Chapter 4 Approach to EIA

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
ECU	Energy Consents Unit
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GIS	Geographical Information System
GLVA3	Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment third edition
km	Kilometres
m	Metres
NPF4	National Planning Framework 4
NTS	Non-Technical Summary
UK	United Kingdom

4. Approach to EIA

4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. This chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report sets out the approach taken to produce the EIA for the Proposed Development.

4.1.2. The EIA process aims to assist Scottish Ministers in their determination of the application by identifying the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the environment. This assessment has been carried out in consultation with statutory consultees, interested parties and the general public.

4.1.3. The structure of the EIA Report follows the requirements of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (the 'EIA Regulations') and relevant good practice guidance. The EIA Report comprises a Non-Technical Summary (NTS), the main EIA Report text, accompanying figures and technical appendices.

4.1.4. This chapter is structured as follows:

- overview of the relevant legislation, policy and guidance;
- an outline of the EIA process utilised;
- the scope of the assessment completed;
- details of the assessment of potential effects;
- the consultation undertaken; and
- the assumptions, likely limitations and any uncertainty.

4.1.5. This chapter is supported by the following appendices:

- **Appendix 4.1** – Culachy Wind Farm EIA Scoping Report
- **Appendix 4.2** – EIA Scoping Opinion
- **Appendix 4.3** – EIA Gatecheck Report
- **Appendix 4.4** – Further Consultation

4.2. Legislation, Policy and Guidelines

4.2.1. A number of legislative and best practice documents have informed the preparation of the EIA Report.

4.2.2. The European Commission Directive 2011/92/EU, amended in 2014 by Directive 2014/52/EU, requires that certain projects, both public and private, must be assessed with regards to their impacts on the environment. This is currently implemented in respect of Section 36 consents by the EIA Regulations.

4.2.3. The content, process and structure of the EIA Report follow the criteria listed within the EIA Regulations.

4.2.4. The Proposed Development is considered to fall within Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations, by nature of it being classed as a generating station which requires consent under Section 36 of the Electricity Act. The criteria for considering whether a Schedule 2 development requires the preparation of an EIA is set out in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations. The Applicant has voluntarily accepted that an EIA is required to be undertaken. The information provided within this EIA Report has been prepared in accordance with the Directive and the EIA Regulations.

4.2.5. Paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act requires the Scottish Ministers when considering applications under Section 36 to have regard to the matters mentioned in 3(1)(a) (i.e. the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or

physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest.) The information required to enable the Scottish Ministers to have regard to such matters is included in the EIA Report.

4.2.6. In addition to the above, the following planning policy and best practice guidance has been taken into account in undertaking the preparation of this EIA Report:

- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (Scottish Government, 2023);
- Planning Advice Note 1/2013: Environmental Impact Assessment (Scottish Government, 2013);
- Planning Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment regulations (Scottish Government, 2017);
- Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment, Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA, 2006);
- Good Practice During Wind Farm Construction 4th Edition (Scottish Government et al., 2019);
- Assessing the Cumulative Impact of Onshore Wind Energy Developments (NatureScot, 2021);
- Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape Version 3a (SNH, 2017); and
- Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook Version 5 (SNH, 2018).

4.2.7. Additional topic-specific legislation, policy and guidance documents are noted within the technical assessment chapters of this EIA Report **(Chapters 6 to 14).**

4.3. Legal Framework for the preparation of the EIA Report

Overall EIA Report Preparation Process

4.3.1. The EIA Report preparation process has been approached as an iterative process throughout the wind farm design stage, rather than a single assessment performed once the design is finalised. When used as an iterative process, the findings can be incorporated within the design evolution of the proposal to provide an optimum design with regard to the environment and the Applicant's requirements.

4.3.2. The description of likely significant effects of the development on the environment are presented in this EIA Report, which has been prepared in accordance with the EIA Regulations.

4.3.3. The broad approach which has been followed is presented in this chapter and an overview of the methodology adopted for each technical study is provided within the respective technical chapters (**Chapters 6 to 14**).

Screening and Scoping

4.3.4. Screening is the process by which it is determined whether or not an EIA should be conducted for a proposed development. As set out above, the Proposed Development falls within Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations. Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations sets out criteria that should be considered in determining whether a Schedule 2 development is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence require a formal EIA.

4.3.5. The Applicant recognised that the Proposed Development would have the potential to have significant environmental effects, and therefore, an EIA would be required. Therefore, rather than undertaking a formal EIA screening process, the Applicant voluntarily elected to undertake an EIA.

4.3.6. The EIA scoping process is undertaken to identify the scope and level of detail of information to be provided in the EIA Report, and an EIA Scoping Opinion may be obtained from the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) on behalf of the Scottish Ministers.

4.3.7. An EIA Scoping Opinion was requested from the ECU in February 2022 through the submission of an EIA Scoping Report (refer to **Appendix 4.1**). The EIA Scoping Report contained details of the site baseline and the Proposed Development. It also proposed which environmental impacts would be assessed in the EIA, and the assessment methodologies that would be used.

4.3.8. The ECU consulted with statutory and non-statutory consultees before providing an EIA Scoping Opinion in May 2022. This information has informed the preparation of the Proposed Development's EIA Report. This EIA Report is based on the Scoping Opinion received as included in **Appendix 4.2**.

4.3.9. Direct consultation has also been undertaken with consultees by FORL, to confirm and agree the approach and scope of technical surveys and assessments on a topic by topic basis. Details of relevant consultations are included in each technical chapter as appropriate.

4.3.10. A summary of how the Scoping responses received would be addressed in this EIA Report was provided to the ECU within an EIA Gatecheck Report in October 2022 (refer to **Appendix 4.3**).

4.4. The EIA Report Preparation Process

4.4.1. The preparation of the EIA Report requires the systematic process of compiling, assessing, presenting and mitigating all the likely significant environmental effects of a proposed development. The assessment that is included in the EIA Report is designed to inform the decision-making process by way of setting out the likely environmental profile of a project. Identification of potentially significant adverse environmental effects then leads to the design and incorporation of appropriate mitigation measures into both the design of the scheme and the way in which it is constructed.

4.4.2. The main steps in the assessment process that are included in the EIA Report for the Proposed Development have been:

- Baseline surveys (where appropriate) to provide information on the existing environmental character of the Proposed Development site and the surrounding area.
- Consideration of the possible interactions between the Proposed Development and the existing and predicted future site conditions. These interactions or effects are assessed using criteria based on accepted guidance and best practice.
- Using the outline design parameters for the Proposed Development, prediction of the environmental effects, including direct, indirect, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, beneficial and adverse effects.
- Using findings as an iterative process to incorporate within the design evolution of the proposal to provide an optimum design with regard to the environment and renewable energy generation.
- Identification of mitigation measures designed to avoid, reduce or offset adverse effects and enhance beneficial effects.
- Assessment of the significance of any residual effects after mitigation, in relation to the sensitivity of the feature impacted upon and the magnitude of the impact predicted, in line with the methodology identified below.
- Identification of any uncertainties inherent in the methods used, the predictions made, and the conclusions drawn during the course of the assessment process.
- Reporting of the results and describing with an assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development in this EIA Report.

Assessment of Effects

4.4.3. Throughout the assessment, a distinction has been made between the term 'impact' and 'effect'. The EIA Regulations refer to the requirement to report the significance of 'effects'. An impact has been defined as the physical change of the characteristics of the receiving

environment as a result of the Proposed Development (e.g. noise from turbines). The level of impact together with the sensitivity of the receiving environment are considered and a judgment as the overall level of effect is made. For the purposes of the EIA Report an effect is found either to be significant or not significant. These terms have been adopted throughout this EIA Report to present a consistent approach to the assessment and evaluation of effects and their significance.

4.4.4. The exception to this is the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which classifies the level of physical and perceptual change to the receiving environment as the "magnitude of change" in line with the recommendations of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment third edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute & IEMA, 2013). However, this terminology should be considered interchangeable with "magnitude of impact" and should be regarded as having the same meaning.

4.4.5. Within this EIA Report, the assessment of effects for each environmental topic takes into account the environmental impacts of the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development, the cumulative impacts with other wind farm developments; and how the environmental baseline is expected to evolve in the absence of the Proposed Development (the do-nothing scenario).

4.4.6. In order to determine whether or not the potential effects of the Proposed Development are likely to be ‘significant’ a number of criteria are used. These significance criteria vary between topics but generally include:

- international, national and local designations or standards;
- relationship with planning policy;
- sensitivity of the receiving environment;
- magnitude of impact;
- reversibility and duration of the effect; and
- inter-relationship between effects.

4.4.7. Effects that are considered to be significant are identified within the EIA Report. The significance of the resultant effect is informed by professional judgement as to the importance or sensitivity of the affected receptor(s) and the nature and magnitude of the predicted changes. For example, a high magnitude of impact on a low sensitivity receptor will have an effect of lesser significance than the same impact on a high sensitivity receptor. **Table 4.1** below is used as a guide to demonstrate the relationship between the sensitivity of the identified receptor and the anticipated magnitude of an impact. Professional judgement is, however, equally important in verifying the suitability of this guiding ‘formula’ to the assessment of the significance of each individual effect. Therefore, the table below will change between technical assessments (**Chapters 6 to 14**).

Table 4.1: Guide to the Inter-Relationship between Magnitude of Impact and Sensitivity of Receptor

		Sensitivity of Receptor / Receiving Environment to Change			
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Impact	High	Major	Moderate to Major	Minor to Moderate	Negligible
	Medium	Moderate to Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
	Low	Minor to Moderate	Minor	Negligible to Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

4.4.8. Using professional judgement and with reference to relevant guidance, the majority of the assessments within this EIA Report consider effects of moderate or greater significance to be significant in EIA Regulation terms, with those of moderate significance or less to be non-significant. If there are deviations from this these will be clearly stated within the individual technical chapters and assessments.

4.4.9. In its Scoping response to the ECU, The Highland Council (THC) requested that when measuring the positive and negative effects of the development, a four-point scale is used advising any effect to be either strong positive, positive, negative or strong negative. It is considered that the above matrix provides more detail than a four-point scale, and is therefore more informative to the reader and decision-makers. In reference to THC's preferred four-point scale, it can generally be taken those effects assessed as 'significant', i.e. typically those assessed as being of moderate or greater significance, are 'strong' positive or negative. Effects assessed as being 'non-significant', i.e. typically those having less than moderate significance, are simply positive or negative (i.e. not 'strong' positive or negative).

4.4.10. Summary tables are provided at the end of each technical chapter of the EIA Report and within **Chapters 15 and 16** that outline:

- the predicted effects associated with an environmental issue;
- the appropriate mitigation measures required to address these effects; and
- the subsequent overall residual effects.

4.4.11. Distinction has also been made between direct and indirect, short and long term, permanent and temporary effects. These are considered as relevant to findings of major/moderate/minor/negligible effects as part of the exercise of professional judgement.

Cumulative Effects

4.4.12. Part 5 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations sets out the matters that require to be incorporated within EIA Reports. The EIA Regulations state that EIA Reports should include an assessment of *"the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved development, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources".*

4.4.13. Cumulative effects are those which result from incremental changes caused by past, present or reasonably foreseeable future actions resulting from the introduction of the Proposed Development. These cumulative effects cover the combined effect of individual impacts from the Proposed Development and combined impacts of several developments, as noted within the guidance document "Assessing the Cumulative Impact of Onshore Wind Energy Developments" (NatureScot, 2021). Developments considered in addition to the Proposed Development are existing and other proposals, covering all major developments, including other wind farms.

4.4.14. Within this EIA Report, cumulative effects for each technical discipline are covered as required on a chapter by chapter basis with a summary of overall effects included in the residual effects in **Chapter 16**.

4.4.15. The cumulative wind farm developments considered are shown within **Figure 6.20.**

4.5. Scope of the EIA Report

Technical Scope

4.5.1. The technical scope of the EIA Report covers all the impacts mentioned in **Table 4.2** below, with the following exceptions relating to technical topics where these have been scoped out of the EIA Report. The EIA Report addresses [list all topics included]. The scope of the information included in the EIA Report is detailed in **Table 4.2**. The following topics have been scoped out of the EIA:

Forestry

4.5.2. There are scattered areas of Ancient Woodland within the site and no other woodland or commercial forestry. No felling is proposed as part of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development utilises infrastructure built for the construction of the Beauly-Denny Overhead Line (BDOHL) to minimise potential impacts on existing woodland. The impact of new infrastructure is negligible, considering 20 m operational disturbance corridors, with the potential to impact of1.53 ha of woodland or land with the potential to facilitate native woodland expansion. An area of 3.88 ha of woodland creation is proposed, exceeding compensatory planting and contributing to biodiversity enhancement. A forestry assessment technical appendix has been included **(Appendix 3.4)** as requested by THC in their Scoping response to the ECU.

Shadow Flicker

4.5.3. Shadow flicker is an effect that can occur when the shadow of a blade passes over a small opening (such as a window), briefly reducing the intensity of light within the room, and causing a flickering to be perceived. The Highland Council Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (November 2016) states that an 11 rotor diameter study area should be used to assess the potential for shadow flicker on regularly occupied buildings. The Proposed Development turbine dimensions will have a rotor diameter of approximately 162 m, 11 rotor diameters are therefore up to 1,782 m. There are no properties within 1,782 m, and the closet property being approximately 3.6 km from any of the Proposed Development turbine locations; therefore, shadow flicker was scoped out of further assessment within the EIA Report.

Telecommunications Links

4.5.4. As outlined in the Scoping Report consultation was undertaken with the telecommunication link operators, shown **Appendix 4.4** and as no impacts were identified through this consultation telecommunication impacts are scoped out of further assessment. A summary of the consultation responses in outlined in **Table 4.2** below.

Table 4.2: Summary of Consultation Reponses from Telecommunication Link Operators

Consultee	Consultation Response
Airquiva (September 2022)	No objection to this development.
Atkins (September 2022)	No objection to proposal.
BT (September 2022)	The grid references provided for the 8 Turbines below will not cause interference to BT's current and presently planned radio network.
EE (October 2022)	Confirmation that there are no infringement issues with the EE/3UK mobile microwave network.
JRC (September 2022)	JRC does not foresee any potential problems based on known interference scenarios and the data you have provided
Vodafone (October 2022)	Vodafone do not have any links that will be impacted by your proposal.

Major Accidents and Disasters

4.5.5. The Proposed Development is not located within an area with a history of natural disasters such as extreme weather events, and the construction and operation of the Proposed Development would be managed within the requirements of all relevant health and safety regulations. It is considered there is a minimal risk of major accidents and / or disasters occurring as a result of the Proposed Development and this has therefore been scoped out of further assessment within the EIA.

Utilities

4.5.6. Any underground services, including water, electrical and gas infrastructure, will be identified through a standard pre-construction utilities survey so as to avoid disruption. Further assessment of effects on utilities has therefore been scoped out of the EIA.

Air Quality and Human Health

4.5.7. Local air quality during construction (dust and vehicle emissions) will be appropriately controlled through good practice in construction as noted in **Chapter 3** of this EIA Report, to be set out in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). An outline CEMP is provided in **Appendix 3.1.** These effects are therefore not considered likely to be significant and assessment of effects on local air quality during construction has been scoped out of the EIA. No significant atmospheric emissions are likely to arise as a result of the operation of the Proposed Development, and assessment of effects on local air quality during operation has therefore also been scoped out.

Spatial Scope

4.5.8. The spatial scope of the EIA, i.e., the geographical coverage of the assessment undertaken, has taken account of a number of factors, in particular:

- the extent of the Proposed Development, as defined by the planning application boundary (refer to **Figure 1.1**);
- the nature of the baseline environment, sensitive receptors and the likely impacts that could arise; and
- the distance over which predicted effects are likely to remain significant and, in particular, the existence of pathways which could result in the transfer of effects to a wider geographical area than the extent of the proposed physical works.

Temporal Scope

4.5.9. The baseline years used for the assessment of environmental effects are 2020 to 2022, as this is the period in which the baseline environmental surveys were undertaken. Where appropriate and valid, reference has been made to data gathered from the previous Culachy Wind Farm application that was submitted in 2014 (14/04782/FUL), this has been agreed with relevant consultees.

4.5.10. For the purposes of the EIA, construction is expected to last for 24 months. Consent is being sought for an operational lifespan of 35 years from the date of commissioning the turbines. For the purposes of the EIA, it is assumed that the Proposed Development will be decommissioned unless further consents to extend operational life are sought.

4.5.11. For construction effects, the assessment takes into account the time of day that works are likely to be undertaken, for example if any night-time working is required to minimise disruption to road users.

4.6. EIA Report

4.6.1. Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations specifies the 'information for inclusion in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports'. **Table 4.3** below details where the information has been provided within the EIA Report.

Table 4.3: Information Included in the EIA Report

Required Information (Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations)	Relevant Reference within this EIA Report
1. A description of the development, including in particular (a) a description of the location of the development; (b) a description of the physical characteristics of the whole development, including, where relevant, requisite demolition works, and the land-use requirements during the construction and operational phases; (c) a description of the main characteristics of the operational phase of the development (in particular any production process), for instance, energy demand and energy used, nature and quantity of the materials and natural resources (including water, land, soil and biodiversity) used; (d) an estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions (such as water, air,	The Proposed Development is described in **Chapter 3** of the EIA Report, including consideration of anticipated construction methods and the operation of the Proposed Development. The land use requirements during construction and operational phases are also described in **Chapter 3**. Expected residues and emissions are addressed, where relevant, in the appropriate technical chapters of this EIA Report.

Required Information (Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations)	Relevant Reference within this EIA Report
soil and subsoil pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation and quantities and types of waste produced during the construction and operation phases	
2. A description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects.	**Chapter 2** of the EIA Report describes the design iteration process and details how the Proposed Development site was chosen, and the environmental constraints taken into consideration in determining the final layout which is the subject of the Application.
3. A description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (baseline scenario) and an outline of the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the development as far as natural changes from the baseline scenario can be assessed with reasonable effort on the basis of the availability of environmental information and scientific knowledge	A description of the existing environment and how it is expected to evolve in the absence of the Proposed Development is provided within each technical chapter.
4. A description of the factors specified in regulation 4(3) likely to be significantly affected by the development: population, human health, biodiversity (for example fauna and flora), land (for example land take), soil (for example organic matter, erosion, compaction, sealing), water (for example hydromorphological changes, quantity and quality), air, climate (for example greenhouse gas emissions, impacts relevant to adaptation), material assets, cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological aspects, and landscape	The receptors potentially affected by the Proposed Development are detailed within each of the technical chapters. Effects on population and human health are assessed in relation to visual impacts (**Chapter 6**), socioeconomics, recreation, tourism (**Chapter 13**), traffic (**Chapter 12**), and noise (**Chapter 11**). Biodiversity impacts and enhancement is covered in the ecology and ornithology chapters (**Chapter 7 & 8**). Impacts on soils and water are covered in the hydrology, geology, hydrogeology and peat chapter (**Chapter 9**). Material assets are addressed through the assessment of cultural heritage effects (**Chapter 10**) and other chapters as appropriate.
5. A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment resulting from, inter alia:	The predicted significant effects of the Proposed Development are reported after relevant mitigation measures have been

Required Information (Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations)	Relevant Reference within this EIA Report
(a) the construction and existence of the development, including, where relevant, demolition works; (b) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity, considering as far as possible the sustainable availability of these resources; (c) the emission of pollutants, noise, vibration, light, heat and radiation, the creation of nuisances, and the disposal and recovery of waste; (d) the risks to human health, cultural heritage or the environment (for example due to accidents or disasters); (e) the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved developments, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources; (f) the impact of the development on climate (for example the nature and magnitude of greenhouse gas emissions) and the vulnerability of the project to climate change; (g) the technologies and the substances used. The description of the likely significant effects on the factors specified in regulation 4(3) should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, transboundary, short-term, medium-term and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development. This description should take into account the environmental protection objectives established at Union or Member State level which are relevant to the project, including in particular those established under Council Directive 92/43/EEC3 and Directive 2009/147/EC	applied to an identified effect, in each of the technical chapters of the EIA Report. Effects have been predicted in relation to both the construction / decommissioning and operational phases of the Proposed Development, including the nature of these effects and their duration. The overall approach and methods used in the assessment of environmental impacts are discussed within this chapter. Prediction methods are discussed in detail within each relevant technical chapter of the EIA Report.
6. A description of the forecasting methods or evidence, used to identify and assess the significant effects on the environment, including details of difficulties (for example technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge) encountered compiling the required	An overview of the methodology of the assessment is provided within this chapter while the individual technical chapters provide details of each technical assessment (**Chapter 6 to 15**).

Required Information (Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations)	Relevant Reference within this EIA Report
information and the main uncertainties involved	
7. A description of the measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified significant adverse effects on the environment and, where appropriate, of any proposed monitoring arrangements (for example the preparation of a post-project analysis). That description should explain the extent, to which significant adverse effects on the environment are avoided, prevented, reduced or offset, and should cover both the construction and operational phases.	Specific mitigation measures and where appropriate monitoring arrangements are reported in each relevant technical chapter of the EIA Report and in the schedule of committed mitigation measures presented in **Chapter 16**.
8. A description of the expected significant adverse effects of the development on the environment deriving from the vulnerability of the development to risks of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned. Relevant information available and obtained through risk assessments pursuant to EU legislation such as Directive 2012/18/EU(3) of the European Parliament and of the Council or Council Directive 2009/71/Euratom(4) or UK environmental assessments may be used for this purpose provided that the requirements of this Directive are met. Where appropriate, this description should include measures envisaged to prevent or mitigate the significant adverse effects of such events on the environment and details of the preparedness for and proposed response to such emergencies.	An assessment of major accidents and/or disasters has been scoped out as detailed in **Section** Error! Reference source not found..
9. A non-technical summary of the information provided under paragraphs 1 to 8	A Non-Technical Summary is presented as a stand-alone document.
10. A reference list detailing the sources used for the descriptions and assessments included in the EIA report.	References are provided at the end of each chapter of the EIA Report.

4.7. Consultation

Regulatory Consultation

4.7.1. Consultation is a key component of the EIA process. In order to inform the EIA, there has been ongoing consultation with statutory consultees, engagement through correspondence and meetings, as required.

4.7.2. Consultation with organisations who were contacted either directly by the Applicant or by the ECU through the formal EIA scoping process, is described as appropriate in each technical chapter of this EIA Report and included within **Appendix 4.4**.

Public Consultation

4.7.3. A stand-alone Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report has been prepared which gives details of the correspondence, online and in-person public consultation and other discussions which have taken place with the communities closest to the Proposed Development site. The PAC Report also details findings of that work and illustrates the ways in which community engagement has helped identify potential issues arising from the emerging development proposal, and where appropriate, shape the final proposal which is now the subject of an application for Section 36 consent.

4.7.4. The Applicant is grateful to residents and local representatives for their input into the pre-application community engagement process and for their participation in the discussions.

4.8. Consideration of Alternatives

4.8.1. Paragraph 5(2)(d) and Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations requires the consideration of alternatives and an indication of the reasons for selecting the site, except where limited by constraints of commercial confidentiality.

4.8.2. The Applicant has an ongoing search for potential onshore wind farm sites and was made aware of an opportunity to develop a wind farm on the Culachy Estate. Once potential sites are identified or brought to the attention of the Applicant, a desk-based assessment utilising secondary data and a Geographical Information System (GIS) to identify constraints is undertaken at the particular site. Sites that are not deemed suitable at one given time (i.e. 'the alternatives') may at a later date be re-assessed, hence, for commercial reasons and in accordance with PAN 1/2013, it is not possible to disclose the names or positions of the alternative sites.

4.8.3. The Applicant considered a number of alternative layouts and different scales of turbine for the Proposed Development, to arrive at the design for which consent is sought. A full description of the iterative design process is provided in **Chapter 2** of this EIA Report.

4.9. Assumptions, Limitations & Uncertainty

4.9.1. The EIA Report process is designed to provide sufficient environmental information to enable informed decision making based on the best available information about the potential environmental effects of a proposed development. However, there will always be some uncertainty inherent in the scale and nature of the predicted environmental effects as a result of the level of detailed information available at the time of assessment, the potential for minor alterations to the Proposed Development following completion of the EIA Report and/or the limitations of the prediction processes.

4.9.2. A number of assumptions were made during the EIA process and are detailed below:

- The principal land uses adjacent to the site remain unchanged during the course of the Proposed Development's lifetime.

- Current operational, consented and under construction wind energy projects are included within the assessment of cumulative effects for each technical aspect.
- Information provided by third parties (including publicly available information and databases) is correct at time of submission.

4.9.3. Further to this, more specific assumptions have been made with regard to the individual technical aspects and are detailed within each technical chapter.

4.9.4. Whilst baseline conditions have been assumed to be accurate at the time of surveying, due to the dynamic nature of the environment, these conditions may change during site preparation, construction and operation. It is noted that there are a number of wind farm schemes at various stages of development and construction within the wider area which add to the baseline scenario of the Proposed Development. Where relevant, the 'future' baseline scenario is described and discussed within the technical assessments. This is particularly relevant to the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, refer to **Chapter 6** for further details.

4.9.5. There is also the potential for a degree of uncertainty as certain aspects of the Proposed Development may be subject to change until a detailed design has been finalised. This uncertainty can come in the forms of:

- Turbine selection;
- Foundation and infrastructure design; and
- Micro-siting of the turbines and associated infrastructure which may change due to investigation findings or implementation of mitigation measures.

4.9.6. The assessment of potential environmental effects takes account of the potential variation of specific details within maximum parameters noted.

4.10. Summary

4.10.1. This chapter has detailed the methodology used to prepare the EIA Report for the Proposed Development. An overview of the relevant legislation and guidance documents has been provided with the main legislative document being the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (as amended). Following this, the EIA Report preparation process and the scope of the assessment are detailed. General assumptions, limitations and uncertainties are also stated.

References

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