Planning Statement and Consideration of Policies

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Table of Contents

List of Tables 6
List of Figures 7
Abbreviations 8
Glossary 12
1 Introduction 17
1.1 The Project 17
1.2 The Applicant 18
1.3 Purpose of the Planning Statement 19
2 The Need for the Project 20
3 Statutory Considerations 21
3.1 Introduction 21
3.2 The Electricity Act 1989 21
3.3 Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 21
3.4 The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 21
3.5 The Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007 22
3.6 Marine Protected Areas 22
3.7 Habitat Regulations 23
3.8 Marine Strategy Framework 24
3.9 Water Framework Directive 24
3.10 Decomissioning 24
3.11 Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 25
4 Climate change and renewables 26
4.1 Introduction 26
4.2 International 26
4.2.1 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 26
4.2.2 Kyoto Protocol 26
4.2.3 Paris agreement 26
4.2.4 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP) 27
4.2.5 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 27
4.2.6 EU Renewables Energy Directive(s) 28
4.2.7 Summary 28
4.3 UK 28
4.3.1 Climate Change Act 2008 28

4.3.2 The UK Energy White Paper (2020) 29
4.3.3 North Sea Transition Deal 29
4.3.4 British Energy Security Strategy 2022 30
4.3.5 National Policy Statements 30
4.3.6 Summary 31
4.4 Scotland 31
4.4.1 The Scottish Government's Climate Change Adaptation Programme 31
4.4.2 Climate Emergency 31
4.4.3 Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions 32
4.4.4 Scottish Energy Strategy 33
4.4.5 Offshore Wind Policy Statement (2020) 33
4.4.6 Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023) 33
4.4.7 Programme for Government and the Green Industrial Strategy 33
4.4.8 Summary 34
5 Planning 35
5.1 UK Marine Policy Statement 35
5.2 National Marine Plan (2015) 35
5.2.1 Consideration of Scotland's National Marine Plan policies 35
5.3 Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (2020) 42
5.4 Sectoral Marine Plan for INTOG 42
5.5 National Planning Framewok 4 43
5.6 Summary 44
6 Stakeholder Engagement 45
6.1 Requirements for consultation 45
6.2 Engagement to Date 46
7 Policy Assessment 48
7.1 Overview 48
7.2 Development principles 48
7.3 Embedded mitigation and monitoring 48
7.4 Residual effects for each receptor 49
7.5 Mitigation measures for residual effects 51
7.6 Policy assessment conclusions 52
8 Benefits of the Project 53
8.1 Introduction 53
8.2 Climate change 53
8.3 Energy infrastructure and socio-economics 53

8.4 Security of supply 54
9 Conclusion 55
9.1 Overview 55
9.2 Legislation, policy and planning. 55
10 References 56

List of Tables

Table 4-1 Scottish Government Emission reduction targets 32
Table 5-1 Scotland's National Marine Plan policies and their application by the Project 36
Table 5-2 Summary of National Planning Framework Policies 43
Table 6-1 Pre-application consultation with MD-LOT 46
Table 7-1 Summary of residual effects from the Project EIAR 49
Table 7-2 Secondary mitigation measures for residual effects from the Project 51

List of Figures

Figure 1-1 Project Location and Red Line Boundary Area 18
Figure 4-1 Illustrative UK final energy use in 2050 (Energy White Paper, 2020) 29

Abbreviations

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
AC	Alternating Current
AA	Appropriate Assessment
AEOSI	Adverse Effect on Site Integrity
AIS	Automatic Identification System
BEIS	Department for business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
BESS	British Energy Security Strategy
CAA	Civilian Aviation Authority
CaP	Cable Plan
CBRA	Cable Burial Risk Assessment
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CCC	Climate Change Committee
CED	Climate Emergency Declaration
CES	Crown Estate Scotland
CLO	Community Liaison Officer
CMS	Construction Method Statement
CNP	Critical National Priority
CNS	Central North Sea
COLREGs	International Regulations for the Prevention of Collision at Sea
COP	Conference of the Parties
DC	Direct Current
DGC	Defence Geographic Centre
DSLP	Development Specification and Layout Plan
EEA	European Economic Area
EGMF	East of Gannet and Montrose Fields
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
EICB	Export/Import Cable Bundle
EICC	Export/Import Cable Corridor
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
EPS	European Protect Species

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
ERCP	Emergency Response Cooperation Plan
ESG	Environmental and Social Governance
ESJTP	Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan
FLO	Fisheries Liaison Officer
FMMS	Fisheries Management and Mitigations Strategy
FTU	Floating Turbine Unit
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
HRA	Habitats Regulations Appraisal
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
HVAC	High Voltage Alternating Current
IAC	Inter-Array Cables
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INNS	Invasive Non-Native Species Management Plan
INNSMP	Invasive Non-Native Species Management Plan
INTOG	Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPF	Initial Plan Framework
IPR	Iterative Plan Review
JEAP	Joint Environment Accelerator Programme
JNCC	Join Nature Conservation Committee
KM	Kilometre
MARPOL	OSPAR Convention and Marine Pollution
MCA	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
MD-LOT	Marine Directorate Licensing Operations Team
MEEB	Measures of Equivalent Environmental Benefit
MEP	Marine Environmental Policy
MGN	Marine Guidance Note
MHWS	Mean High water spring
MLA	Marine Licence Applications
MMO	Marine Mammal Observers
MPA	Marine Protected Area

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
MPCP	Marine Pollution Contingency Plan
MPS	Marine Policy Statement
MRF	Marine Recovery Fund
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive
MW	Megawatts
ncMPA	Nature Conservation MPA
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NESO	National Energy System Operator
NFFO	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations
NID	Nature Inclusive Design
NLB	Northern Lighthouse Board
NMP	National Marine Plan
NOTAM	Notice to Aviation System
NPF4	national Planning Framework 4
NPS	National Policy Statement
NSN	UK National Site Network
NSP	Navigational Safety Plan
NSTA	North Sea Transition Authority
NSTD	North Sea Transition Deal
NtM	Notice to Mariners
OMP	Operations and Maintenance Programme
OPRED	Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning
OSCPs	Offshore Substation Converter Platforms
OWE	Offshore Wind Energy
OWPS	Offshore Wind Policy Statement
PAC	Pre-Application Consultation
PAM	Passive Acoustic Monitoring
PWA	Pipeline Works Authorisations
RIAA	Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment
RLB	Red Line Boundary
ROV	Remote Operated Vehicle

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
SAC	Special Areas of Conservation
SCDS	Supply Chain Development Statement
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
SFF	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
SMEEF	Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund
SMP	Sectoral Marine Plan
SNCB	Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies
SNH	Scottish National Heritage (Now NatureScot)
SOLAS	International Regulations for the Safety of Life at Sea
SOPEP	Ship Oil Pollution Emergency Plan
SOV	Service Operations Vessel
SPA	Special Protection Areas
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TLP	Tension Leg Platform
UKHO	UK Hydrographic Office
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System
WFD	Water framework Directive
WTG	Wind Turbine Generators

Glossary

TERM	DEFINITION
2023 Scoping Opinion	Scoping Opinion received in June 2023, superseded by the 2024 Scoping Opinion.
2023 Scoping Report	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Report submitted in 2023, superseded by the 2024 Scoping Report.
2024 Scoping Opinion	Scoping Opinion received in September 2024, superseding the 2023 Scoping Opinion.
2024 Scoping Report	EIA Scoping Report submitted in April 2024, superseding the 2023 Scoping Report.
Area of Opportunity	The area in which the limits of electricity transmission via High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) cables can reach oil and gas assets for decarbonisation. This area is based on assets within a 100 kilometre (km) radius of the Array Area.
Array Area	The area within which the Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs), floating substructures, moorings and anchors, Offshore Substation Converter Platforms (OSCPs) and Inter-Array Cables (IAC) will be present.
Cenos Offshore Windfarm ('the Project')	'The Project' is the term used to describe Cenos Offshore Windfarm. The Project is a floating offshore windfarm located in the North Sea, with a generating capacity of up to 1,350 Megawatts (MW). The Project which defines the Red Line Boundary (RLB) for the Section 36 Consent and Marine Licence Applications (MLA), includes all offshore components seaward of Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) (WTGs, OSCPs, cables, floating substructures moorings and anchors and all other associated infrastructure). The Project is the focus of this Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).
Cenos Offshore Windfarm Ltd. (The Applicant)	The Applicant for the Section 36 Consent and associated marine licences.
Cumulative Assessment	The consideration of potential impacts that could occur cumulatively with other relevant projects, plans, and activities that could result in a cumulative effect on receptors.
Developer	Cenos Offshore Windfarm Ltd., a Joint Venture between Flotation Energy and Vårgrønn As (Vårgrønn).
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	The statutory process of evaluating the likely significant environmental effects of a proposed project or development. Assessment of the potential impact of the proposed Project on the physical, biological and human environment during construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning.
Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations	This term is used to refer to the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations which are of relevance to the Project. This includes the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (as amended); and the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007.

TERM	DEFINITION
Environmental Impact Assessment Report	A report documenting the findings of the EIA for the Project in accordance with relevant EIA Regulations.
Export/Import Cable	High voltage cable used to export/import power between the OSCPs and Landfall.
Export/Import Cable Bundle (EICB)	Comprising two Export / Import Cables and one fibre-optic cable bundled in a single trench.
Export/Import Cable Corridor (EICC)	The area within which the Export/Import Cable Route will be planned and the Export / Import Cable will be laid, from the perimeter of the Array Area to MHWS.
Export / Import Cable Route	The area within the Export / Import Export Corridor (EICC) within which the Export/Import Cable Bundle (EICB) is laid, from the perimeter of the array area to MHWS.
Floating Turbine Unit (FTU)	The equipment associated with electricity generation comprising the WTG, the floating substructure which supports the WTG, mooring system and the dynamic section of the IAC.
Flotation Energy	Joint venture partner in Cenos Offshore Windfarm Ltd.
Habitats Regulations	The Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/ECC) and the Wild Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) were transposed into Scottish Law by the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994 ('Habitats Regulations') (up to 12 NM); by the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Offshore Marine Regulations') (beyond 12 NM); the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (of relevance to consents under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989); the Offshore Petroleum Activities (Conservation of Habitats) Regulations 2001; and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The Habitats Regulations set out the stages of the Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) process required to assess the potential impacts of a proposed project on European Sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, candidate SACs and SPAs and Ramsar Sites).
Habitats Regulations Appraisal	The assessment of the impacts of implementing a plan or policy on a European Site, the purpose being to consider the impacts of a project against conservation objectives of the site and to ascertain whether it would adversely affect the integrity of the site.
High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC)	Refers to high voltage electricity in Alternating Current (AC) form which is produced by the WTGs and flows through the IAC system to the OSCPs. HVAC may also be used for onward power transmission from the OSCPs to assets or to shore over shorter distances.
High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC)	Refers to high voltage electricity in Direct Current (DC) form which is converted from HVAC to HVDC at the OSCPs and transmitted to shore over longer distances.
Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD)	An engineering technique for laying cables that avoids open trenches by drilling between two locations beneath the ground's surface.

TERM	DEFINITION
Innovation & Targeted Oil and Gas (INTOG)	In November 2022, the Crown Estate Scotland (CES) announced the Innovation & Targeted Oil and Gas (INTOG) Leasing Round, to help enable this sector-wide commitment to decarbonisation. INTOG allowed developers to apply for seabed rights to develop offshore windfarms for the purpose of providing low carbon electricity to power oil and gas installations and help to decarbonise the sector. Cenos is an INTOG project and in November 2023 secured an Exclusivity Agreement as part of the INTOG leasing round.
Inter-Array Cable (IAC)	The cables which connect the WTGs to the OSCPs. WTGs may be connected with IACs into a hub or in series as a 'string' or a 'loop' such that power from the connected WTGs is gathered to the OSCPs via a single cable.
Joint Venture	The commercial partnership between Flotation Energy and Vårgrønn, the shareholders which hold the Exclusivity Agreement with CES to develop the Cenos site as an INTOG project.
Landfall	The area where the Export / Import Cable from the Array Area will be brought ashore. The interface between the offshore and onshore environments.
Marine Licence	Licence required for certain activities in the marine environment and granted under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and/or the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.
Marine Protected Area (MPA)	Marine sites protected at the national level under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 out to 12 NM, and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 between 12-200 NM. In Scotland MPAs are areas of sea and seabed defined so as to protect habitats, wildlife, geology, underseas landforms, historic shipwrecks and to demonstrate sustainable management of the sea.
Marine Protected Area (MPA) Assessment	A three-step process for determining whether there is a significant risk that a proposed development could hinder the achievement of the conservation objectives of an MPA.
Mean High Water Springs (MHWS)	The height of Mean High Water Springs is the average throughout the year, of two successive high waters, during a 24-hour period in each month when the range of the tide is at its greatest.
Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS)	The height of Mean Low Water Springs is the average throughout a year of the heights of two successive low waters during periods of 24 hours (approximately once a fortnight).
Mitigation Measures	Measures considered within the topic-specific chapters in order to avoid impacts or reduce them to acceptable levels. • Primary mitigation – measures that are an inherent part of the design of the Project which reduce or avoid the likelihood or magnitude of an adverse environmental effect, including location or design; • Secondary mitigation – additional measures implemented to further reduce environmental effects to 'not significant' levels (where appropriate) and do not form part of the fundamental design of the Project; and

TERM	DEFINITION
	• Tertiary mitigation – measures that are implemented in accordance with industry standard practice or to meet legislative requirements and are independent of the EIA (i.e. they would be implemented regardless of the findings of the EIA). Primary and tertiary mitigation are referred to as embedded mitigation. Secondary mitigation is referred to as additional mitigation.
Mooring System	Comprising the mooring lines and anchors, the mooring system connects the floating substructure to the seabed, provides station-keeping capability for the floating substructure and contributes to the stability of the floating substructure and WTG.
Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area (NCMPA)	MPA designated by Scottish Ministers in the interests of nature conservation under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.
Offshore Substation Converter Platforms (OSCPs)	An offshore platform on a fixed jacket substructure, containing electrical equipment to aggregate the power from the WTGs and convert power between HVAC and HVDC for export/import via the export / import cable to / from the shore. The OSCPs will also act as power distribution stations for the Oil & Gas platforms.
Onward Development	Transmission projects which are anticipated to be brought forward for development by 3rd party oil and gas operators to enable electrification of assets via electricity generated by the Project. All Onward Development will subject to separate marine licensing and permitting requirements.
Onward Development Area	The area within which oil and gas assets would have the potential to be electrified by the Project.
Onward Development Connections	Oil and gas assets located in the waters surrounding the Array Area will be electrified via transmission infrastructure which will connect to the Project's OSCPs. These transmission cables are referred to as Onward Development Connections.
Project Area	The area that encompasses both the Array Area and EICC.
Project Design Envelope	A description of the range of possible elements that make up the Project design options under consideration and that are assessed as part of the EIA for the Project.
Study Area	Receptor specific area where potential impacts from the Project could occur.
Transboundary Assessment	The consideration of impacts from the Project which have the potential to have a significant effect on another European Economic Area (EEA) state's environment. Where there is a potential for a transboundary effect, as a result of the Project, these are assessed within the relevant EIA chapter.
Transmission Infrastructure	The infrastructure responsible for moving electricity from generating stations to substations, load areas, assets and the electrical grid, comprising the OSCPs, and associated substructure, and the Export / Import Cable.
Vårgrønn As (Vårgrønn)	Joint venture partner in Cenos Offshore Windfarm Ltd.

TERM	DEFINITION
Wind Turbine Generator (WTG)	The equipment associated with electricity generation from available wind resource, comprising the surface components located above the supporting substructure (e.g., tower, nacelle, hub, blades, and any necessary power transformation equipment, generators, and switchgears).
Worst-Case Scenario	The worst-case scenario based on the Project Design Envelope which varies by receptor and / or impact pathway identified.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Project

Cenos Offshore Windfarm (the Project) is a floating offshore windfarm, which is located 200 kilometre (km) offshore east of Aberdeen, from the closest edge of the Project Array Area, in the Central North Sea (CNS) (see Figure 1-1). The Project shall generate renewable electricity to the UK Grid from up to 95 Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs) in addition to enabling efficient electrification of offshore oil and gas assets within the vicinity of the Project. When wind speeds are insufficient to power the Oil and Gas assets directly, additional electricity would be imported from the UK grid through the Export/Import Cable connection.

The Project's lifetime is expected to exceed that of the oil and gas assets and, therefore, would continue to produce renewable electricity to the UK Grid after those assets are decommissioned. Overall, the requested consent duration of the Project is 35 years. The offshore construction phase is expected to commence in 2030 and would continue for approximately six years, with the aim to complete the windfarm construction by 2035.

A central aim of the Project is to provide the opportunity for oil and gas assets located in the waters surrounding the Array Area to electrify via transmission infrastructure connecting to the Project's electricity hub (i.e. OSCPs). These future projects form part of the anticipated future Onward Development and are referred to as "Onward Development Connections."

Applications for the Onward Development Connections for oil and gas electrification will be finalised and brought forward by 3rd party oil and gas operators, subject to separate marine licencing and permitting requirements (including separate EIA, as appropriate).

The Applicant has entered into a binding agreement to acquire NorthConnect Limited (the "Acquisition"). Completion of the Acquisition is subject to receipt of customary regulatory approvals. Once this acquisition is complete, the Applicant will hold the benefit of the Marine Licences granted in respect of the NorthConnect project as well as the planning permissions that have been granted for the onshore substation and cable infrastructure. Discussions remain ongoing as to whether the Applicant will utilise the full NorthConnect route to develop a multi-purpose interconnector that connects the Project (as well as future oil and gas Onward Development Connections) to Scotland and Norway. The Applicant intends to utilise the shoreward part of the NorthConnect cable corridor for its offshore transmission infrastructure, although it is applying for new marine licences to reflect the fact that its transmission infrastructure would not be part of an exempt interconnector cable and instead connected to an offshore generating station. For the avoidance of doubt, only one set of infrastructure would be placed within the consented cable corridor.

A detailed project descriptions is provided in the **Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) Vol. 2, Chapter 5: Project Description.**

Figure 1-1 Project Location and Red Line Boundary Area

1.2 The Applicant

The Applicant, Cenos Offshore Windfarm Ltd., is a Joint Venture between Flotation Energy and Vårgrønn As (Vårgrønn). Flotation Energy has a 13 Gigawatt (GW) portfolio of both fixed and floating developments internationally. Flotation Energy has a developing project pipeline of offshore wind projects with more than 13 GW in the UK, Ireland, Taiwan, Japan, and Australia. Now part of the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) Group, with its combination of technology and experience and aim of achieving environmental improvements, Flotation Energy holds a strong position in offshore wind development.

Norway-based offshore wind company, Vårgrønn, is a joint venture between the energy company Plenitude (Eni) and the Norwegian energy entrepreneur and investor HitecVision. The company is powering the energy transition through the development, construction, operation, and ownership of offshore wind projects. Vårgrønn's pipeline of projects and prospective projects spans the UK, Ireland, and Norway, in addition to early-stage initiatives in the Baltics. The company also holds a 20% share in Dogger Bank, the world's largest windfarm under construction.

1.3 Purpose of the Planning Statement

This Planning Statement and Consideration of Policies accompanies an application for consent of the Project under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 and the associated Marine Licences under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.

As described above, the Applicant has entered into a binding agreement to acquire NorthConnect Limited. Once this acquisition is complete, the Applicant will hold the benefit of the Marine Licences granted in respect of the NorthConnect project as well as the planning permissions that have been granted for the onshore substation and cable infrastructure. There is, therefore, no additional onshore planning application associated with the Project.

As regulator, the Scottish Ministers are the authority responsible for determinations of the required consents and licences that are needed to construct and operate the Project. In determining the applications, Scottish Ministers must be satisfied that the Applicant has adequately considered the relevant legislation, policy and planning frameworks pertaining to the Project.

This Planning Statement and Consideration of Policies demonstrates compliance with the legislation and policies and provides evidence, in light of those policies, that the Project will make a significant contribution to tackling climate change, decarbonisation of the Scottish and UK energy network, direct decarbonisation of the oil and gas sector, energy security and is critical in order for Scotland and the UK to reach the binding net zero commitments.

2 The Need for the Project

The need for the Project is centred around four key topics:

- Climate change;
- New energy infrastructure;
- Energy security; and
- Socio-economics.

EIAR Vol. 2, Chapter 2: Need for the Project presents a summary of the need for renewable energy developments, including the Project, the main climate change and energy objectives, and targets which are determining the direction of the offshore wind energy industry, and the supporting policy and legislation.

The objectives of the Project include "to generate and deliver significant capacity of low carbon electricity to existing oil and gas infrastructure to maximise the decarbonisation opportunity in Scottish (see **MPA Assessment: Without Prejudice Derogation Case**). The decarbonisation aims of the Project will support the commitments and polices detailed in the **EIAR Vol. 2, Chapter 3: Policy and Legislative Context** and this report.

There is also a need for new energy infrastructure to support the United Kingdom's (UK) requirement for energy security through a well-coordinated energy transition. This key driver underpins the UK offshore oil and gas industry's North Sea Transition Deal (NSTD) with the UK Government targeting Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050. Through the NSTD, the oil and gas industry has committed to a 50% reduction in Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 and the North Sea Transition Authority (NSTA) is driving the process of achieving these targets by facilitating multi-industry partnerships between renewable energy developers and oil and gas asset operators. By positioning the project in the CNS, the Applicant has maximised the opportunity to electrify a number of oil and gas assets with longer production timelines, as well as potential green field developments which may come online over the lifetime of the Project.

The Project would respond to the socio-economic needs of Scotland and the UK through:

- The reduction of energy importation fees by switching to locally produced energy;
- Extending the lifecycle of oil and gas assets connecting to the Project by reducing fossil fuel energy use on extraction and production activities, as well as enabling those assets to continue to meet ongoing fossil fuel demands within the UK; and
- Providing investment and job opportunities at local, regional and national scales.

Collectively, the above demonstrates how the Project can provide for a just energy transition within the remote Northeast of Scotland. An overview of the Project's socio-economic benefits is provided in **EIAR Vol. 3, Chapter 19: Socio-economics, Tourism, and Recreation.**

3 Statutory Considerations

3.1 Introduction

This section describes the legislation and directives that are relevant for the Project and which must be considered by the decision makers when determining the applications.

3.2 The Electricity Act 1989

Scottish Ministers are responsible for determining applications under Section 36 (s.36) of the Electricity Act 1989 for offshore generating stations with an installed capacity exceeding 1 Megawatt (MW) in Scottish territorial waters, and over 50 MW in the Scottish REZ. Such applications are processed on behalf of Scottish Ministers by the Marine Directorate - Licensing Operations Team (MD-LOT). S.36A covers the public rights of navigation and s.36B sets out duties in relation to navigation.

S.36 consent is required for the generating station and ancillary infrastructure, including the offshore windfarm array and Inter-Array Cables (IAC).

An application for consent under Section 36 of this Act has been submitted to Scottish Ministers. This must be evaluated in accordance with Schedules 8 and 9 of the Act.

3.3 Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (the 2009 Act) provides a statutory framework for sustainable management of the UK seas, including around Scotland, beyond 12 NM. The requirement for a marine licence to undertake certain licensable activities was introduced under the 2009 Act.

The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 (the 2010 Act) introduces a duty to protect and enhance the marine environment within Scottish territorial waters (from Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) out to 12 NM), including measures to help boost economic investment and growth in areas such as marine renewables. Key measures included within the 2010 Act include marine planning, marine licensing, marine conservation, and enforcement.

The Project requires to undertake prescribed marine licensable activities within and outwith 12 NM, therefore requiring marine licences under both the 2009 Act and the 2010 Act. Prescribed marine licensable activities include the deposition or installation of any necessary infrastructure.

Scottish Ministers, as the determining authority, may issue a note to the Applicant stating that both the Marine Licence Applications (MLA) and s.36 application will be subject to the same administrative procedure. Where that is the case, the two related applications may be considered at the same time.

Applications for relevant marine licences have been submitted as part of the Project Application.

3.4 The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

The requirement for an EIA for electricity generation projects requiring consent under s.36 of the Electricity Act 1989 is provided for in Scotland by the Electricity Works (Environmental

Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 [F] (hereafter referred to as 'Electricity Works EIA Regulations 2017'). These regulations set out the statutory process and minimum requirements for EIA.

The Electricity Works EIA Regulations 2017 identify that certain developments will be, or may be, subject to EIA. An offshore windfarm falls under Schedule 2 of the Electricity Works EIA Regulation 2017 as 'a generating station'. Where a Schedule 2 project is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location, (the development involves the installation of more than two turbines, or the hub height of any turbine or height of any other structure exceeds 15 metres (m)), an EIA is required. Due to the location and scale of the Project an EIAR has been prepared under the Electricity Works EIA Regulations 2017.

3.5 The Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007

The Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (hereafter referred to as the 'Marine Works EIA Regulations 2017') are relevant to the marine licences in respect of the offshore works, including the cable connection, on or under the seabed within the 12 NM limit of Scottish territorial waters.

The Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007 (hereafter referred to as the 'Marine Works EIA Regulations 2007') are relevant for the marine licences for the offshore works on or under the seabed in Scottish offshore waters beyond 12 NM out to 200 NM.

The Marine Works EIA Regulations 2017 identify that an EIA is required for certain developments likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location. An offshore windfarm falls under schedule 2 of the Marine Works EIA Regulations 2017 as an installation for harnessing of wind power for energy production, and, due to the location, size and nature of the Project an EIA is required under Marine Works EIA Regulations 2017 and the Marine Works EIA Regulations 2007.

3.6 Marine Protected Areas

Scotland's network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) consists of 247 sites, with 233 for conservation purposes providing protection to 37% of Scotland's seas (NatureScot, 2024). Whilst many of these MPAs are aligned with existing Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas(SPA), Ramsar sites or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a number have been designated directly under MPA legislation, through the 2010 Act or the 2009 Act, for Scottish territorial and offshore waters, respectively.

MPAs are designated to protect biodiversity and heritage, with specific focus on protected features (species, habitats, large scale features or geomorphological features). Where a project may have risk of hindering the achievement of the MPA's conservation objectives, the EIAR should include the necessary information to inform an MPA assessment. The MPA assessment is undertaken by the competent authority (Scottish Ministers for marine licences and s.36 consents) in consultation with NatureScot / Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC).

An MPA Screening Assessment was undertaken for the Project and was submitted alongside the 2024 Scoping Report. The 2024 Scoping Report was submitted to MD-LOT in April 2024, and relevant stakeholders were then consulted. The Scoping Opinion was received in September 2024.

The EIA assesses the potential for impacts on MPAs, informed by the Scoping Opinion, engagement with MD-LOT and Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies and any other relevant information deemed appropriate.

3.7 Habitat Regulations

The Council Directive (92/43/EEC) (the 'Habitats Directive') was adopted in 1992 and aims to maintain or restore the natural habitats and wild flora and fauna species listed in the Annexes of the Directive at a favourable conservation status.

The EU Directive (2009/147/EC) on the conservation of wild birds (the 'Birds Directive') provides a framework for the conservation and management of wild birds within Europe.

The Habitats and Birds Directives have been transposed into domestic legislation; those of relevance to the Project include:

- The Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994 (as amended);
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017;
- The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017; and
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Both the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive form a network of designated 'European sites'. Under this legislation these sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and Ramsar sites. Legislative amendments, focused on the changes necessary to ensure that the Habitats Regulations remain operable, were made following the UK's exit from the EU. These amendments make some changes to terminology, and Scottish Ministers now exercise some functions which, before EU Exit, were carried out at EU level. In the UK, the Habitats Regulations now are applicable to the 'UK National Site Network' (NSN), which covers SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites designated before EU exit (i.e. UK sites that formed part of the EU Natura 2000 network) and any sites designated under the Habitats Directive post EU Exit.

The Habitats Regulations include the general provisions for the protection of European sites, policy and standards, and the procedural requirements to undertake Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) to assess the implications of plans or projects on European sites. In those cases that a project is likely to have a significant effect on a National Site Network site, regardless of whether the project location is within or beyond the 12 NM boundary, there is a requirement for the competent authority (Scottish Ministers) to carry out an Appropriate Assessment (AA).

In accordance with the HRA Regulations, an HRA has been undertaken for the Project. The HRA documentation has been co-ordinated with the EIA but has been reported separately in the Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA) to support compliance with all relevant statutory requirements guidance and best practice. The Scottish Ministers, as the competent authority, must determine whether the Project will adversely affect the integrity of any relevant marine or terrestrial European site. An HRA Screening Report was submitted alongside the 2024 EIA Scoping Report.

The RIAA builds upon the HRA Stage One Screening Report which the Applicant submitted to MD-LOT. The report provided supporting information to enable the evaluation of potential pathways for the presence of Likely Significant Effects (LSE) on the qualifying features and

conservation objectives of sites designated as part of the National Site Network which display potential connectivity with the Project.

The RIAA considers the likely significant environmental effects of the Project as it relates to relevant European site integrity at Stage Two of the HRA process. The RIAA provides MD-LOT with the information required to undertake an HRA Stage Two Appropriate Assessment.

3.8 Marine Strategy Framework

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) (2008/56/EC) (EC, 2008) of the European Parliament and the Council was published on 17th June 2008. The MSFD establishes a framework for community action in the field of Marine Environmental Policy (MEP) adopted in 2008, with the overall aim of protecting the marine environment across Europe. The MSFD is transposed for the whole of the UK by the Marine Strategy Regulations 2010. The UK has made amendments to the Marine Strategy Regulations 201046, under the Marine Environment (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018 which transpose the requirement into domestic law, so that MSFD can continue to be effective now the UK is no longer part of the EU.

MD-LOT carry out the assessment on behalf of the Scottish Ministers, as the competent authority, to determine whether the Project has the potential to influence Good Environmental Status (GES) of the UK's marine water and therefore the UK Government's ability to uphold its responsibilities under the MSFD. EIAR, Vol. 3: Chapter 9: Marine Water and Sediment Quality Water provides a detailed assessment of the Project in relation to the marine environment.

3.9 Water Framework Directive

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) (Directive 2000/60/EC) (EC, 2000) aims to 'prevent deterioration and enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems, including groundwater, promote sustainable water use, reduce pollution and contribute to the mitigation of floods and droughts.' These aims are to make sure that the water environment will be improved and protected on a catchment scale. The WFD was transposed into Scottish legislation by the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003and the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 with Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) being the competent authority, having the responsibility to consider whether proposals for developments have the potential to:

- Cause a deterioration of a WFD water body from its current status or potential; and/or
- Prevent future attainment of good status or potential where not already achieved.

The Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003 covers coastal waters up to 3 NM and state that the Scottish Ministers, SEPA and responsible authorities must have regard to the requirements of the WFD to ensure that all surface water bodies achieve 'Good Ecological Status' and that there is no deterioration in status. Five classifications of water quality status are defined: High (near natural), Good, Moderate, Poor and Bad; and each classification is accorded a degree of confidence (high, medium or low) in the overall quality assessment. EIAR, Vol. 3: Chapter 9: Marine Water and Sediment Quality Water provides a detailed assessment of the Project in relation to surface coastal waters.

3.10 Decomissioning

Sections 105 to 114 of the Energy Act 2004 (amended by the Scotland Act 2016) contain statutory requirements in relation to the decommissioning of Offshore Renewable Energy Installations (OREI) and their related electricity lines. Under the terms of the Energy Act 2004, Scottish Ministers may require a person who is responsible for these installations or lines in

Scottish Waters or in a Scottish part of an REZ to prepare (and carry out) a costed Decommissioning Programme for submission to and approval by Scottish Ministers (Scottish Government, 2022a).

Responsibilities and powers associated with decommissioning for OREI within Scottish Waters transferred from the Secretary of State to Scottish Ministers in 2017. Before this BEIS was responsible for requiring decommissioning programmes (BEIS, 2019). Marine Directorate are seeking to establish robust policies and procedures covering decommissioning. The guidance note for decommissioning of offshore renewable energy installation in Scottish waters (Scottish Government, 2022) or in the Scottish Part of the REZ, under the Energy Act 2004 was finalised in August 2022.

Scottish Ministers have the power to determine specific approaches to decommissioning, including stipulating the form, timing and size of financial securities required. The expected content of a Decommissioning Programme includes decommissioning standards, financial security, residual liability and industrial cooperation and collaboration.

Section 5 of the Guidance Note 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.” (Scottish Government, 2022a).

The decommissioning requirements in Scotland relate to the area between the MHWS mark and the seaward limits of the territorial waters, including coastal water and the Scottish part of the REZ. The Energy Act 2004does not cover the intertidal waters.

The decommissioning phase of the Project and the effects of activities associated with decommissioning have been assessed within the relevant chapters of the EIAR.

3.11 Islands (Scotland) Act 2018

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 established measures to promote sustainable growth for Scotland’s islands. It introduces a licensing scheme for any works that take place in the coastal waters around the islands, out to 12 NM.

The Act also details functions that related to the role of Regional Marine Plans. As these regional plans are not in place where the Project will interact with the coastal region, and the Project is not located near any of the Scottish Islands, this Planning Statement will instead focus on The Scottish Government’s Scotland’s National Marine Plan (2015), see Section 5.2.

4 Climate change and renewables

4.1 Introduction

This section outlines the important policy developments and targets relating to tackling climate change and the pressing need for renewable energy. Both topics are key policy areas for Scotland, the UK and the wider international community.

This section draws on and expands the EIAR Vol. 2, Chapter 03: Policy and Legislative Context.

The Project will make a critical contribution to the delivery of these policies and achievement of challenging net zero commitments. As a project based in Scottish waters, the Scottish policy context is most pertinent to the Project.

The climate and biodiversity crises have been highlighted by the Scottish Government as two of the most critical challenges facing the people of Scotland today (National Planning Framework 4). As a Targeted Oil and Gas (TOG) decarbonisation project, the additional carbon reduction resulting from the Project makes a significant contribution to addressing both crises.

4.2 International

4.2.1 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was established in 1992 and is tasked with supporting the global response to the threat of climate change. It has nearly full membership within the UN and is the parent treaty to the 2015 Paris Agreement which seeks to keep the global average temperature rise this century as close as possible to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. It is also the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol which commits industrialised countries and economies in transition to limit and reduce greenhouse gases

4.2.2 Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol was agreed in 1997 and commits State parties to reduce GHG emissions. Due to the complex process of ratification, the protocol only entered into force in 2005. The protocol contains binding commitments for developed countries to reduce their emissions according to individual targets. The UK is signatory to the Kyoto Protocol and its commitments were transposed into UK law by the Climate Change Act 2008 and the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

4.2.3 Paris agreement

The Paris Agreement (Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) is a legally binding commitment, adopted by 196 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in December 2015. It requires the Parties to commit to hold the “increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels” and to make efforts to “limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.” The Paris Agreement came into force in 2016. It is to be delivered through five-year cycles of increasing ambitions from the signatories to reduce emissions and tackle climate change. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) are produced and are meant to reflect more ambitious efforts to decarbonise. There is also an overall aim to reduce GHG by 43% by 2030.

The Paris Agreement was transposed to UK law with the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 which set a net zero target for 2050 for the UK. Scotland has pursued a more aggressive commitment and through the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets (Scotland) Act 2019 it set binding targets for the reduction in emissions by 100% below 1990 levels by 2045.

4.2.4 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP)

The United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Partes (COP) are the annual events where the details and processes of addressing climate change are discussed, and agreements made. The Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreements were set at the COP3 and COP21 events (1997 and 2015 respectively).

More recently, COP26 in 2021 focused on accelerating the effort to meet the commitments of the Paris Agreement. However, it was also agreed that the targets were likely to be missed and as such, the Glasgow Climate Pact set out a series of decisions and resolutions to refocus effort. The Glasgow Climate Pact was agreed by the majority of Parties but is not legally binding.

During COP28 in 2023, the conference determined that more work is required to tackle climate change and the "Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge" was set. This pledge commits the parties to work together to triple the world's installed renewables energy generation capacity to 11,000 GW by 2030.

COP29, which took place in Baku in November 2024 focused on developed countries to deliver financial commitments for developing nations to help tackle climate change. Whilst the agreement sees a $300 billion pledge, it fell short of the $1.3 trillion target.

4.2.5 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a United Nations body that was created to "provide policymakers with regular scientific assessments on climate change, its implications and potential future risks, as well as to put forward adaptation and mitigation options," (IPCC, 2024).

The IPCC has provided numerous reports and research assessing the state of climate change and is used by policy makers to inform their decisions about climate change. It has, in recent reports, delivered stark warnings that progress to hold temperature rise below 1.5°C must be accelerated. In the recent Climate Change 2023 Synthesis Report there is a clear message that human activities, primarily through GHG emissions have "unequivocally caused global warming with global surface temperature reaching 1.1°C above 1850-1900 in 2011 – 2020," (IPCC, 2023). In the earlier *Climate Change 2022 Mitigation of Climate Change* (2022) report, modelled pathways to limit warming above the 1.5°C involve immediate reductions in GHG emissions and a transition to renewable energy options (IPCC, 2022).

The ICPCC Synthesis report, published in March 2023 (IPCC, 2023) notes:

- Between 2011 and 2020 the global surface temperature raised by 1.1°C compared to 1990 levels due to increasing GHG emissions arising from unsustainable energy use, land use and land-use change, lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production across regions, between and within countries, and among individuals;
- Based on Nationally Determined Contributions as of October 2021, it is clear that the amount of global GHG emissions in 2030 make it likely that warming will exceed 1.5°C during the 21st century, which will make it difficult to limit warming below 2°C;

- There are gaps between projected emissions from implemented policies and those from Nationally Determined Contributions and finance flows fall short of the levels needed to meet climate goals across all sectors and regions.
- Every increment of global warming will intensify multiple and concurrent hazards, and deep, rapid, and sustained reductions in GHG emissions would lead to a discernible slowdown in global warming within around two decades, and also to discernible changes in atmospheric composition within a few years;
- Projected CO2 emissions from existing fossil fuel infrastructure will exceed the remaining carbon budget for 1.5°C;
- Rapid, deep and immediate reductions in GHG emissions across all sectors is required this decade to meet any of the modelled scenarios keeping warming below 1.5°C and 2°C; and
- If warming exceeds 1.5°C, then the only way of reducing warming is to achieve and sustain net negative global CO2 emissions, relying on the removal of CO2 from the environment which has additional feasibility concerns.

4.2.6 EU Renewables Energy Directive(s)

At the EU level, there has been similar policy targeted at maximising the renewable energy opportunity to help reduce GHG emissions and move to decarbonisation of European Member State's energy systems.

The Renewable Energy Directive (EU/2018/2001) established a binding renewable energy target for the EU for 2030 of at least 32%. The Directive contained a clause that allowed for an upward revision in 2023. Amendments to the directive have been made, which came into force in November 2023 (but allows time for transposition of the directive into national law), and the renewable energy target has now been set to at least 42.5%.

Although the UK has left the EU, these targets represent the clear alignment of our closest neighbours to deliver on renewable energy requirements and transition away from fossil fuels.

4.2.7 Summary

The Project will deliver up to 1,350 MW of renewable energy to Scotland and the UK. It will also provide a clean electrification option to multiple oil and gas assets and allow them to decarbonise quickly. The Project clearly aligns with the international commitments to tackle the climate emergency and contributes to meeting the UK's binding agreements.

4.3 UK

4.3.1 Climate Change Act 2008

As described above, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement were transposed into UK law. The Climate Change Act 2008 commits the UK to a net reduction in GHG emissions of 34% of 1990 emission by 2022 and a further 80% by 2050. In 2019, the Act was amended through the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 which followed the Paris Agreement. The new target was set to 100% reduction of emissions by 2050.

The Act also requires the establishment of legally binding carbon budgets. The Climate Change Committee (CCC) was also established by the Act and provides recommendations for

the carbon budgets to ensure the UK meets it obligations. The sixth carbon budget recommended a 78% reduction of emissions below 1990 levels.

Whilst progress has been made on the emissions reduction and net zero commitments, primarily through the phase-out of coal, there is still work to be done, especially in the roll out of renewables and low carbon technology. the CCC indicates that the UK should now be in a phase of rapid investment and delivery, however, almost all of the CCC indicators are off-track and require significant acceleration in order to reach the even the 2030 targets (CCC, 2024).

4.3.2 The UK Energy White Paper (2020)

The UK Energy White Paper "Powering our Net Zero Future" (2020) was followed on from the previous government's "ten-point plan" for a green industrial revolution and sets out how accelerating renewable development and investing in energy innovation technology through the 2020's will enable the UK to meet net zero targets and deliver significant job opportunities.

The white paper provided an indicated illustration of how the UK energy system may look in 2050 (depicted below in Figure 4-1).

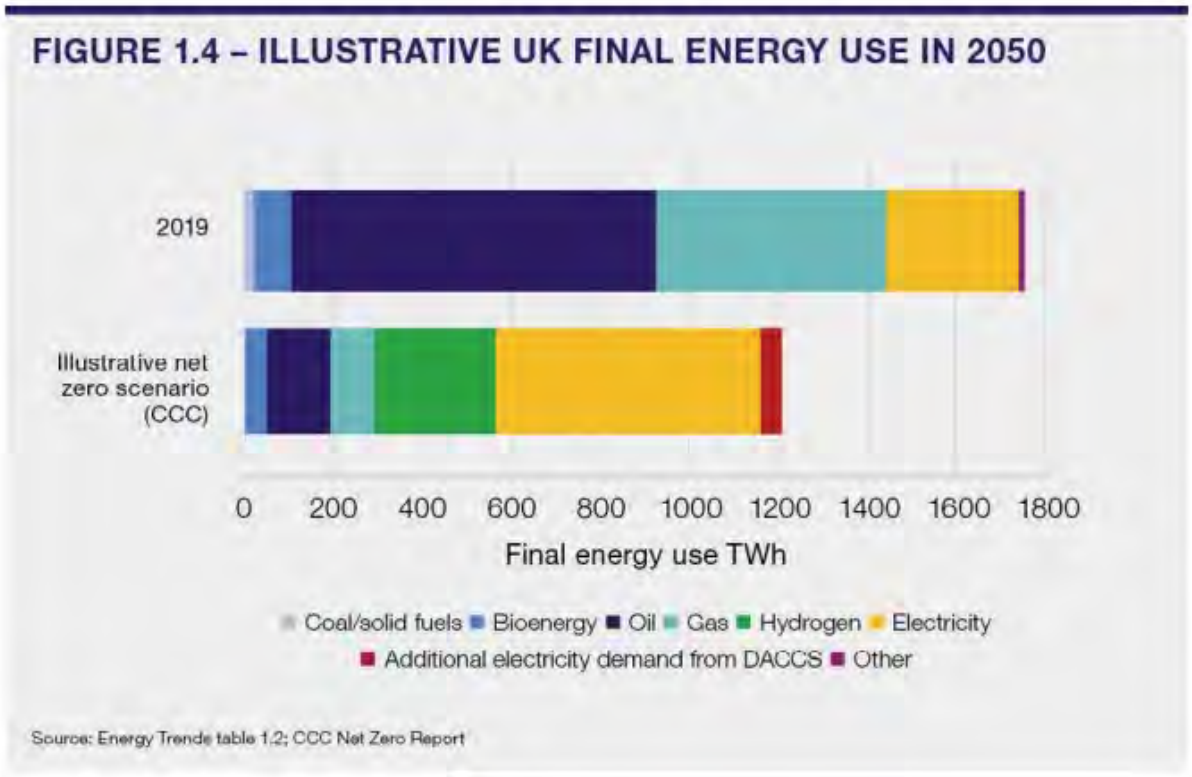

Figure 4-1 Illustrative UK final energy use in 2050 (Energy White Paper, 2020)

This illustration emphasises the reduction of fossil fuels and the required growth in renewables.

4.3.3 North Sea Transition Deal

The North Sea Transition Deal (NSTD), established in March 2021 (BEIS, 2021) is a sector wide deal between the UK Government and the oil and gas industry which aims to facilitate the decarbonisation of the oil and gas sector. Key commitments of the deal include setting early emissions reductions targets and investing up to £16 billion by 2030 to reduce sector carbon emissions, a commitment to secure up to 40,000 energy jobs, reduce emissions by up to 60 million metric tonnes and ensure that local content accounts for half the inputs into new energy projects (BEIS, 2021).

The NSTD is also intrinsically linked to the Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas (INTOG) programme of offshore wind planning and leasing introduced by the Scottish Government and Crown Estate Scotland to facilitate the electrification of oil and gas infrastructure through offshore wind. The Project is the second TOG projects seeking consent and is the largest of the projects to be identified.

4.3.4 British Energy Security Strategy 2022

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, many countries, including the UK, re-evaluated their reliance on foreign sources of energy. Energy security and the rising cost of energy became a primary focus of international policy. The British Energy Security Strategy (BESS) (2022) set out ambitions to accelerate and secure the UK's renewable energy potential and reduce reliance on external sources.

The BESS raised the UK government's ambition for offshore wind to 50 GW by 2030. This also included a target of 5 GW of floating offshore wind projects. In addition, the strategy also aimed to set the way to reduce consenting times, consider environmental issues at a strategic level and enable fast-track consenting roues for priority cases. The Energy Act 2023 followed the BESS and set into law some of the changes the strategy described.

4.3.5 National Policy Statements

The UK has published National Policy Statements (NPS), which are statements explaining, justifying and accounting for UK Government policy in relation to the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. The NPS are primarily applied to England and Wales, however as all energy policy is a reserved matter for UK ministers, the content of the NPS is still relevant for consideration in Scottish planning decisions.

4.3.5.1 Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1)

The UK Government's Overarching National Policy Statement (NPS) for Energy (EN-1), as issued by DESNZ, sets out national policy for energy infrastructure and is part of a suite of NPSs issued by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (HM Government 2024).

EN-1 sets out the UK Government's policy for the delivery of major energy infrastructure which includes renewable electricity generation (both onshore and offshore) as covered in the NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (HM Government 2023). Of particular relevance to the without prejudice derogation provisions for the Project, EN-1 concluded that there is a critical national priority (CNP) for the provision of nationally significant low carbon infrastructure, which includes offshore renewable generation such as offshore wind. It is important to note that while the CNP status of offshore wind generation does not generate an additional need beyond that already established for renewable energy infrastructure, it does emphasise the need for the Project and encourage Scottish ministers to support the Project.

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

EN-3, taken together with EN-1, provides the primary policy for decisions on applications received for significant renewable energy infrastructure.

NPS EN-3 provides a mechanism for delivery of the BESS (HM Government, 2022), which sets out a series of bold commitments to deliver a more independent, secure, and affordable energy system.

Section 2.8 of NPS EN-3 reiterates the UK Government's expectations, as set out in the BESS, that offshore wind (including floating wind) will play a significant role in meeting demand and

decarbonising the energy system, and the ambition to deploy up to 50 GW (potentially 60 GW under the new UK Government) of offshore wind capacity (including up to 5 GW floating wind) by 2030, with an expectation that there will be a need for substantially more installed offshore capacity beyond this to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

To meet these objectives, the UK Government considers that all offshore wind developments are likely to need to maximise their capacity within the technological, environmental, and other constraints of the development.

4.3.6 Summary

The Project is a vital contribution to the UK net zero commitments and specifically the offshore wind targets. The Project will provide more than 1 GW contribution to the offshore wind targets and will be one of the only floating offshore wind farms capable of contributing to the 5 GW target. With the CCC and UK Government acknowledging that progress to reach the 2030 and 2050 emissions reduction targets is already off-track, the Project is needed to help address that short-fall and enable the floating offshore wind supply chain and job benefits that are necessary to allow the floating offshore wind sector to grow in Scotland and the UK.

4.4 Scotland

4.4.1 The Scottish Government's Climate Change Adaptation Programme

The Scottish Government's Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) Programme (Scottish Government, 2013) was introduced in 2013. The CCA programme focussed on the assessment of climate change risks to the environment, economy, infrastructure and local communities, and the development of adaptation strategies and action plans for a range of sectors. The programme also focussed on increasing engagement and collaboration between stakeholders. The CCA Programme process concluded that critical infrastructure (including transport networks, energy systems, water supply and communications) needed enhancements in order to better handle the increased frequency of climate related hazards, including natural ecosystem-based approaches to improve the overall biodiversity of Scotland.

4.4.2 Climate Emergency

In 2019, the First Minster of Scotland declared a climate emergency and made clear intentions that Scotland would seek to play its part in tackling the crisis. This was the first government in the world to do so (Climate Emergency Declaration (CED), 2019). The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 amended the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The amendment outlines Scotland's net zero commitments in line with the Paris Agreement established at COP21. Scotland has set more aggressive net zero targets with a commitment to reduce emissions by 100% by 2045, five years ahead of the wider UK.

The Scottish Government also published the 2018 Climate Change Plan (Scottish Government, 2018) which set out the pathway to delivery of the ambitious net zero and renewable energy targets. This plan was in turn updated in December 2020 (2020a) by the Update to the Climate Change Plan: Securing a Green Recovery on a path to Net Zero. This 2020 update considers the approach to dealing with the climate emergency, Scotland's net zero targets and the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It places emphasis in the need for greater renewable energy delivery and the pressing need to deliver a just transition away from

fossil fuels. Offshore wind provides a clear opportunity to transfer the larger work force, skills and knowledge from oil and gas into offshore renewables.

More recently, the climate emergency has been twinned with the growing biodiversity crisis in the Scottish political context. The recent Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (Scottish Government, 2024a) describes that the loss of species and degradation of the environment is an existential threat to humanity. It notes that carefully located offshore renewable projects provide a valued contribution towards Scotland's net zero targets.

4.4.3 Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The Scottish Government publishes a strategic plan for meeting emissions reduction targets every five years. Information published on the Scottish Government website (Scottish Government, 2024b) has indicated that these targets will be difficult to meet.

The CCC's Progress in reducing emissions 2023 report to Parliament (CCC, 2023) does highlight that Scotland's emissions are reducing but not sufficiently enough to meet its 2021 annual target. However, compared to the rest of the UK emissions from industry and electricity supply decreased in Scotland (CCC, 2023). It is therefore clear that further opportunities to reduce emissions and accelerate renewable energy projects should be utilised.

The Scottish Government's annual emissions reduction targets (expressed as percentage reductions from the 1990/1995 baseline) are described in Table 4-1. As described above, the 2021 target was not met and the most recent Progress in Reducing Emissions: 2024 Report to Parliament indicates that 2022 target was also missed (CCC, 2024). In April 2024, the Scottish Minister for Net Zero confirmed that the 2030 emissions reduction target was out of reach and future UK carbon budgets will "require sustained increase in the pace and breadth of decarbonisation," (Scottish Government, 2024c)

Table 4-1 Scottish Government Emission reduction targets

TARGET YEAR	PERCENTAGE REDUCTION FROM BASELINE	TARGET YEAR	PERCENTAGE REDUCTION FROM BASELINE
2021	51.2		
2022	53.8	2034	81.0
2023	56.5	2035	82.5
2024	59.1	2036	84.0
2025	61.8	2037	85.5
2026	64.4	2038	87.0
2027	67.1	2039	88.5
2028	69.7	2040 (interim target)	90.0
2029	72.4	2041	92.0
2030 (interim target)	75.0	2042	94.0
2031	76.5	2043	96.0
2032	78.0	2044	98.0
2033	79.5	2045	100% (net zero emissions)

4.4.4 Scottish Energy Strategy

The Scottish Energy Strategy: the Future of Energy in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2017) set out the ambition for Scottish energy and the mechanisms required to reach the 2030, 2045 and 2050 targets. The 2050 vision is described in six key priorities. The "Renewable and low carbon solutions" priority recognises the potential for Scotland to maximise offshore wind and highlights the strength Scotland has in developing floating offshore wind to help meet its targets. Similarly, the "oil and gas industry strength" priority emphasises innovation and diversification across the oil and gas sector. Developed after the 2017 strategy, the use of offshore wind to decarbonise oil and gas infrastructure, which is managed through the INTOG programme demonstrates this commitment to innovation in practice.

The Scottish Energy Strategy Position Statement was published in 2021 (Scottish Government, 2021). This statement emphasises the green economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic and updates the programme of work to reflect interim publications, such as the Offshore Wind Policy Statement (Scottish Government 2020b) and the Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (Scottish Government 2020c). The 2017 strategy will remain in place until an update is adopted by Scottish Ministers. Consultation on the update: Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan took place in 2023.

4.4.5 Offshore Wind Policy Statement (2020)

The Scottish Government's Offshore Wind Policy Statement (OWPS) (2020) built on the Scottish Energy Strategy and set out Scottish Government's ambition for offshore wind out to 2030 and the role the sector will play in delivering net zero by 2045.

The OWPS reaffirmed commitments to reduce emissions by 75% by 2030 (against the 1990 baseline) and to further those reductions to 90% by 2040.

Importantly, the OWPS set out Scotland's ambition to see 8 – 11 GW of installed offshore wind capacity by 2030. Additionally, the significant opportunity of floating offshore wind is recognised in the OWPS as is the critical early mover advantage.

4.4.6 Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)

The Scottish Government published the Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (ESJTP) for public consultation in 2023. The draft ESJTP builds on the Scottish Energy Strategy (2017) and, once adopted would replace that 2017 strategy.

The ESJTP sets out the intended direction of travel for Scotland's energy system. It emphasises the need to move away from fossil fuel and to develop more renewable energy projects. The ESJTP indicates an ambition to add 20 GW of additional renewable electricity, from on and offshore projects, by 2030.

Critically, the ESJTP also establishes the clear need for a just transition. As Scotland moves away from fossil fuels, the country must maintain or increase employment in the energy production sector. This is particularly the case for the northeast of Scotland where the oil and gas industry is a major source of employment. The ESJTP highlights that maintaining the number of jobs in the energy sector could require 14,000 people to move from oil and gas to renewables, and an additional 16,000 to join the sector through to 2030.

4.4.7 Programme for Government and the Green Industrial Strategy

The Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2024-25 (2024d) explains the government's priority for the year ahead. The 2024 Programme for Government sets out the ambition to make Scotland more attractive for investment and the continued commitment to

the just transition. Developing the offshore wind supply chain and the enabling infrastructure is described as a key priority, which will help communities, maintain jobs as the energy system transforms and will mitigate against climate change and biodiversity loss.

The Programme for Government 2024 also speaks of the Green Industrial Strategy that will help support this just transition.

The Green Industrial Strategy was subsequently published in September 2024 (2024e). The strategy is not solely concerned with offshore wind but the "wind economy" is identified as one of the five key areas of focus. Building on the first-mover advantage of floating offshore wind is central to that focus. The strategy reiterates Scotland's commitment to accelerating offshore wind development, maximising the floating offshore wind opportunity and the UK participation in the *Ostend Declaration of Energy ministers on the North Seas as Europe's Green Power Plant* (2023). This declaration set a target of 120 GW of offshore wind in the North Sea by 2030 and at least 300 GW by 2050.

4.4.8 Summary

The Scottish Government and organisations supporting policy development in Scotland have made a clear and urgent case for the acceleration of offshore wind development in Scottish waters. The climate and biodiversity crises have been defined as a problem that Scotland must play its part in addressing and, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, must take advantage of to support the just transition away from reliance on fossil fuels.

The Project firmly addresses the climate emergency through the provision of 1,350 MW to the UK energy system and by directly removing oil and gas production emissions from the North Sea. The Project aligns with the established and emerging energy policy described in the Scottish Energy Strategy (Scottish Government, 2017) and the draft ESJTP (2023). The Project will directly contribute to the OWPS ambition for offshore wind and, as a floating offshore wind project, it will directly contribute to building the floating supply chain and enabling Scotland to take advantage of being the first-mover.

The Project makes a key contribution to Scottish energy and offshore wind policy.

5 Planning

5.1 UK Marine Policy Statement

The Marine Policy Statement (MPS) 2011 (HM Government, 2011) is a required action under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The MPS further elaborates on the need for an integrated approach to marine planning and sets out a number of objectives relating to the environment and socio-economic receptors. The MPS is adopted by all the UK governments and sets out the high-level objectives and marine planning framework, in addition to describing the principles for decision making. It also makes clear the need for evidence-based assessment of impacts.

Section 3.3. of the MPS focuses on energy production and infrastructure development. Here, the MPS highlights the positive wider environmental, societal and economic benefits of low carbon electricity development, and the potential impact of inward investment in offshore wind and other marine renewables. The MPS requires that marine plans to be developed should take this all into consideration.

5.2 National Marine Plan (2015)

The Scottish Government's National Marine Plan (NMP) was adopted in 2015. The NMP provides an overarching framework for all activity in Scottish inshore (out to 12 NM) and offshore (12 to 200 NM) waters. Under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, the Scottish Ministers must adopt a National Marine Plan covering the inshore waters, whilst at the same time, under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 they must ensure that a marine plan is in place when the MPS is in effect.

The NMP was developed following a comprehensive assessment of the state of the seas. This assessment was published as Scotland's Marine Atlas (2011). The Atlas and NMP comply with the UK MPS (2011).

The NMP provides a strategy for sustainable economic growth of marine industries and the protection of the marine environment. It provides general policies that focus on achieving a "***sustainable economy, promoting good governance*** *and* ***using sound science responsibly*** *are essential to the creation and maintenance of a* ***strong, healthy and just society*** *capable of* ***living within environmental limits,"*** *(Scottish Government, 2015).*

The NMP then also sets out sectoral specific objectives and policies. These policies, though described in separate chapters, are not to be considered in isolation and should be read and used with the other sector and general policies in mind.

Chapter 11 of the NMP focuses on offshore wind and marine renewable energy. The renewable energy objectives are concerned with sustainable growth of the sector, economic benefits, contribution to decarbonisation and transitioning to low carbon energy sources, all of which the project will contribute to.

A list of the key relevant policies from Chapter 11 and the wider NMP are described in Section 5.2.1 alongside a description of how these have been considered by the Project.

5.2.1 Consideration of Scotland's National Marine Plan policies

The Project has considered the policies underpinning Scotland's National Marine Plan throughout the development process. Table 5-1 outlines the policies and how they relate to the Project or how they have been considered within the Applicant's approach to development.

Table 5-1 Scotland's National Marine Plan policies and their application by the Project

POLICY	DETAILS	PROJECT APPLICATION
Renewables 1	Proposals for commercial scale offshore wind and marine renewable energy development should be sited in the Plan Option areas identified through the Sectoral Marine Plan process	The Project location was identified and aligned with the Areas of Search described in the Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind for INTOG decarbonisation: Initial Plan Framework (SMP INTOG IPF). These areas of search were approved by Scottish Ministers and opened for leasing by Crown Estate Scotland.
Renewables 4	Applications for marine licences and consents relating to offshore wind and marine renewable energy projects should be made in accordance with the Marine Licensing Manual and Marine Scotland's Licensing Policy Guidance.	The Applicant has followed available guidance and the updated licensing manual for renewable applications.
Renewables 5	Marine planners and decision makers must ensure that renewable energy projects demonstrate compliance with Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats Regulations Appraisal legislative requirements.	The Applicant has provided a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment and Report to Inform an Appropriate Assessment (RIAA) under the habitat regulations. In addition, the Applicant has also submitted an MPA Assessment.
Renewables 6	New and future planned grid connections should align with relevant sectoral and other marine spatial planning processes	The Applicant has been coordinating with National Energy System Operator (NESO) to manage grid connections timelines and locations. The Project has been incorporated into the Holistic Network Design process.
Renewables 7	Marine planners and decision makers should ensure infrastructure is fit for purpose now and in future. Consideration should be given to the potential for climate change impacts on coasts vulnerable to erosion.	The Project will make a sizable contribution to Scotland and the UK's offshore wind capacity and will provide green energy for 35 years. The Project will not impact coasts but will help to tackle climate change.
Renewables 8	Developers bringing forward proposals for new developments must actively engage at an early stage with the general public and interested stakeholders	The Applicant has carried out regular engagement activity with stakeholders and the public throughout the development of the project. See also Section 6.
Renewables 9	Marine planners and decision makers should support the development of joint research and monitoring programmes for offshore wind and marine renewables energy development.	As described in the EIA, the Applicant proposes fisheries and marine archaeology monitoring programmes. These will be proactively shared with the regulator and relevant stakeholders. Project data will be shared to the Marine Data Exchange

POLICY	DETAILS	PROJECT APPLICATION
		in accordance with the Crown Estate Scotland requirements.
Renewables 10	Good practice guidance for community benefit from offshore wind and renewable energy development should be followed by developers, where appropriate	A funded mechanism supporting local skills and training is expected to be included as a key element of the community benefits fund currently being developed for the Project. The fund seeks to ensure the local workforce is adequately skilled and trained.
General 1	Presumption in favour of sustainable development	The Project promotes sustainable development and has demonstrated no significant impact on receptors through the EIA. The Project will deliver renewable energy and remove carbon emissions from connected oil and gas operations.
General 2	Encourages sustainable development that produces economic benefit for the people of Scotland	The Project will be a critical factor in developing the floating offshore wind supply chain in Scotland and has outlined potential investment and a number of FTE over the lifetime of the Project (see Section 8.3)
General 3	Encourages sustainable development that provides social benefit for the people of Scotland	The social impact of the project is considered and assessed in EIAR Vol. 3, Chapter 19: Socio-economics, Tourism and Recreation.
General 4	Encourages development which considers co-existence with other activities	The Project location was selected to maximise the potential for co-existence and minimise impact on other sea users and the environment. The location of the Project is critical to being able to meet the INTOG requirements and connect to oil and gas infrastructure, while being located inside the East of Gannet and Montrose Field Nature Conservation MPA (EGMF ncMPA), where there will be no significant impacts to the designated features of the MPA, also means there is limited impact on commercial fisheries due to lower fishing activity. Additionally, potential MPA management measures mean that fishing may eventually be excluded from the MPA which means there is no cumulative displacement from the Project plus MPA measures.

POLICY	DETAILS	PROJECT APPLICATION
General 5	Decision makers should act in the best way to mitigate and adapt to climate change	The Project directly contributes to tackling climate change and will provide renewable energy to the UK grid whilst also removing carbon emissions from oil and gas production activity in the North Sea.
General 6	Protect or enhance heritage assets	The project has been designed to minimise all impacts to heritage assets as demonstrated in the EIAR and MPA Assessment.
General 7	Developments should consider landscape/seascape impacts	The Project location, specifically the distance from shore, means that there will be no visual impact.
General 8	Developments should be resilient to flooding and should not have an adverse impact on coastal processes	The Project will contribute to tackling climate change, which is a key cause of flooding events. Through coordination with NorthConnect, the Project's landfall and coastal impacts have already been fully assessed and consented.
General 9	Developments must; comply with legal requirements for protected areas, not result in significant impact on Priority Marine Features, and protect and enhance the health of the marine area.	The Applicant has considered potential impact on protected sites and Priority Marine features. This is evidenced by the Project design and embedded mitigation, in addition to the provision of a comprehensive EIAR and RIAA. The Project will also enhance the EGMF ncMPA by protecting the designated features from damaging fishing practices.
General 10	Opportunities to reduce or remove invasive non-native species should be taken.	The Project will adhere with the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, 2004 (BWM Convention). An Environmental Management Plan will be produced which will include an Invasive non-native Species Management Plan.
General 11	Address and reduce marine litter	In addition to managing the Project's own waste and compliance, the Applicant has also proposed debris clearance as a compensation measure for any impact to the EGMF ncMPA, if required.
General 12	Developments should not result in a deterioration of water quality	The Project has demonstrated through the EIAR that there will be no significant effects on water quality. **EIAR vol.3, Chapter 09: Marine**

POLICY	DETAILS	PROJECT APPLICATION
		Water Quality and Sediment Quality discusses this further.
General 13	Developments should minimise the impact of noise, especially on sensitive species	Through the Project design, the Applicant has removed or reduced the potential for impact through noise. EIAR, Vol. 3, Chapter 11: Marine Mammal Ecology discusses this further.
General 18	Early and effective engagement with all interested stakeholders	Engagement has been a key component of Project development. Key stakeholders have been informed and had regular opportunities to discuss the Project since development began. Section 6 below and EIAR Vol. 2, Chapter 06: Stakeholder Engagement discusses this in more detail.
General 19	Decision making in the marine environment should be based on sound scientific and socio-economic evidence	The Applicant has considered the most recent and best available data and evidence in the preparation of the EIAR. The Applicant has also commissioned bespoke surveys to collect new data to support the application.
General 20	Adaptive management practices should be used to take account of new data and evidence	Where necessary, the Project has proposed monitoring and adaptive management as part of the EIAR. In addition, the Applicant has provided details of an adaptive management plan that can be implemented if compensation measures are determined to be required.
General 21	Cumulative impacts should be addressed in decision making	A cumulative assessment has been provided as part of the EIAR with the list of cumulative activities agreed with Scottish Ministers and NatureScot.
Fisheries 1	Taking account of policy and legislation, fishing opportunities should be safeguarded, vulnerable stocks protected, seabed protection enacted.	The site selection for the Project specifically considered overlap with commercial fisheries and sought a location that would minimise impact and where the effects of displacement would be reduced. The Project location, inside an ncMPA, means that the spatial squeeze on fishers is reduced as the loss of the ncMPA as a fishing ground will not be added to by the loss of another location due to the Project.
Fisheries 2	The cultural and economic importance of fisheries should be	The Project has considered the socio-economic importance of the fishing

POLICY	DETAILS	PROJECT APPLICATION
	taken into account. This includes consideration of impacts on sustainable stocks, spawning habitats and displacement of fish and fisheries.	sector throughout the Project design and in detail in the EIAR. EIAR Vol. 3. Chapter 14: Commercial Fisheries and EIAR Vol. 3, Chapter 19: Socio-economics, Tourism and Recreation both discuss the impacts to fishers.
Fisheries 3	A Fisheries Management and Mitigation Strategy should be produced when fishing activity cannot be safeguarded	An Outline Fisheries Management and Mitigation Strategy is submitted with the application and the final version will be developed in collaboration with the commercial fishing sector.
Wild Fish 1	Impact on diadromous fish species should be taken into account	A detailed assessment of potential impact on diadromous fish has been included in the EIAR.
Oil & Gas 1	The Scottish Government will seek to maximise and prolong oil and gas exploration and production, whilst ensuring environmental risks are mitigated	The Project will actively deliver on this policy as a Targeted Oil and Gas decarbonisation project. Oil and gas installations connected to the Project will be able to continue production without any further carbon emissions, thereby lowering the environmental harm of the production.
Rec & Tourism 2	Development should consider the impact on recreational and tourist activities, including access to water	The Project location limits impacts on tourism and recreation activities.
Rec & Tourism 4	Consideration should be given to the facility requirements of marine recreation and tourism activities, including support for participation and development in sport.	The Project location limits impacts on tourism and recreation activities
Rec & Tourism 6	Codes of practice for invasive non-native species should be complied with.	The Project will adhere with the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, 2004 (BWM Convention). An Environmental Management Plan will be produced which will include and Invasive non-native Species Management Plan.
Transport 1	Navigational safety must be protected and adherence to the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea is required.	The Project has carried out a navigational risk assessment and provided a detailed assessment of potential impacts in EIAR Vol. 3, Chapter 15: Shipping and navigation.
Transport 3	Ferry and transport to islands and remote mainland areas should be safeguarded.	Due to the location, the Project will not impact any transport routes between the islands or remote mainland. Project has carried out a navigational

POLICY	DETAILS	PROJECT APPLICATION
		risk assessment and provided a detailed assessment of potential impacts in EIAR Vol. 3, Chapter 15: Shipping and navigation.
Transport 4	Maintenance, repair and sustainable development of port and harbour facilities should be supported.	The Project encourages this policy and has provided a detailed socio-economic assessment to aid understanding of impacts at ports.
Transport 6	Developments should avoid displacing shipping activity.	The Project has carried out a navigational risk assessment and provided a detailed assessment of potential impacts in EIAR Vol. 3, Chapter 15: Shipping and navigation.
Cables 1	Early engagement is required between cable owners and decision makers. A joined-up approach to development in order to minimise impact is encouraged	The Applicant has been coordinating with National Energy System Operator (NESO) to manage grid connections timelines and locations. The Project has been incorporated into the Holistic Network Design process.
Cables 2	Cable developments should consider routing options to minimise impact. Cables should be buried or protected where burial is not possible. The need to reinstate the seabed and undertake post-lay surveys should be considered. Methods to minimise impact should be employed.	A full assessment of cable burial and protection options has been included in the EIAR and MPA Assessment. Following best practice, cables will be buried wherever possible and protected where this is not possible.
Cables 3	A risk-based approach to be applied when considering the removal of submarine cables.	A Decommissioning Programme will be developed and agreed with Scottish Ministers prior to construction. This is required under Section 105 of the Energy Act 2004 (as amended).
Cables 4	Impact on flooding and coastal protection should be taken into account when selecting land-fall locations.	The Project is coordinating with NorthConnect for the cable landfall. The NorthConnect project has already been consented.
Defence 1	To maintain operational effectiveness in Scottish waters used by the armed services.	The Applicant has engaged with defence organisations and will continue to do so in preparation of a Lighting and Marking Plan.

5.3 Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (2020)

The Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (SMP OWE) was adopted by the Scottish Government in 2020 and identified 15 Plan Options for future offshore wind development. As per the NMP Renewables 1 Policy, these Plan Options became the preferred location for offshore wind development. The SMP OWE seeks to contribute to the Scottish and UK climate change policies and targets through the provision of a spatial strategy that will inform future seabed leasing for offshore wind.

The SMP OWE seeks to:

- Minimise the potential adverse effects on other marine users, economic sectors and the environment resulting from further commercial-scale offshore wind development; and
- Maximise opportunities for economic development, investment and employment in Scotland, by identifying new opportunities for commercial scale offshore wind development, including deeper water wind technologies.

The SMP OWE, is compliant with the NMP and the MPS. Through detailed Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitat Regulations Appraisal and a social and economic impact assessment, the SMP OWE sets out that 10 GW of new offshore wind projects is sustainable. This is aligned with the OWPS, published at the same time, which indicated an upper ambition of 11 GW to be in operation by 2030.

The SMP OWE outlined several plan-level mitigation measures that affect several of the Plan Options. In particular, two measures are focused on addressing impact to seabirds. Five Plan Options in the east and northeast regions were identified as having "high levels of ornithological constraint" and development should not proceed until there is sufficient scientific evidence to conclude that the risk has been reduced to an acceptable level. Additionally, two Plan Options in the east region are subject to uncertainty and regional surveys and assessment is required to identify the potential impact.

The Project is located beyond the extent of these mitigation measures.

The SMP OWE acknowledges that the offshore wind sector is subject to change and the plan must be kept up to date via an iterative Plan Review (IPR) process that can consider new data or evidence.

The ScotWind leasing process, managed by Crown Estate Scotland resulted in 20 projects, with a notional capacity of 30 GW, being identified within the SMP OWE Plan Options. As the number and capacity of the project far exceeds the SMP OWE assessment and conclusions regarding impact, the IPR process was initiated shortly after the ScotWind results. The follow up sectoral marine plan, INTOG, was also consolidated into the IPR process to allow a comprehensive assessment of Scottish offshore wind.

5.4 Sectoral Marine Plan for INTOG

The SMP INTOG follows the SMP OWE that aims to identify and assess further Plan Options for future offshore wind development. Unlike the SMP OWE, the SMP INTOG is concerned with allowing smaller innovative and novel projects access to seabed to help build the offshore wind supply chain and enable delivery of the larger ScotWind projects. Additionally, it seeks to facilitate larger projects focused on a new offshore wind market. These larger projects must be focused on the decarbonisation of oil and gas installations through the use of offshore wind. This possible market was indicated in the final SMP OWE and was addressed by the INTOG programme.

The SMP INTOG Planning Specification and Context Report (Scottish Government, 2021) describes the ambitions of the plan as one which will:

- Contribute to the attainment of net zero targets through targeted decarbonisation of offshore oil and gas assets from offshore wind;
- Minimise the potential adverse effects on other marine users, economic sectors and the environment resulting from further offshore wind development; and
- Maximises opportunities for economic development, investment and employment in Scotland, by identifying new opportunities for offshore wind development.

The focus on oil and gas decarbonisation is demonstrated to drive the site selection process and results in a new set of Areas of Search being identified. These areas were modified and confirmed by Scottish Ministers, following consultation, in the SMP INTOG IPF (2022).

The SMP INTOG IPF set specific requirements for projects seeking to progress under this planning framework. These specifications, such as maximum project capacity, area and total projects were carried through to the INTOG leasing process managed by Crown Estate Scotland.

The leasing process resulted in 13 new projects being offered seabed exclusivity agreements with full lease awards subject to the planning process.

The Project is the largest of these INTOG projects and is located within the Ea Area of Search, agreed by the Scottish Ministers.

The IPR process is still currently underway but is expected to result in a new Sectoral Marine Plan that assesses all projects identified through ScotWind and INTOG leasing.

5.5 National Planning Framewok 4

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) was adopted in 2023 (Scottish government, 2023b) and replaces previous planning frameworks for Scotland. The NPF4 sets out planning policies, spatial principles, regional priorities and national developments. Though not specifically addressing marine activity, the NPF4 does provide clarity on aspects of offshore projects and addressed areas where there are planning overlaps.

Renewable energy is addressed in NPF4 and connected to its policies on the just transition. Additionally, several NPF4 policies directly relate to the Project and renewables in general. These are summarised in Table 5-2.

Table 5-2 Summary of National Planning Framework Policies

POLICY	DETAILS	PROJECT APPLICATION
Policy 1	When considering all development proposals significant weight will be given to the global climate and nature crises	The Project directly contributes to Scotland's climate change mitigation programme and decarbonisation targets.
Policy 2	a) Development proposals will be sited and designed to minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions as far as possible. b) Development proposals will be sited and designed to adapt to current and future risks from climate change. c) Development proposals to retrofit measures to existing developments	The Project will directly contribute to reduction of carbon emissions and will, through delivery of electricity to oil and gas installations, align with section c).

POLICY	DETAILS	PROJECT APPLICATION
	that reduce emissions or support adaptation to climate change will be supported.	
Policy 11	Development proposals for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies will be supported. This Policy also states that these projects will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact.	The Project complies with this policy and will maximise economic impact through contribution to the floating offshore wind supply chain in Scotland and the UK.

In Annex B – National Developments Statements of Need, the NPF4 is also focused on renewable energy and emphasises that these projects are critical for Scotland. Although the National Developments identified in NPF4 are onshore projects, the principles and stated requirement to prioritise projects such as "Energy Innovation and Development on the Islands," and "Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure" align with the Project objectives. Based on the above, the Project would be supported by NPF4.

5.6 Summary

The Project aligns closely to the UK and Scottish marine planning frameworks. The Project will address the urgent need for renewable energy, will help tackle climate change, and will maximise the socio-economic opportunity of floating offshore wind for the people of Scotland. The Project demonstrates alignment with Scotland's National Marine Plan and considered the relevant general and sectoral policies during development and in the application process. Additionally, the Project fully aligns with the Sectoral Marine Planning process for INTOG and, using lessons learned from the earlier SMP OWE, has identified a project location that reduces impacts on key seabirds – a significant concern for the SMP OWE.

6 Stakeholder Engagement

6.1 Requirements for consultation

Under the Marine Licensing (Pre-Application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 there are a number of requirements for stakeholder engagement and consultation with relevant statutory nature conservation bodies and stakeholders:

- The Applicant must give notification that an application for a marine licence is to be submitted to the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish National Heritage (SNH) (now NatureScot), and any delegate for a marine region (where the activity is wholly or partly to be carried out);
- The Applicant must hold at least one PAC event, where the above stakeholders and members of the public may provide comments;
- The Applicant must publish in a local newspaper containing:
    - A description, including the location, of the licensable marine activity for which the marine licence is to be sought;
    - Details as to where further information may be obtained;
    - The date and place of the PAC event;
    - A statement explaining how persons wishing to provide comments to the prospective applicants may do so and the date by which this must be done;
    - A statement that comments made to the prospective applicant are not representations to the Scottish Ministers and that there will be an opportunity for representations to be made to the Scottish Ministers;
- A PAC event must be held no earlier than six weeks after the later of:
    - The date on which the notification of the event is given;
    - The date of notification that an application for a marine licence is to be submitted; and

A Pre-Application Report must be in the form prescribed as in Schedule 1 of the PAC Regulations.

For activity in the Scottish Inshore Region, the Marine Licensing (Pre-Application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 lists ‘prescribed classes’ of activity to which the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Regulations apply. There is no provision for PAC in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, so these requirements do not apply in respect of relevant applications in the Scottish Offshore Region (Scottish Government 2018).

Applicants for ‘prescribed classes’ of activity must notify the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), Northern Lighthouse Board (NLB), NatureScot, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and any delegate for a relevant marine region. Applicants must hold at least one pre-application event at which the bodies notified, and members of the public may provide comments to the Applicant. Applicants must publish in a local newspaper a notice containing a description of the activity, detail where further information may be obtained, the date and place of the event, how and when comments should be submitted to the Applicant. A PAC report, as per the schedule to the PAC Regulations should be submitted alongside the MLAs. PAC events may not be needed if a suitable event has been held in the year before the application is made (Scottish Government 2018).

6.2 Engagement to Date

Stakeholders were mapped by the Applicant prior to Crown Estate Scotland (CES) awarding an Exclusivity Agreement to develop the Project.

The Applicant met with Aberdeenshire Council on the 1st of June and 2nd September 2021. Discussions included a Project update and working collaboratively with NorthConnect regarding the nearshore and onshore elements of the Project (outwith the scope of this Application).

The Applicant held meetings, workshops and requested pre-application advice from MD-LOT between 2023 and 2024, as described in Table 6-1.

Table 6-1 Pre-application consultation with MD-LOT

TOPIC	DATE(S)	COMMUNICATION TYPE	DETAIL
Quarterly Meetings	February 2024 March 2024 June 2024 September 2024	Online Meetings	Quarterly updates on: • Project progress and timescales; • Consent strategy; and • Surveys and EIA methodology.
Scoping Workshop	February 2024	Online Meeting	• Provided a Project update and detailed the proposed approach to scoping; • Subject matter experts summarised key receptors and potential impact pathways; • Overview of proposed assessment methodologies to be used during the EIA was presented; • Consultees offered feedback throughout the workshop; and • Follow-up sessions were arranged to discuss specific topics in more detail where relevant.
Scoping Report	April 2024	Email	Submitted 2024 Scoping Report to MD-LOT, superseding the 2023 Scoping Report.
Post-Scoping Consultation Meeting 1	October 2024	Online Meeting	• Provided a Project update; • Discussion on the consenting strategy for the Project, specifically in relation to Onward Development; • Provided the methodology for Cumulative Effects Assessments; and • Provided the approach for Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Assessment (including discussion on data sources).

TOPIC	DATE(S)	COMMUNICATION TYPE	DETAIL
Post-Scoping Consultation Meeting 2	October 2024	Online Meeting	• Provided information on the methodology utilised for the Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA); • Provided information on the methodology for the MPA Assessment; and • Discussed the development of a without prejudice Derogation Case.
Post-Scoping Consultation Meeting 3	November 2024	Online Meeting	• TOG Electrification Coordination & Consents Discussion: A meeting coordinated by the Applicant to bring together members of NSTA, MD-LOT, The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), and NatureScot to discuss the process of coordinating development and consents of the two key, separate industries of oil and gas and offshore wind.

Additionally, the Applicant has undertaken consultation with key statutory and non-statutory consultees throughout the early development planning and pre-application phases of the project. This has included any stakeholder which may have an interest in the Project, be they individuals, organisations or communities.

As a part of the pre-application consultation (PAC) process, the Applicant held a PAC event to invite the public, community stakeholders and interested organisations to engage directly with the Project. The PAC event was held across two sessions at Peterhead Football Club on Tuesday 1st October 2024, from 12-3pm and 4-7pm, in accordance with the Marine Licensing (Pre-Application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013. The event was attended by 23 individuals, including representatives of the SFF and the SWFPA, individuals and representatives of businesses from Peterhead's fishing industry, a representative of another offshore wind developer, and local residents from nearby towns. A PAC Report has been prepared and submitted alongside the EIAR**.**

As well as hosting a PAC event, which was open to the public and advertised in newspapers, the Applicant has collaborated with Peterhead's Men's Shed to create an interactive INTOG display model, with the aim to engage young people with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). The Applicant is also a member of The Peterhead Developers Forum and remains an active participant in discussions regarding development of offshore wind in the Peterhead area.

7 Policy Assessment

7.1 Overview

This section demonstrates that the Project aligns with the key policy and planning frameworks described above. The development principles, conclusions of the EIAR and relevant mitigations are described.

7.2 Development principles

The Applicant recognises that the climate and biodiversity crises are closely intertwined and, at this early stage of development, has used the EIA process as far as possible to address them. As detailed in **EIAR Vol. 2, Chapter 7: EIA Methodology**, the EIA process informs the Project design by considering environmental baseline information and key receptor sensitivities. For this project, key receptors identified within the Array Area include protected benthic habitats and associated species, as detailed in **EIAR Vol. 3, Chapter 10: Benthic Ecology**. In this regard, the Project has considered biodiversity principally though embedded mitigation by minimising seabed footprint of Project infrastructure, for example, by removing the catenary design from the design envelope to reduce maximum seabed disturbance from the mooring line ground chain, as the catenary design has a larger quantity of ground chain on the seabed compared to other mooring designs, and by restricting rock placement within the Array Area to pipeline crossings and the base of the OSCPs only. The chapter, **EIAR Vol. 2, Chapter 4: Site Selection,** provides more detail on Project design evolution.

Options for incorporating Nature Inclusive Design (NID), as highlighted in the Crown Estate Scotland (2024) Report, indicate that there are limited NID options available for floating wind projects like this one. This is particularly true for the deep offshore circalittoral mud habitat within the Array Area. Consequently, the Applicant has not proposed any NID measures as part of this application. The Project is committed to continuing its employment of environmentally sensitive design as it moves towards detailed design post-consent. This commitment includes ensuring effects to the seabed are minimised wherever possible, including routing and siting around designated features, as informed by further planned ground investigation works. Additionally, the design selection process will prioritise components which limit both temporary and long-term effects to sensitive habitats and features wherever feasible.

7.3 Embedded mitigation and monitoring

The Project has considered and made use of embedded mitigation measures to reduce or remove negative effects. These measures have been developed in alignment with planning and policy frameworks. Embedded mitigation measures are described in **EIAR Vol. 3, Chapter 23: Summary of Mitigation and Monitoring**. These measures can be considered alongside the NMP policies discussed above at Section 5.2.1. They primarily relate to the general and Renewable policies but are also relevant to the cables, transport and navigation policies.

In addition to the mitigation measures embedded into the Project's design and planned activities (detailed in **EIAR vol. 3, Chapter 23 Summary of Mitigation and Monitoring**, monitoring has been proposed to support the continued characterisation of commercial fisheries receptors, as their activities vary year to year. Monitoring will be undertaken by the Project to assess ongoing effects to demersal trawlers in line with the Monitoring Guidance (awaiting publication).

7.4 Residual effects for each receptor

There were no residual effects from the Project alone for any of the receptors assessed in the EIAR. Table 7-1 provides a summary of the conclusions reached in the impact assessments for each of the relevant receptors.

Table 7-1 Summary of residual effects from the Project EIAR

EIAR TECHNICAL CHAPTER	SUMMARY OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT		
	CONSTRUCTION STAGE (INCLUDING PRE-CONSTRUCTION)	OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE STAGE	DECOMMISSIONING STAGE
Marine Geology, Oceanography and Coastal Processes	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Marine Water and Sediment Quality	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Benthic Ecology	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Marine Mammal Ecology	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Ornithology	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified Moderate significant effects identified in the Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA)	No significant effects identified
Fish and Shellfish Ecology	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Commercial Fisheries	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Shipping and Navigation	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Marine Archaeology	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Marine Infrastructure and Other Users	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Military and Civil Aviation	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Socio-economics, Tourism and Recreation	Moderate beneficial significant effect identified for 'Increased Gross Value Added'	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified

EIAR TECHNICAL CHAPTER	SUMMARY OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT		
	CONSTRUCTION STAGE (INCLUDING PRE-CONSTRUCTION)	OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE STAGE	DECOMMISSIONING STAGE
Carbon and Greenhouse Gases	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Major Accidents and Disasters	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified
Statement of Combined Effects	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified	No significant effects identified

7.5 Mitigation measures for residual effects

Table 7-2 Secondary mitigation measures for residual effects from the Project

CODE	MITIGATION MEASURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	SECURED BY
MM-056	Communication and liaison procedures with Peterhead Port Authority	Secondary	To mitigate the impact of reduced access to local ports and harbours during construction, the additional mitigation of communication and liaison procedures with Peterhead Port Authority has been identified as a necessary mitigation.	Secured via the Supply Chain Development Statement (SCDS)
MM-057	Conduct comprehensive community consultation and engagement	Secondary	Once further engineering and supply chain analysis has been conducted, comprehensive community consultation and engagement will be undertaken to ensure that the work of the CLO and the community benefit fund is focused on areas with the greatest need. Specific attention should be given to areas with the most deprived data zones. This additional analysis will be documented within the SCDS.	Secured via the SCDS
MM-058	Adherence to the Fishing Liaison with Offshore Wind and Wet Renewables Group (FLOWW) Guidance (FLOWW, 2015) and development of cooperation agreements	Secondary	The Applicant will continue engagement with the fishing industry and stakeholders directly impacted by construction works and will adhere to the FLOWW (2015) guidance by developing evidence-based cooperation agreements for vessels required to relocate their static gear during the construction, maintenance and decommissioning periods.	Details will be included in the FMMS and will be in adherence with the FLOWW (2015) guidance. Secured through the Section 36 Consent and/or Marine Licence conditions. An outline FMMS is provided as part of the Application EIAR Vol. 4 Appendix 34: Outline FMMS.

7.6 Policy assessment conclusions

Through careful consideration of renewable energy policy at the international and national level, in addition to detailed assessment of Scotland's national and offshore wind marine planning frameworks, the Project will deliver urgent renewable energy whilst minimising environmental and socio-economic impact. The Project will also contribute to the wider socio-economic policy targets to maximises the floating offshore wind supply chain.

The Project application complies with all of the required legislation.

8 Benefits of the Project

8.1 Introduction

In consideration of the legislation, policy and planning frameworks described above, this section describes the clear benefit of the Project and the urgent need for the Project to proceed as soon as possible.

The climate emergency has shaped the Scottish and UK policy landscape, with an imperative need to accelerate the development of offshore wind. In addition, the opportunity to capitalise on the offshore wind investment and supply chain is a key socio-economic objective at the local, regional and national level.

The Project meets these objectives and is fully aligned with the policy set out above.

8.2 Climate change

The climate emergency has been well documented. The Scottish, UK and international governments have responded with policy and legislation aimed at addressing climate change. In the UK and Scotland, a key method to address climate change is the upscaling and acceleration of offshore wind deployment, which will provide renewable energy to the UK grid. The relevant policies in Scotland and the UK have been described in detail above.

The Project will provide 1,350 MW renewable energy to the UK system. This capacity includes the direct electrification of oil and gas installations in the central North Sea, removing significant levels of carbon emissions from oil and gas production activities. The remaining capacity will be provided back to the UK grid.

The UK and Scottish Governments are legally committed to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and 2045, respectively. Interim targets for 2030 also include a sizeable increase in the amount of operational offshore wind projects available. As recent assessments by the UK government and the CCC have established that the 2030 and 2050 emission reduction targets are off-track, the Project's contribution is critical. The Project is estimated to produce 235,542,384 MWh over the lifetime of the project and will avoid emitting up to 7.4 $MtCO_2e$ as those will be displaced from the grid. Emissions and avoided emissions are discussed in **EIAR Vol. 3, Chapter 20: Carbon and Greenhouse Gases**.

As part of the Scottish Government's INTOG programme, the Project is also well aligned to Scottish policy to support existing oil and gas production while seeking to deliver a just transition away from fossil fuels.

8.3 Energy infrastructure and socio-economics

The emission reductions targets for 2045 and 2050 are off-track and rapid deployment of offshore wind is required to mitigate the effects of climate change. The Scottish Government has been clear in recent policy development, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, that the opportunity to capitalise on renewable energy investment and supply chain should not be missed.

In addition to helping to mitigate climate change, the Project will be one of the first large-scale floating offshore wind farms in the world. This allows Scotland and the UK to maximise the first-mover advantage for floating offshore wind, in line with the Scottish OWPS and the more recent draft ESJTP.

As part of the INTOG leasing process, a full Supply Chain Development Statement will be produced which will set out the details of the level of committed spend in Scotland, the UK and internationally.

In **EIAR Vol. 3, Chapter 19: Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism** an assessment of development scenarios are presented.

For the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire spatial area, it is estimated that the expenditure could generate employment of up to 4,021 FTEs over the pre-construction and construction phase. At the Scotland level, the estimated employment generated by the expenditure could be up to 20,037 FTEs over the pre-construction and construction phase. In the peak employment year of construction up to 1,588 FTEs could be generated in the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire area and up to 4,941 FTEs generated in Scotland.

For the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire spatial area, it is estimated that the expenditure could create a GVA of up to £378 million total GVA generated during the pre-construction and construction phase. At the Scotland level, the estimated GVA generated by the pre-construction and construction phase could be £1,950 million.

Total GVA generated during the peak expenditure year of the construction phase could be up to £115 million for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire and up to £462 million for Scotland.

Further, it is estimated that over the operation and maintenance phase, the Project could create employment of up to 725 FTEs for the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire spatial area and up to 999 FTEs for Scotland.

For the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire spatial area, it is estimated that the total annual GVA generated over the operation and maintenance phase of the Project could generate up to £55 million. At the Scotland level, the estimated total annual GVA generated over the operation and maintenance phase could be up to £79 million.

These are considerable benefits for the local and wider Scottish economy and workforce. These opportunities will support the floating offshore wind sector and will help develop a new and emerging supply chain that can then continue to support the large number of floating projects that will follow the Project, in Scotland and the UK.

8.4 Security of supply

Reducing the Scottish and UK's reliance on foreign energy sources is a growing concern for both nations. Following the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the UK has emphasised the need to produce and maintain a local energy supply. This helps strengthen the UK energy position and can help protect the consumer from rising costs triggered by external events.

The British Energy Security Strategy (2022) made this concern clear in stating that "the growing proportion of our electricity coming from renewables reduces our exposure to volatile fossil fuel markets." In addition, the ability to move away from oil and gas depends "critically on how quickly we can roll out new renewables."

The Project will contribute to this objective while also helping to decarbonise the oil and gas sector as it progresses its transition to phase out fossil fuels.

9 Conclusion

9.1 Overview

This section describes the overall conclusions of the Project alignment with the relevant legislation, planning and policy that the Applicant and decision-makers must consider when designing and determining the applications for section 36 consent and marine licences.

9.2 Legislation, policy and planning.

The Planning Statement and Consideration of Policies has provided evidence that the Applicant has considered and developed the Project in accordance with the statutory legislation and the relevant energy and climate change policies.

The urgent need for the Project, in the face of the climate and biodiversity crises, has been clearly demonstrated. Offshore wind, and floating offshore wind in particular, are of critical importance to the UK and Scottish Government's policy framework and ambition to the increase local energy production, provide security of energy supply and develop an offshore wind supply chain. Floating offshore wind is a significant opportunity for the Scottish supply chain and has been emphasised in more recent policy statements and the draft ESJTP.

The Project will contribute 1,350 MW to the UK energy system and, in alignment with the Scottish Government's INTOG programme, will directly contribute to the removal of carbon emissions from oil and gas installations in the Central North Sea.

In accordance with the relevant legislation, described above, the Applicant has provided a detailed EIAR which has comprehensively assessed the potential impacts of the Project on the environment and socio-economic receptors. The EIAR demonstrates no significant effects on any receptors.

In accordance with the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, the Scottish Ministers must be satisfied that the Project will not affect (other than insignificantly) the protected feature in a ncMPA. Accordingly, the Applicant has provided a detailed **MPA Assessment** to support this decision. The MPA Assessment concludes that there are no significant impacts on any protected features of an ncMPA.

Through project design, informed by Scottish and UK marine planning frameworks, specifically the NMP (2015), the Project has demonstrated no significant effects for any environmental or socio-economic receptor.

The Project will be a critical component of the Scottish and UK ability to meet the legally binding net zero commitments. Through contribution to the decarbonisation of the energy system and direct removal of carbon emissions from connected oil and gas infrastructure, the Project will provide a dual benefit to the environment and people of Scotland.

The Project's contribution to building a floating offshore wind supply chain in Scotland and the wider UK cannot be overstated. Scotland has a unique chance to capitalise on the first-mover advantage with floating offshore wind. The Project provides a key opportunity to make the most of that advantage and enables the supply chain to build and prepare for the floating offshore wind projects that will follow.

The Scottish Ministers must balance the potential negative effects of the Project against the public benefit the Project will create. It is clear, given the lack of any significant negative effects, that the public benefit clearly outweighs any adverse impacts.

For these reasons, it is considered that the Section 36 and marine licences should be granted.

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