening, scoping and assessment), and the approach and criteria to be used during the assessment stage. It also explains the purpose of, and proposed approach to the MEA, to cumulative and in-combination effects, as well as mitigation and monitoring.

This chapter sets out common matters that are relevant to all technical chapters of this Scoping Report and should therefore be read in conjunction with those chapters. Where known at this stage, any proposed divergence from the standard methodology set out below is explored within the technical chapters themselves.

This Scoping Report has been produced to cover both jurisdictions and a similar approach to the MEA is proposed. However, the Applicants would appreciate feedback on whether there is a preference from the MMO and MD-LOT as to whether a single MEA is produced to accompany the marine licence applications or whether separate MEAs would be more appropriate.

At this early phase, the project description is indicative and has been developed to include sufficient flexibility to accommodate further refinement during detailed design. Chapter 3 (of this Scoping Report) sets out a series of options and/or parameters for which maximum values are used to inform the MEA for the Project.

The purpose of the MEA is to provide a systematic analysis of the impacts of the Project in relation to the existing (baseline) environment. This is summarised in an MEA, which provides information to the Regulatory Authority (in this case the MMO for the components of the Project in English waters and MD-LOT for the components of the Project in Scottish waters), statutory consultees, stakeholders and the public, to enable them to assess the acceptability of the Project and its potential environmental effect.

The MEA will address the three phases of the Project:

- Construction – the works, activities and processes that will be required to build the Project, including preparatory works.
- Operation and maintenance – the works undertaken during the lifetime of the Project, after construction works are completed, during operation of the HVDC link.
- Decommissioning – the works and processes required to undertake the closure, dismantling and removal of the Project.

The MEA process typically comprises a series of phases, which are shown in Figure 4-1 and Table 4-1. Although a statutory EIA is not required for the Project, the MEA process will be undertaken to the same standard, and will include:

- A description of the Project comprising information on the site, design and size of the development.
- A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development.
- The likely significant effects of the Project on the environment.
- Mitigation measures required to minimise potentially significant effects.

The technical topic areas identified for assessment as part of the MEA for the Project are:

- Marine Physical Processes (including metocean conditions, coastal and seabed geomorphology, and sediment and water)
- Protected Sites and Species
- Intertidal and Subtidal Benthic Ecology
- Fish and Shellfish Ecology
- Intertidal and Offshore Ornithology
- Marine Mammals and Marine Reptiles
- Shipping and Navigation
- Commercial Fisheries
- Marine Archaeology
- Other Marine Users and Activities (including tourism)

Figure 4-1 presents an overview of the proposed MEA approach, which is described in more detail in the following sections. Relevant stakeholders will be engaged at various stages throughout the MEA process.

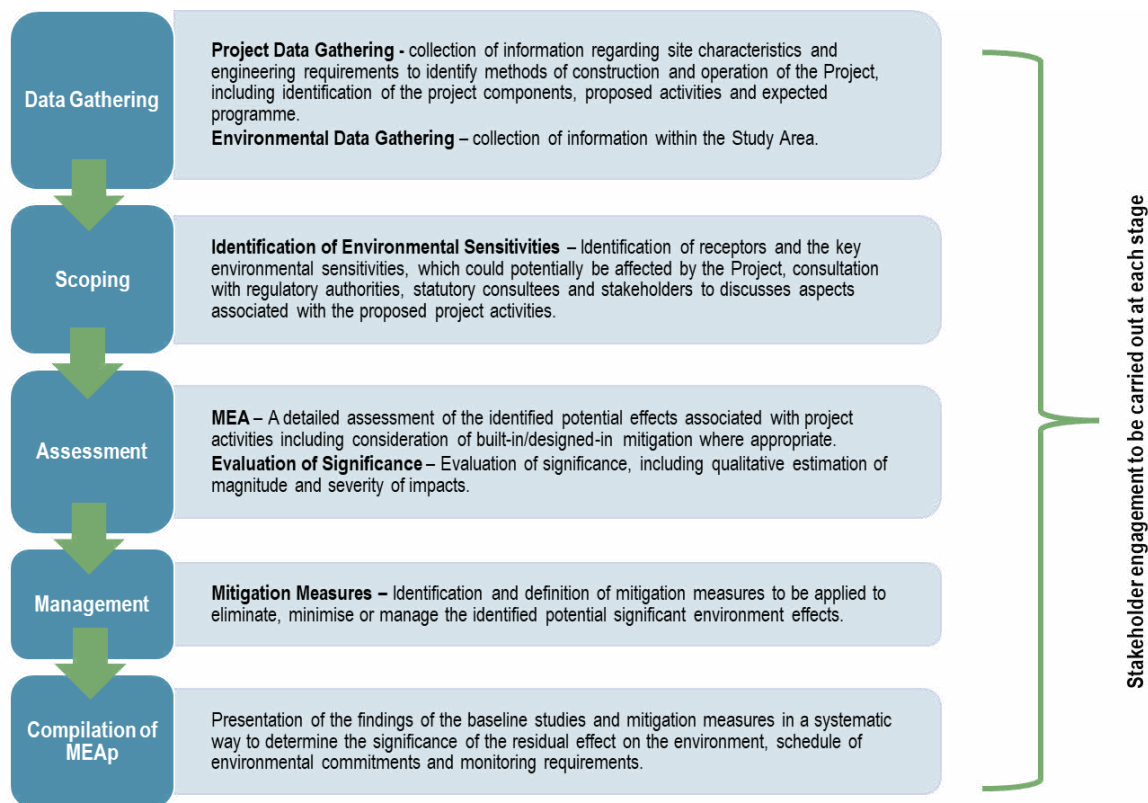


Figure 4-1: Overview of the MEA approach

4.2. Guidance and Best Practice

Although the Project does not require a statutory EIA, the approach to the MEA and the production of the MEAp will closely follow numerous relevant EIA guidance and industry best practice documents, including but not limited to:

- National Infrastructure Planning advice notes - insofar as the principles for good EIA practice, and approaches to related assessments (such as cumulative, transboundary, and in-combination effects) may be considered appropriate.
- Relevant guidance issued by other government and non-governmental organisations (e.g. licensing and EIA guidance published by MD-LOT and NatureScot).
- Professional EIA guidance documents:
 - Guide to Shaping Quality Development (IEMA 2016)
 - Delivering Proportionate EIA, A Collaborative Strategy for Enhancing UK Environmental Impact Assessment Practice (IEMA 2017)
- Best Practice guidance documents informing assessment:
 - Natural England Offshore wind cabling: ten years' experience and recommendations (NE 2018)
 - Review of cable installation, protection, mitigation and habitat recoverability (RPS 2019)
 - Receptor specific guidance as outlined in individual topic chapters.

4.3. Data Gathering

Data gathering for the Project has already commenced. Environmental information has been collected from publicly available data sources and will be supplemented with information as agreed with relevant consultees during the Scoping and MEA process. Site-specific baseline surveys will be undertaken to fill gaps in the available data.

The environmental characterisation survey detail will be covered in the receptor topic sections of this Scoping Report. The specific approach to establishing a robust baseline (upon which effects can be assessed) is set out under each parameter within this Scoping Report. It is envisaged that this approach will be subject to review following the receipt of the Scoping Opinion from the MMO and MD-LOT and subsequent consultation with statutory bodies. It is also recognised that this approach may evolve over time with the collection of new data from the Study Area and as the design of the Project advances.



The relevant data currently available and a gap analysis are provided in each technical chapter of this Scoping Report.

4.4. Approach

The MEA will be undertaken within a consistent framework that will facilitate transparency in the assessment and its conclusions. The definition of terms and assessment processes that will be adopted by each of the specialist assessors is described below.

In general, the MEA will identify, describe and analyse the potential effects of the Project using a source-pathway-receptor model. For instance, a project activity (source) may entail a predicted change in environmental conditions affecting either directly or indirectly (the pathway) a specific component of the baseline environment (the receptor). If the receptor is sensitive to the change it could result in either a positive or negative impact/effect. Figure 4-2 presents this model with a specific example to illustrate the concept.

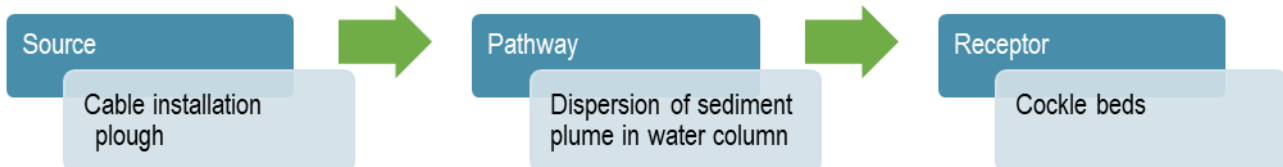


Figure 4-2: Source - Pathway - Receptor model example

Confusion can arise whilst reading an MEAp due to a lack of clarification around the words ‘impact’ and ‘effect’. Throughout the assessment process, the term ‘impact’ will be used to define a change that is caused by a source. For example, pile driving of foundations during construction (the source) results in increased levels of subsea noise (the impact). Impacts can be direct, indirect, secondary, cumulative, inter-related or transboundary. They can also be beneficial, adverse or negligible. The term ‘effect’ will be used throughout the assessment (and in the MEAp) to express the outcome of an impact, i.e., the increased levels of suspended sediment (impact) from the laying of the cable (source) has the potential to smother benthic communities or fish habitat (the effect).

The MEA process will following a sequential process as described in Table 4-1 and further outlined in Sections 4.4.1 to 4.4.5. Consultation with statutory and non-statutory stakeholders is an ongoing process that was started during the feasibility stage of the Project (i.e., to inform route development and option appraisal) and will continue throughout the assessment process. Consultation will inform each of the steps outlined in Table 4-1 and is described in further detail in Section 4.8.

Table 4-1: Assessment methodology

Step	Description
1	Characterise the baseline environment Uses publicly available information and where necessary site-specific survey to identify sensitive receptors.
2	Establish the potential impacts to be assessed Impacts are the mechanism by which the licensable activity could influence or have a marked effect on a receptor. The nature of an impact is determined by the activity type, intensity and duration.
3	Evaluate the significance of the impact The significance of an impact on a receptor is characterised by the sensitivity of the receptor to the impact (considering its recoverability and importance) and the magnitude of the predicted impact i.e., the duration, frequency, spatial extent and scale of change from the baseline that is predicted to occur. Combined, the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of the impact are used to determine the significance of the impact.
4	Establish mitigation (where required). Impacts which are Minor or Negligible (Not Significant) typically do not require mitigation measures other than compliance with environmental legislation and best practice. Impacts which are classified as Moderate or Major (Significant) would typically be unacceptable without the implementation of project specific mitigation designed to avoid or abate the significance of the impact. When identifying mitigation, a standard hierarchical approach has been taken as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avoid or prevent: Preferably the mitigation should seek to avoid or prevent the significant impact at source e.g., by avoiding the sensitive receptor spatially or temporally. 2. Reduce: If the impact is unavoidable the mitigation measures which seek to reduce the significance of the impact e.g., by reducing the footprint, duration or intensity. 3. Offset: If the impact can neither be avoided nor reduced then mitigation measures should seek to offset the effect through the implementation of compensatory measures. The MEAp will identify appropriate and feasible mitigation measures to be implemented to ensure compliance with environmental legislation and best practice and reduce environmental impacts.



It should be noted that where a receptor is a Primary Feature or Qualifying Feature of a European Site (e.g., SAC or SPA) or a Protected Feature of a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) or Marine Protected Area (MPA), the MEAp will reference the conclusion of the information provided by the Applicant to support either the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process or the Marine Conservation Zone Assessment process (further described in Section 5).

4.4.1. Characterise the Baseline Environment

An evidence-based approach will be used throughout the assessment. The evidence-based approach involves not only utilising data collected specifically for the purposes of the Project but also data and information from sufficiently similar projects or activities to inform the understanding of the baseline or the significance of the effect.

The Project neighbours several developments, including offshore wind farms, marine aggregates areas, and other power cable or telecommunication cable projects and pipelines. Therefore, extensive data from the Marine Licensing, Environmental Statements and baseline and post-construction monitoring data are available which provide both raw data and modelling that will inform the assessments for the Project. Where possible, appropriate, and agreed with the relevant stakeholders, the Applicant intends to use this existing data to:

- Aid in the characterisation of the baseline environment, where data is sufficient and appropriate to do so.
- Scope out impacts where there is a clear evidence base.
- Provide evidence for assessments where impacts are scoped in.

The use of this existing data is encouraged as part of several analogous industries and has for example been included in the offshore wind industry's response to Government drivers to reduce the cost of offshore wind energy. Collaborative Offshore Wind Research into the Environment has provided best practice principles for documentation and dissemination of data (COWRIE, 2008a).

Each topic chapter will identify where the data used for the baseline and the impact assessment will be sourced from. A gap analysis has been undertaken to identify the requirement for additional data to be collected.

Each topic chapter provides the methodology for any new data collection (if required) including surveys. Adequate data collection will be undertaken for the purposes of the assessment, to enable the receiving environment to be robustly characterised.

This Scoping Report sets out to provide a detailed justification that is anticipated to facilitate the scoping out of certain topics or impacts from further assessment.

Mitigation that is embedded (designed-in) within the Project will be described in the MEAp. Any modification of the standard approach and definitions will be fully described and justified within each section where necessary.

4.4.2. Establishing the Impacts to be Assessed

Potential impacts will be established by the project team based on industry experience and consultation with relevant stakeholders. Where applicable, the list of marine pressures established by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Marine Pressures-Activities Database v1.5 (2022), Natural England's and NatureScot's advice on operations for relevant European sites will be used to establish impacts to be assessed. These lists do not include impacts on social or human receptors.

For each impact the zone of influence – the spatial extent over which the pathway could affect the receptor – will be established. This will be undertaken quantitatively where possible, or qualitatively based on evidence from analogous projects, post-construction monitoring data and literature reviews.

Receptors which occur outside of the zone of influence, and which cannot, or are unlikely to, travel into the zone of influence, will be scoped out. Conversely, mobile receptors which could travel into the zone of influence will be scoped in. Where the zone of influence is currently uncertain, the Scoping Report identifies what surveys, studies and/or assessments will be undertaken to define it and taking the precautionary approach impacts will be scoped in until they can be fully defined.

Where several activities (sources) result in the same impact, or the construction technique has not been determined, the maximum spatial extent will be assumed.

4.4.3. Assessment of Effects

Effects will be presented within the MEAp as 'significance of effect', which will take into account the magnitude of an impact in combination with the importance and/ or the sensitivity of the receptor or resource, in line with defined significance criteria.

The assessment process will consider the following:

- The magnitude of the impact.



- The sensitivity of the receptor to the impact.
- The probability that the impact will result in a given effect.
- The significance of the resulting likely environmental effect.
- The level of certainty inherent within the assessment.

4.4.3.1. The Magnitude of Impact

The magnitude of an impact provides a useful initial measure of the likelihood of an environmental effect arising. Magnitude is defined for the purposes of assessment via four factors:

- Extent – The area over which an impact occurs.
- Duration – The time for which the impact occurs.
- Frequency – How often the impact occurs.
- Severity – The degree of change relative to the baseline level.

The assessment will use the criteria established in Table 4-2.

Table 4-2: Criteria for characterising the magnitude of an impact

Magnitude	Definitions	
	Physical/Biological	Socio-Economic
High	Impacts are of long-term (>15 years) through to long-term/permanent duration and/or on a regional or population/habitat level or major alteration to key elements/features of the baseline condition such that post-impact baseline character will be fundamentally changed. Natural recruitment will not return the population/habitat to the baseline condition.	Total loss of, or major alteration to key elements or features of the pre-project conditions, such that the post-project character or composition of the feature would be fundamentally changed.
Medium	Impacts are of medium term (7-15 years) duration and/or on a local level (wider than project footprint) or alter an element of the baseline conditions such as that post-impact the damage to the baseline is above that experienced under natural conditions but with no permanent effect on integrity.	Loss of or alteration to key elements or features of the pre-project conditions, such that the post-project character of the feature would be partially changed.
Low	Impacts are temporary (<1 year) or short term (1-7 years) in duration, site specific and/or a minor shift away from the baseline condition such as that experienced under natural conditions. Impacts limited to within the Project footprint. Negligible contribution to cumulative effects.	Minor alteration from pre-project conditions.
Negligible	Very little or no detectable change from baseline conditions. Disturbance is within the range of natural variability. Impacts predicted to be brief (one to two days) or for a short period (up to 3 months). No contribution to cumulative effects.	No or unquantifiable change to pre-project conditions.

4.4.3.2. Sensitivity to the Impact

The criteria provided in Table 4-3 will be used to characterise the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of the impact. The sensitivity of the receptor is a function of its capacity to accommodate change and reflects its ability to recover if it is affected. The sensitivity of the receptor is therefore quantified via the following factors:

- Value - A measure of the receptor's importance, rarity and worth.
- Adaptability - The degree to which a receptor can avoid or adapt to an impact.
- Tolerance - The ability of a receptor to accommodate temporary or permanent change without a significant adverse impact.
- Recoverability - The temporal scale over and extent to which a receptor will recover following an impact.



The assessment will use the criteria established in Table 4-3. If the approach differs for a specific receptor, the criteria used will be outlined in the topic chapter. An example of this are heritage assets. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (MHCLG, 2021) states that heritage assets should be recognised as “an irreplaceable resource” and to “conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance”. Archaeological receptors cannot typically adapt, tolerate or recover from physical impacts resulting in material damage or loss caused by development. Consequently, the sensitivity of each receptor is predominantly quantified only by their value. Where receptors are considered to be capable of adapting to, tolerating or recovering from indirect impacts, these factors were incorporated into an assessment of their sensitivity.

Table 4-3: Criteria for characterising the sensitivity of receptors

Sensitivity	Definitions		
	Physical	Biological	Socio-Economic
High	Receptor has low/no capacity to return to pre-impact conditions i.e., recovery will take longer than 10 years. The physical/or geological features are protected feature of an internationally designated site (e.g., SAC).	Receptor has low tolerance to change i.e., recovery will take longer than 10 years following the cessation of activity or will not occur. The receptor is a protected feature of an internationally designated site (e.g., SAC, SPA) and the licensable activity is taking place during a sensitive season.	Receptor is economically valuable and has low/no capacity to return to pre-impact conditions, e.g., low tolerance to change and low recoverability such as loss of access with no alternatives or the impact will have major financial consequences for the receptor.
Medium	Receptor has intermediate capacity to return to pre-impact conditions i.e., between 5 to 10 years. The physical/or geological features are protected feature of a nationally designated site (e.g., MCZ, SSSI).	Receptor has intermediate tolerance to change i.e., recovery to pre-impact conditions is possible between 5 and 10 years. The receptor is a protected feature of a nationally designated site (e.g., MCZ, SSSI).	Receptor is of intermediate economic value and/or is tolerable to change e.g., acceptable alternatives with minor financial consequences.
Low	Receptor has high capacity to return to pre-impact condition within 1 year or up to 5 years. The receptor is common or widespread or designated as locally important.	Receptor has high tolerance to change with recovery to pre-impact conditions between 1 and 5 years. Common and widespread habitats/species of no specific conservation value.	May affect behaviour but is not a nuisance to user, with acceptable financial consequences e.g., short-term, reversible changes.
Negligible	The receptor is tolerant to change with no effect on its character.	The receptor is tolerant to change with no effect on its character. Recovery expected to be relatively rapid, i.e., less than approximately six months following cessation of activity. Artificial, highly modified, and/or degraded benthic habitats/species of low/no conservation interest.	The receptor is tolerant to change with no effect on its character.

4.4.4. The Determination of Effect Significance

The significance of an effect, either adverse or beneficial, will be determined using a combination of the magnitude of the impact and the sensitivity of the receptor. A matrix approach is proposed to be used throughout all topic areas to ensure a consistent approach within the assessment.

The terms assigned to categorise the significance of effects, where they are predicted to occur, can be described as follows:

- **Negligible:** beneficial or adverse - where the Project would cause no discernible improvement in or deterioration of the existing environment.
- **Minor:** beneficial or adverse - where the Project would cause a barely perceptible improvement in or deterioration of the existing environment.



- **Moderate:** beneficial or adverse - where the Project would cause a noticeable improvement or deterioration of the existing environment.
- **Major:** beneficial or adverse - where the Project would cause a considerable improvement or deterioration of the existing environment.

For example, if the magnitude of the impact is assessed as High (negative) and the sensitivity of the receptor is assessed as Negligible, then the significance would be Minor adverse (see Table 4-4). Those effects which are assessed as Moderate or Major will be considered as Significant effects. It is expected that feasible and cost-effective project specific mitigation is proposed to avoid, reduce and offset the significance of the effect. It is also expected that the residual effect has been subject to measures such that the remaining effects are reduced to as low as reasonably practicable and that no further mitigation is feasible. Those effects which are assessed as Negligible and Minor will be considered as Not Significant effects. They can be adequately controlled by best practice and legal controls and opportunities to reduce the significance of effects through mitigation may be limited and are unlikely to be cost effective.

Table 4-4: Significance matrix

		Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Negative magnitude	High	Major	Major	Moderate	Minor
	Medium	Major	Moderate	Minor	Minor
	Low	Moderate	Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
Beneficial magnitude	Negligible	Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
	Medium	Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
	High	Major	Major	Moderate	Minor

Predictions of impact will be based on the best available data using a combination of professional judgement, expert knowledge and modelling where appropriate. The precautionary principle will be applied to ensure that potential effects are not ascribed unduly low probability of occurrence or low levels of significance.

4.4.5. Acknowledging Levels of Certainty

The assessment needs to be robust and so will seek to describe and take into account the degree of uncertainty inherent in, for instance, the data used in the assessment, the identification of activities and impacts, the confidence in determining impact magnitude and receptor sensitivity, and in assigning significance levels to predicted resulting effects.

4.5. Mitigation and Monitoring

Appropriate mitigation measures will be explored to eliminate, minimise or manage identified potentially significant effects on the environment. Best practice strategies for mitigation are widely practiced and will be followed when considering the methods of dealing with the environmental impacts of the Project. The strategy comprises the components listed in Table 4-5.

Where changes are required to be made to the design of the Project during the iterative assessment process, these measures will be clearly identified within the MEAp. The clear inclusion of these measures within the MEAp will demonstrate the commitment to these measures. Where required, these measures will be secured by the Marine Licence. By employing this method, the significance of effect presented for each identified impact may be presumed to be representative of the maximum residual effect that the Project will have, should it be approved and constructed absent any specific mitigation.

The assessment is then repeated for the revised 'maximum adverse scenario' until:

- The effect has been reduced to a level that is not significant; or
- No further changes may reasonably be made to the design parameters in order to reduce the magnitude of the impact, thereby permitting the presentation of an effect that is still significant.

In some instances, additional mitigation measures will be outlined in the topic chapters. Additional mitigation measures may be deemed necessary where:



- An effect is significant, even with embedded mitigation, but additional mitigation measures are available to reduce the level of effect; or
- Mitigation has been proposed but has not yet been agreed with regulators, stakeholders, etc. or it is unproven.

Where relevant, these additional mitigation measures will be outlined in the topic chapters, after the assessment of significance section.

Table 4-5 outlines the proposed mitigation strategy to be undertaken in the MEAp.

Table 4-5: Mitigation Strategy

Avoidance	Where viable, the project will be redesigned to avoid impacts. Avoidance will also be considered during the assessment of alternative routes.
Reduction	Reduction (through the use of mitigation or different techniques) will be considered when all options for the avoidance of impacts have been exhausted or deemed to be impractical. For example, alternative technologies could be considered to reduce impact.
Compensation	Where the potential for avoiding and reducing impacts has been exhausted, consideration will be given to providing compensation for residual impacts to make the proposal more environmentally acceptable.
Remediation	Where adverse effects are unavoidable, consideration will be given to limiting the level of impact by undertaking remedial works.

4.6. Cumulative Effects

A Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA) is required under Schedule 3, Paragraph 3(2)(e) of the Marine Works (EIA Regulations) 2007 (as amended). Cumulative effects are defined as those effects on a receptor that may arise when the Project is considered together with other existing and/or approved projects.

In the absence of specific Marine Licencing guidance for CEA, the approach to the CEA will be based on “PINS Advice Note 17: Cumulative effects assessment relevant to nationally significant infrastructure projects” (PINS, 2019) as the most appropriate proxy. Additional guidance from “A Strategic Framework for Scoping Cumulative Effects” (MMO, 2014) and “Marine Scotland Consenting and Licensing Guidance” (Marine Scotland, 2018) will also be used.

Cumulative impacts of the Project will be assessed to identify where there could be an accumulation of impacts on a sensitive receptor, which could result in the need for further mitigation (for instance a large number of minor effects may coincide to result in an adverse effect of greater severity/ harm overall).

Cumulative impacts consider other proposed developments within the context of the Project and any other reasonably foreseeable proposals in the vicinity including:

- Those under construction.
- Permitted application(s), but not yet implemented.
- Submitted application(s) not yet determined.
- Projects on the Planning Inspectorate's Programme of Projects.
- Identified in the relevant Development Plan (and emerging Development Plans - with appropriate weight being given as they move closer to adoption) recognising that much information on any relevant proposals will be limited.
- Identified in other plans and programmes (as appropriate) which set the framework for future development consents / approvals, where such development is reasonably likely to come forward.

It is proposed that projects that are built and operational at the time that survey data were collected have been classified as part of the baseline conditions but will be considered again if appropriate in the CEA.

For those projects that are only partially constructed or have only recently been completed, the full extent of the impacts arising from the development(s) may not be known and therefore will be included within the CEA.

In assessing the potential cumulative impact(s) for the Project, it is important to bear in mind that some projects, predominantly those 'proposed' or identified in development plans or at early project stages may or may not actually be taken forward. There is thus a need to build in some consideration of certainty (or uncertainty) with respect to the potential impacts which might arise from such proposals. For this reason, all relevant projects/plans considered cumulatively alongside the Project will be allocated into 'Tiers', reflecting their stage within the planning and development process. This allows the cumulative impact assessment to present several future development scenarios, each with a differing potential for being ultimately built out.



Impacts scoped in for assessment for individual receptors, as described in the scoping assessment tables within each chapter, will be assessed for cumulative effects utilising the methodology described above.

4.7. Transboundary Effects

The Espoo Convention sets out the obligations of Parties to assess the environmental impact of certain activities that have the potential to have transboundary effects at an early stage of planning and to notify and consult other States in cases where there is likely to be significant adverse environmental impact on those States.

The Marine Scheme lies wholly in UK waters. Given the distance to the UK EEZ boundary, there is no potential for transboundary impacts.

4.8. Consultation

The Applicants are committed to proactive, open and transparent dialogue and engagement with all stakeholders, regulators, and communities which may be affected by or indeed may affect the Project. The Applicants recognise that consultation is a critical activity in the development of a comprehensive and balanced assessment.

Engagement 'pre-scoping' has focused on providing stakeholders with the opportunity to influence the design of the Project. Feedback received throughout 2023 has influenced the selection of the proposed Landfall and the position of the proposed submarine cable corridor. All pre-application engagement is being recorded in a stakeholder engagement tracker, a summary report outlining all pre-application engagement will be provided alongside the MEA.

As part of the assessment process, further engagement with statutory consultees, non-statutory consultees, and the public will take place. The onshore elements, in England, will have statutory requirements for consultation as part of the DCO application. As a responsible developer, the Applicants will include the marine scheme in the onshore consultation to provide a holistic overview of the Project to the public. This engagement will provide an opportunity to:

- Identify potential concerns about the Project and use these to inform the preparation of the MEAp.
- Seek opinions on potential impacts and the approaches taken to determine significance of effects.
- Incorporate mitigation measures into the design of the Project in the early stages where possible.
- Take into consideration the expertise and knowledge of local communities, experts and interest groups.
- Encourage stakeholder participation in future decisions.
- Ensure stakeholders are fully informed of current information regarding all aspects of the Project throughout the full duration of the Project.

In addition, a formal process of Pre-Application consultation will be completed under the Marine Licensing (Pre-application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 (the 2013 PAC Regulations).

Engagement will take the form of emails, phone calls, online and face-to-face meetings, and online or in-person engagement events. A Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO), Brown & May Marine Ltd, has been engaged by the Applicants. The FLO will assist the Applicant with engagement with national and local fisheries associations and fishers. All feedback received from the Scoping Opinion issued by the MMO and MD-LOT and from engagement activities will be recorded and considered in the preparation of the MEAp. The MEAp will set out in each individual topic chapter how the relevant responses to the Scoping Report and any other engagement have been addressed in the assessment process.

A project website has been created to inform the public about the Project. It can be viewed at <https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects/eastern-green-link-3-and-4>. This website will be used to advise the public on any Project updates including consultation dates, Project timeline, and any changes in the design following the various consultations.

4.9. References

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