Planning and Renewable Energy Statement

Lairdmannoch Energy Park

May 2025

ReAmp Consultancy Limited

Document History

Author	Alison Sidgwick	April 2025
Checked	Clare Hamilton	April 2025
Approved	Alison Sidgwick	May 2025

Client Details

Client Name	Atmos Consulting
Address	CBC House 24 Canning Street Edinburgh EH3 8EG

Version Control

Issue	Date	Revision Details
A	16 April 2025	First draft for PM review
B	28 April 2025	Second draft for legal review
C	12 May 2025	Final for submission

The ReAmp Consultancy Limited
14-16 Hill Street
Edinburgh
Reg No: SC809211

Contents

Executive Summary

The UK and Scottish Governments have declared a climate emergency and set ambitious climate change targets with a Net-Zero CO2 target for 2045 in Scotland and an interim target of 75% reduction in emissions by 2030.

Lairdmannoch Energy Park Ltd (the Applicant) is seeking consent from the Scottish Ministers under the terms of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 and deemed planning permission under the terms of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, to construct and operate the Lairdmannoch Energy Park (the Proposed Development).

The Proposed Development is located in Dumfries and Galloway, sited approximately 7 km northeast of Gatehouse of Fleet and 10km west of Castle Douglas. The Site covers an area of 612.2 ha on land predominantly consisting of upland bog, with wet heath, used for sheep and cattle grazing.

The Proposed Development would comprise of nine wind turbines, with a maximum tip height of 180 m (60 MW), ground mounted solar panels (20 MW) and battery energy storage system (BESS) (20 MW) with the combined total installed capacity of 100 MW.

The Proposed Development will help to support climate action plans, including the recently published Clean Power 2030 Action Plan: A new era of clean electricity, emission reduction targets and contribute towards future electricity demands in Scotland and the UK by creating enough electricity to meet the average annual domestic needs of approximately 39,762 UK households. The contracted connection date for the project is 2030.

The key issues in the consideration of the Application are considered to relate to the contribution of the Proposed Development to meeting renewable energy targets, the creation of biodiversity enhancement and the maximisation of socio-economic benefits which are balanced against the localised landscape and visual impacts of the Proposed Development and impacts on cultural heritage.

It is concluded that on balance the Proposed Development is acceptable and as such should be granted section 36 consent and deemed planning permission.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scotland's current climate change targets are amongst the most ambitious in Europe. The Scottish Government declared a climate emergency in May 2019 and passed the Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, which amends the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. This sets a target for a 100% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2045, there is also an interim target of 75% reduction in emissions by 2030.

1.2 In late 2022 The Scottish Government published the Onshore Wind Policy Statement (OWPS 2022) which sets a minimum target for an operational capacity of 20 GW from onshore wind by 2030. Chapter 1 of the OWPS 2022 contains specific acknowledgement of the need for the further speedy deployment of onshore wind. It states *"We must now go further and faster than before. We expect the next decade to see a substantial increase in demand for electricity to support net zero delivery across all sectors, including heat, transport, and industrial processes".*

1.3 The Proposed Development is located within the Dumfries and Galloway Council (DGC) administrative area. In March 2024, DGC updated its climate strategy to include new net zero targets. Specifically, this seeks to achieve carbon neutrality (Council Operations) by 2033 and support the region in reaching net zero targets by 2040, strengthening the ambition to be carbon negative by 2045.

1.4 Key to achieving the net zero goals is the decarbonisation of many sectors of the economy and in order to do this the generation of renewable electricity needs to be increased. An essential component of decarbonising power generation will be the development of renewable energy in the form of onshore wind farms and solar arrays.

1.5 The Proposed Development would comprise of 9 wind turbines, with a maximum tip height of 180 m (60 MW), ground mounted solar panels (20 MW) and battery energy storage system (BESS) (20 MW) with the combined total installed capacity of 100 MW.

1.6 The Applicant fully supports the fight against climate change and the need for greater energy security and proposes to develop Lairdmannoch Energy Park (the Proposed Development) in DGC administrative area to contribute to addressing those energy policy aims. This would be a renewable energy solution which responds to the need to meet national and international climate change targets. The Proposed Development would provide infrastructure that both generates and stores electricity. As a consequence of the holistic energy generation and storage elements of the Proposed Development, the infrastructure, once operational, will be able to regulate output and provide clean power to homes and businesses when they need it most. As well as contributing to targets for renewable energy, the Proposed Development would provide opportunities for community investment and create further employment opportunities in the local area during construction and operation and as a result of the proposed community ownership.

1.7 The generating capacity of the Proposed Development would exceed 50 MW, and therefore constitutes a Schedule 2 development as provided for by the Electricity

Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations).

1.8 Atmos Consulting Limited has been appointed to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to determine and evaluate the potential effects of the Proposed Development. The results of the EIA are presented in the EIA Report which is submitted as part of the Application.

The Application

1.9 The Application for the Proposed Development is submitted to the Scottish Ministers under Section 36 of the 1989 Act. The Applicant, by way of the Section 36 process, requests that the Scottish Ministers issue a Section 36 Consent in respect of the Proposed Development, together with a Direction under Section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended (the 1997 Act) that planning permission is deemed to be granted for the Proposed Development.

Purpose of this Planning and Renewable Energy Statement

1.10 This Planning and Renewable Energy Statement (PRES) sets out the background, policy and planning considerations relevant to the Proposed Development. It is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 includes the introduction to the PRES, provides the framework for decision-making and provides background information on the Applicant.
- Chapter 2 provides a brief description of the Proposed Development and a context to the Site.
- Chapter 3 outlines the statutory framework for the consideration of the Application for the Proposed Development.
- Chapter 4 sets out the renewable energy framework and includes information in relation to the climate emergency declared by both the Scottish Government and EAC and details the key renewable energy policies.
- Chapter 5 outlines the renewable energy targets set in law and the progress towards the targets in Scotland.
- Chapter 6 details the relevant planning policy, including national policy, and the Development Plan.
- Chapter 7 provides an assessment against the relevant policy set out in Chapter 6.
- Chapter 8 provides the conclusions of the PRES.

The Applicant

1.11 Lairdmannoch Energy Park is being developed by Lairdmannoch Energy Park Limited (the Applicant), which is part of a joint venture between Wind 2 Limited (Wind2) and companies managed by Octopus Energy Generation.

1.12 Wind2 is a specialist renewable energy developer which is working on the development of a range of renewable energy projects across the UK. The company has personnel in Edinburgh, Perthshire, Cromarty, Wells (Somerset) and in Mold in North Wales. Further information on Wind2 can be found on its company website at https://wind2.co.uk.

1.13 Octopus Energy Generation are one of Europe's largest investors in renewables, operating £4 billion of green energy generation across seven countries. Octopus Energy Generation operate solar and wind projects across the UK.

1.14 The Applicant is committed to investing in Dumfries and Galloway through renewable energy projects, with the community benefits and additional outcomes that renewable energy development can bring (including construction and post construction employment).

Pre-Application Consultation

1.15 Under Sections 36 and 37 of the 1989 Act, the carrying out of pre-application consultation with the public is considered good practice and applicants are encouraged to have meaningful engagement at the earliest possible stage with any communities or groups who would be affected by the Proposed Development.

1.16 The Energy Consents Unit Good Practice Guidance for Applications under Section 36 and 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 sets out minimum expectations for public consultation. The Applicant has undertaken pre-application consultation in accordance with the good practice guidance, including:

- The Applicant undertook of community council consultation in August 2023, August 202 and February 2025 which included contacting members of the local Community Councils. The first round included consultation with the Ward Councillors, County Councillors, the MSP for Galloway and West Dumfries as well as the MP for Dumfries and Galloway with details of the Proposed Development, information on EIA Scoping and an offer to meet with the project team to discuss in further detail.
- Two rounds of in-person public consultation events took place in September 2024 and February 2025. The public events gave members of the public the opportunity to make comments to the applicant in relation to the Proposed Development.
- Engagement with the host Community Councils (Twynholm Community Council and Tongland & Ringford Community Council) and others in the vicinity of the Proposed Development including Balmaghie, and Gatehouse of Fleet Community Councils.
- The Application is accompanied by a PAC Report which sets out the consultation undertaken, any commentary received on the Proposed Development and how this has been responded to by the Proposed Development.

2. THE SITE AND THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Site and Surrounding Area

2.1 The Proposed Development is located to the northeast of Gatehouse of Fleet and approximately 10 km west of the settlement of Castle Douglas and approximately 7 km from the town of Gatehouse of Fleet (the Site). The Site lies entirely within the DGC administrative area. The Site is shown in Figure 1.

2.2 The Site is an irregular shape which is bounded to the east by the A762 and by existing forestry to the north and south. The southwestern access track passes through existing forestry to join the B727 east of Gatehouse of Fleet.

2.3 The northern tip of Loch Mannoch loch lies within the Site and the Site is crossed by a number of watercourses, including the Anstool Burn with crosses from north to south to drain into Loch Mannoch.

2.4 With the exception of the southwestern access track route, the land cover consists of predominantly upland bog with wet heath in the vicinity of the proposed wind farm infrastructure to the west and lowland pasture to the east in the vicinity of the solar farm infrastructure.

2.5 The land use across the Site is livestock grazing.

2.6 A core path between Gatehouse of Fleet to Glengap follows the route of the proposed southwestern access track from the Site entrance located at the junction of the existing forestry track with the B727 to the point where the proposed access track leaves the route of the existing forestry track and turns north towards the proposed infrastructure.

2.7 Recreational routes include core paths providing access to moorland and forest areas and the National Cycle Network Route (NCNR) 7 which comes within 5.6 km west of the wind farm infrastructure as it progresses along the B796.

2.8 There are a number of dispersed settlements connected by minor roads between the A762, A75, B727 and Laurieston Road in the vicinity of the Site.

Environmental Designations

2.9 Figure 1-3 in Volume 4 of the EIA Report presents the context of the Site and the setting of the Proposed Development, illustrating designated sites within 10 km. The proposed wind turbines, BESS and solar array are not located within any international, national or local landscape related designations. The southwestern access route, which utilises and existing forestry track, passes through the Fleet Valley National Scenic Area (NSA). No statutory designated heritage assets (World Heritage Sites, Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes, Inventory Battlefields and Category A Listed Buildings or Conservation Areas) have been identified within the Site. The Site is located within the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve. There are no statutory natural heritage designations within the Site.

2.10 There are a number of designations within the Site and its vicinity. These are set out in the EIA Report and include the following which are within 10 km of the Site:

- Fleet Valley NSA is 4 km west of the closest wind turbine and 6.7 km southwest of the solar panel arrays at their closest point;
- Galloway Hills Regional Scenic Area (RSA) is 0.9 km west of the closest wind turbine and 3.8 km southwest of the solar panel arrays at their closest point;
- Galloway Dark Skies Park (GDSP). The core and buffer areas of the GDSP are 18 km northwest and 3 km west of the closest wind turbine;
- The Loch Mannoch Archaeologically Sensitive Area (ASA) is located within the Site;
- There are a total of 91 non-designated assets within the Site;
- There are a total of 45 Scheduled Monuments within 10 km of the Site. The closest is Loch Mannoch, Cairn & Stone Circle, is 0.8 km west of the Site;
- There is one Category 'B' Listed Building, Kirkconnel Farmhouse and Steading within the Site. There are no Listed Buildings within 1 km of the Site boundary. The nearest Category 'A' Listed Building to a wind turbine is Rusko Castle, 5.7 km to the west and in relation to the solar panels, Argrennan House is located 4.6 km to the southeast of the Site;
- Laughenghie and Airie Hills Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is 0.4 km west of the Site;
- Woodhall Loch SSSI is 3.5 km northeast of the Site;
- Galloway Oakwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is 4.2 km west of the Site;
- Carstramon Wood SSSI is 4.2 km northwest of the Site;
- Killiegowan Wood SSSI is 6.3 km west of the Site;
- Ardwall Hill SSSI is 6.9 km west of the Site; and
- Lagganmullan SSSI is 4.7 km west of the Site.

Cumulative

2.11 Blackcraig Hill Wind Farm is the closest commercial scale operational wind farm to the Site. It is located some 19 km north of the Site.

2.12 There are a number of proposed wind farm developments which are considered in the EIA Report. These include a resubmission for Garcrogo Wind Farm , Barlay Hill and Marnhoul Wind Farm, all of which are at Scoping stage and located approximately 15 km northeast of the Site. These are shown in EIA Report Figure 5-13.

2.13 No solar developments are present within vicinity of the Site.

2.14 All wind farms considered as part of the cumulative assessment presented in this EIA Report are shown on Figure 1-4 of the EIA Report.

Site Selection

2.15 The site selection process is described in the EIA Report Chapter 3. The Site has been selected for the following reasons:

- It has a commercially viable electricity grid connection point with available capacity;
- The land is available for development i.e. land owner is willing to offer land for development;
- The Site benefits from a good wind resource;

- The Site benefits from suitable orientation/topography and insolation levels for solar development;
- Other than the existing forestry track that will be used to access the Site from the southwest, the proposed infrastructure is not located within nationally designated areas;
- The infrastructure associated with the Proposed Development can be located at a suitable distance from the nearest residential properties and settlements; and
- The Site benefits from a good existing road network.

The Proposed Development

The Proposed Development is described in detail in the EIA Report in Chapter 3 of the EIA Report and is summarised in the following text. It is shown on Figure 2.

Design Evolution

2.16 The design evolution process which has resulted in the Proposed Development for which consent is sought has been the subject of an iterative process. This is described in Chapter 3 of the EIA Report This process has been used to limit the impacts of the Proposed Development through design led mitigation. Where possible mitigation has been identified to ensure that impacts are minimised as far as reasonably possible.

2.17 As part of the design process, the Applicant has reviewed and discounted alternative infrastructure siting for the proposed turbines, solar panels, sections of new access track due to a variety of factors including environmental, planning, technical and commercial constraints.

2.18 The design of the Proposed Development has been driven by the principle of positioning the wind turbines, solar panels and associated infrastructure so that it captures the maximum wind and solar energy as possible within a suitable area determined by environmental and technical constraints.

Description of the Proposed Development

2.19 The Proposed Development comprises nine wind turbines, each with a tip height of 180 m, ground mounted solar panels, BESS and associated infrastructure which includes the following:

- 6.1 km of upgraded existing access track;
- 12.64 km of new access track (of which 12.15 km will be cut and 0.49 km will be floated);
- Turbine foundations and crane hardstandings;
- Substation;
- One borrow pit;
- Underground cabling;
- Temporary construction compound;
- Solar infrastructure including a power station and switching and breaking station; and;
- Up to eight watercourse crossings.

Felling

2.20 It is recognised that there will be some felling required as part of the Proposed Development along the western access. It has not been possible to confirm the precise extent of this, but all felling will be on the eastern side of the western access route and restricted to the more commercial conifer plantations.

Micro-siting

2.21 Although the layout of the Proposed Development has been the subject of detailed consideration in the design process to date, there remains the potential for the precise locations to be altered slightly at the construction phase.

2.22 A micro-siting allowance of up to 50 m in all directions is being sought in respect of all infrastructure. This allowance will ensure that the final position of the turbines and associated infrastructure are not varied to such a degree as to cause a notable change in the predicted environmental effects outlined in the EIA Report.

Access

2.23 The Site includes three access points these are as follows:

- One southwestern access track which would be used for the delivery of materials associated with the construction of the wind farm infrastructure (including wind turbine components). The existing junction at the southwestern access point will be upgraded to create a bellmouth capable of accommodating abnormal load deliveries.
- Two eastern access points from the A762 which would be used for the delivery of the solar components.

Grid Connection

2.24 One onsite substation would accommodate 33 KV equipment to collect electricity from the Site. The substation compound would include a control and metering building.

2.25 The electrical power produced by the individual wind turbines and solar arrays would be transmitted to the proposed Substation via underground cables. A connection to the national grid's electricity transmission/distribution system will be required. This does not form part of the Proposed Development and is not the subject of the Application. A grid connection date has been provided of June 2030. This means that the Proposed development could be contributing renewable electricity into the grid in 2030 and thus contributing to the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan and 2030 targets.

Lifetime of the Proposed Development

2.26 Consent is sought for the Proposed Development to have an operational lifetime of 40 years. Once the Proposed Development ceases operation after the period of generation, the wind farm is decommissioned and above ground infrastructure dismantled and removed from the Site. Alternatively, an application could be made seeing to extend the lifetime of the Proposed Development.

2.27 It is assumed that the consent will contain a condition requiring the submission of a decommissioning method statement prior to the end of the operational period.

Socio-economic Benefits

2.28 The EIA Report, Chapter 12, sets out the socio-economic benefits of the Proposed Development and these are summarised in Table 12-14 of the EIA Report. These are summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Summary of Socio-economic Effects of the Proposed Development

Phase of Development	Type of Effect	Value
Development Phase	Spend (UK)	£9,038,760
	Spend (Scotland)	£3,801,660
	Spend (Dumfries and Galloway)	£743,100
	Employment (UK)	Up to 62 jobs
	Employment (Scotland)	Up to 26 jobs
	Employment (Dumfries and Galloway)	Up to 5 jobs
	GVA (UK)	£5,649,225
	GVA (Scotland)	£2,376,038
	GVA (Dumfries and Galloway)	£464,438
Construction Phase	Spend (UK)	£45,001,020
	Spend (Scotland)	£29,208,720
	Spend (Dumfries and Galloway)	£6,565,920
	Employment (UK)	Up to 214 jobs
	Employment (Scotland)	Up to 139 jobs
	Employment (Dumfries and Galloway)	Up to 31 jobs
	GVA (UK)	£17,595,398
	GVA (Scotland)	£11,420,610
	GVA (Dumfries and Galloway)	£2,567,274
Operational Phase	Spend (UK)	£4,047,180
	Spend (Scotland)	£2,908,500
	Spend (Dumfries and Galloway)	£1,290,480
	Employment (UK)	Up to 14 jobs
	Employment (Scotland)	Up to 10 jobs
	Employment (Dumfries and Galloway)	Up to 4 jobs
	GVA (UK)	£2,055,967
	GVA (Scotland)	£1,477,518
	GVA (Dumfries and Galloway)	£655,564

Community Benefit

2.29 The EIA Report, Chapter 12, advises that the Applicant is adhering to the best practice recommendation and proposing a community benefit package based on a figure of £5,000 per MW of wind and £500 per MW of solar installed generating capacity. This results in a fund of up to £310,000 per annum or £12.4 million over the 40-year life of the Proposed Development,

2.30 At this time, figures are indicative and subject to a number of factors, including the dependence of installed generating capacity on available technology and turbine and solar panel procurement.

Shared Ownership

2.31 The EIA Report advises that the Applicant is keen to explore interest in part community shared ownership in the Proposed Development. This would provide an opportunity for the communities around the Site to invest in the Proposed Development.

Mitigation

2.32 Chapter 15, of the EIA Report, sets out the mitigation which is part of the Proposed Development. Details are also set out in the EIA Report technical chapters in so far as it is relevant to the technical specialism of each specialist topic chapter.

2.33 Where required, mitigation would be secured by planning conditions. Mitigation measures are separate to the embedded design measures which are also detailed in the technical chapters.

2.34 Key elements of mitigation include the following:

- A Construction and Environnement Management Plan (CEMP);
- Habitat Management Plan (HMP) ;
- A Pollution Prevention Plan;
- Compensatory Woodland Planting;
- Peat Management Plan;
- Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP);
- A Species Protection Plan; and
- Employment of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW).

Enhancement

2.35 As part of the Proposed Development, and in accordance with National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Policy 3, which requires that major developments conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity, an outline Habitat Management Plan (oHMP) (EIA Report Technical Appendix 6-6) has been prepared. The oHMP provides a framework for the good practice, avoidance, mitigation, compensation, restoration and enhancement measures adopted for the Site with respect to biodiversity. The oHMP aims to provide appropriate precautionary mitigation measures to address the Proposed Development's predicted effects and provide appropriate enhancement measures, taking into account the Site's environmental characteristics and potential for enhancement.

2.36 The oHMP has been informed by baseline surveys (i.e. ecological, ornithological, peat and hydrology surveys) undertaken to inform the EIA process. The oHMP includes measures for habitat enhancements and ecological monitoring. The oHMP is to compensate and enhance for loss of priority peatland habitats in line with the relevant guidance. Priority peatland habitats present on the Site are:

- M17 and M18; and
- M15 and M25 when on deep peat (50 cm or more).

2.37 Compensation is based on a programme of detailed habitat management prescriptions which are shown in EIA Report Figures 6-8 and 6-9.

2.38 Other objectives relate to additional habitat and faunal enhancements plus the creation of a Habitat Management Group to oversee the peatland restoration

proposals and restoration progress through the 40-year lifespan of the Proposed Development. Bat and ornithological monitoring requirements are also included.

2.39 It is expected that a condition will be used to secure the preparation of a final HMP prior to the commencement of the Proposed Development in discussion with NatureScot, DGC and SEPA.

2.40 The HMP will enable the conservation, restoration and enhancement of biodiversity within the Site in a manner which would not be possible without direct intervention. Once approved the HMP aims to improve the overall biodiversity value and condition of the Site by providing meaningful enhancement measures to improve habitat connectivity across the Site.

Carbon Saving

2.41 A carbon balance assessment has been undertaken using the Scottish Government Calculator v1.14.1. This found that there is a Moderate (beneficial) influence of the Proposed Development on Climate Change and national and international targets to combat climate change.

2.42 It is expected that the Proposed Development would make a positive contribution to offsetting carbon emissions after a maximum of 1.6 years, at which time it is estimated to be carbon neutral.

2.43 The EIA Report has considered the potential of the Proposed Development to avoid carbon emissions over its lifetime. The potential annual carbon emission savings for the Proposed Development are provided in Table 13-2 of the EIA Report.

2.44 The EIA report advises that displacement of a grid mix of electricity generation due to the Proposed Development is expected to result in a CO_2 emission saving over time of 54,259 tonnes CO_2 equivalent against a Grid-mix scenario of electricity generation.

3. STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

3.1 The following text sets out the statutory framework with respect to the 1989 Act, the EIA Regulations and the Proposed Development.

The Electricity Act 1989

3.2 The Applicant is not a licensed electricity generator in terms of the 1989 Act.

3.3 Under Schedule 9 of the 1989 Act the Scottish Ministers, in the consideration of an application for Section 36 Consent, are required to have regard to *"the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features or special interest in protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest."* A generation licence holder, or a person authorised by exemption, is under a duty to do what they reasonably can to mitigate any effect which the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects. Schedule 9 also imposes duties to avoid impact on fisheries and fish where possible. While the Applicant is not bound by these duties they have had regard to these matters in the formulation of the EIA process and design evolution.

3.4 The Applicant has demonstrated their commitment to addressing the matters set out in Schedule 9 of the 1989 Act by undertaking the project formulation as reported in the EIA Report accompanying the Application. The design evolution of the Proposed Development encompasses consideration of all the matters set out in Schedule 9 of the 1989 Act. The EIA Report accompanying the Application sets out in detail how the Applicant has approached the design of the scheme and how very careful consideration has been given throughout that process to the matters that are listed. In the circumstances, the Scottish Ministers can be satisfied that the statutory requirements of Schedule 9 have been fulfilled.

Environmental Impact Assessment

3.5 The Proposed Development does not fall within the definition of Schedule 1 development included in the EIA Regulations.

3.6 The Proposed Development does fall within Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations. An EIA Scoping Opinion was requested by the Applicant in August 2023, in accordance with Regulation 12 of the EIA Regulations. Having consulted the relevant consultees, the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU) provided a Scoping Opinion (ECU00004900) in January 2024.

3.7 The EIA Report is based on the Scoping Opinion that was received from the Scottish Government and it demonstrates the Applicant's compliance with the requirements set out in EIA Regulations.

4. RENEWABLE ENERGY FRAMEWORK

4.1 The Proposed Development is the subject of an application under Section 36 of the 1989 Act, therefore, it must be recognised that it is progressed in an environment where the need for renewable energy is becoming increasingly important in addressing important global issues associated with climate change and energy supply. The framework of international agreements, legally binding targets and renewable energy policy is the foundation upon which national (UK and Scottish) energy policy is based.

4.2 The context set out in this PRES is a relevant consideration in the determination of the Application. It is a consideration which should attract significant weight in the decision-making balance. This chapter of the PRES first acknowledges that both the Scottish Government and DGC have declared a climate emergency and what their position on that is.

The Climate Emergency

4.3 In May 2019, the Scottish Government declared a climate emergency. At the same time, in Westminster, the Environment Secretary acknowledged a climate change emergency. In a speech to the Scottish Parliament the Climate Change Secretary stated:

"The Climate Change Committee has been stark in saying that the proposed new targets will require a fundamental change from the current piecemeal approach that focuses on specific actions in some sectors to an explicitly economy wide approach. To deliver the transformational change that is required, we need structural changes across the board: to our planning, procurement, and financial policies, processes and assessments. And as I've already said, that is exactly what we will do."

4.4 The Climate Change Secretary went onto say that:

"subject to the passage of the Planning Bill at stage 3, the next National Planning Framework and review of the Scottish Planning Policy will include considerable focus on how the planning system can support our climate change goals."

4.5 The speech to parliament highlighted the advice received by the Scottish Government from the UK Climate Change Committee (CCC), emphasising that this advice was being taken forward via amendments to the Climate Change Bill.

4.6 DGC declared a climate emergency in June 2019. They have identified organisational and regional targets as follows:

Organisational emissions targets

- make a 75% reduction in carbon emissions by 2027 (from 2008/09 baseline) – already achieved 63% reduction by 2022/23;
- make a 90% reduction in carbon emissions by 2031; and
- become a carbon neutral organisation by 2033.

Regional emissions targets

- become a net zero region on or before 2040; and

- transition to a carbon negative region by 2045 to align with the wider aspiration outlined by South of Scotland Enterprise.

Renewable Energy Policy

4.7 The UK and Scottish Governments have developed a suite of comprehensive policies which are broadly supportive of renewable energy. The following documents are considered to be the most relevant to the consideration of this Application:

- The Scottish Energy Strategy 2017;
- The UK Government Energy White Paper 'Powering our Net Zero Future' (December 2020);
- Scottish Energy Strategy Position Statement (March 2021);
- The UK Government Energy Security Strategy (April 2022);
- The Scottish Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement 2022;
- The Energy Act 2023;
- The UK Battery Strategy 2023;
- The Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan 2023 (DES&JTP);
- The Scottish Government Programme for Government 2024-25; and
- The Green Industrial Strategy (September 2024)
- The UK Government Clean Power 2030 Action Plan (2024).

4.8 The key parts of these documents are considered in the following text.

The UK Policy

4.9 Since coming to power in July 2024 the new UK government have been clear on their aspiration for renewable energy. The Labour Party Manifesto used during the recent election was unambiguous that the Labour Party has *"a national mission for clean power by 2030"* and it explicitly states that this is achievable *"and should be prioritised*". The Manifesto stated that the Labour Party saw the clean energy transition as having real potential to generate economic growth and tackle the cost-of-living crisis. This objective is set out as Labour's "second mission" for the UK.

4.10 The Energy Secretary, Edward Miliband, has announced a number of Task Forces in order to accelerate the delivery of clean power to help the UK reach its 2050 targets. The UK Government in the last few months have announced a number of consents for solar farms and energy transmission connections. It proposed a Green Prosperity Plan, including the establishment of GB Energy, a National Wealth Fund and the upgrade of homes for energy efficiency.

The Energy White Paper December 2020

4.11 On 13 December 2020, the UK Government published its Energy White Paper, Powering our Net Zero Future, this document sets out current thinking on the way in which the UK should work towards meeting its Net Zero targets by 2050. It not only advises that retiring fossil fuel generation capacity will need to be replaced but presents modelling which suggests that overall demand could double by 2050. It notes that this would require a four-fold increase in clean electricity generation with decarbonisation of electricity increasingly underpinning the delivery of the Net Zero target.

4.12 Page 4 of the Energy White Paper sets out three key themes as follows:

- Transform energy;
- Green recovery; and
- Fair deal for consumers.

4.13 It is evident that the UK Government was looking for a transformation to the delivery of renewable energy which, at the time of the White Paper, was identified to form part of a green recovery post-COVID and deliver fair prices for the consumers of energy. Page 9 of the document was clear on what decarbonisation of the energy system means, stating *"Decarbonising the energy system over the next thirty years means replacing – as far as it possible to do so – fossil fuels with clean technologies such as renewables, nuclear and hydrogen.*"

4.14 The document looks at what needs to be achieved in terms of clean electricity production in order to reach Net Zero and Figure 1.2 on page 9 summarises the situation clearly, it is as follows:

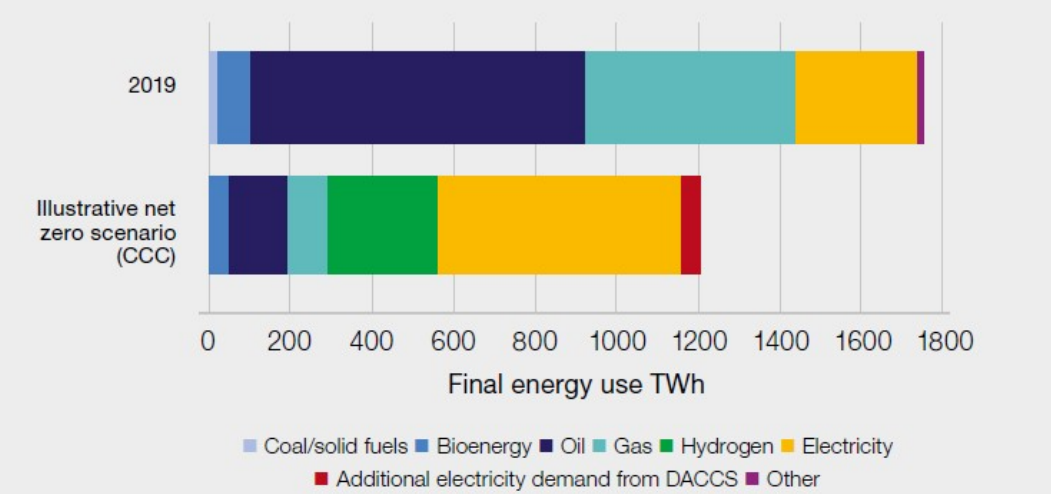


Figure 4.1: Illustrative UK Final Energy User in 2050

Source: Energy Trends Table 1.2; CCC Net Zero Report

4.15 Page 10 of the Energy White Paper is advises that clean electricity is key to reaching Net Zero – it states, *"Clean electricity will become the predominant form of energy, entailing a potential doubling of electricity demand and consequently a fourfold increase in low-carbon electricity generation."*

4.16 Chapter 2 of the Energy White Paper outlines the UK Government's goal in relation to power. It states, *"Electricity is a key enabler for the transition away from fossil fuels and decarbonising the economy cost-effectively by 2050."* To do this the UK Government will:

- *"Accelerate the deployment of clean electricity generation through the 2020s.*
- *Invest £1 billion in the UK's energy innovation programme to develop the technologies of the future such as advanced nuclear and clean hydrogen.*
- *Ensure that the transformation of the electricity system supports UK jobs and new business opportunities, at home and abroad."*

4.17 Page 43 of the document is clear on the expected role of wind farm developments as a key generator of low-cost clean energy. It advises that while the UK Government *"are not planning for any specific technology solution, we can discern some key characteristics of the future generation mix. A low-cost, net zero consistent system is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar."*

4.18 The document is explicit that onshore wind and solar are part of the overall solution stating that: *"Onshore wind and solar will be key building blocks of the future generation mix, along with offshore wind…We will need sustained growth in the capacity of these sectors in the next decade to ensure that we are on a pathway that allows us to meet net zero emissions"*.

The UK Government Energy Security Strategy (2022)

4.19 The UK Government published the British Energy Security Strategy in April 2022. The strategy was published in response to concern over the security, affordability and sustainability of the UK's energy supply.

4.20 The strategy proposes to accelerate the UK towards a low-carbon energy independent future. The foreword states, *"we're going to bring clean, affordable, secure power to the people for generations to come."*

4.21 The introduction states, *"All of these steps will accelerate our progress towards net zero, which is fundamental to energy security. By 2030, 95% of British electricity could be low-carbon; and by 2035, we will have decarbonised our electricity system, subject to security of supply. This is a transition which reduces our dependence on imported oil and gas and delivers a radical long-term shift in our energy with cleaner, cheaper power, lower energy bills and thousands of high wage, high skilled new jobs".*

4.22 The strategy focuses on expanding domestic UK energy supply alongside commitments to completely remove Russian oil and coal imports by the end of 2022, and Russian gas *"as soon as possible thereafter"*. The relevant policies outlined in the strategy include:

- a proposal for over 40% reduction in gas consumption by 2030;
- increased targets for low-carbon power generation compared to previous targets in the Energy White Paper; and,
- reduced consent times for offshore wind planning from four years to one.

4.23 With regards to onshore wind, the strategy notes that onshore wind is one of the cheapest forms of renewable energy. The strategy states: *"The government is serious about delivering cheaper, cleaner, more secure power, so we need to consider all options."*

The Energy Act 2023

4.24 The Energy Act 2023 received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023. The Act was originally introduced as the Energy Security Bill in 2022, and its purpose is to build on the commitment to reduce the UK's dependence on volatile fossil fuel markets, through the improvement of domestic energy production, to make the UK more energy self-sufficient.

4.25 Once The Energy Act 2023 came into law, the then Energy Security stated that *"The Energy Act is the largest piece of energy legislation in a generation. It will boost investment in clean energy technologies and support thousands of skilled jobs across the country. It lays the foundations for greater UK energy independence, making us more secure against tyrants like Putin, and helps us to power Britain from Britain".*

The UK Battery Strategy (2023)

4.26 The UK Battery Strategy was published by the UK Government on 26 November 2023. The UK Battery Strategy brings together Government activity to achieve a globally competitive battery supply chain by 2030 that will support economic prosperity and the net zero transition in the UK. In the foreword to the document, the Minister of State for Industry and Economic Security at the Department of Business and Trade states that (page 3):

"Batteries will play an essential role in our energy transition and our ability to successfully achieve net zero by 2050."

4.27 The Government's vision is for the UK to continue to grow a UK based thriving battery innovation system. The UK Battery Strategy wants to see the UK become a world leader in sustainable design, manufacture and use of BESS.

4.28 The Strategy is based around the design, build, sustain approach with the key objectives that the UK will:

- design and develop batteries for the future;
- strengthen the resilience of UK manufacturing supply chains; and
- enable the development of a sustainable battery industry.

UK Government Clean Power 2030 Action Plan (2024)

4.29 In December 2024 the UK government published the UK Government Clean Power 2030 Action Plan which sets out a detailed plan for achieving the target of clean power by 2030. The plan sets out bold measures to get more homegrown clean power to people. These measures include: cleaning up the grid system by prioritising the most important projects and ending the 'first-come-first served' system; speeding up decisions on planning permission by empowering planners to prioritise critical energy infrastructure in England; and expanding the renewable auction process to stop delays and get more projects connected.

4.30 The foreword states that "This plan will *provide the foundation for the UK to build an energy system that can bring down bills for households and businesses for good. And it is also about creating the sort of country that we know people want to see - reindustrialising our heartlands with good jobs and tackling the climate crisis."*

4.31 It goes onto state:

"*Ultimately, we need to move fast and build things to deliver the once-in-a-generation upgrade of our energy infrastructure Britain needs. In our first five months, we've already lifted the onshore wind ban, established Great British Energy, consented almost 2 GW of solar, delivered a record-breaking renewables auction, and kickstarted our carbon capture and hydrogen industries. This is the speed at which we will continue to work.*

As the Prime Minister has made clear, clean power is an urgent priority for our country. The clean power sprint is the national security, economic security, and climate justice fight of our time - and this plan gives us the tools we need to win this fight for the British people."

4.32 The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan includes a DESNZ 'Clean Power Capacity Range', which is range of possible installed capacities for each technology that will form the pathway to 2030 targets. The Clean Power Capacity Range identifies a need for 27 – 29 GW of installed onshore wind capacity against the 14.2 GW that is operational, and a need for 45-47 GW of installed solar capacity against the 16.6 GW currently operational.

Scottish Policy

4.33 Tackling climate change is a devolved matter and therefore the Scottish Government has a responsibility to set policy to ensure compliance with targets set at EU and UK level. The Scottish Government are responsible for their climate change and planning policy. The following text sets out the current Scottish policy relevant to the consideration of the Application for the Proposed Development.

4.34 In December 2017, the Scottish Government published The Scottish Energy Strategy 'The Future of Energy in Scotland'. At the time, this policy document along with one relating specifically to onshore wind farms, represented the Scottish Government's intended energy and climate change strategy for the period to 2050. In 2021 the Scottish Government published the Scotland Energy Strategy Position Statement and in January 2023 the Scottish Government published the Scottish Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan. Further information in respect of these documents is contained in the following text.

Scottish Energy Strategy 2017

4.35 The Scottish Government published its Scottish Energy Strategy (SES 2017) in December 2017. The SES 2017 set out a vision for a strong and sustainable low carbon economy. SES 2017 described the Scottish Government's vision for the future energy system in Scotland beyond 2020 looking forward until 2050.

4.36 The SES 2017 was designed to provide a long-term vision to guide detailed energy policy decisions over the coming decades. It set out the priorities for an integrated system-wide approach that considers both the use and the supply of energy for heat, power and transport. It contained six energy priorities including increasing renewable energy production and increasing flexibility, efficiency and resilience of the energy system.

4.37 The SES 2017 advised that for Scotland to meet the domestic and international climate change targets, the Scottish Government will set a new 2030 'all-energy' target for the equivalent of 50% of Scotland's heat, transport and electricity consumption to be supplied from renewable sources. It advised that it has a vision for:

"a flourishing, competitive local and national energy sector, delivering secure, affordable, clean energy for Scotland's households, communities and businesses."

4.38 The SES 2017 set two new targets for the Scottish energy system by 2030. These were:

"The equivalent of 50% of the energy for Scotland's heat, transport and electricity consumption to be supplied from renewable sources; and

An increase by 30% in the productivity of energy use across the Scottish economy."

4.39 Reaching 50% in the 13 years from the publication of the SES 2017 would be challenging, despite the progress being made, and the SES 2017 acknowledged this.

4.40 Renewable and low carbon solutions are identified as one of six energy priorities around which the 2050 vision is built. The document advised that the Scottish Government *"will continue to champion and explore the potential of Scotland's huge renewable energy resource, and its ability to meet our local and national heat, transport and electricity."*

4.41 The SES 2017 advised *that "changes to how we store energy across the system, and particularly in terms of electricity and heat, could have a profoundly important bearing on our low carbon future."* The Proposed Development is for a renewable energy development which, at 100 MW of capacity, would have an important contribution to Scotland's capability to store clean energy.

4.42 Under the heading of Renewable Energy SES 2017 it is explicit that the Scottish long term climate change targets will require the near complete decarbonisation *"of the Scottish energy system by 2050 and that renewable energy is anticipated to meet a significant share of this".*

4.43 In the section on Onshore Wind, SES 2017 advised that at that time *"onshore wind is now amongst the lowest cost forms of power generation of any kind and is a vital component of the huge industrial opportunity that renewables create for Scotland".* This remains the case. Onshore wind was identified, in 2017, as being required to play a vital role in the future of Scotland, helping to decarbonise electricity, boosting the economy and meeting demand.

4.44 The SES considers the opportunity of solar photovoltaic (PV) development in Scotland. It advises that solar PV has the potential to make an increasing contribution to the energy needs of Scotland. It notes that: *"solar will play an important role in a low carbon energy system, helping meet Scotland's renewable generation ambitions."*

4.45 The SES 2017 noted that in order to achieve the targets means developers and communities working together and striking the right balance between environmental impacts, local support, benefit and where possible economic benefits deriving from community ownership.

Scotland's Energy Strategy Position Statement (2021)

4.46 The Scottish Government published Scotland's Energy Strategy Position Statement (SESPS) in March 2021 which provided an overview of the Scottish Government's key priorities for the short to medium-term in ensuring a green economic recovery, whilst remaining aligned to Net Zero ambitions, in the lead up to COP 26.

4.47 SESPS provided an overview of the Scottish Government's policies in relation to energy. It was obvious, at the time, that the Scottish Government would remain guided by the key principles set out in the SES and the SESPS reinforced *"the importance the Scottish Government attaches to supporting the energy sector in our journey towards net zero, thus ensuring a green, fair and resilient recovery for the Scottish economy".*

4.48 The Ministerial Foreword referenced the challenge of COVID 19 which, it stated, had created an economic crisis and noted that the Climate Emergency "*has continued unabated"*. The Foreword stated that *"in this context, the need for a just transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, in a manner that supports sustainable economic growth and jobs in Scotland, is greater than ever*".

4.49 The Forward further stated (inter alia) that:

"The potential remains for much more renewable capacity and development across Scotland…but also from the large scale deployment of… and solar PV."

4.50 The report made reference to Scotland's ambitious and world-leading legislative framework for emissions reduction and *"a particularly challenging interim target for 2030"*. This is the ambitious target of achieving a 75% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 in advance of Net Zero by 2045.

4.51 The summary of the SESPS was unambiguous that the current SES remains in place until any further Energy Strategy refresh is adopted by Ministers. The SES remains in place at the time of writing this PRES.

4.52 Section 5 of the SESPS considered 'a green economic recovery' and stated that creating green jobs was, at the time, at the heart of the Scottish Government's plans for a green economic recovery.

4.53 Onshore renewables is specifically considered in Section 8, of the SESPS where it stated that *"the continued growth of Scotland's renewable energy industry is fundamental to enable us to achieve our ambition of creating sustainable jobs as we transition to net zero".* It added that *"the Scottish Government is committed to supporting the increase of onshore wind in the right places to help meet the target of net zero. In 2019, onshore wind investment in Scotland generated over £2 billion in turnover and directly supported approximately 2,900 full time equivalent jobs across the country".*

4.54 If the UK is to meet its Net Zero targets, then there needs to be a fundamental shift away from the use of fossil fuels to generate power for sectors such as transport and heat. The shift away from the use of fossil fuels must be replaced by renewable energy and electricity generated from renewable forms is a fundamental part of the solution. The generation of renewable electricity is key to the decarbonisation of a wide number of sectors. The progress towards meeting the renewable energy targets is considered to be a key relevant consideration in the determination of the Application for the Proposed Development.

Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (DES&JTP) - Delivering a Fair and Secure Zero Carbon Energy System for Scotland (2023)

4.55 On 10 January 2023, a route map to secure Scotland's fastest possible fair and just transition away from fossil fuels towards a fair and secure zero carbon energy

system for Scotland, was published for consultation. The DES&JTP sets out a plan for Scotland's renewables revolution to be accelerated as North Sea basin resources decline. The document is a consultative draft and as such should only be attached limited weight in the decision-making process.

4.56 The Ministerial foreword advises that now more than ever there is a need for energy security. It reinforces the importance of acting now to deliver on the net zero targets. It states:

"The imperative is clear: in this decisive decade, we must deliver an energy system that meets the challenge of becoming a net zero nation by 2045, supplies safe and secure energy for all, generates economic opportunities, and build a just transition."

4.57 The DES&JTP is explicit that the situation in Ukraine, which has resulted in volatility in the global energy supply market, has heighted the need for domestic energy generation and security. It is also very clear that there is a need to reduce fuel poverty and to ensure that energy is available to consumers at a reasonable price. The foreword sets out key ambitions for Scotland's Energy Future, and identifies 10 which include the following, that are relevant to the Proposed Development:

- More than 20 GW of additional renewable electricity on and offshore by 2030;
- Increased contributions from solar and other technologies to the energy mix;
- Generation of surplus electricity, enabling export of electricity to support decarbonisation across Europe;
- Energy security through development of own resources and additional storage; and
- Just transition by maintaining or increasing employment in Scotland's energy production sector against a decline in North Sea production.

4.58 Solar energy is covered in Section 3 Paragraph 1. sub paragraph 4 of the DES&TJP. The DES&TJP notes that solar developments have an important role to play in decarbonising our energy system, particularly when combined with other renewables. It is further noted that the Scottish Government wish to continue to make considerable progress in lowering barriers to facilitate greater deployment of solar.

4.59 Onshore wind is covered at 3.1.2 and energy storage is considered at 5.1 of the DES&JTP. The Applicant is committed to maximising the contribution that energy storage can make to a just, inclusive, transition to net zero.

4.60 Published as part of the DES&JTP is a Just Transition Plan for the energy sector. This details the support being provided to grow Scotland's highly skilled energy workforce, increase jobs in energy generation and the supply chain, while enabling communities and businesses to prosper.

4.61 The DES&JTP advises that analysis shows the number of low carbon production jobs is estimated to rise from 19,000 in 2019 to 77,000 by 2050 as the result of a just energy transition, meaning there will be many more jobs in energy production in 2050 than there are now.

4.62 The DES&JTP included a draft vision for solar in Scotland and a consultation question on whether a solar deployment ambition should be set.

4.63 The Proposed Development has been designed to operate in the current and emerging market conditions and, as such, will contribute positively towards reaching the targets set out in the DES&JTP.

Onshore Wind Policy Statement 2022

4.64 The Scottish Government published the OWPS 2022 on the 21 December 2022. As a document, it dovetails with NPF4 (which is considered in this document in Chapter 7) and there are specific references within the OWPS 2022 which link the two documents. To some degree the OWPS 2022 explains some of the context for the policies that are contained in NPF4. In considering the issues relating to the Proposed Development, it is submitted that the two documents should be read together.

4.65 The key headline in the OWPS 2022 is the identification in Scottish Government Policy that we need to *"go further and faster than before"* along with the inclusion in policy of the *"minimum installed capacity of 20 GW"* ambition for onshore wind in Scotland by 2030.

4.66 The following text considers the weight that should be attached to the climate emergency in the decision-making process. It then considers the elements of the OWPS 2022 that are relevant to the Proposed Development and makes cross refence to Chapter 6 and 7 of this PRES in respect of NPF4 as it is considered appropriate.

4.67 The key policies set out in OWPS 2022 are focused on the change of ambition and the formal agreement to the higher minimum target by 2030. The text in this section, of the PRES, identifies a range of matters, relevant to the consideration of the Application within the OWPS 2022.

Weight to be Attached to the Climate Emergency

4.68 The Ministerial Foreword of the OWPS 2022 provides important context to the subsequent emergence of the ambition to achieve a minimum of 20 GW onshore wind by 2030. The Cabinet Secretary acknowledges the specific contribution that onshore wind can make to meeting climate change objectives and the transition towards a net zero society.

4.69 The Cabinet Secretary's foreword, paragraph two, identifies the issues caused to security of energy supply by the invasion of Ukraine. The Ukraine invasion has resulted in serious concerns about the extent to which Scotland's current energy system can meet demands for energy. The second aspect raised in respect of the invasion of Ukraine is the consequence for energy prices. This is one of the key contributors to the current cost of living crisis and is counter intuitive when considered in the context of the long-standing policy of providing consumers with affordable energy sources.

4.70 The Ministerial Foreword demonstrates how price competitive onshore wind is, paragraph 11 advises that onshore wind is "good value for consumers" and it can therefore make a contribution to an energy future which seeks to provide greater price certainty for consumers whilst also providing additional generation which can help to meet the future security of supply.

4.71 The Ministerial Foreword states that it is not onshore wind at any cost, paragraph 13 is clear that the ambition needs to be delivered in a way which continues to enhance Scotland's rich natural heritage and native flora and fauna and supports actions to address the nature crisis and the climate crisis.

4.72 The OWPS 2022 sets a specific renewable target which itself relates to the legally binding energy generation targets which are themselves refenced in Policy 11 of NPF4. To date, the focus of the justification for most renewable energy projects has been in relation to climate change and emissions reduction with links made to the legally binding targets which are set out in The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019. This link is a step change and one which should carry material weight in the decision-making process.

4.73 Chapter 1 of the OWPS 2022 contains specific acknowledgement of the need for the further speedy deployment of onshore wind. It states *"We must now go further and faster than before. We expect the next decade to see a substantial increase in demand for electricity to support net zero delivery across all sectors, including heat, transport, and industrial processes".* As a result of this policy ambition there is a need for a minimum installed capacity of 20 GW by 2030. If that ambition is to be achieved, consents need to be granted in early course to allow deployment as quickly as possible. Schemes consented now are likely to be delivered in 2025/2026 and an increase in deployment has to occur now. The Proposed Development has a grid connection date of 2030 and it is clear that, if consented, it could actively contribute towards the 2030 targets.

Environmental Considerations

4.74 Chapter 3 of the OWPS 2022 is entitled Environmental Considerations; Achieving Balance and Maximising Benefits, this is obvious that it is all about balance. The following text considers what the OWPS 2022 says in respect of landscape and biodiversity in the order in which they are covered in that document.

Biodiversity

4.75 Paragraph 3.5.6 refers to the role in which onshore wind can play in addressing the biodiversity crisis. It states:

"the resolution of the balance between its [onshore wind] deployment and biodiversity interests requires careful discussion and planning at a local level. As the rate of onshore wind deployment increases in the coming years, we see a great opportunity for wind energy developments to further contribute significantly to our biodiversity ambition. By proactively managing intact habitats and the species they support, restoring degraded areas and improving connectivity between nature-rich areas, onshore wind projects will contribute to our climate change targets and help address the biodiversity crisis.".

4.76 OWPS 2022 is explicit that there is an expectation that onshore wind farm development has a role to play in addressing the nature crisis and to contributing to biodiversity improvements. Annex one of the OWPS 2022 contains an example of biodiversity enhancement related to habitat management and peatland restoration. It is also obvious that there is work in progress in the form of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and the way in which the aspiration of the OWPS 2022 in respect of biodiversity can be achieved.

Landscape

4.77 The OWPS 2022 Chapter 3 includes a section which covers landscape and visual matters. In paragraph 3.6.1 there is acknowledgement of the need for taller and more efficient turbines and the recognition that these will inevitably change the landscape. It states:

"Meeting our climate targets will require a rapid transformation across all sectors of our economy and society. This means ensuring the right development happens in the right place. Meeting the ambition of a minimum installed capacity of 20 GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030 will require taller and more efficient turbines. This will change the landscape.".

4.78 Paragraph 3.6.2 of the OWPS 2017 states:

"Outside of these areas [National Parks and National Scenic Areas (NSA)], the criteria for assessing proposals have been updated, including stronger weight being afforded to the contribution of the development to the climate emergency, as well as community benefits."

4.79 This must be seen as an unequivocal acknowledgement, from the Scottish Government, that in order to achieve the 2030 targets, a higher level of landscape and visual impact will need to be accepted, this expressly includes landscape change. It is accepted that there is a need to accept change to the landscape and that increased weight should be given to the contribution of the development to the climate emergency as well as community benefits in considering the decision-making balance.

4.80 It is submitted that the OWPS 2022 provides a positive framework for considering the landscape and visual effects of wind farm proposals.

Other Environmental Matters

4.81 It is submitted that in terms of OWPS 2022 Chapter 3, the Application material has dealt with all the environmental matters raised in the OWPS 2022. With the exception of landscape and visual and cultural heritage matters no adverse significant effects, subject to mitigation being implemented, have been identified during the EIA.

Benefits to Local Communities and Financial Mechanisms

4.82 Chapter 4 of the OWPS 2022 devotes attention to benefits to local communities and financial mechanisms. While neither shared ownership nor the delivery of monetary community benefits are material to the consideration of the application for deemed planning permission it is important to recognise the benefits which such arrangements bring to the local area.

The Onshore Wind Sector Deal (2023)

4.83 The Onshore Wind Sector Deal (the Sector Deal) for Scotland was signed, by the Scottish Government and renewable energy industry representatives, in September 2023.

4.84 The Sector Deal sets out the ambition for the next era of onshore wind delivery in Scotland. The Foreword advises that Scotland stands on *the "threshold of a pivotal era"* in the energy transition. It contains a number of key measures which are

designed to support the Scottish Government in reaching its ambition, as set out in the OWPS of a minimum installed capacity of 20 GW of onshore wind, in Scotland, by 2030.

4.85 The Sector Deal is focused on onshore wind in particular and it describes how the Scottish Government, and the onshore wind sector (developers, consultants, consultees and stakeholders) will work collaboratively so that onshore wind farms can be delivered quickly and in a way that is sustainable. This approach will provide the best chance of Scotland meeting its net zero targets (the targets are set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 as amended by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019. It sets out anintent to ensure that as much is done, as is possible, to secure the 20 GW ambition set out in the OWPS.

4.86 The Sector Deal foreword (page 1) advises that: *"The Government is committed to working with developers and stakeholders, understanding the operational barriers to delivering onshore wind projects and setting out processes to help reduce them. We also commit to speeding up consenting decisions, working with planning authorities and statutory consultees to increase skills and resources, as well as streamlining approaches. Jointly, we will work together on ensuring a balance is struck between onshore wind and the impacts on land use and the environment. We will collaborate to enable information to be collected and shared from monitoring and evidence purposes, and we jointly want to capitalise on the unique opportunity for Scotland to become a world leader in decommissioning, remanufacturing and recycling of onshore wind assets."*

4.87 It goes on to state that: "*The Sector Deal is more than just a document; it is a testament to our determination, a celebration of our potential, and a promise to future generations. Let us work together to usher in an era where innovation, sustainability, and prosperity converge, as we power Scotland's greener future through the boundless energy of onshore wind"* (page 2).

4.88 The Sector Deal sets out a number of matters which are to be actioned through a collaborative approach, as well as specific actions, relating to the matters, from the onshore wind sector and the Scottish Government. These matters are set out under the following headings:

- Supply chain, skills and the circular economy;
- Community and benefits;
- Land use and the environment;
- Planning;
- Legislative and regulatory actions; and
- Technical actions.

4.89 It is submitted that of most relevance to the Application are those relating to land use and the environment and planning.

4.90 With regards to land use and the environment, the Sector Deal reiterates the fact that NPF4 Policy 1 is clear that significant weight needs to be given to the global climate and nature crisis and that *"New onshore wind projects in Scotland will enhance biodiversity and optimise land use and environmental benefits"* (page 11).

4.91 It goes onto state that *"Balancing the need for more wind farms with the safeguards defined in NPF4 will be a crucial aspect of achieving the 2030 onshore wind*

ambition. Scotland will continue to be a world leader in responsible onshore wind development, demonstrating how onshore wind can coexist with a diversity of species, sensitive habitats, peatland, carbon rich soils and forestry, ensuring positive outcomes for the climate and nature."

4.92 Under the heading of Planning the Sector Deal advises that the aim is to reduce the time it takes for section 36 applications to be determined. The Sector Deal (page 13) states that *"The ambition of 20 GW of installed onshore wind capacity by 2030 will require a significant number of new sites, the repowering and extension of existing sites and the realisation of unbuilt consented sites. Meeting this ambition will require the determination of applications to be made much more quickly than in recent years."*

Green Industrial Strategy (2024)

4.93 The Scottish Government published the Green Industrial Strategy in September 2024. The single aim of the strategy is to help Scotland realise the economic benefits of the global transition to net zero. The document is clear that the development of all renewable energy technologies is a key focus of the Scottish Government.

Programme for Government (2025)

4.94 The 2025-26 Programme for Government was published by the Scottish Government in May 2025. It advises that the government will focus on a number of matters including tackling the climate emergency. Chapter 3 of the document advises that

"This Government is working hard to address the twin crises of climate change and nature loss – the devastating consequences of which are playing out at home and abroad, including damaging wildfires and floods witnessed in Scotland recently. It is more important than ever that we embrace and champion the green revolution to improve the lives of current and future generations both here and overseas.

The journey to net zero also presents significant opportunities – for people, communities, and businesses. Between 1990 and 2022 our emissions halved while the economy grew by 66.6%, showing that a thriving economy and falling emissions can be achieved in tandem."

Conclusion

4.95 The international, UK and Scottish contexts set a framework of ambitious targets associated with climate change including those for renewable energy and Net Zero emissions. If these targets are to be met, and the economy is to decarbonise, then the need for generation of renewable energy is critical, without renewable energy it will not be possible to achieve the targets.

4.96 Scotland offers the potential for renewable energy opportunities which can be home grown and provide economic benefits which can help to ensure that the Scottish economy becomes more resilient and less reliant on traditional carbon-based fuels. Renewable energy developments, such as the Proposed Development, can play a leading role in this.

4.97 In the recent decision letter in respect of Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development (ECU reference 00003353) which has a generating capacity of 65 MW along with 15 MW of battery, the Scottish Minsters are unambiguous that *"The seriousness of climate change, its potential effects, and the need to cut carbon dioxide emissions, remain a priority for the Scottish Ministers." They went onto agree with the reporter that they "agree that the proposed Development would make an important contribution in support of Renewable Energy Policy Objectives."*

4.98 In the case of Clachaig Glen (ECU00002103) the Scottish Minster's decision letter stated that:

"It is noted by the Scottish Ministers that the proposed Development will have an installed capacity of up to 90MW and will be a valuable contribution to Scotland's renewable energy, electricity and emissions reductions targets" (paragraph 88)

4.99 The Scottish Government have recently consented a number of applications in order to facilitate the Kendoon to Tongland grid upgrade. This is a further example of the Scottish Government's commitment to facilitating the generation of renewable energy. The Proposed Development will feed into this link. The Proposed Development offers an opportunity to contribute valuable renewable energy generation and management which would assist Scotland in addressing the climate change emergency in a relatively short timeframe, and in a key decade for Scotland to address climate change.

4.100 The Proposed Development gains tangible support from the renewable energy legislation and policy framework. This should attract significant weight to the decision making process.

5. RENEWABLE ENERGY TARGETS

5.1 This chapter of the PRES outlines the targets set in law for both the UK and Scottish Governments, in respect of renewable energy targets, and sets out the progress towards the targets in Scotland.

5.2 Through policy, the UK and Scottish Governments have set very clear and ambitious legally binding targets for renewable energy and GHG emissions. These targets, and progress against these targets, are important relevant considerations in the decision-making process for the application.

5.3 The Proposed Development could make an important contribution to renewable energy targets, in particular it could assist in meeting targets before 2030.

5.4 On 11 June 2019, Theresa May, the then Prime Minister, announced that the UK Government would bring forward legislation which would make the Net Zero target law. On 27 June 2019, the UK passed legislation to end its part in global warming by 2050 through the reduction in greenhouse gasses by at least 100%. The amendment to the Climate Change Act 2008 makes this legally binding.

5.5 Paul Wheelhouse, the then Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands, in his Ministerial Foreword in the Annual Energy Statement 2019 made it clear, in the context of Scotland's net zero target by 2045 *"we [Scotland] have the most stringent statutory targets in the world".*

5.6 The Climate Change Act 2008 as amended by the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 and the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 as amended by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2024 set the UK and Scottish targets for reaching Net Zero. These acts and targets are covered in the following text.

UK and Scottish Renewable Energy Targets

5.7 As this is a project in Scotland it will contribute to the Scottish targets first and foremost, however it will also contribute to the UK targets and so those are also considered to be relevant.

UK Energy Targets

5.8 The recently elected labour Government has been very clear on its ambition for homegrown clean energy projects to boost the UK's energy security. One of the five national missions of the labour party is *"to make Britain a clean energy superpower with zero carbon electricity by 2030, and accelerating our journey to net zero"*.

5.9 An early move by the new government has been to increase funding for the energy auction (the Contracts for Difference) process and in September 2024 this delivered support for a wide variety of renewable energy projects.

5.10 The Government have set up a task force, a mission control and a number of working groups looking to deliver green energy across the UK.

The Climate Change Act 2008 as amended by the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019

5.11 The Climate Change Act 2008 (the 2008 Act) became law on 26 November 2008. Scotland is a partner in delivering the UK emissions reduction target set out in the 2008 Act.

5.12 Two key aims underpin the 2008 Act, these are:

- To improve carbon management and help the transition towards a low carbon economy in the UK; and
- To demonstrate strong UK leadership internationally.

5.13 The 2008 Act introduced for the first time a legally binding framework to tackle the challenges of climate change. It set legally binding targets for the UK to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 80% by 2050 relative to 1990 levels. Energy generated from renewable sources was identified as a key component for meeting the challenge of reducing carbon emissions and the fight against climate change.

5.14 The 2008 Act was amended in 2019 by the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 to include revised targets. These included a reduction in GHGs of at least 100% from 1990 levels by 2050. The key aims were not altered.

Scottish Energy Targets

The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) Scotland Act 2024

5.15 The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) Scotland Act 2024 introduced limits on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in Scotland over a five-year period. The approach, which is based on recommendations from the independent CCC, aims to provide a reliable framework for GHG emissions reduction.

5.16 The legislation requires carbon budgets to be set through secondary legislation based on the expert advice from the CCC. These budgets are not yet set. The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) Scotland Act 2024 also altered the deadline to finalise the next Climate Change Plan for Scotland so the Climate Change Plan can align with the process for setting the new carbon budgets.

Progress towards UK Renewable Energy Targets

Progress in Reducing Emissions 2024 Report to Parliament

5.17 The CCC Progress in Reducing Emissions Report to Parliament was published in July 2024. It advised (page 8) that urgent action is needed to get on track if the UK is to hit the 2030 target. It states: *"The UK has committed to reduce emissions in 2030 by 68% compared to 1990 levels, as its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement. It is the first UK target set in line with Net Zero. Now only six years away, the country is not on track to hit this target despite a significant reduction in emissions in 2023."*

5.18 The Introduction of the document contains a number of key messages which include the following:

- UK GHG emissions – fell in 2023 and are 49.5% lower than they were in 1990. The rate of emissions reduction seen in 2023 represents a significant increase

from recent sustained rates and is roughly in line with the pace of change needed out to 2030.

- Change from 2022 to 2023 – were the greatest since 2016 other than during the Covid pandemic. This was largely due to a fall in the total gas demand.
- Pace of change - the reduction in emissions in 2023 was roughly in line with the annual pace of change needed to meet the UK's 2030 NDC (5.7% per year from 2023 to 2030). However, the average annual rate over the previous seven years was insufficient. This rate will need to double over the next 7 years if the UK is to meet its target for 2030.

Climate Change Committee, COP 28: Key Outcomes and Next Steps for the UK (January 2024)

5.19 The CCC published a report and related Statement in January 2024 with looking at COP28 and the next steps for the UK. The Key Outcomes and Next Steps for the UK advised that:

"2023 was the hottest year on record, with worsening extreme weather events across the world. With global greenhouse gas emissions at an all-time high, COP28 took important steps to try to change the direction of travel.

The UK played an important role in this hard-fought COP28 outcome. We may be further into the decarbonisation journey than many nations, but the obligation on every country is now to push even harder. This also frames the economic challenge."

5.20 In the context of the next steps for the UK the CCC *"noted a significant delivery gap to the UK's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of reducing emissions by 68% by 2030. The agreements made at COP28 require a sharper domestic response and time is now short for the gap to be bridged.*

Achieving the 2030 NDC will require the rate of emission reductions outside of the electricity sector to quadruple from that of recent years. Addressing these gaps in a transparent way remains one of the most important ways for the UK to show climate leadership."

5.21 The related COP28: Key Outcome and next Steps for the UK Report set out the following points inter alia:

- *"The Global Stocktake undertaken at COP28 marks the first formal assessment of progress of the Paris Agreement process and it reinforced the growing momentum in renewables and other low carbon technology deployment.*
- *Countries were called upon to support a trebling of renewables globally….. Alongside this was the crucial brokering of recognition of the need to transition away from all fossil fuels to achieve a net zero energy system by 2050.*
- *The UK can continue to lead by example and support actions elsewhere to accelerate the pace of the low carbon transition and develop resilience to climate impacts. It must demonstrate delivery towards to its ambitious 2030 and 2035 targets on the path to Net Zero."*

5.22 The COP28: Key Outcome and next Steps for the UK Report sets out the 'next steps for the UK'. In this context there is reference to opportunities for climate leadership. The COP28: Key Outcome and next Steps for the UK Report identifies

actions that will be important for ensuring domestic action is consistent with the language that the UK committed to at COP28. These include:

- Delivering rapid deployment of renewables.
- The UK must continue to focus on addressing delivery gaps to the 2030 NDC. Reference is made to the CCC findings in 2023 that if the UK is to achieve its 2030 NDC then the rate of emissions reduction *"outside electricity supply must almost quadruple from 1.2 % annual reductions to 4.7 %".*
- The UK Government only has renewables deployment targets for offshore wind (aiming for up to 50 GW by 2030) and solar PV (aiming for up to 70 GW by 2035).

5.23 At the time the CCC published these documents there was a lack of policy support for onshore wind in England. Scotland and Wales were both delivering contributions to targets. The CCC made it clear that:

"UK targets for offshore wind and solar PV are broadly consistent with COP28 calls to triple renewable energy capacity by 2030. However, a tripling of total renewable energy capacity (on 2022 levels) would also require growth in onshore wind."

5.24 The CCC made it clear that, according to their findings the UK Government is currently not on track to meet its renewables targets. It advised that in order to support the ambitions agreed at COP28 *"and to meet the target of a decarbonised electricity supply by 2035, the Government must increase efforts to deliver against its existing targets on time"*.

Solar Targets

5.25 On 28 October 2023 the Scottish Parliament Minister for Energy and the Environment announced an ambition to deploy between 4 – 6 GW of solar energy by 2023. The Scottish Government agrees there is a strong interest in providing solar PV development and that deployment of solar PV development that will help increase the diversity of Scotland's energy mix.

Progress towards Scottish Renewable Energy Targets

Climate Change Committee, Progress in Reducing Emissions in Scotland 2023, Progress Report to Parliament (March 2024)

5.26 The CCC published Progress in Reducing Emissions in Scotland in March 2024. The CCC was clear in its view at that time that Scottish Government's 2030 climate goals were no longer credible.

5.27 Progress in Reducing Emissions in Scotland was clear that it was the view of the CCC that Scotland's Climate Change Plan required urgent application to enable the CCC to assess it and identify the actions to deliver on future targets.

5.28 Progress in Reducing Emissions in Scotland states that *"The Scottish Government should build on its high ambition and implement policies that enable the 75 % emissions reduction target to be achieved at the earliest date possible."*

5.29 The Progress in Reducing Emissions in Scotland considers electricity supply, and it advises that there has been progress in the delivery of renewable electricity generation in Scotland. The Progress in Reducing Emissions in Scotland notes that

the Scottish Government aims to develop 20 GW on onshore wind capacity, by 2030. It notes that *"The growth in onshore wind capacity has slowed, however, and is slightly off track to deliver its 2030 target, which will require operational capacity to more than double."*

5.30 Progress in Reducing Emissions in Scotland advises that Scotland must increase the deployment rate for onshore wind by more than a factor of 4 to an average annual rate of 1.4 GW.

Progress Towards Renewable Energy Targets

5.31 The Scottish Government had a long-standing target to generate the equivalent of 100% of gross energy consumption in Scotland from renewable sources by 2020. This is a target that was not achieved.

5.32 The SES 2017 contained a target for 50% energy from renewable sources by 2030 which it advised may require in the region of 17 GW of installed renewables capacity by 2030 (SES page 34). This is considered to be a less ambitious target than more recent targets, the most up to date of which is contained on the OWPS 2022. The OWPS 2022 target of 20 GW of onshore wind by 2030 is considered to be the most relevant policy target for the Proposed Development.

5.33 Figures released in the Energy Statistics for Scotland (March 2025) show that as of the end of 2024, there is 17.6 GW of renewable electricity capacity in Scotland. It shows that as of the same time there was an estimated 37.5 GW of renewable electricity generation projects in the planning pipeline. NB these figures include all forms of renewable energy.

5.34 Figure 5.1 is an extract from the Energy Statistics for Scotland Q4 2024 figures which clearly show the position in respect of different generating technologies.

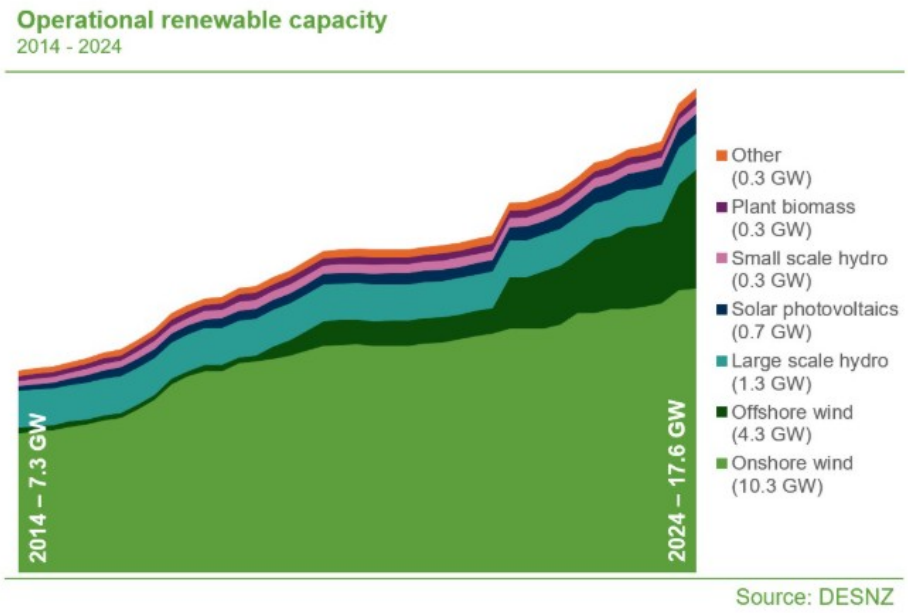


Figure 5.1: Latest Operational Renewable Capacity

Source: Energy Statistics for Scotland – Q4 2024 – www.gov.scot

Progress Towards Onshore Wind Targets

5.35 The OWPS 2022 sets a target of a minimum installed capacity of 20 GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030. It advise at that time that Scotland had 8.7 GW of installed onshore wind capacity. Figure 1.1 shows that this figure has increased to 10.3 GW by the end of 2024. This is an increase of 1.6 GW in two years.

5.36 Based on the progress in the last two years Scotland will not meet its ambition of 20 MW operation capacity from onshore wind by 2030. 1.6 GW in 18 months is not quick enough. The challenge of moving from the current situation to 20 GW of installed capacity for onshore wind in less than six years is clear.

5.37 The OWPS 2022 advises that there is some 5.53 GW of potential capacity which is in planning or consenting and 1.17 GW under construction. The most recent energy statics advise that these figures are now 1.4 GW under construction, 5.4 GW awaiting construction and 8.1 GW in the planning pipeline.

5.38 It must be remembered that not all of the schemes in 8.1GW of potential capacity will be consented and not all of the projects consented will be constructed for a variety of reasons including the fact that some projects are no longer viable, not all will have grid connection dates before 2030 and some are currently constrained by Eskdalemuir Seismic Array to name but a few reasons. The figure in this category has remained relatively static between the end of 2022 and the end of 2024.

Proposed Development Contribution to Targets and National Policy Objectives

5.39 The Proposed Development would have a combined rated output of around 80 MW. A battery energy storage system would also be installed with a capacity of up to 20 MW giving a total capacity for the Proposed Development of around 100 MW. The prospective electricity generation from the proposed wind turbines equates to the annual power consumed by up to approximately 39,762 average Scottish households. The Proposed Development would provide a flexible balance of fully renewable electricity to meet the demands of the National Grid.

5.40 In the case of Lethans Extension Wind Farm (ECU reference 00002221) the Scottish Minster's decision letter stated that: *"The Scottish Ministers are satisfied that the proposed Development will provide a contribution to renewable energy targets and carbon savings in support of the ambitions of the SES and OWPS".* Lethans is a development with an installed capacity of approximately 60 MW.

5.41 In the case of Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development (ECU Reference 00003353) the Scottish Minsters advised "*that the proposed Development would provide a positive contribution towards meeting Scottish Government targets".* Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development has an anticipated generating capacity of 65 MW.

6. PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

6.1 This chapter of the PRES sets out details of the relevant planning policy when considering the Application for the Proposed Development. It first considers the Development Plan and then other relevant Scottish Planning Guidance. This chapter does not provide an assessment against the policies which include a mix of spatial and development control policies, rather it identifies the relevant policy. Chapter 7 then considers the Proposed Development in the context of the development control policies.

6.2 The Development Plan comprises the NPF4 and the Local Development Plan. Where the Local Development Plan has been adopted prior to the adoption and publication of NPF4, as is the case in this situation, the legislation (the 1997 Act section 24(3)) is clear that in the event of any incompatibility between a provision of NPF4 and a provision of the Local Development Plan the provision of NPF4 is to prevail.

6.3 In the context of the Proposed Development, which is subject to an application submitted under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989, the Development Plan does not have primacy (as explained in Chapter 3 of this PRES). That said, the weight to be attached to NPF4 as a relevant consideration is considered to be substantial given its approval by the Scottish Parliament, its detailed focus on renewables and other relevant topics, and given its relatively recent adoption and status as a national development.

National Planning Framework 4

6.4 NPF4 was laid before the Scottish Parliament on the 8 November 2022 for approval. NPF4 received final approval from the Scottish Parliament on the 11 January 2023 and was adopted by the Scottish Ministers on the 13 February 2023.

6.5 NPF4 contains a strong and clear spatial strategy, it is clear on the weight that should be given to addressing the climate emergency and nature crisis when assessing applications. In the case of Clashindarroch (ECU reference 00002002) the first inquiry into the proposed development was held prior to the addition of NPF4. Following the inquiry the Reporter recommended that the proposed development be refused consent on landscape and visual grounds. The Inquiry was reopened following the adoption of NPF4 and the Reporter revised their recommendation and recommended that consent be granted for the proposed development. In their decision the Scottish Minsters found that although the proposed development would have a significant landscape and visual effect that development was acceptable. The decision letter states:

"the proposed Development will have significant adverse landscape and visual effects (including some on views from houses and on visitors to Tap o' Noth), however the Scottish Ministers find that these negative impacts on the natural environment are acceptable in the context of the net economic benefits and significant renewable energy benefits, in support of climate change mitigation, that would arise if the proposed Development were deployed."

6.6 This is clear evidence of the revised balance which is to be struck between the benefits and impacts of renewable energy as a result of NPF4.

6.7 NPF4 removes the Spatial Framework for Onshore Wind Farms (Spatial Framework) and replaces it with a strategic spatial strategy which clearly supports onshore wind electricity generation and associated grid infrastructure throughout Scotland. Policy 11 is clear that that wind farms in NSAs and National Parks will not be supported. Outwith these areas, NPF4 states that proposals for all forms of renewable energy, including onshore wind farms "will be supported". Applications will instead only be required to be considered against detailed policy factors.

NPF4 Part 1: A National Spatial Strategy for Scotland

6.8 Part 1 of NPF4 sets out the national spatial strategy and regional spatial priorities for different parts of Scotland. There are six spatial principles identified which will influence all plans and decisions, comprising:

- Just transition;
- Conserving and recycling assets;
- Local living;
- Compact urban growth;
- Rebalanced development; and
- Rural revitalisation.

6.9 Application of these spatial principles will support the planning and delivery of:

- Sustainable Places – where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity;
- Liveable Places – where we can all live better, healthier lives; and
- Productive Places – where we have a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy.

6.10 The commentary on 'Sustainable Places' is the most relevant section of NPF4 Part 1 to this application. The commentary on page 6 notes the legislative basis for Scotland's net-zero greenhouse gas emissions target by 2045 and notes that *"we must make significant progress towards this by 2030"*.

6.11 On page 7 it goes on to note that *"every decision on our future development must contribute to make Scotland a more sustainable place"*. There is encouragement for the expansion of renewable energy generation as well as a statement that "*to respond to the global biodiversity crisis, nature recovery must be at the heart of future places."*

6.12 Six national developments are identified on page 7 which will help deliver sustainable places, one of which includes 'Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure' which *"supports electricity generation and associated grid infrastructure throughout Scotland, providing employment opportunities for community benefit, helping to reduce emissions and improve security of supply.*".

6.13 Annex B (page 97) of NPF4 sets out that 18 National Developments have been identified. These are described as *"significant developments of national importance that will help to deliver the spatial strategy…National development status does not*

grant planning permission for the development and all relevant consents are required".

6.14 It adds that:

"Their designation means that the principle of the development does not need to be agreed in later consenting processes, providing more certainty for communities, businesses and investors…In addition to the statement of need at Annex B, decision makers for applications for consent for national developments should take into account all relevant policies.".

6.15 Annex B sets out the Statements of Need for all 18 - National Developments. It explains that these are significant developments of national importance that will help to deliver the Spatial Strategy. It states on page 99 that:

"The statements of need set out in this annex are a requirement of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and describe the development to be considered as a national development for consent handling purposes.".

6.16 Page 103 of NPF4 describes National Development 3, stating:

"This national development supports renewable electricity generation, repowering, and expansion of the electricity grid.

A large and rapid increase in electricity generation from renewable sources will be essential for Scotland to meet its net zero emissions targets. Certain types of renewable electricity generation will also be required, which will include energy storage technology and capacity, to provide the vital services, including flexible response, that a zero carbon network will require. Generation is for domestic consumption as well as for export to the UK and beyond, with new capacity helping to decarbonise heat, transport and industrial energy demand. This has the potential to support jobs and business investment, with wider economic benefits.

The electricity transmission grid will need substantial reinforcement including the addition of new infrastructure to connect and transmit the output from new on and offshore capacity to consumers in Scotland, the rest of the UK and beyond. Delivery of this national development will be informed by market, policy and regulatory developments and decisions.".

6.17 Under the commentary on 'Need', NPF4 states that *"Additional electricity generation from renewables and electricity transmission capacity of scale is fundamental to achieving a net zero economy…"*.

6.18 The location for this National Development is set out as being all of Scotland and in terms of need it is described as:

"Additional electricity generation from renewables and electricity transmission capacity of scale is fundamental to achieving a net zero economy and supports improved network resilience in rural and island areas.".

6.19 Reference is made to the designation and classes of development which would qualify as such, and it states in this regard:

"A development contributing to 'Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission' in the location described, within one or more of the Classes of Development described below and that is of a scale or type that would otherwise

have been classified as 'major' by 'The Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009', is designated a national development:

(A) on and off shore electricity generation, including electricity storage, from renewables exceeding 50 megawatts capacity;

(B) new and/or replacement upgraded on and offshore high voltage electricity transmission lines, cables and interconnectors of 132kv or more; and

(C) new and/or upgraded Infrastructure directly supporting on and offshore high voltage electricity lines, cables and interconnectors including converter stations, switching stations and substations."

6.20 Page 8 of NPF4 sets out 'Cross-cutting Outcome and Policy Links' with regard to reducing GHG emissions. It states:

"The global climate emergency and the nature crisis have formed the foundations for the spatial strategy as a whole. The regional priorities share opportunities and challenges for reducing emissions and adapting to the long-term impacts of climate change, in a way which protects and enhances our natural environment."

6.21 It then goes on to note that the nature crisis and the global climate emergency underpin the spatial strategy as a whole within the 'Improving Biodiversity' outcome and policy link.

6.22 These policy links clarify how NPF4 will help achieve the stated Outcomes through reference to relevant policies and summary commentary on each. The most relevant policies to the Proposed Development are discussed later in this statement.

6.23 Commentary on the National Spatial Strategy in Part 1 of NPF4 is supported by commentary on five Regional Spatial Priorities, each of which will contribute in their own different ways to achievement of the National Spatial Strategy. The Proposed Development is located within the 'South Regional Area', shown indicatively in the map on page 35 of NPF4. The introduction to this sections notes that *"This area is ambitious for positive change in the coming year, and the immediate work to recover from the pandemic will form the basis of a longer term plan to respond to the challenges of climate change and support nature restoration and recovery".*

6.24 National Development 3 'Strategic Renewable Energy Generation and Transmission Infrastructure' is identified as one of 18 National Developments that will support delivery of the spatial strategy for the South Region.

6.25 NPF4 Part 2: National Planning Policy Part 2 of NPF4 sets out 33 national planning policies, under the headings of:

- Sustainable Places;
- Liveable Places; and
- Productive Places.

6.26 Most of the policies of relevance to the Proposed Development are set out under the Sustainable Places heading, which considers tackling the climate and nature crises. For each policy, NPF4 provides commentary on Policy Intent and Policy Outcomes and then discusses implications of the policy for Local Development

Plans. Following the policy wording, NPF4 then sets out statements on Policy Impact and cross references to other Key Policy Connections.

Sustainable Places

6.27 In terms of 'Sustainable Places', relevant policies for the Proposed Development include the following:

- Policy 1: Tackling the Climate and Nature Crisis;
- Policy 3: Biodiversity;
- Policy 4: Natural Places;
- Policy 5: Soils;
- Policy 6: Forestry Woodland and Trees
- Policy 7: Historic Assets and Places;
- Policy 11: Energy; and
- Policy 22: Flood Risk and Water Management.

6.28 These policies are considered in more detail in the following text. The assessment of the Proposed Development against each policy is contained in Chapter 7 of this PRES.

Policy 11 – Energy

6.29 Policy 11 is the most relevant to the Proposed Development and is considered to be the lead policy for the consideration of the Application. The intent of Policy 11 intent is set out as:

"to encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore. This includes energy generation, storage, new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure and emerging low carbon and zero emission technologies including hydrogen and carbon capture utilisation and storage."

6.30 Policy Outcomes are identified as *"expansion of renewable, low carbon and zero emission technologies".*

6.31 The intent and desired outcome of the policy is expressly clear – the expansion of renewable energy, through encouragement, promotion and facilitation which the Proposed Development, as a nationally important development, would help further.

6.32 The following text sets out the elements of the policy which need to be considered in the context of the Proposed Development.

Location

6.33 The first part of Policy 11 states (inter alia):

"a) Development proposals for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies will be supported. These include:

i. wind farms including repowering, extending expanding, and extending the life of existing wind farms;
iii. energy storage, such as battery storage and pumped storage hydro;
v. solar arrays

b) Development proposals for wind farms in National Parks and National Scenic Areas will not be supported".

Net Economic Benefit

6.34 NPF4 Policy 11c) details that *"proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities".*

National and international Designations

6.35 NPF4 Policy 11d) advises that development proposals that impact on international or national designations will be assessed in relation to Policy 4.

Impacts to be Addressed

6.36 Policy 11(e) requires that a proposed development, through its design and mitigation, demonstrates how a number of impacts are addressed by the development. These matters are as follows:

"i. impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact, noise and shadow flicker;

ii. significant landscape and visual impacts, recognising that such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/ or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable;

iii. public access, including impact on long distance walking and cycling routes and scenic routes;

iv. impacts on aviation and defence interests including seismological recording;

v. impacts on telecommunications and broadcasting installations, particularly ensuring that transmission links are not compromised;

vi. impacts on road traffic and on adjacent trunk roads, including during construction;

vii. impacts on historic environment;

viii. effects on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk;

ix. biodiversity including impacts on birds; x. impacts on trees, woods and forests;

xi. proposals for the decommissioning of developments, including ancillary infrastructure, and site restoration;

xii. the quality of site restoration plans including the measures in place to safeguard or guarantee availability of finances to effectively implement those plans; and

xiii. cumulative impacts".

6.37 The way in which the Proposed Development responds to these matters is set out in Chapter 7 of this PRES.

6.38 Policy 11, part e) also incorporates a paragraph which is important in considering the acceptability of renewable energy proposals. At the end of part e) there is the following statement, *"In considering these impacts, significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets."*

Policy 1 – Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises

6.39 Policy 1 states significant weight will be given to the global climate and nature crises. The intention of the policy is to *"encourage, promote and facilitate development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crises"*. The Policy Outcomes are *"Zero carbon, nature positive places".*

6.40 This policy applies to all forms of development and not just renewable energy proposals. The reference to the need to give 'significant weight' to the global climate and nature crises in this overarching policy aligns with Policy 11 and shows the seriousness with which Ministers are treating these issues. In the Explanatory Report accompanying NPF4, and in response to comments from consultees, it is noted in the table on page 73 that Policy 1 *"gives significant weight to the global climate crisis in order to ensure that it is recognised as a priority in all plans and decisions"*.

6.41 The chief planner's letter of February 2023 advises that *"This policy prioritises the climate and nature crises in all decisions. It should be applied together with the other policies in NPF4. It will be for the decision maker to determine whether the significant weight to be applied tips the balance in favour for, or against a proposal on the basis of its positive or negative contribution to the climate and nature crises."*

Policy 3 – Biodiversity

6.42 The Policy Intent of Policy 3 is *"to protect biodiversity, reverse biodiversity loss, deliver positive benefits from development and strengthen nature networks". The Policy Outcomes is stated as "Biodiversity is enhanced and better connected including through strengthened nature networks and nature-based solutions".*

6.43 The policy sets out a range of criteria that vary depending upon the scale and type of development proposed. Part (a) applies to all scales of development and states that proposals will contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity including, inter alia, restoring degraded habitats and building and strengthening nature networks and the connections between them.

6.44 Part (b) relates to national or major development or for development that requires an Environmental Impact Assessment. This part of Policy 3 states that proposals will only be supported where they will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity *"so that they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention"*. Part (b) continues and sets five criteria that proposals will be expected to meet.

6.45 Policy 3 does not provide any guidance on how 'significant enhancements' will be considered in the decision making process. The letter from the Chief Planner issued on 08 February 2023 refers to the application of policy where specific supporting guidance for assessment is not available. The document states:

"recognising that currently there is no single accepted methodology for calculating and / or measuring biodiversity 'enhancement' – we have commissioned research to explore options for development a biodiversity metric or other tool, specifically for use in Scotland. There will be some proposals which will not give rise for opportunities to contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity, and it will be for the decision maker to take into account the policies in NPF4 as a whole, together with material considerations in each case".

6.46 The Scottish Government published 'Draft Planning Guidance: Biodiversity' in November 2023. Paragraph 1.1 states that it: *"Sets out the Scottish Minister's expectations for implementing NPF4 policies which support the cross cutting NPF4 outcome 'improving biodiversity."*

6.47 The draft guidance makes reference to Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy, which it states sets targets for halting biodiversity loss by 2030 and restoring and regenerating biodiversity by 2045. The guidance states that *"The terms 'enhance' and 'enhancement' are widely used in NPF4. In order for biodiversity to be 'enhanced' it will need to be demonstrated that it will be in an overall better state than before intervention, and that this will be sustained in the future. Development proposals should clearly set out the type and scale of enhancements they will deliver".*

6.48 The guidance considers development planning and, in terms of development proposals and sets out some 'core principles.' It states that *"Applying these principles will not only help to secure biodiversity enhancements, they can also help to deliver wider policy objectives including for green and blue infrastructure, open space, nature based solutions, nature networks and 30 x 30. Development proposals which follow these steps are also much more likely to result in more pleasant and enriching places to live, work and spend time."* The principles are as follows:

- *"apply the mitigation hierarchy as defined in the glossary of NPF4;*
- *consider biodiversity from the outset;*
- *provide synergies and connectivity for nature;*
- *integrate nature to deliver multiple benefits;*
- *prioritise on-site enhancement before off-site delivery;*
- *take a place-based and inclusive approach;*
- *ensure long term enhancement is secured; and*
- *additionality."*

6.49 The draft guidance makes reference to the determination of planning applications. It is clear that NPF4 must be read and applied as a whole. Specific reference to NPF4 Policy 3 (Biodiversity) Part 3 b) is made and the guidance includes the following:

- NPF4 does not specify or require a particular assessment approach or methodology to be used, although the policy makes clear that best practice assessment methods should be followed.
- Assessments can be qualitative or quantitative (including the use of a metric).
- NatureScot is to develop a biodiversity metric which is suitable for use in supporting the delivery of NPF4 Policy 3 b). Further information will be provided on this work *"in due course".*
- The absence of a universally adopted Scottish methodology/tool should not be used to delay decision making.
- A flexible approach is required to applications coming forward prior to a methodology being prescribed.
- Relevant, information and evidence gathered for statutory and other assessments including EIA, can be utilised to demonstrate the ways in which the policy tests set out in NPF4 policy 3 have been met.
- Where a developer choses to use an established metric or tool, the submission should define the way in which it has taken account of Scotland's habitats and

environmental conditions. In the event that an established metric or tool has been modified, the changes made and the reasons for such changes should be set out.

- It is for a planning authority to determine whether the relevant policy criteria have been met, taking into consideration the circumstances of a proposed development.

6.50 The guidance advises that *"NPF4 does not specify how much enhancement or 'net gain' should be delivered, though biodiversity should clearly be left in a 'demonstrably better state' than without intervention. Rather, the selection and design of enhancements will be a matter of judgement based on the circumstances of the individual case, taking into account a range of considerations."*

6.51 In early 2024 NatureScot consulted on 'a Biodiversity Metric for Scotland's Planning System'. The document set out work that NatureScot was commissioned by the Scottish Government to develop a biodiversity metric for Scotland's planning system, to support delivery of NPF4 policy 3(b).

6.52 The consultation did does not suggest solutions or provide conclusions on specific aspects of the Scottish biodiversity metric which is to be developed. Work on developing a Scottish biodiversity metric is ongoing.

6.53 In online advice dated 20 September 2024 NatureScot advise that

- *"Development proposals should clearly set out the type and scale of enhancement they will deliver, ensuring that applications clearly distinguish between those elements mitigating or compensating for adverse effects and those delivering enhancement.*
- *Developers should prioritise on-site enhancement before off-site delivery. Where purely on-site enhancement is not possible, the Scottish Government draft guidance sets out further considerations for off-site delivery.*
- *It is also important that applications demonstrate that the enhancement is to be secured within a reasonable timescale and with reasonable certainty, including appropriate management and monitoring arrangements, and sustained for the future (preferably in perpetuity) in order to deliver a lasting legacy.*
- *Information on predicted losses, and the proposed mitigation, compensation and enhancement should be clearly set out, and also concisely summarised, in any application, so that this can be easily understood by decision makers.*
- *Enhancement requires consideration of all biodiversity (including birds and other protected species) , not just the significant effects that are the focus of EIA."*

6.54 Part c) of Policy 3, relates to local developments and is not relevant to the Application.

6.55 Part d) of Policy 3 relates to the need to assess the cumulative impact of a proposed development on biodiversity, nature networks and the natural environment. This is considered in the context of Policy 11.

Policy 4 – Natural Places

6.56 This policy sets the basis for assessing applications that affect European natural heritage designations such as SPAs as well as proposals affecting National Parks and NSAs and also local level natural heritage and landscape designations. The

Policy Intent is to *"protect, restore and enhance natural assets making best use of nature-based solutions"*.

6.57 There are two Policy Outcomes, including (i) *"Natural Places are protected and restored"* and (ii) *"Natural assets are managed in a sustainable way that maintains and grows their essential benefits and services"*.

6.58 Part a) of Policy 4 advises that development proposals which would have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment will not be supported.

6.59 Part b) of Policy 4, refers to developments which will have a significant effect on European sites and advises that if they have a significant impact on such areas, and are not directly connected with or necessary of their management, will require to be the subject of appropriate assessment. The Proposed Development does not trigger an appropriate assessment and therefore this policy is not relevant.

6.60 Part c) is relevant to developments which would affect a nationally designated area. It states:

"Development proposals that will affect a National Park, National Scenic Area, Site of Scientific Interest or a National Nature Reserve. will only be supported where:
i. The objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the areas will not be compromised; or
ii. Any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance."

6.61 The approach to the criteria should be considered as a two limb policy in which it is possible to pass one limb while failing the other. This approach is consistent with SNH's 'Notes on Legislative and Policy Framework for National Parks and National Scenic Areas'. This is also the approach that the Reporters took at Caplich (note that this was considered in the context of Scottish Planning Policy 2014 (SPP) however the wording in the NPF4 is almost the same) where the Reporter found, at paragraph 3.141, that:

"When considering the acceptability of a proposal's effects on an NSA, SPP paragraph 212 offers two potential routes to consent. The first is if it can be demonstrated that the objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the NSA would not be compromised. The alternative is where significant effects on the qualities for which the NSA was designated would be clearly outweighed by benefits of the scheme."

6.62 He went on at 3.143 to state that *"In addition, it is clear that the two alternative routes to consent in paragraph 212 only make sense if the first applies to development that would cause little harm. If it permitted development that would cause significant harm to the special qualities of the NSA then there would have been no need for the second test, which deals with such development and requires it to be weight against the benefits of the proposal."*

6.63 In development control policies, which are constructed in the way NPF4 Policy 4c is constructed, it is usual to consider the first limb and then only consider limb two if the first is failed. This approach is consistent with the approach of the Reporters in the case of Corriegarth, they concluded *that "Part c) of Policy 4 limits the circumstances in which development affecting certain national designations will be*

supported. The only relevant designation affected by this proposal would be the Cairngorms National Park, where there would be a significant effect on its 'vastness of space, scale and height' special landscape quality as experienced from hill summits at its north-western periphery. However, we have already found this localised effect would not undermine the national park's overall integrity or designation objectives. As such there is no issue with criterion i) of this part of the policy and it follows that criterion ii) is therefore not engaged"

6.64 There have been a number of decisions where the impact of a proposed wind farm on a nationally designated landscape is acceptable. It is clear from the decisions that a decision maker may conclude, as was the case in Corriegarth II, that identified significant effects on a national landscape designation do not warrant the refusal of consent. In the case of Achany, NatureScot concluded that *"that there would be some significant adverse effects on the special landscape quality ("SLQ") Significant tracts of wild land for the Assynt-Coigach NSA. However we are of the view that whilst these effects are significant, they are moderated both by the distance [10km] of the proposed development from the NSA and by its proximity to existing wind farms, so would not adversely affect the integrity of the NSA."* In their decision letter the Scottish Minsters concluded that *"it is therefore considered by the Scottish Ministers that the landscape and visual impacts, including on the NSA, are acceptable".*

6.65 In the case of Caplich the Reporter concluded, (paragraph 3.143), that:

"It [SNH] defines 'overall integrity' as the wholeness of the area, the unity or soundness of the whole being unimpaired, recognising that the entire area of the designation is valued. Consequently, it [SNH] contends that adverse effects to part of it, is damage to the unity or soundness of the whole. This is rather more strict than if one had interpreted 'overall integrity' as being breached only by development that would have effects across a wide area of the NSA. However, given the national importance of NSAs and the need for great care to be taken in their protection, it seems reasonable."

6.66 In the case of Caplich, SNH at the time described the landscape of the Assynt-Coigach NSA as a landscape that is unparalleled in Britain (paragraph 3.37). Wild land was also an issue and a matter relevant to the consideration of applications at that time. The Reporter found that the proposal would harm some of the special qualities of the NSA such that the overall integrity of the NSA would be compromised along with a number of other matters. The Reporter, in the case of Caplich, undertook the balancing exercise as required by the second limb of the policy and ultimately on that occasion found that the development was not acceptable. The Scottish Minsters agreed with the findings of the Reporter in the case of Caplich and this is noted in their Decision Letter.

6.67 Part d), of Policy 4, refers to locally designated sites for landscape or biodiversity and provides that their integrity or qualities for which they are designated will be protected. The Proposed Development would not effect such a site and therefore this policy is not relevant.

6.68 Part e) of Policy 4, requires the application of the precautionary principle in accordance with legislation.

6.69 Part f) of Policy 4 is relevant to species protected by legislation. It states:

"Development proposals that are likely to have an adverse effect on species protected by legislation will only be supported where the proposal meets the relevant statutory tests. If there is reasonable evidence to suggest that a protected species is present on a site or may be affected by a proposed development, steps must be taken to establish its presence. The level of protection required by legislation must be factored into the planning and design of development, and potential impacts must be fully considered prior to the determination of any application."

6.70 Part g) relates to development within Wild Land Areas. The Proposed Development is not within such an area. This policy is not relevant to the consideration of the Application.

Policy 5 – Soils

6.71 The Intent of Policy 5 is to *"protect carbon-rich soils, restore peatlands and minimise disturbance to soils from development". The Policy Outcomes include "valued soils are protected and restored"*.

6.72 Part a) of Policy 5 requires that developments are designed and constructed in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy.

6.73 Part b) of Policy 5 relates to development on prime agricultural land, the Proposed Development would not be located on Prime Agricultural Land and therefore is not relevant to the consideration of the Application.

6.74 Part c) of Policy c) advises on the types of development that will be supported in area of peatland, carbon rich soils and priority peatland habitat. Part (c)(ii) of the policy notes that proposals for the generation of energy from renewable sources are one of the identified land uses potentially permitted on areas of peatland, carbon-rich soils and priority peatland.

6.75 Part (d) of this policy notes the requirements for a detailed site-specific assessment to help understand the presence of peat and carbon-rich soils on a site and to enable the likely effects of a development proposal on these resources. It continues that this should inform careful project design and that impacts should first be avoided and then minimised through best practice.

6.76 Part e) of policy 5 relates proposals for commercial peat extraction and irt snot relevant to the Proposed Development.

Policy 6 - Forestry, Woodland and Trees

6.77 This policy seeks to protect and expand forests, woodland and trees.

6.78 Part a) of Policy relates to proposals for woodland planting.

6.79 Part b) of the policy provides a set of criteria which would result in a development not being supported. These include the loss of ancient woodland and trees, adverse impact on native woodland and hedgerows which have a high biodiversity value, fragmentation of woodland habitats and conflict with restocking directions.

6.80 Part c) of Policy 6 sets out circumstances where woodland removal would be supported. It requires compensatory planting in such situations, in line with the Scottish Government's Policy of Woodland Removal.

6.81 Policy 6 d) refers to development which would effect areas located in areas identified for woodland creation and provides criteria which should be met for such proposals to be supported.

Policy 7 – Historic Assets and Places

6.82 This policy seeks to protect and enhance historic environment assets and places and to enable positive change as a catalyst for the regeneration of places. Part a) of Policy 7 advises that development proposals with a potentially significant impact on historic assets or places will be accompanied by an assessment of the cultural heritage significance of the asset.

6.83 Parts b) and c) relate to the demolition and reuse of listed buildings and therefore are not relevant to the consideration of the Application. The second part of c) relates to development which would affect the setting of a Listed Building. This part of the policy is relevant to the consideration of the Application.

6.84 Parts d), e),f) and g) relate to development within or effecting Conservation Areas and therefore are not relevant to the consideration of the Appliciaton.

6.85 Part h) of Policy 7 relates to development which would affect or impact a Scheduled Monument. It advises that direct impacts are to be avoided. Significant impacts on the integrity of the setting of a scheduled monument will not be supported unless there are exceptional circumstances and impacts on the monument or its setting have been minimised.

6.86 Part i) covers situations where developments which would affect nationally important Gardens and Designed Landscapes will be supported. Part k) seeks to protect the coast edge where preservation objectives of Historic Marine Protected Areas will not be hindered. Part l) advises that development proposals affecting World Heritage Sites, or their settings, will only be supported where their Outstanding Universal Values are protected and preserved. Part m) relates to repair of historic buildings. Enabling development for historic environment assets are covered in part n). None of these parts are relevant to the consideration of the Appliciaton.

6.87 Part o) covers non designated historic environment assets and places. It requires that they should be preserved in situ where feasible.

Liveable Places

6.88 The policies which come under the Liveable Places section of NPF4 largely relate to built development. However there are elements, of some policies, which are relevant to the consideration of the Application and they are set out in the following text.

Policy 22 – Flood Risk and Water Management

6.89 The policy seeks to strengthen resilience to flood risk by promoting avoidance as a first principle and reducing the vulnerability of existing and future development to flooding. Part a) provides situations where development proposals at risk of flooding or in a flood risk will be supported. The Proposed Development is not within such an area and therefore this policy is not relevant.

6.90 Part b) relates to small scale development to buildings and as such is not relevant to the consideration of the Application.

6.91 The other parts of this policy are not considered to be relevant to the consideration of the Application.

Policy 23 – Health and Safety

6.92 The policy seeks to protect people and places from environmental harm, mitigate risks arising from safety hazards and encourage development which improves health and wellbeing.

6.93 Part d) seeks to ensure that development that will not be detrimental to air quality and will not introduce unacceptable noise issues.

6.94 Part e) advises that development which is likely to raise unacceptable noise issues will not be supported. It requires a Noise Impact Assessment to considered significant effects.

6.95 The other parts of this policy are not considered to be relevant to the consideration of the Application.

Productive Places

6.96 There are no policies in this section of NPF4 which are considered to be relevant to the Proposed Development.

Summary

6.97 The policy direction contained with NPF4 is clear in its unambiguous support for the expansion of renewable energy of all forms. We are in a global climate emergency and NPF4 leaves us in no uncertainty that significant weight should be applied to National Developments that will contribute to alleviating it.

6.98 Specifically, Policy 11 of NPF4 supports renewable energy development. It is clear that the Scottish Government expects that the potential of a development to contribute to meeting emissions targets should be afforded significant weight in the decision-making process. The scale of the Proposed Development, 100 MW would be a valuable and meaningful contribution to Scotland's renewable energy and greenhouse gas targets.

The Local Development Plan

6.99 The Proposed Development is located within the administrative area of Dumfries and Galloway. In 2019, Dumfries and Galloway Council adopted the Local Development Plan (DGLDP2).

Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2 2019

6.100 The Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2 contains general development policies for the DGC area. The policy contained in the Dumfries and Galloway DGLDP2, in respect to energy, is considered to be relevant in respect of this Application.

6.101 The DGLDP2 vision includes a statement that, in 20 years' time, there will be a viable rural economy and community characterised by, amongst other things, a range of renewable energy developments. Developing this theme, the economic strategy of the DGLDP2 highlights the importance of the renewable energy sector and its contribution to the economy and a low carbon place. Additionally, the energy strategy of the DGLDP2 notes that planning policy is seen as a key tool to help deliver climate change action. Clearly, renewable energy development proposals that conform to policies within the DGLDP2 would therefore contribute to the realisation of its vision and strategy.

6.102 The Site is largely identified in the DGLDP2 as 'white land' for which there is no site-specific policy. The remaining part of the site is designated as the Loch Mannoch ASA. The following text sets out the other policies which are considered to be relevant and provides an assessment of the Proposed Development in respect of them.

Policy IN1 Renewable Energy

6.103 The key policy in DGLDP2 which is relevant to the Application is Policy IN1: Renewable Energy, which states that DGC will support development proposals for all renewable energy generation and storage which are located, sited and designed appropriately. It provides that the acceptability of proposals will be assessed against listed criteria including:

- landscape and visual impact;
- cumulative impact;
- impact on local communities and individual dwellings, including visual impact, residential
- amenity, noise and shadow flicker;
- the impact on natural and historic environment;
- the impact on forestry and woodlands; and
- the impact on tourism, recreational interests and public access.

6.104 Policy IN1 states that *"acceptability will be determined through an assessment of the details of the proposal including its benefits and the extent to which its environmental and cumulative impacts can be satisfactorily addressed."* Policy IN1 clearly recognises that making a judgement on the acceptability of impacts is ultimately a balancing exercise which must take into account both the benefits as well as the disbenefits of the Proposed Development.

6.105 The matters which are raised in Policy IN1 are all matters which have been considered in the context of the relevant NPF4 policies. The one exception to this is the matter of tourism.

Policy IN2 Wind Energy

6.106 Policy IN2 states that DGC will support wind energy proposals that are located, sited and designed appropriately. It states that the acceptability of any proposed wind energy development will be assessed against a range of considerations, and that acceptability will be determined through an assessment of the details of the proposal including its benefits and the extent to which environmental and cumulative impacts can be addressed satisfactorily. These considerations are:

- renewable energy developments;
- socio-economic benefits;
- landscape and visual impact;
- cumulative impact;
- Impact on local communities and individual dwellings, including visual impact, residential amenity, noise and shadow flicker;
- impact on infrastructure;
- impact on aviation and defence; and
- the impact on other considerations (including the historic environment, the natural environment, cultural heritage, forestry and woodlands, carbon rich soils, tourism and recreational interests and biodiversity).

6.107 The matters which are raised in Policy IN2 are all matters which have been considered in the context of NPF4.

6.108 The DGLDP2 also contains a spatial strategy for wind farms. Given the provisions of NPF4 this is not considered in this PRES.

Policy HE4 Archaeologically Sensitive Areas

6.109 In some parts of Dumfries and Galloway, the archaeological interest is not confined to a particular site but extends over a large area.

6.110 In order to highlight to potential developers of large scale projects, such as wind farms, mineral extraction or forestry, that there is a particular need to consider these extensive archaeological interests and issues that might arise from their proposals at an early stage, Archaeologically Sensitive Areas have been designated by the Council and occur both within settlements and within rural areas.

Other Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2 Policies

6.111 There are a number of further policies in the DGLDP2 which are also considered potentially relevant to the Proposed Development. These are set out in Table 6.1 Table 6.1 does not include policies which are technically relevant to all development but are clearly aimed at traditional built development or where there is no predicted effect on the assets which the policy is designed to protect, such as Listed Buildings.

6.112 Table 6.1 provides a summary of each of these policies

Table 6.1 Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2019 Policy Summary

Policy	Policy summary
Policy OP1: Development Considerations	This policy is an overarching policy that sets out general development considerations relevant to the scale, nature and location of the proposal. These considerations include general amenity, the historic environment, landscape, biodiversity, transport, sustainability and the water environment.
Policy HE3: Archaeology	DGC will protect and preserve archaeological and historic assets in situ in an appropriate setting wherever feasible. In determining planning applications that may impact on historic environment assets or their setting, the balance of the benefits of the development against the importance of the features will be assessed by DGC. The weight given to archaeological considerations and the case for refusal will depend on a number of factors.
Policy HE6: Gardens and Designed Landscapes	This policy is primarily directed at proposals located within Gardens and Design Landscapes. The policy seeks to protect such areas from inappropriate development.
Policy NE1: National Scenic Areas	This policy seeks to protects NSAs from development which would adversely affect the integrity of the NSA unless there are clear benefits which outweigh such adverse effects.
Policy NE2: Regional Scenic Areas	This policy sets criteria which must be satisfied if development within and affecting an RSA is to be considered acceptable.
Policy NE4: Sites of International Importance for Biodiversity	This policy sets out the requirements to be addressed by development proposals likely to have a significant effect on areas designated for international importance for ecology and ornithology.
Policy NE5: Species of International Importance	This policy sets out the test for proposed developments which are likely to have adverse effects on European protected species.
Policy NE6: Sites of National Importance for Biodiversity and Geodiversity	This policy advises on the way in which developments that affect sites of national importance for biodiversity and geodiversity will be considered.
Policy NE11: Supporting the Water Environment	This policy sets out how DGC will consider development which has the potential to affect the water environment.
Policy NE12: Protection of	The policy for Water Margins provides specific support for the maintenance or

Water Margins	enhancement of waterbody status. It should also support green networks, landscape and townscape quality, and biodiversity. It applies to development proposed adjacent to or in the immediate vicinity of water bodies. This policy applies for all margins of water bodies in accordance with detailed standards which are set out in planning guidance.
Policy NE14: Carbon Rich Soil	This policy sets out the requirements for developments situated on carbon rich soils.
Policy NE15: Protection and Restoration of Peat Deposits as Carbon Sinks	This policy advises that DGC will support proposals for peatland restoration. It sets out where development on peatland may be considered acceptable. It provides specific requirements in respect of renewable energy development.
Policy CF4: Access Routes	This policy is clear that DGC will seek to ensure that routes over which rights may reasonably be exercised are protected. It is clear that the Council will not grant planning permission to development proposals which would result in the loss of access routes.

Supplementary Guidance: Wind Energy Development: Development Management Considerations (2020)

6.113 The Supplementary Guidance: Wind Energy Development: Development Management Considerations (WED) was adopted by DGC in February 2020 and forms part of, and has the same weight as, the DGLDP2. Its purpose is to provide further detail in support of the development management considerations in DGLDP2 Policy IN2, noting that proposals will be assessed against all relevant policies in the DGLDP2 along with any other relevant material considerations. Although it provides some additional detail and guidance, the guidance does not change the focus of Policy IN2 or its respective policy tests.

6.114 Section 3 of the WED Supplementary Guidance indicates the various issues to be taken into account in the assessment of wind energy proposals. Paragraph 3.3 states that in considering proposals DGC will make an assessment by balancing all applicable factors outlined and considering against all relevant policies contained within DGLDP.2 It clarifies that although a proposal may be detrimental in terms of one or more of these factors that this does not automatically result in a proposal being recommended for refusal. Instead, it provides that proposals will be considered favourably where DGC is satisfied through an assessment of the details of the proposal including its benefits and the extent to which its environmental and cumulative impacts can be satisfactorily addressed. This approach accords with that set out in DGLDP2 Policy IN2.

Local Development Plan Summary

6.115 NPF4 takes precedence over the DGLDP2 in the event that there is an incompatibility between the two documents.

6.116 It is concluded that when the DGLDP2 is read as a whole the Proposed Development complies with it. The Proposed Development is considered to comply with the renewable energy and wind energy policies of IN1 and IN2.

Development Plan Assessment Conclusions

6.117 The planning policy sets out the matters that are to be addressed in the design and mitigation of a proposed development. It is submitted that, through the design evolution process as demonstrated in the EIA Report, the design of the Proposed Development, along with the prescribed mitigation, which where appropriate would be secured by conditions, satisfactorily address the environmental impacts.

6.118 It is clear that the Proposed Development will make a valuable contribution to meeting the renewable energy targets for the UK and Scotland. The environmental impacts of the Proposed Development have been considered, along with the appropriate mitigation and enhancement. It is submitted that the Proposed Development is in accordance with NPF4 when read as a whole, which is the document with the most recent Development Plan policy. There is nothing in the DGLDP2 which suggests that consent for the Proposed Development should not be forthcoming.

Scottish Government Planning Guidance

6.119 The Scottish Government provides advice and guidance for planning applications which has relevance to renewable energy development. This guidance is for planning applications and covers many of the issues that have been identified in the context of renewable energy policy, the Local Development Plan and NPF4 and is, therefore, not set out in this PRES.

Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement (HESPS)

6.120 The HESPS contains Scottish Ministers' policies and provides direction for Historic Environment Scotland and related policy frameworks. HESPS is a policy statement directing decision-making that affects the historic environment. It is non-statutory, which means that it is not required to be followed as a matter of law or statute. It is relevant to a wide range of decision-making at national and local levels. It is a relevant consideration for planning proposals that might affect the historic environment.

6.121 HESPS sets out a number of policies and core principles which set out Historic Environment Scotland's understanding of how the historic environment should be managed and how to apply these principles. The principles contained in the document are the fundamental ideas that underpin desirable and positive outcomes for the historic environment. The principles are the basis for the policies outlined in the document and the policies describe how the principles should be implemented.

Other Matters

6.122 It is known that the Site is located in an area which is under consideration for a new national park. Consultation on this is currently underway and runs until after the Application will be submitted. It is clear in the consultation document that it is not certain that there will be a new national park in Galloway and, in the event one is designated, then the Scottish Government has indicated that to ensure any new

National Park addresses the climate emergency and supports progressive development, it will develop new bespoke planning policy on onshore wind to be applied in any new National Park.

6.123 There is clear policy in NPF 4, as currently adopted, that the development of a wind farm in a national park is not acceptable. It is understood that a review of NPF4 will be undertaken in light of a new National Park designation. How this will be done is currently unclear. Until such times as a decision is taken by the Scottish Minsters in respect of the allocation of a new National Park in Galloway no weight should be given to existing National Park policies in the decision making process.

7. ASSESSMENT

7.1 The decision-making framework is clear that the decision maker in the case of this Section 36 application should have regard to a number of matters. These are, in no particular order, as follows:

- Climate change and renewable energy policy;
- Contribution to renewable energy targets;
- Spatial policy for wind farm development; and
- Environmental criteria.

7.2 Chapter 5 of this PRES has set out the relevant climate change and renewable energy policy and the weight that should be attached to such matters in the decision-making process. That is not repeated here other than to note that significant weight should be attached to such policy in the decision-making process.

7.3 The contribution of the Proposed Development to renewable energy targets has been considered in Chapter 5 of this PRES. It is noted that significant weight should be attached to the renewable energy targets and the contribution of the Proposed Development to such targets. The conclusions of Chapter 5 are not repeated here.

7.4 Chapter 6 of the PRES provides details of planning policy for framework. As noted in Chapter 6 of this PRES there are a number of criteria which require to be considered in respect of wind farm applications. The response to each of these criteria is set out in this chapter of the PRES.

7.5 This section provides an assessment of the Proposed Development against the relevant policy. It follows the policies of NPF4, in the first instance, rather than the DGLDP2 as the matters which are raised in the Renewable Energy Assessment Criteria are largely the same as those in the national policy contained in NPF4.

Spatial Strategy

7.6 The Proposed Development exceeds the 50 MW threshold set for a National Development and would therefore have National Development status as per these provisions of NPF4.

7.7 While not every National Development will be granted permission, the fact that the Proposed Development falls within this category is an important starting point in any policy assessment. NPF4 clearly recognises the need for these developments which are considered to be of such a scale that they are “fundamental” to the achievement of Scotland’s net zero emissions targets. When this National Development status is combined with the requirement for decision makers to give “significant weight” to the renewable energy benefits of a scheme, a compelling case for granting consent emerges.

7.8 The Proposed Development is a renewable energy development of circa 100 MW, which once developed will add to the renewable energy capacity of Scotland. The Proposed Development is a National Development, as defined in NPF4, which is considered to be acceptable in principle.

Policy 11 Energy

Location

7.9 The Proposed Development is for a form of renewable development which is considered to be supported by NPF4 under Policy 11a).

7.10 The Proposed Development is not in a National Park or NSA. It is therefore concluded, given the Spatial Strategies and Policy emphasis within NPF4, that there is support in principle for the Proposed Development. It is considered to comply with Part b) of Policy 11.

7.11 NPF4 Policy 11, part d) requires that development proposals which impact on international or national designations are assessed in relation to Policy 4. An assessment in the context of Policy 4 of NPF4 is provided later in this PRES.

Net Economic Impact

7.12 The socio-economic benefits of the Proposed Development are set out in the Socio-Economic Statement and in Chapter 12 of the EIA Report. Table 2.1 of this PRES sets out the key findings of the assessment. That information is not repeated here.

7.13 It is clear that as a result of the Proposed Development there will be employment opportunities during construction, both at the local and more strategic level. The Proposed Development will contribute to socio-economic development, locally, regionally and nationally, both through the construction of the Proposed Development providing opportunities and the contribution to supporting the generation and use of renewable energy.

7.14 The Proposed Development will maximise net economic impact as required by part c) of NPF4 policy 11.

7.15 In addition to the net economic benefit which is set out the Proposed Development would result in Community Benefit. The Applicant is committed to continuing engagement with the local community regarding community benefit as the Proposed Development progresses.

7.16 If the Proposed Development is consented, it is proposed that a Community Benefit Fund will be established with the express intention of delivering local benefits. It is not considered appropriate for this to be the subject of a planning condition attached to the consent, should it be forthcoming. This is due to the fact that the condition would not meet the tests for planning conditions which are set out in Scottish Government Circular 4/1998.

7.17 It is concluded that the Proposed Development will maximise net economic impact as required by part c) of NPF policy 11.

Environmental Matters to be Addressed

7.18 Table 7.1 considers the matters which are relevant considerations for all renewable energy development which are contained in Policy 11(e) of NPF4 and provides information on how the design and mitigation has addressed the potential impacts of the Proposed Development.

7.19 The EIA Report Chapter 3 sets out the approach to the design evolution as part of the EIA process. It is clear that careful consideration has been paid to the potential for mitigation of likely significant effects, as a result of the Proposed Development as part of the design process in accordance with the principles of the mitigation hierarchy.

7.20 In order to avoid repetition later in the PRES Table 7.1 provides the conclusions in respect of the level of impact in respect of the various matters to address Policy IN1 of the DGLDP2. Table 7.1 demonstrates that the matters referred in Schedule 9 of the 1989 Act have been considered by the Applicant.

7.21 The contents of Table 7.1 draw on the EIA submitted as part of the Application.

Table 7.1 Environmental Matters to be Addressed and Application Responses

Matter	Response
Impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact, noise and shadow flicker.	Chapter 4 of the EIA Report sets out the design evolution process and the design mitigation which has formed part of the consideration of the Proposed Development. It is clear that the impact on residential receptors was one of the key design criteria. **Residential Visual Amenity** Appendix 5.6 of the EIA Report provides a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) of the Proposed Development. A total of 18 properties are considered in the RVAA. It is concluded that in no case would the proposed turbines be present in such numbers, size and proximity as to represent an overwhelming and unavoidable presence in main views from the properties where it would come to be widely regarded as an unattractive place in which to live. Whilst the visual effect would be Major or Major/Moderate, it would not be sufficient to breach the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold. **Settlements** The impact of the Proposed Development on settlements has been carefully considered. The EIA Report Chapter 5 advises that some significant visual effects on groups of viewers, or "receptors" were identified for limited, higher parts of the village of Laurieston. No significant residual effects or night-time effects were identified for receptor groups in Gatehouse of Fleet, Kirkcudbright, Castle Douglas, Crossmichael, Glengap, or dispersed rural settlement in the Drumlin Pastures area. During intense periods of construction activity, local residents in the nearby villages and settlements of Laurieston, Kirkconnell, Glengap and Gatehouse of Fleet and motorists on the A762 would have views or partial views of the work as it progresses but the visual effects would not be significant. However, some very localised significant adverse visual effects are predicted during the construction period for recreational users of the Core Path/ forest track north of the settlement of Glengap, due to relatively close views of the wind farm access track upgrading works. **Noise** Chapter 9 of the EIA Report advises that as a result of the location of the proposed infrastructure away from sensitive properties noise from the Proposed Development was scoped out of detailed assessment as initial predictions resulted in sufficiently low rating

Matter	Response
	levels at sensitive properties due to large distances between the on-site potentially noise generating plant and nearest noise sensitive receptors. The operational noise from the substation, BESS and solar farm would not result in a significant effect. **Shadow Flicker** Chapter 14 of the EIA Report advises that there are no receptors within the zone of potential shadow flicker with the potential to experience shadow flicker. It is therefore concluded that shadow flicker is not a concern in respect of the Proposed Development. **Private Water Supplies (PWS)** The locations of PWS in the vicinity of the Proposed Development have been identified. Technical Appendix 8-4 of the EIA Report provides a PWS Risk Assessment. PWSs and Drinking Water Protected Areas are considered to be high sensitivity receptors. With the best practice construction techniques to protect the quality and quantity of surface water and groundwater receptors, in combination with the proposed monitoring programme (see example in Technical Appendix 8-4) the magnitude of effect is assessed as negligible, and the resultant significance of effect is assessed as negligible and not significant, in terms of the EIA Regulations, for the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.
Significant landscape and visual impacts, recognising that such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable.	The impact of the Proposed Development on landscape and visual receptors has been carefully considered as part of the design evolution process. The following summarises the landscape and visual sensitivities and design objectives considered in the approach to design: • Consideration of turbine numbers to improve visual composition and minimise inconsistent turbine spacing and ensure a balanced/compact array especially from key views; • The implementation of a reduced lighting scheme and automatic dimming of the lights, • Consideration of the particular landscape sensitivities identified within the Dumfries and Galloway Wind Energy Landscape Sensitivity Study Assessment of Larger Wind Turbines (October 2024) (DGWLSS); • Minimising prominence of the Proposed Development in views from the Galloway Hills RSA and the Fleet Valley NSA; • Reducing the prominence of the Proposed Development in views from nearest residents in the village of Laurieston, as well as recreational users in the area; • Reducing the prominence of the Proposed Development in views from key transport routes including the A75 and A762; • Avoiding significant effects on Tourist Routes and Dark Skies Core Area; and • Avoiding significant effects upon the most valued landscape features on Site. Within the Site there would be long-term direct effects on the landscape fabric. They would be very localised and are considered

Matter	Response
	not significant. The EIA Report, Chapter 5, concludes that the impact on the host Landscape Character Type (LCT) would not be significant. It is concluded that none of the neighbouring or nearby LCTs would have significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development. In the event that the forestry which is in the vicinity of the Site is felled the landscape effects within the host LCT and the area around Loch Whinyeon would be considered as significant. The impact of the Proposed Development on nationally and regionally designated landscapes is considered in the context of Policy 4 of NPF4 and is not repeated here. At Laurieston Church Road, significant visual effects are identified in the EIA Report, Chapter 5. At Laurieston-Upper, visual effects were assessed as Significant with or without the forestry. Night-time effects at this receptor group are considered to be significant should intervening forestry be removed. The EIA Report Chapter 5, advises that there a number of public vantage points were assessed, and a Significant effect was identified in two situations at Neilson's Monument, Barstobrick Hill. No significant residual effects or night-time effects were identified for receptor groups in Kirkcudbright, Castle Douglas, Crossmichael, Glengap, or dispersed rural settlements in the Drumlin Pastures area. There is no rule of thumb which can be applied to localised impacts. Each case is different and relates to the scale of the development, the scale of the landscape, the intervening land features and the sensitivity of the receptors. In this case it is considered that the significant landscape and visual impacts are localised as they are within relatively short distances of the Proposed Development and are limited in their extent.
Public access, including impact on long distance walking and cycling routes and scenic routes.	Chapter 5 of the LVIA advises that receptors on a number of core paths close to the Proposed Development and the upper section of B796 /National Cycle Route 7 near Upper Rusko are predicted to receive significant visual effects. The core paths which would be subject of significant visual effects are the Core Path from Loch Mannoch to Kirkconnel, the Core Path at Loch Whinyeon and the Core Path between Disdow Wood and Glengap through Laurieston Forest.
Impacts on aviation and defence interests including seismological recording.	Chapter 14 of the EIA Report advises that the Applicant is currently engaging with NATS, in respect of identified potential effects on Lowther and Great Dun Fell en-route radar and potential effects on Prestwick Centre Air Traffic Control and Military Air Traffic Control. in order to agree suitable mitigation to ensure that the Proposed Development has no impact on NATS operations. It is expected that the agreed mitigation would be the subject of a

Matter	Response
	condition which would form part of any consent for the Proposed Development.
Impacts on telecommunications and broadcasting installations, particularly ensuring that transmission links are not compromised.	There are numerous fixed communications links that surround the Site, and one link which through the east of the Site near to the solar area. This has been considered in the design evolution process. As a result it has been concluded, as stated in Chapter 14 of the EIA Report that no proposed infrastructure has the potential to impact on the fixed telecommunications links and therefore they will not be compromised.
Impacts on road traffic and on adjacent trunk roads, including during construction.	Considerable attention has been paid to the way in which the Proposed Development would be accessed. This forms part of the design mitigation to address the potential for traffic impacts associated with the Proposed Development. Onsite borrow pits have been identified and the existing onsite tracks would be used in so far as possible to construct and operate the Proposed Development. These approaches would reduce the volume of materials which would require to be transported to the Site during construction. This would minimise the impact on the public road network. Chapter 11 of the EIA Report considers the impact of the Proposed Development on traffic and transport matters. This has included a robust assessment based on a conservative approach for the total construction traffic movements and the worst-case scenario for each transport link. It is acknowledged that the Proposed Development would result in high percentage increases of traffic on the A762 and B727. This is mainly attributable to the low baseline levels of general and HGV traffic on the route. These increased traffic levels are temporary in nature with a significant decrease in construction traffic from month eight to completion. A CTMP is proposed as mitigation and this would be the subject of a condition attached to any consent. It is concluded that the environmental effects associated with increased traffic as a result of the Proposed Development are not significant. in terms of the EIA Regulations, provided the required mitigation is in place. It is concluded that the traffic and transport impacts of the Proposed Development are acceptable.
Impacts on historic environment.	The design evolution of the Proposed Development has sought to avoid direct impacts on cultural heritage assets. The Proposed Development, including the location of wind turbines within the western area of the Site has been designed to take cognisance of the Loch Mannoch, cairn & stone circle Scheduled Monument and its setting. The positioning and the extent of the solar array has been

Matter	Response
	designed with the location of the cairn and stone circle in mind. Nine turbines of the Proposed Development would be visible from the Loch Mannoch cairn and stone circle which is a Scheduled Monument. In wider views of the Scheduled Monument the topographical bowl location and historic river valley setting would remain appreciable. The EIA Report Chapter 10 advises that the Proposed Development would have a moderate level of effect on the Loch Mannoch cairn and stone circle Scheduled Monument which is considered to be significant in EIA terms. The integrity of the setting would not be significantly adversely impacted. The setting of the Category B Listed Kirkconnel Farmhouse and Steading which is located adjacent to the Site would be impacted by the Proposed Development as the solar array would change the land use of some of the area surrounding the farm. The level of effect is judged to be minor which is not significant in EIA terms. The Site is partially located within the Loch Mannoch ASA. Chapter 10 of the EIA Report advises that whilst the Proposed Development has avoided the known heritage assets within the ASA, the construction of the Proposed Development has the potential to impact unknown heritage assets as well as paleoenvironmental and archaeological deposits which may survive within the ASA. The Proposed Development has the potential to have an adverse, direct, permanent, long term effect on the ASA. This is not considered to be significant. A planning condition would be used to secure archaeological monitoring during the construction of the Proposed Development to ensure that any unregistered historic assets are appropriately recorded. The design evolution has meant that direct impacts on the majority of cultural heritage assets have been avoided. However, 25 non-designated heritage assets within the Site would be physically impacted by the Proposed Development. The significance of effect in all twenty-two cases was assessed in the EIA Report, Chapter 10, to be negligible to minor, and not considered to be significant in EIA terms. Additional mitigation has been proposed to fence off known archaeological remains and to investigate, identify and record any known remains which may be impacted by the construction of the Proposed Development.
Effects on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk.	**Hydrology** The Proposed Development has been designed to minimise works in the vicinity of mapped watercourses and to minimise the need for new water crossings to reduce the risk of pollution and changes to watercourse morphology. Eight watercourse crossings are proposed.

Matter	Response
	The impact assessment has taken into account the soil, geological and hydrological regime, highlighting that the principal effects will occur during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. Chapter 8 of the EIA Report advises that subject to adoption of best practice construction techniques and a site-specific CEMP, no significant adverse effects on hydrology, geology (including soils and peat) and hydrogeology have been identified. **Flood Risk** The published mapping confirms the turbine area, BESS, proposed substation and the proposed solar arrays are not located in an area identified as being at significant flood risk. The final CEMP will include provision for drainage management plans and will be used to safeguard water resources and manage flood risk. In accordance with good practice, routine inspection and clearing of watercourse crossings at the Proposed Development will be undertaken, reducing the likelihood of a blockage occurring. The SuDS drainage measures deployed across the Proposed Development during construction will be maintained and used to locally collect, treat and discharge incident rainfall runoff. These measures will also attenuate the rate of runoff and mitigate the potential for flood risk to be increased offsite.
Biodiversity including impacts on birds.	**Ecology** Chapter 6 of the EIA Report advises that the baseline ecology surveys which have been undertaken were used to inform the design of the Proposed Development. Chapter 6 of the EIA Report advises that the design has evolved iteratively to minimise the impacts on potential GWDTEs and peat habitats through taking account of NVC results and hydrological assessments, in addition to the presence of watercourses. General scoping and pre-application guidance for onshore wind farms and Priority Peatland guidance has informed the design evolution in order to avoid and minimise negative impacts on the peat resource on Site. In response to the discovery of high concentrations of Nyctalus sp. bats, noctule and Leisler's during survey work it is proposed that a, curtailment regime will be put in place. This would be monitored in order to ensure that it remains relevant. As a result of the design mitigation and the proposed mitigation/monitoring in relation to bats and habitats no residual significant effects on ecological receptors as a result of the Proposed Development have been identified. The Ecological Impact Assessment has concluded that there would be no significant adverse impacts in terms of the EIA Regulations on ecological receptors. **Ornithology** Chapter 7 of the EIA Report considers the impact of the Proposed Development on ornithological receptors. In particular impacts on the Laughengie and Airie Hills SSSI, Red kite and Twite.

Matter	Response
	The design of the Proposed Development has taken account of these receptors in particular. No significant effects, in terms of the EIA Regulations, have been identified as a result of the Proposed Development on ornithological receptors.
Impacts on trees, woods and forests.	The Proposed Development will include some small scale felling along the western access track. This will be minimised as far as it is practicable to do so.
Proposals for the decommissioning of developments, including ancillary infrastructure, and site restoration.	It is expected that this is a matter which would be the subject of a planning condition should consent be forthcoming.
The quality of site restoration plans including the measures in place to safeguard or guarantee availability of finances to effectively implement those plans.	The EIA Report advises that at end of its operational life of 40 years, it is assumed that the Proposed Development will be decommissioned. The decommissioning will be undertaken in accordance with good practice guidance available at the time. It is expected that should consent be forthcoming there will be a condition which will require the submission to, and approval by, the local planning authority of a decommissioning plan.
Cumulative impacts.	The potential for cumulative impacts as a result of the Proposed Development in combination with other wind farms has informed the design evolution. The distance between the Site and other wind farms means that this has not been a significant constraint for most technical disciplines. **Landscape and visual** Chapter 5 of the EIA Report advises that taking into account the large separation distance, it is considered highly unlikely that significant cumulative landscape and visual effects would arise in conjunction with the Proposed Development and this development. Therefore, a cumulative landscape and visual assessment has not been undertaken. **Cultural heritage** Chapter 10 of the EIA Report advises that due to the distance between the Site and other wind farm developments the cumulative development is unlikely to increase the magnitude of change from that of the Proposed Development alone. As such no detailed assessment has been undertaken for cumulative effects. **Noise** Chapter 9 advises that no significant noise cumulative construction or operational effects are predicted as a result of the Proposed Development. **Ecology** Chapter 6 concludes that there will be no cumulative ecological effects due to the proximity of the Proposed development to pre-existing wind turbine developments or planned developments. **Ornithology** Chapter 7 of the EIA Report considers the cumulative collision risk associated with other onshore wind farms and concludes that the cumulative collision risk would therefore be classed as a minor impact but it would be not be considered as significant

Matter	Response
	Traffic and transport Chapter 11 of the EIA Report concludes that there would be no cumulative impacts as a result of the Proposed Development and other developments. **Hydrology** Chapter 8 of the EIA Report advises that no other developments are noted within the same surface water catchment as the Proposed Development. Therefore, cumulative effects are not anticipated as a result of the Proposed Development. **Aviation** Chapter 14 of the EIA report advises that there would be no cumulative impacts on aviation and defence interest as a result of the Proposed Development.

Contribution to Targets

7.22 The key to the final element of Policy 11 e) is that contributions to renewable energy targets are related to the scale of a proposed development. In the context of the Proposed Development is for 80 MW generating capacity. That capacity will assist in supporting targets to achieve a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. This is a matter to which significant weight must be attached in the decision-making process.

Summary

7.23 It is concluded that the location of the Proposed Development is supported by Policy 11 of NPF4. The Proposed Development seeks to maximise net economic benefit and the relevant matters have been considered in respect of design and mitigation. Significant weight should be placed on the potential capacity of the Proposed Development as set out in part e) of Policy 11 of NPF.

Policy 1 Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises

7.24 This policy applies to all forms of development and not just renewable energy proposals and must be read as an overarching policy which in itself goes further than Policy 11. In the context of this policy, it is important to recognise that the benefits of the Proposed Development go beyond just renewable energy generation. In the context of biodiversity this includes a range of proposals which are set out in the context of Policy 3 including those set out in Table 7.2.

7.25 The Proposed Development will result in the generation of renewable energy, with a generating capacity of 80 MW. That capacity will assist in supporting targets to achieve a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The inclusion of the BESS is also valuable as it will assist in the balancing out the supply of electricity to the grid.

Policy 3 Biodiversity

7.26 The proposal is for a development which is a National Development, as set out by NPF4. Therefore Policy 3(b) is relevant. The requirements of Policy 3(b) are discussed in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Responses to Policy 3(b) of NPF 4

Policy ref	Policy wording	Commentary
3(b)(i)	The proposal is based on an understanding of the existing characteristics of the site and its local, regional and national ecological context prior to development, including the presence of any irreplaceable habitats.	Chapters 6 and 7 of the EIA Report set out the survey work which has been undertaken to ensure that the existing characteristics of the Site and its local and regional context are properly understood.
3(b)(ii)	Wherever feasible, nature-based solutions have been integrated and made best use of.	The oHMP sets out the nature based solutions which would be used in the form of mitigation and enhancement.
3(b)(iii)	An assessment of potential negative effects which should be fully mitigated in line with the mitigation hierarchy prior to identifying enhancements.	The EIA Report describes how the mitigation hierarchy has informed the design of the Proposed Development. Chapter 3 sets out the way in which avoidance has been at the heart of the design process. Chapter 3 also demonstrates that were possible impacts have been minimised through the design process. Chapters 6 and 7 of the EIA Report, describe the way in which the impacts have been mitigated and the enhancement which would be undertaken.
3(b)(iv)	Significant biodiversity enhancements are provided, in addition to any proposed mitigation. This should include nature networks, linking to and strengthening habitat connectivity within and beyond the development, secured within a reasonable timescale and with reasonable certainty. Management arrangements for their long-term retention and monitoring should be included, wherever appropriate.	An oHMP has been produced in order to deliver habitat enhancement in relation to sensitive habitats including peatland, groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTEs) and woodland habitat for local protected mammal species. The oHMP advises that the main objective of the HMP is to compensate and enhance for loss of priority peatland habitats in line with guidance (NatureScot, 2023). The objectives relate to additional habitat and faunal enhancements alongside the creation of a Habitat Management Group to oversee the peatland restoration proposals and restoration progress through the 40-year lifespan of the Proposed Development. Peatland on the Site is degraded, and it is this habitat which forms the focus of peat restoration measures which are described in the oHMP. The priority peatland loss as a result of the Proposed Development accounts for 9.39 ha. As such, the oHMP advises that 95.10 ha is required in total under guidance and 88 ha has been identified under the current restoration plan.

		This is less than the target as several areas containing cultural heritage assets have been removed from earlier restoration proposals. It is however considered a significant enhancement given the 1:9.25 loss/compensation ratio when considered in the context that guidance defines priority peatlands as peatlands which show evidence of being undisturbed and actively forming peat.' A single area proposed for increasing broad-leaved woodland is located to the east of the existing broad-leaved plantation within the proposed solar farm. Various areas are suggested for scrub thickening within this solar farm area in addition to enhancing the existing improved grassland into wildflower areas. Black grouse habitat enhancements include softening of woodland edges around the turbine areas to create a graded ecotone of ruderal woodland, scrub and marshy grassland. In terms of enhancement for species, areas around the existing plantation woodland where further woodland planting is proposed has been identified as suitable for bat box installation. Installing bat boxes increases the number of potential roost sites away from the Proposed Development and helps to keep bats away from wind turbines, reducing collision risk and barometric trauma. Bird boxes will be installed within this woodland area, whilst hibernacula will be placed within the area of marshy grassland surrounding Lake Mannoch. It is expected that the required HMP would be the subject of a Planning Condition should consent be forthcoming.
3(b)(v)	Local community benefits of the biodiversity and/or nature networks have been considered.	The Proposed Development has focused on the delivery of biodiversity enhancements. During the consultation events there were no requests made for specific biodiversity enhancement. The biodiversity enhancement that are proposed would benefit the local community through the improvement of the local environment.

7.27 In the preparation of the proposed biodiversity enhancement regard has been had to the Draft Planning Guidance: Biodiversity. It is clear that the Proposed Development offers a real opportunity to deliver biodiversity enhancements to the area local to the Site. It is concluded that the Proposed Development is in accordance with Policy 3 of NPF4.

Policy 4 Natural Places

7.28 The Proposed Development would not have a significant effect on an existing or proposed SAC or SPA. The potential for impact on such designations are considered in Chapter 7 of the EIA Report.

7.29 The potential for impacts as a result of the Proposed Development on a National Park, National Scenic Area, SSSI or National Nature Reserve is considered in the EIA Report at Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. No significant effects on national ecological designations are predicted in the EIA Report, Chapters 6 and 7.

7.30 The EIA Report sets out the survey work which has been undertaken in respect of protected species. The findings are presented in Chapters 6 and 7 of the EIA Report. No significant impacts on protected species are identified in the EIA Report and no Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken.

7.31 Chapter 5, of the EIA Report advises that while there would be a moderate but not significant effect on one of the Special Landscape Qualities of the Fleet Valley NSA. This is in a localised area in the upper Fleet Valley near Upper Rusko. No significant effects on the Fleet Valley NSA are identified in the EIA Report.

7.32 A detailed assessment of effects of the Proposed Development on the special qualities of the Fleet Valley NSA is set out in Technical Appendix 5.5. In the context of limb 1 of policy 4 c) this concludes that the impacts on the Fleet Valley NSA are acceptable and would not result in the objectives of the designation and the overall integrity of the Fleet Valley NSA being compromised.

7.33 As the first limb of policy 4 c) has been met, there is no policy requirement to demonstrate compliance with the second limb. However, for completeness it is submitted that the limited landscape impact on the Fleet Valley NSA would be outweighed by the social, environmental and economic benefits of the Proposed Development, which are of national importance. The weight of policy support and need for the Proposed Development is set out in chapters 3 – 6 of this PRES, and not repeated here.

7.34 The potential for impacts as a result of the Proposed Development on sites designated for local nature conservation and landscape reasons is considered in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the EIA Report. The EIA Report concludes that there would be no significant effects on local nature conservation sites.

7.35 The Galloway Hills RSA is the largest RSA in DGC area and is to the east of the Site. The RSA's which are identified in the DGLDP2 cover approximately a third of the DGC area. It should be noted that there are locations in the RSA's where wind farms are located within the designated areas. The Proposed Development would not have a direct impact on the Galloway Hills RSA. Chapter 5 advises that there would be some localised significant effects upon the Galloway Hills RSA. These impacts relate to the upland area on the south-eastern edge of this RSA.

7.36 The potential for the proposed lighting on the turbines on the RSA has been considered. Chapter 5 of the EIA Report concludes that up to four aviation warning lights on the turbines would be visible from the RSA. It is concluded that the night-time visual effects would not be significant, due to limited or no receptors. Chapter 5 of the EIA Report concludes that there would be indirect landscape effects; as the area is an area of dark skies, the perception of the lights at varying distances but

primarily appearing in areas with little or no artificial lighting would seem out of keeping with the prevailing night-time characteristics. This is not considered to be significant.

7.37 It is concluded that the Proposed development would not have a significant effect on the integrity of the Galloway Hills RSA or the qualities for which it has been identified.

7.38 It is concluded that the Proposed Development is in accordance with Policy 4 of NPF4.

Policy 5 Soils

7.39 The EIA Report Chapter 3 advises that the presence of peat was one of a number of environmental constraints that influenced the final design of the Proposed Development. The design of the Proposed Development has been informed by a detailed programme of peat depth probing and it has been shown that, where technically possible, areas of deep peat have been avoided. The design evolution has also included the use of existing access. This is in accordance with the requirements of the mitigation hierarchy. During the construction phase micro-siting will also be used to avoid unnecessary impact on peat in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy.

7.40 Peatland classification mapping shows that, with the exception of the northeastern extent of the Site, the majority of the Site is underlain by mineral soils (Class 0) or Class 4 peatland which are not considered representative of peatland habitats.

7.41 The northeastern extent of the Site is shown to be underlain by Class 1 and 2 peatland areas with small areas of Class 3 and Class 5 peatland. A small area of Class 3 peatland is also shown within the southeastern extent of the Site and along a small section of the southwestern access track.

7.42 Class 1 and 2 peatland areas are considered nationally important carbon-rich soils, areas of deep peat and priority peatlands, with potentially high conservation value and restoration potential. Class 3 and Class 5 are not considered priority peatland areas; however, soils may remain carbon rich with areas of deep peat. Chapter 8 of the EIA Report advises that as part of the baseline assessment, a comprehensive peat probing exercise and condition assessment was conducted. In summary the site investigations have confirmed that there would be no significant impacts on peat as a result of the Proposed Development.

7.43 The Proposed Development is for renewable energy. The assessment of peat and carbon rich soils has considered all of the proposed infrastructure. A site-specific Peat Landslide and Hazard Risk Assessment (PLHRA) and Peat Management Plan (PMP) is presented in Technical Appendix 8-1 and Technical Appendix 8-2 respectively of the EIA Report. These confirm that peat and carbon rich soils disturbed by the Proposed Development are limited in volume and can be beneficially reused in restoration works onsite.

7.44 Chapter 2 of this PRES sets out the findings of the carbon balance assessment which has been undertaken using the Scottish Government Calculator. It is expected that the Proposed Development would make a positive contribution to

offsetting carbon emissions after a maximum of 1.6 years, at which time it is estimated to be carbon neutral.

7.45 The EIA Report has considered the potential of the Proposed Development to avoid carbon emissions over its lifetime. The EIA report advises that displacement of a grid mix of electricity generation due to the Proposed Development is expected to result in a CO_2 emission saving over time of 54,259 tonnes CO_2 equivalent against a Grid-mix scenario of electricity generation.

7.46 It is concluded that the Proposed Development is in accordance with Policy 5 of NPF4.

Policy 6 Forestry Woodland and Trees

7.47 The scale of felling along the western access route is currently unknown. Any felling required will be minimised and will avoid the western side of the access track.. The Proposed Development would not result in the loss of ancient woodland, ancient or veteran trees.

7.48 There would be a net loss of woodland as a result of the Proposed Development. This would be compensated for in accordance with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy. It is expected that the way in which such compensatory planting would come forwards would be the subject of a planning condition should consent be forthcoming.

7.49 It is concluded that the Proposed Development is in accordance with Policy 5 of NPF4.

Policy 7 Historic Assets and Places

7.50 The EIA Report Chapter 10 contains an assessment of the impacts of the Proposed Development on historic assets. This assessment is based on an understanding of the cultural significance of the historic assets which have been identified in the relevant study areas and the Site.

7.51 The setting of the Category B Listed Kirkconnel Farmhouse and Steading, which is located within the Site, would be impacted by the Proposed Development as the solar array would change the land use of some of the area surrounding the farm. The EIA Report Chater 10 advises that the Proposed Development, as a modern development would be appreciable as such and thus the land to the north would still be understandable as land associated with the Farmhouse and Steading just of a somewhat altered character. The alteration to the asset's baseline would not affect how it is understood, appreciated and experienced. The effect is not assessed as significant and is considered to be acceptable.

7.52 There would be no direct impact on Scheduled Monuments as a result of the Proposed Development. Nine turbines of the Proposed Development would be visible from the Loch Mannoch cairn and stone circle which is a Scheduled Monument. The EIA Report concludes that, on balance, with the retention of key characteristics, the understanding, appreciation and experience of the cairn and stone circle would be retained and their overall cultural significance would not be materially adversely impacted. It is therefore concluded that significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the setting of the Scheduled Monument are avoided.

7.53 The Site is partially located within the Loch Mannoch ASA. Chapter 10 of the EIA Report advises that the Proposed Development has been designed to avoid direct impact upon individual heritage assets within the ASA wherever possible.

7.54 It is noted that whilst the Proposed Development has avoided the known heritage assets within the ASA, the construction of the Proposed Development has the potential to impact unknown heritage assets as well as paleoenvironmental and archaeological deposits which may survive within the ASA. The Proposed Development has the potential to have an adverse, direct, permanent, long term effect on the ASA. This is not considered to be significant.

7.55 A planning condition would be used to secure archaeological monitoring during the construction of the Proposed Development to ensure that any unregistered historic assets are appropriately recorded.

7.56 It is concluded that the Proposed Development is in accordance with Policy 7 of NPF4.

Policy 22 Flood Risk and Water Management

7.57 Chapter 8, of the EIA Report advises that the Proposed Development is not within a flood risk area. The Proposed Development will use Sustainable Drainage Systems to attenuate rates of water run off as required. The Proposed Development will not increase the risk of flooding as a result of its construction or operation. Chapter 8 of the EIA Report concludes that subject to mitigation there will be no significant effects on the water environment as a result of the Proposed Development.

7.58 It is concluded that the Proposed Development is in accordance with Policy 22 of NPF4.

Policy 23 Health and Safety

7.59 Chapter 9 of the EIA Report advises that as a result of the location of the proposed infrastructure, which is sited, away from sensitive properties noise from the Proposed Development was scoped out of detailed assessment as initial predictions resulted in sufficiently low rating levels at sensitive properties due to large distances between the on-site potentially noise generating plant and nearest noise sensitive receptors. The operational noise from the substation, BESS and solar farm would not result in a significant effect.

7.60 It is concluded that the Proposed Development is in accordance with Policy 23 of NPF4.

Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan

7.61 NPF4 is more recent than the DGLDP2 and as such is dominant in cases where the two documents do not accord with each other. That being the case, in policy situations where the DGLDP is compliant with NPF4 and where it is not, the response to the policy is covered by the assessment of the Proposed Development in the context of the NPF4 polices. The following summary is provided for completeness but seeks to avoid repetition.

Policy IN1 Renewable Energy

7.62 The matters which are raised in Policy IN1 are all matters which have been considered in the context of the relevant NPF4 policies. The conclusions in respect of these matters are not repeated here.

7.63 The one exception to this is the matter of tourism. The issue of tourism was scoped out of the EIA. It is however referenced in the DGLDP2. The Socio-economic Statement, submitted with the Application, advises that the most recent evidence on the relationship between wind farms and tourism suggests that there are no adverse effects on the tourism economy resulting from the development of onshore wind. This is reinforced by the OWPS. It is not expected that the introduction of the Proposed Development into Dumfries and Galloway will negatively impact tourism and recreational behaviours.

7.64 It should be noted that NPF4, in comparison to Scottish Planning Policy 2014 does not refer to tourism. This is reflective of the fact that the impact of onshore wind farms on tourism is no longer considered to be a significant matter.

Policy IN2 Wind Energy

7.65 The matters which are raised in policy IN2 are all matters which have been considered in the context of the policy assessment provided in the context of the NPF4 policies. The conclusions which are reached in respect of the NPF4 policies are not repeated here. The one exception to this is the matter of tourism. This is considered in the context of DGLDP2 Policy IN1 and that conclusion is not repeated here.

Policy HE4 Archeologically Sensitive Areas

7.66 The matters which are raised in this policy are considered in the context of NPF4 Policy 11, in Table 7.1, and Policy 7. The conclusions are not repeated here.

Other DGLDP2 Policies

7.67 Table 7.2 sets out a response to DGLDP2 referring where relevant to the assessment in the context of NPF4 to avoid repetition.

Policy	Policy summary
Policy OP1: Development Considerations	The matters which are raised in this policy are considered in the context of NPF4 Policy 11, in Table 7.1.
Policy HE3: Archaeology	The matters which are raised in this policy are considered in the context of NPF4 Policy 11, in Table 7.1, and Policy 7.
Policy HE6: Gardens and Designed Landscapes	The matters which are raised in this policy are considered in the context of NPF4 Policy 11, in Table 7.1, and Policy 7.
Policy NE1: National	The matters which are raised in this policy are considered in the context of NPF4

Policy	Policy summary
Scenic Areas	Policy 11, in Table 7.1, and Policy 4.
Policy NE2: Regional Scenic Areas	The matters which are raised in this policy are considered in the context of NPF4 Policy 11, in Table 7.1, and Policy 4.
Policy NE4: Sites of International Importance for Biodiversity	The matters which are raised in this policy are considered in the context of NPF4 Policy 11, in Table 7.1, and Policy 4.
Policy NE5: Species of International Importance	The matters which are raised in this policy are considered in the context of NPF4 Policy 11, in Table 7.1, and Policy 4.
Policy NE6: Sites of National Importance for Biodiversity and Geodiversity	The matters which are raised in this policy are considered in the context of NPF4 Policy 11, in Table 7.1, and Policy 7.
Policy NE11: Supporting the Water Environment	The matters which are raised in this policy are considered in the context of NPF4 Policy 11, in Table 7.1, and Policy 22.
Policy NE12: Protection of Water Margins	The matters which are raised in this policy are considered in the context of NPF4 Policy 11, in Table 7.1, and Policy 22.
Policy NE14: Carbon Rich Soil	The matters which are raised in this policy are considered in the context of NPF4 Policy 11, in Table 7.1, and Policy 5.
Policy NE15: Protection and Restoration of Peat Deposits as Carbon Sinks	The matters which are raised in this policy are considered in the context of NPF4 Policy 11, in Table 7.1, and Policy 5.
Policy CF4: Access Routes	The matters which are raised in this policy are considered in the context of NPF4 Policy 11, in Table 7.1.

7.68 It is concluded that the Proposed Development is in accordance with Policy IN1 of the DGLDP2.

Assessment Conclusions

7.69 The planning policy sets out the matters that are to be addressed in the design and mitigation of a Proposed Development. It is submitted that, through the design evolution process and as demonstrated in the EIA Report, the design of the Proposed Development, along with the prescribed mitigation, which where

appropriate would be secured by conditions, satisfactorily address the environmental impacts.

7.70 It is clear that the Proposed Development will make a valuable contribution to meeting the renewable energy targets for the UK and Scotland. The environmental impacts of the Proposed Development have been considered, along with the appropriate mitigation and enhancement. It is submitted that the Proposed Development is in accordance with NPF4, when read as a whole, which is the document with the most recent Development Plan policy. There is nothing in the DGLDP2 which suggests that consent for the Proposed Development should not be forthcoming.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The Proposed Development provides an opportunity for creation of a renewable energy development which would have a capacity of 100 MW which would make a meaningful contribution to meeting Scotland Climate Change commitments.

Energy Policy and Relevant Targets

8.2 The Proposed Development would support the resilience of the electricity network through the electricity it generates and the additional technical services it can provide to the electricity system operator. It would contribute to sustainable development by providing for greater and more efficient use of renewable energy generation in the electricity system, and it would contribute to greenhouse gas emissions reduction ambitions.

8.3 The Proposed Development has a grid connection date of 2030 and therefore can, if consented, contribute to the ambition contained in the OWPS for 20 GW of onshore wind generating in 2030.

Economic and Community Impacts

8.4 The Applicant is committed to ensure that the Proposed Development will have a community benefit fund which will benefit the local community. The Proposed Development will result in socio-economic benefits through all phases of the Proposed Development. The Applicant has sought to maximise the socio-economic impact of the Proposed Development as required by NPF4.

Environmental Impacts

8.5 The EIA Report has identified significant effects in respect of landscape and cultural heritage. It is considered that the design of the Proposed Development has sought to mitigate the impacts on landscape, visual and cultural heritage receptors. In the case of the landscape and visual impacts NPF4 recognises that localised impacts, such as those which are predicted are to be expected from some forms of renewable energy developments.

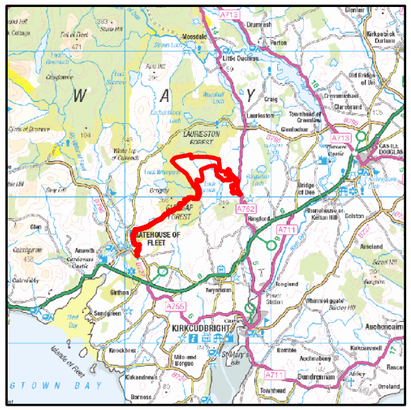
8.6 The Proposed Development would also result in biodiversity Subject to suitable mitigation being in place the environmental impacts of the Proposed Development are considered acceptable.

Summary

8.7 In considering the impacts, of the Proposed Development, significant weight is to be placed on the contribution of the Proposed Development to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emissions reduction ambitions. The Proposed Development will generate, store and supply a considerable amount of electricity per year, and act as an enabling technology for harnessing more electricity generated from renewable sources in Scotland.

8.8 This PRES has sought to consider and balance the relevant considerations, determine what weight is to be given to each consideration and come to a view on

where the planning/consenting balance falls. It is considered that the Proposed Development is supported by the relevant planning and renewable energy policy. It is concluded that the impacts of the Proposed Development are acceptable in the context of the positive benefits of the Proposed Development.



Lairdmannoch Energy Park

Figure 1
Location Plan

Key

🟥 Site boundary

0 0.5 1 2
Kilometers

N

Scale @ A3:
1:35,000

16/03/2025 TL010 40418/SL/016c
Drawn by: TH Checked by: TH Approved by: LK

Lairdmannoch Energy Park

wind2

Figure 2a
Site Layout - Map 1
Development Site

Key

- Site boundary
- Turbine Location

Wind infrastructure

- Turbine foundation
- Crane hardstanding
- Auxillary crane area
- Tower storage
- Blade storage
- Substation and BESS
- Construction compound
- Borrow Pit

Track lines

- Access track - cut
- Access track - floating
- Access track - upgraded / widened
- Access track - solar
- Watercourse crossing

Solar infrastructure

- Solar panel
- Power Station
- Switching and Breaking Station

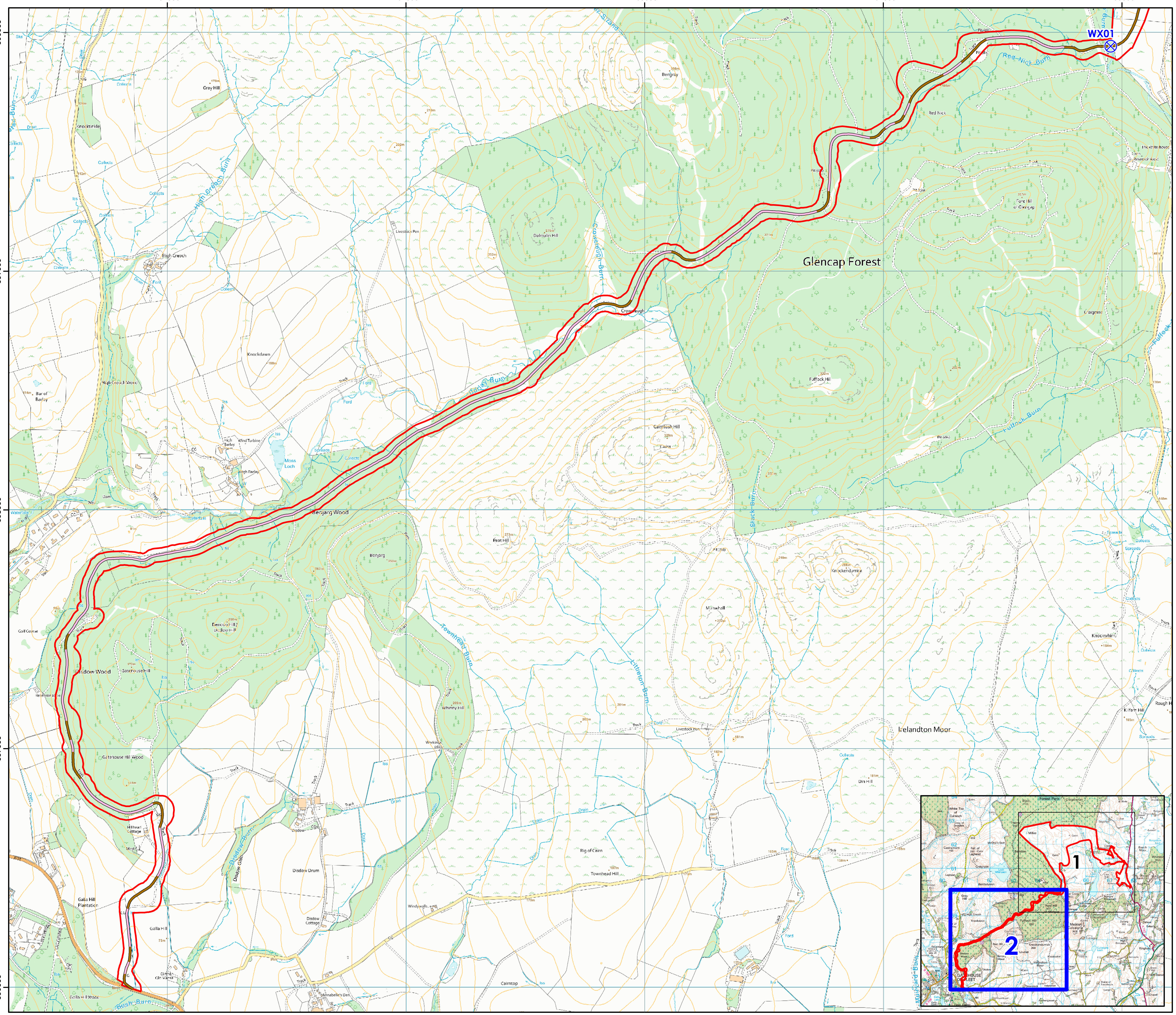
atmos CONSULTING

0 212.5 425 850
Metres

N

Scale @ A3:
1:15,000

21/03/2025 TL010 40418/SL/093c
Drawn by: TH Checked by: TH Approved by: JG



Lairdmannoch Energy Park

wind2

Figure 2b
Site Layout - Map 2
Access Route

Key

Site boundary

Track lines

Access track - cut

Access track - upgraded / widened

Watercourse crossing

atmos CONSULTING

0 212.5 425 850
Metres

N

Scale @ A3: 1:15,000

21/03/2025 TL010 40418/SL/093c
Drawn by: TH Checked by: TH Approved by: JG