



Chapter 1

Introduction

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1. The UK and Scottish governments have declared a climate emergency and set ambitious climate change targets with a Net Zero Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) target for 2045 in Scotland and an interim target of 75% reduction in emissions by 2030. The Energy White Paper notes that to meet the UK targets this would require a four-fold increase in clean electricity generation with decarbonisation of electricity increasingly underpinning the delivery of the Net Zero target (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2020). It is therefore important to accelerate growth in the renewable energy sector. **Chapter 4: Renewable Energy and Planning Policy** provides further details of the ambitious targets, the renewable energy policy framework and Scotland's current progress towards Net Zero.
2. ScottishPower Renewables (UK) Ltd (SPR) (hereafter 'the Applicant') is helping to lead the fight against climate change by developing renewable energy projects such as this fully integrated renewable scheme known as Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development (RED) (hereafter the 'proposed Development'). This would be a fully integrated renewable energy solution in direct response to meeting national and international climate change targets. The proposed Development would be able to regulate output and provide clean power to people's homes when they need it most and would provide a state of the art development for this area of the Highland region.
3. It is the intention of the Applicant to submit an application under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 for the proposed Development. The proposed Development would constitute a Schedule 2 development as provided for by the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations). Therefore, in support of the application, the Applicant has undertaken an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and produced its findings in this EIA Report. The EIA Report informs readers of the nature of the proposed Development, and likely significant environmental effects and measures proposed to protect the environment during site preparation, construction, and operation.
4. To ensure clarity in the EIA, the following terms and descriptions presented in **Table 1.1** below are used.

Table 1.1: Key terms and descriptions

Term	Description
The Applicant	ScottishPower Renewables (UK) Ltd.
proposed Development	The proposed Development refers to all components of the Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development installation. The proposed Development, as assessed and reported in the EIA Report, comprises 10 wind turbines up to 149.9 m in height, with an installed capacity of around 50 MW, and around 15 MW of ground mounted solar arrays producing a combined output of around 65 MW. The application also includes approximately 15 MW of battery storage (BESS) to store energy. The proposed Development is described in further detail in Chapter 3: Proposed Development .
Site	The Site refers to the area within the application boundary beginning at the site access from the C1033 Everley-Crockster Toll Road and within which the proposed Development lies.
Application Boundary	The extent of the area relating to the application, comprising the Site and the offsite area.
Study area	The area over which desk based or field assessments have been extended. The study area varies depending on the nature of the potential effects for each environmental parameter, as informed by professional guidance and best practice regarding EIA. The study area is

Term	Description
	therefore explained within the approach and methods section of the relevant chapters (Chapters 7 to 16).

1.2 The Applicant

6. SPR is part of the ScottishPower group of companies operating in the UK under the Iberdrola Group, one of the world's largest integrated utility companies and a world leader in wind energy. ScottishPower now only produces 100% green electricity – focusing on wind energy, smart grids and driving the change to a cleaner, electric future. The company has committed to investing over £4m every working day between 2018 to 2022 to make this happen and is committed to speeding up the transition to cleaner electric transport and improving air quality
7. SPR is at the forefront of the development of the renewables industry through pioneering ideas, forward thinking and outstanding innovation. Its ambitious growth plans include expansion of its existing onshore wind portfolio, investment in new large-scale solar deployment and innovative grid storage systems including batteries. The company is also delivering the Iberdrola Group's offshore windfarms in the Southern North Sea off East Anglia.
8. SPR has been working alongside communities across the UK for nearly two decades and has to date contributed more than £42 million in benefit funds to support initiatives and projects for those communities local to their onshore windfarm sites. SPR have two existing operational sites in the Highland region: Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm and Halsary Windfarm. Community benefit funds from these developments are projected to exceed £3.4 million in the local area over the lifespan of the projects.
9. With the development of these sites nearby, SPR is continuing the history of working positively with local communities in the Highland region of Scotland. The flexible approach adopted by SPR has empowered local communities to decide what the community benefit is spent on. This has resulted in a range of projects being delivered from improving local amenities including broadband provision, environmental improvements, youth activities, educational programmes, heritage projects, a community minibus and installation of defibrillators and provision of first aid kits.
10. RSK has been appointed by SPR to undertake an EIA to determine and assess the potential effects of the proposed Development. The results are presented in this EIA Report.

1.3 Background and Description

11. The proposed Development is located approximately 8 km south west of John o' Groats and 16 km east of Thurso, situated within the north eastern part of the Caithness area of the Highlands, centred on National Grid Reference ND 29621 69892, as shown on **Figure 1.1**. The application boundary covers the area shown on **Figure 1.2** and an aerial photograph is presented in **Figure 1.3**, showing topography, terrain and the current land use of the Site and surrounding area.

1.4 Purpose of the EIA Report

12. EIA is a process for identifying the likely consequences on the existing biological, physical and human environment arising from development progression.
13. The process is undertaken to ensure that the environmental effects of certain types of development proposal are fully investigated, understood and taken account of in the consenting and authorisation process.
14. This EIA Report has been prepared in accordance with The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations).

15. Under the terms of the EIA Regulations, the proposed Development is “a generating station, the construction of which (or the operation of which) will require a Section 36 consent but which is not Schedule 1 development”. In this regard, the proposed Development is of a type falling within Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations, meaning that an EIA will be required if it is deemed the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size and location
16. Screening procedures exist within the EIA Regulations to assist determination of whether a development proposal qualifies for EIA. However, in this case, in recognition of the proposed Development’s potential effects, the Applicant has decided to volunteer to undertake an EIA in support of the application. It was therefore not considered necessary to seek a Screening Opinion and this EIA Report is submitted voluntarily in accordance with the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit (ECU) Guidance.
17. There are also provisions under the EIA Regulations that facilitate the definition of the scope of the EIA, in consultation with Stakeholders. Such provisions are not, however, mandatory. In that context, in March 2019 the Applicant received pre-application advice from THC in relation to the proposed Development. The advice received was comprehensive and contained the majority of information that would typically be contained in a formal scoping direction given by the ECU and its consultees. For this reason, rather than requesting a formal scoping opinion from the ECU, a subsequent direct scoping exercise was undertaken directly with relevant stakeholders, including the ECU, and taking due cognisance of the prior pre-application advice. Scoping responses were duly received from key consultees in September 2020. In light of comments received in the scoping responses and after subsequent design iterations, further consultation was arranged with key consultees to address concerns and agree on an appropriate assessment scope. This EIA Report takes into account all consultation responses. Further details on the direct scoping approach is provided in **Chapter 6: Direct Scoping and Consultation**.
18. This EIA Report is presented to the ECU in the determination of the application for consent under Section 36 of the 1989 Act and for deemed planning permission in terms of section 57 of The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended for the proposed Development. Its purpose is to present the proposed Development and its predicted environmental effects in a concise, objective and non-promotional manner in order to provide the Scottish Ministers, Local Authority, consultation bodies, interested bodies and the general public with sufficient information to assess its likely environmental effects. This EIA Report presents the findings of the EIA process by describing the proposed Development, and the current conditions at the Site and Extended Area and likely significant effects which may result from the proposed Development. Where appropriate, mitigation is proposed, and any residual effects are reported. Regulation 3 of the EIA Regulations prohibits Scottish Ministers from granting Section 36 consent for EIA development unless they have first taken the environmental information provided in the EIA Report into consideration.

1.5 EIA Project Team and Competency

19. The EIA Project Team is led by RSK Environment Ltd (RSK), part of the RSK Group Ltd with assistance from specialist consultants.
20. RSK Group Ltd is a fully integrated, environmental, health, safety and engineering consultancy with over 20 years experience in the assessment of environmental impacts associated with the development of renewable energy infrastructure. RSK is a founding member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment’s (IEMA) EIA Quality Mark scheme, which recognises and accredits organisations that meet the required high-quality standard of EIA on a consistent basis.
21. For this project, RSK were responsible for co-ordinating the production of the EIA Report. were supported by a number of technical specialists from other organisations in support of specific technical assessments. **Table 1.2** details the technical subject areas covered by the EIA and the technical specialists responsible for each.

The Applicant confirm that the specialist organisations, including RSK, that have carried out the EIA and produced the EIA Report have the skills and relevant competency, expertise and qualifications to undertake an EIA for the proposed Development.

Table 1.2: EIA Team competencies

Discipline	Lead Specialist	Qualifications	Years of Experience
EIA Project Management Team			
EIA Project Manager	Robert Beck, RSK	BA (Hons), MEnvS, PGDip, PIEMA	16 years
EIA Project Director	Mike Kelly, RSK	BSc (Hons)	24 years
EIA Project Support	Adam Paterson, RSK	BSc (Hons), MSc, GIEMA	2 year
EIA Technical Specialists			
Renewable Energy and Planning Policy	Alison Sidgwick, Stephenson Halliday	BSoc Sc (Hons), MURP, RTPi	21 years
Landscape and Visual Amenity	Ross Allan, RSK	BSc (Hons), MSc, CMLi	19 years
Ecology and Biodiversity	Nicole Robinson, Avian	BSc (Hons), MSc, ACIEEM	11 years
Ornithology	Alex Ash, NRP Ltd	BSc	18 years
Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils	Catherine Isherwood, RSK	MA, MSci, MSc, PhD, ProfGradIMMM, CGeol,	14 years
Archaeology and Cultural Heritage	Stephen Carter, RSK Headland	BSc (Joint Hons), PhD, MCIfA, FSA Scot	31 years
Access, Traffic and Transport	Jon Hassel, RSK	BEng (Hons), MCIHT	28 years
Noise	Mark Jiggins, Hoare Lea	MSc MIOA	22 years
Forestry	Wayne Scurrah, RSK ADAS	DDF	31 years
Aviation	John Van Hoogstraten, Cyrrus	BSc, MSc, MBCI, CBCP, SIIRSM	26 years
Socio-Economics, Recreation and Land Use	Robert Beck, RSK Mike Kelly, RSK Adam Paterson, RSK	As above.	As above.
Shadow Flicker	Danny Scrivener, Pager Power	BSc	9 years
Telecommunications	Michael Sutton, Pager Power	BSc	2 years
Carbon Balance	Danielle King, RSK	BA (Hons), LLM, PSC	6 years
Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	Debra Lewis, RSK	BSc (Hons)	22 years

1.6 Structure of the EIA Report

23. The EIA Report is presented in four volumes as follows:

- Volume 1: Non-Technical Summary (NTS)

The NTS describes in non-technical language the proposed Development and the likely effects it may have on people in the local area and the receiving environment. It also describes the measures that the Developer proposes to use to avoid or reduce any potential negative effects that have been identified, including how environmental issues would be managed during and after construction.

- Volume 2: EIA Report

The EIA Report presents the complete findings of the EIA and is the main document accompanying the application for consent.

The EIA Report written text is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1: Introduction;
- Chapter 2: Site Description and Design Evolution;
- Chapter 3: Proposed Development;
- Chapter 4: Renewable Energy and Planning Policy;
- Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology;
- Chapter 6: Scoping and Consultation;
- Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;
- Chapter 8: Ecology and Biodiversity;
- Chapter 9: Ornithology;
- Chapter 10: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils;
- Chapter 11: Archaeology and Cultural Heritage;
- Chapter 12: Access, Traffic and Transport;
- Chapter 13: Noise;
- Chapter 14: Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism;
- Chapter 15: Other Issues; and
- Chapter 16: Schedule of Commitments.

- Volume 3: EIA Report Figures; and

Volume 3 contains all relevant Figures referred to throughout Volume 2 of the EIA Report.

- Volume 4: EIA Report Technical Appendices

The Technical Appendices referenced in each EIA Chapter are compiled separately in Volume 4. They are numbered sequentially for each Chapter that they are mentioned in.

1.7 Publicity of the EIA Report

1.7.1 Statutory Requirements

24. The EIA Report will be publicised in accordance with Part 5 of the 2017 Regulations and the Electricity (Applications for Consent) Regulations 1990 (as amended).

25. A notice will be published in the following ways:

- on the Applicant's project website (https://www.scottishpowerrenewables.com/pages/hollandmey_renewable_energy_development.aspx);
- in the Edinburgh Gazette;
- in the Herald;
- in the John o' Groats Journal; and
- in the Caithness Courier.

1.7.2 Voluntary Publicity

26. In addition to the statutory requirements for publicising an EIA Report, the Applicant has advised the following local Community Councils of the EIA Report being available:

- Bower Community Council;
- Castletown Community Council;
- Dunnet and Canisbay Community Council; and
- Sinclair Bay Community Council.

27. A notice will also be published on the Caithness.org community website.

28. A hard copy of the EIA Report can be viewed at The Highland Council Planning Office, Caithness House, Market Place, Wick (by appointment only between the hours of 9am and 5pm).

29. Electronic copies of all EIA Report Volumes will be made available for download from the SPR corporate website at:

https://www.scottishpowerrenewables.com/pages/hollandmey_renewable_energy_development.aspx

30. The EIA Report can also be viewed at the Scottish Government Energy Consents website, under application reference ECU00003353, at:

<https://www.energyconsents.scot/>

31. Under the Electricity Works (Miscellaneous Temporary Modifications) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Regulations 2020, the requirement for developers to make Section 36 application documents including the EIA Report available for public inspection in hard copies at a place within the locality, has been temporarily suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic.

32. Hard copies of the NTS are available free of charge from:

RSK
65 Sussex Street
Glasgow
G41 1DX
Tel: 0141 418 0471
Hollandmeyred@scottishPower.com

33. Hard copies of the EIA Report may be purchased by arrangement from the above address at a cost of £1,000 per copy, or £15 per DVD/USB. Specific sections of the EIA Report are also available on request at a proportionate cost. The price of the hard copy reflects the costs of producing all Volumes as well as the Landscape and Visual photography and photomontages at the recommended size and quality in order to view them properly. In the interests of sustainability and in keeping with the renewable energy agenda, the paperless (DVD/USB) version is recommended.

1.8 References

Scottish Government Guidance on Energy Consents. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/energy-infrastructure/energy-consents/> [accessed 4 November 2021]

The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019

The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019.

The Electricity Act 1989.

The Electricity (Applications for Consent) Regulations 1990

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

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997

Update to the climate change plan 2018–2032: Securing a green recovery on a path to net zero: Scottish Government: 2020

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