Eastern Green Link 4:

Scottish Onshore Scheme

Volume 5: Appendices

Appendix 5.1 Scoping Opinion

December 2025

Prepared for:

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Appendix 5.1
Scoping Opinion

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Planning Services

Martin McGroarty

development.central@fife.gov.uk

Your Ref:
Our Ref: 24/03149/SCO

Date 17th February 2025

Dear Sir

Application No:	**24/03149/SCO**
Proposal:	**EIA Scoping for Eastern Green Link 4**
Address:	**Onshore Elements Only, Kinghorn to Westfield, Fife**

I refer to your request for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping opinion received on the 29th of November 2024, and I apologise for the delay in responding.

I can confirm that the methodology and scope of the proposed EIA Report (EIAR) are broadly acceptable in terms of the headings and summaries provided within your Scoping Report on the EGL4 Scottish Onshore Scheme EIA (dated November 2024).

I note that your Scoping Report considers that the following matters should be **fully scoped-out** of the Scottish Onshore Scheme EIA:

- Marine Water Features and Impacts
- Decommissioning
- Air Quality
- Waste
- Vibration
- Health and Wellbeing
- Socioeconomics, Recreation and Tourism

I further note that your Scoping Report considers that the following matters should be **partially scoped-out** of the EIA:

- Landscape and Visual (Operational phase effects of underground cable corridors)
- Ecology and Nature Conservation (certain excluded species surveys)
- Water Environment and Flood Risk (Lochs excluded from Surface Water Features)
- Access Traffic and Transport (excluding Hazardous Loads)
- Noise (Convertor Station operations only; excluding non-residential receptors)
- Climate Change (excluding CCRA and ICCI assessments)

With respect to the matters which you consider can be **fully** scoped-out of the EIA, I would comment as follows:

Marine Water Features and Impacts

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that the Onshore EIA need not assess likely significant effects in the marine environment beyond Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS), given that the Marine Scheme will be assessed separately under the Marine Scheme EIAR, which will accompany an application to Marine Scotland for a Marine Licence.

Decommissioning

I DO NOT concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that the Onshore EIA need not assess likely significant effects of decommissioning.

You indicate that, once operational, EGL4 will form an integral part of the electricity transmission network for at least 40 years and, since it is likely that after this period refurbishment and plant replacement will extend the life of the converter station rather than lead to decommissioning, this leads to your conclusion that decommissioning can be scoped out of the Onshore EIA.

My concern is that 40 years is a significant period of time and, given the speed of technological change that can occur, it is not possible to conclude with certainty that decommissioning will not be required after 40 years. If only at a high level, the EIA should contain some narrative on the likely significant impacts of decommissioning, in the event that it is required.

Air Quality

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that the Onshore EIA need not assess likely significant effects on air quality arising from the proposed scheme, on the basis that baseline data indicates that: the existing air quality is good and there is no risk of any air quality exceedance; there will be negligible emissions to air from the ordinary operation of the converter station; and potential emissions to air during the construction phase are anticipated to derive from dust and traffic emissions, which will be temporary in nature, not affect the whole project area at any one time, and can be controlled through the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)..

Waste

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that the Onshore EIA need not assess likely significant effects of waste arising from the proposed scheme, given that the quantity of waste generated by the installation and operation of the cable route (which constitutes the majority of the route) is anticipated to be minimal, and wate arisings

from the construction of the Convertor Station can be managed through a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) and any associated Waste Management Licences, where appropriate, to minimise and reduce the amount of waste needing treatment and disposal.

Vibration

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that the Onshore EIA need not assess likely significant effects of vibration from the proposed scheme on the basis that there are no existing sources of vibration. I also consider that any vibration which may arise during construction from heavy traffic movements can be controlled through the CEMP.

Health and Wellbeing

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that the Onshore EIA need not have a specific chapter on likely significant effects upon health and wellbeing arising from the proposed scheme, but rather these impacts will be covered as part of various other chapters of the Onshore EIA.

In reaching this conclusion, I also note the narrative on Electric and Magnetic Fields contained in Section 2.5 of your Scoping Report, with respect to the Electricity Industry's adherence to technical Government guidelines covering exposure to Electric and Magnetic Fields.

Socioeconomics, Recreation and Tourism

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that the Onshore EIA need not assess likely significant effects on socioeconomics, recreation and tourism arising from the proposed scheme, on the basis that land take at the proposed converter station and landfall site will not lead to any potential impacts in terms of recreational routes and public rights of way or in terms of community severance during construction or once operational.

With respect to the matters which you consider can be **partially** scoped-out of the EIA, I would comment as follows:

Landscape and Visual

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that the Onshore EIA be restricted to the likely significant impacts of the Convertor Station and above ground infrastructure associated with the proposed scheme, noting that most of the proposed scheme involves underground cabling.

Ecology and Nature Conservation

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that the Onshore EIA's ecology and nature conservation chapter should scope-out certain species surveys, subject to Fife Council's Natural Heritage specialist's comments provided later in this Scoping Opinion.

Water Environment and Flood Risk

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that the Onshore EIA's water environment and flood risk chapter should scope-out Camilla Loch, Loch Gelly, and two identified (but unnamed) lochs from the assessment on surface water features, on the basis that these are outwith the project area.

Access Traffic and Transport

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that the Onshore EIA's access traffic and transport chapter should scope-out both Hazardous Loads for the construction and operational phases of the proposed development, on the basis that it is considered unlikely there will be material construction traffic generated whose loads would fall within the current classifications for the carriage of dangerous goods. **I also concur** with your Scoping Report's conclusion that access traffic and transport impacts from the operational phase of the proposed development are scoped-out of the EIA, given that Converter Stations are typically operated remotely and therefore operational traffic would be limited to inspection and maintenance only.

Noise

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that the Onshore EIA's noise chapter should be limited to an operational noise assessment of the Converter Station, given no likely adverse noise will arise from the underground cable route. Since no non-residential sensitive receptors (that would be significantly affected by construction or operational activities within the red line boundary of the Project) have been identified at the scoping stage, **I also concur** with your Scoping Report's conclusion that non-residential sensitive receptors should be scoped-out of the EIA.

Climate Change

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that the Onshore EIA's climate change chapter should relate to Greenhouse Gas emissions only, and scope-out a Climate Change Resilience Assessment (CCRA) and In-combination Climate Change Impacts (ICCI), since the construction period is in the short term (4-5 years), there are no climate change parameters included and climate change is not expected to result in significant changes. I note that these risks have been considered by the Applicant in its

Climate Resilience Strategy, which will apply to the design of the Scottish Onshore Scheme.

Taking into account all of the above, the following matters should therefore be within the scope of the EIA. Additional comments are provided below on each of these matters to assist in the focus of the chapters and ensure sufficient information is provided within the EIAR.

The matters that are in scope are:

- Landscape and Visual (excluding operational phase effects of cable corridors)
- Ecology and Nature Conservation (excluding certain species surveys)
- Water Environment and Flood Risk (excluding certain Lochs)
- Cultural Heritage
- Access Traffic and Transport (excluding Hazardous Loads)
- Noise (Convertor Station operations only; excluding non-residential receptors)
- Geology and Ground Conditions
- Climate Change (Greenhouse Gas Assessment only)
- Intertidal Zone
- Cumulative and In-Combination Effects

I have outlined below where consultees have commented on the proposed chapters and also made any comments relative to the Planning Service. If the chapter is not included, then please take this as agreement with the EIA Scoping Report on the methodology and contents of the chapter.

<u>Landscape and Visual</u>

I am generally content that your initial commentary on the need for a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) correctly identifies the relevant context within which the EIA should consider the impact of the proposed development on the landscape character and visual amenity. **I therefore concur** with the recommendation of the Scoping Report that an LVIA is scoped into the EIA. The methodology and scope of this proposed chapter is broadly acceptable, however the following comments should be noted and taken into consideration:

- The LVIA will be prepared in line with the “Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition)”. Any proposal should also refer to the Fife Landscape Character Assessment (1999) along with its guidelines and recommendations for accommodating development.
- In relation to the visual impact of the proposals, a list of key viewpoints has been indicated in the Scoping Report. Early contact should be made with Fife Council to agree the key viewpoints for the ZTV mapping that will inform the study area and crystalise the selection of viewpoints.

- Photomontage images should be provided for all viewpoints, once agreed - covering existing, completion of operations, to final restoration stages.
- It is suggested that the content of the Design and Access Statement to be produced for inclusion in any planning application is discussed with planning officers prior to submission to ensure that proposals mitigate against the visual impact on landscape assets and integrate development into its countryside context.
- Any Built Heritage assets which may be identified as potentially being affected in terms of their setting should be included in the LVIA. Note that guidance on the settings of listed buildings is available at: *https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=80b7c0a0-584b-4625-b1fd-a60b009c2549* *Historic Environment Scotland, Managing Change in the Historic Environment (Setting).*

Ecology and Nature Conservation

I note from your Scoping Report that a range of ecological (including ornithological) field surveys will be carried out, the results of which will be used to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment of the Project. Alongside this, an HRA Screening, and where necessary an Appropriate Assessment, will also be conducted to determine whether the project could have significant effects on Firth of Forth SPA, Outer Firth of Forth and St Andrews Bay Complex SPA, Forth Islands SPA, and/or Loch Leven SPA. Further, a quantitative BNG assessment will be carried out with the aim being that the Scottish Onshore Scheme delivers no net loss of biodiversity units relative to the baseline, in compliance with national planning policy.

NatureScot has indicated that it has previously provided EIA scoping advice to the Marine Directorate for the subsea cable elements of the Eastern Green Link 4 project and notes that its advice below focusses on Statutory Designated Sites.

NatureScot considers that the Scoping Report is comprehensive, agrees with the summary of the proposed scope of the EIA report, and has the following additional comments to make:

- As mentioned in the scoping report, the proposed landfall area north of Kinghorn falls within the Firth of Forth Special Protection Area (SPA) designated for its wintering bird interests and their supporting intertidal habitats, and the proposed landfall site is approximately 100m from the Outer Firth of Forth and St Andrews Bay Complex SPA, designated for its breeding and wintering bird interests. Additionally, there is potential connectivity between the converter station and cabling route and the Pink-Footed Geese qualifying feature of Loch Leven SPA. NatureScot supports the intention to undertake a Habitats Regulation Appraisal (HRA), alongside the EIA, to establish whether the proposed development will affect the integrity of the SPAs.
- NatureScot agrees that at this stage in the design of the Scottish Onshore Scheme, it is not possible to make detailed recommendations for mitigation. However, for SPA features that could potentially be most impacted by disturbance from coastal

mechanical operational work or by visual disturbance of contractors in the landfall area, impacts may be mitigated by working outwith the wintering season.

- As discussed in the scoping report, the proposed landfall area falls within the Firth of Forth Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI), designated for its breeding and wintering bird interests, high value supporting habitats and geological interests. In addition to the bird interests covered by the SPA designations, the proposed landfall site at Kinghorn is designated for its Lowland Neutral Grassland feature, and for two geological features: Lower Carboniferous [Dinantian – Namurian (part)] and Carboniferous – Permian Igneous. If operational works within the Firth of Forth SSSI use non-destructive techniques where no damage is expected to impact the surface expression of the rock surface during installation, or during any future maintenance works, then the geological features are unlikely to be impacted but should be considered within the EIA. For more information on Geological Conservation Review (GCR) sites, please see the NatureScot *website* and the *NatureScot OpenData Hub*.
- As noted in the scoping report, the proposed converter station and associated cabling routes are close to Camilla Loch SSSI, designated for its fen and freshwater habitats, Loch Leven SSSI designated for its fen and freshwater habitats, Holl Meadows SSSI, designated for its lowland neutral grassland feature, and Carriston Reservoir SSSI, designated for its mesotrophic loch feature. NatureScot supports the intention to incorporate an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) within the EIA to consider the direct and indirect impacts on the terrestrial biodiversity, and which will consider the impacts on the SSSI. Based on the information currently available, in NatureScot's view the proposal is unlikely to have Significant Effects on the qualifying features of the following SSSIs that are close to the converter station and proposed underground cable routes, assuming work will not cause any hydrological impacts to these sites: Loch Leven SSSI, Camilla Loch SSSI, Holl Meadows SSSI and Carriston Reservoir SSSI.
- Furthermore, the proposed landfall site north of Kinghorn is adjacent to a designated seal haul out site at Kinghorn Rocks. Similar to the SPA bird features, works in this area may be subject to seasonal working restrictions.
- NatureScot supports the intention to undertake ecological surveys to assess the habitats and the presence of any protected species on the site and agrees with the list of excluded surveys and their justifications.
- NatureScot supports the development of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) to manage the mitigation of the impacts of the proposed development.
- NatureScot notes the intention to assess the in-combination effects of the proposed development.

Fife Council's Natural Heritage specialist comments as follows on this chapter of your Scoping Report:

- The ecological assessment detailed in Scoping Report Section 6 Ecology and Nature Conservation covers both terrestrial and aquatic habitats, as well as Protected Species.
- The species surveys identified for scoping-out are deemed reasonable.
- Where suitable habitats for red squirrel, etc., are unavoidable, the Applicant should ensure that a pre-works survey is conducted as part of the species-specific mitigations.
- Important Ecological Features (IEFs) scoped-in for assessment are also deemed appropriate.
- Use of Horizontal Direct Drilling (HDD) is welcomed, especially where this ensures no loss of trees to felling within woodland areas.
- A commitment to conducting a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment and identification of suitable biodiversity enhancement measures is noted.
- The overall approach and scope to ecological assessment is deemed appropriately considered.

Water Environment and Flood Risk

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that the Scottish Onshore Scheme has the potential to have direct and indirect water quality, flood risk, hydrogeological and hydromorphological adverse impacts, and that those impacts are predominantly associated with the construction phase (although the management of surface water runoff from above ground installations such as the Converter Station can result in permanent but localised impacts to any receiving watercourses).

I note that a Water Environment Impact Assessment will be included in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report covering potential impacts on surface water and groundwater receptors, including water quality, water resources and hydromorphology, as well as flood risk. This will include details of proposed mitigation or environmental enhancement measures, stating the residual effects.

The impact assessment will also be supported by a Private Water Supply (PWS) Risk Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and a Water Framework Directive (WFD) assessment. The WFD assessment will consider the potential for deterioration or prevention of improvement in the status of WFD water bodies that are potentially affected by the Scottish Onshore Scheme.

I am content that, at this stage, it is only proposed that a preliminary screening and scoping level of assessment will be carried out, with the need for further assessment to be determined at a later stage through consultation with stakeholders.

In this context, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) makes initial comments indicating that, to avoid delay and potential objection, the EIA submission must contain a series of scale drawings of sensitivities (for example: peat depth, peat condition, Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE), proximity to watercourses, overlain with proposed development). This is necessary to ensure the EIA process has informed the layout of the development to firstly avoid, then reduce and then mitigate significant impacts on the environment.

SEPA requests that the issues covered in Appendix 1 to this Scoping Opinion, be addressed to its satisfaction in the EIA process. Appendix 1 provides details on SEPA's information requirements and the form in which they must be submitted. Details of regulatory requirements and good practice advice, for example in relation to engineering works in the water environment and waste management, can be found on the regulations section of SEPA's website.

Bearing in mind the advice from SEPA above, the methodology and scope of this chapter is considered to be generally acceptable. The following comments should however be noted:

- Your Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) should consider the impact of future climate change.
- The information within the planning application should comply with the requirements of Fife Council's Design Criteria Guidance on Flooding and Surface Water Management Plan Requirements (2022). A SuDS may be required to treat and attenuate surface water runoff from the site. If SuDS is required, adequate space should be afforded to accommodate SuDS within the site layout. Consideration should be given to this matter early in the planning process when proposals are at their most fluid and modifications to layout can be easily made with less expense to the developer. Each individual type of SuDS facility, such as a filter drain, detention basin, permeable paving or swale, provides one level of surface water treatment The level of SuDS required is dependent on the nature of the proposed development.
- The potential pollution of existing watercourses during the construction and operational phases should be considered in the EIA report.
- Construction phase SuDS should be used on site to help minimise the risk of pollution to the water environment.
- Run-off from any areas subject to particularly high pollution risk (e.g. yard areas, service bays, fuelling areas, pressure washing areas, oil or chemical storage, handling and delivery areas) should be minimised and directed to the foul sewer.
- Your Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will need to reflect the national policy change to consider 'flood risk areas' (rather than the functional floodplain) and demonstrate that proposals accord with the requirements of NPF4 (Policy 22).

You should note that, at planning application stage, self-certification of drainage arrangements is a validation standard for Fife Council. Further details on this can be found at:
http://publications.fifedirect.org.uk/c64_SuDSGuidanceFinalNov2016.pdf

Fife Council's Natural Heritage specialist comments as follows on this chapter of your Scoping Report:

- The Section 7 Water Environment & Flood Risk notes Horizontal Direct Drilling (HDD) will be used for larger watercourses and sensitive habitats will be avoided/traversed with care (i.e. no HDD use in areas of potential confined aquifer; avoidance of GWDTEs, guided by the ecology study).
- Mitigation measures to be included in the CEMP are outlined.
- The approach to the water environment is considered to be appropriate in its scope.

Cultural Heritage

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that a chapter on the Cultural Heritage of the area should be within the scope of the Onshore EIA.

In this context, I am generally content with the approach and the scoping but would draw your attention to the following comments received in consultation responses:

- Historic Environment Scotland (HES) has reviewed the details of the proposed scheme in terms of its historic environment interests, which covers World Heritage Sites, scheduled monuments and their settings, category A-listed buildings and their settings, inventory gardens and designed landscapes, inventory battlefields and Historic Marine Protected Areas.
- HES notes that it is content with the proposed scope of assessment and has not identified any likely significant effects on its historic environment interests. HES therefore has no further comments to make on the proposals at this time, other than to recommend that you refer to the EIA Handbook for best practice advice on assessing cultural heritage impacts, viewable online here:
  Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook | Hist Env Scotland.
- With respect to Cultural Heritage elements beyond HES's remit, Fife Council's Built Heritage specialist notes that Section 8.0 of your scoping report outlines the proposed methodology to assess the impact of development on built heritage assets. It highlights a number of potential designated heritage assets and advises that the scope will be revised during a walkover survey stage and with the aid of ZTV mapping. It will be important at EIA and application stage to understand as far as possible the extent of temporary works for the project to also understand their impacts on the historic environment.
- The setting of designated heritage assets is likely to be an important consideration, the requirements to preserve and/or enhance setting is set out in NPF4 Policies 7(c-d). Potential built non-designated historic environment assets (NDHEAs) and their

setting have been overlooked in the scoping and proposed methodology. NPF4 Policy 7(o) sets out a requirement to assess, protect and preserve them in developments.

- At EIA and full application stage we would expect to see potential NDHEAs identified within the wider heritage assessment and the setting of both designated and undesignated heritage scoped in to comply with NPF4 Policy 7. Both these requirements may result in a scoping boundary being widened at EIA stage.
- The assessment of the proposals' impact and also whether additional heritage assets may need to be scoped in should follow HES' guidance on setting: *Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Setting.*
- NPF4 Policy 33 and FIFEPlan Policy 15 require the safeguarding of minerals and their protection against sterilisation through development. Regarding the historic built environment, this requirement includes the requirement to safeguard those minerals which are workable and of important conservation value. This might include sands, limestones, sandstones, whinstone, or other finite materials crucial to supporting the conservation of the historic built environment in Scotland.
- Fife Council's Archaeologist notes that Section 8.0 of your scoping report also outlines the proposed methodology to assess the impact of development on archaeology. The approach outlined is satisfactory in relation to known heritage assets but lacks a methodology to test for the potential for development to impact on unrecorded, buried archaeological deposits. You are advised to widen the scope of the cultural heritage impact assessment to include an assessment of:
    - the potential for buried archaeology to exist along the development corridor;
    - a strategy to test for the presence/absence of buried archaeology along the development corridor; and
    - a strategy to mitigate the impact of development on unrecorded archaeological deposits should these be encountered in advance or during development.

<u>Access Traffic and Transport</u>

I am content that an EIA Transport Chapter will be produced in accordance with IEMA Guidelines 2023, which will be informed by baseline traffic information provided by DfT counters and ATC traffic surveys. I note that the significance of environmental effects on traffic and movement potentially resulting from Development construction traffic will be identified, and that mitigation measures will be identified to address any significant adverse effects, with the residual significance of effects summarised.

The methodology and scope of this chapter is considered to be acceptable.

<u>Noise</u>

The methodology and scope of this chapter is broadly acceptable, however the following comments should be noted and taken into consideration:

- Whilst the range of considerations in the proposed Noise chapter of your Scoping Report appears appropriate, it is recommended that prior to commencing any noise impact assessment, your appointed noise consultant should liaise with Fife Council (Public Protection) to agree the location of noise sensitive receptors, relevant noise assessment methodology and establish appropriate noise assessment criteria.
- I would expect that a noise report would need to be provided to accompany any planning application. The noise report should include a written scheme of how nearby residents will be protected from noise from the proposal. The report shall include an assessment of noise emissions from the proposed development and details of background and predicted noise levels at the boundary of nearby residential properties together with proposed noise attenuation measures. The report shall be appropriate for all times of day and night when the development will operate. The report should include any supporting calculations.
- A competent person should undertake any noise survey and developers may wish to contact the Association of Noise Consultants *http://www.association-of-noise-consultants.co.uk/Pages/Links.htm (01736 852958)* or the Institute of Acoustics *http://www.ioa.org.uk* (01727 848195) for a list of members.
- The noise impact assessment shall also include an assessment of any noise impacts from any existing neighbouring land uses which, cumulatively with your proposal, may have the potential to impact noise sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the site.

Geology and Ground Conditions

I concur with your Scoping Report's conclusion that Geology and Ground Conditions should be the subject of a specific chapter in the EIA and consider that the methodology proposed within this chapter of the EIAR for assessing the site's geology and ground conditions is generally satisfactory.

Given Fife's mining heritage, I particularly welcome your Scoping Report's conclusion that mining and mining legacy will be scoped into the EIA; including impacts to perched groundwater during construction, impacts to peatland resources during construction, and the risk of potential subsidence as a result of developing on areas of legacy mining.

Fife Council's Land and Air Quality (LAQ) team notes that within Section 11, Geology & Ground Conditions, of the Scoping Report (and specifically within 11.4 Assessment Methodology) reference has been made to Fife Council Historical Land Use and District Landfill map viewer data, and other appropriate guidance. LAQ notes the intention to include Phase I Desk studies, Ground Investigations where required, and mitigation where required, in areas identified as having potential pollutant linkages in the respective Conceptual Site Models. LAQ looks forward to reviewing these in due course.

LAQ considers that potential contamination issues should be scoped into the EIA. All land contamination reports should be prepared in accordance with CLR11 and PAN 33 or any subsequent revisions of those documents. Additional information can be found at: *www.fifedirect.org.uk/contaminatedland*

The submission should systematically identify all aspects of site work that might impact upon the environment, potential pollution risks associated with the proposals and identify the principles of preventative measures and mitigation. This will establish a robust environmental management process for the development. A draft Schedule of Mitigation should be produced as part of this process, which should cover all the environmental sensitivities, pollution prevention and mitigation measures identified to avoid or minimise environmental effects. Intrusive investigations are recommended to better assess the potential risks associated with the development.

It is advised that an appropriate contaminated land site-specific risk assessment be submitted where required.

<u>Intertidal Zone</u>

I note that the boundary of the Scottish Onshore Scheme extends to MLWS and therefore overlaps with the boundary of the Marine Scheme, which extends to Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) in line with the authority area of the Marine Directorate – Licensing Operations Team (MD-LOT) – the determining authority for the Marine Scheme.

I further note that, as outlined in Chapter 2: Project Description, the Scottish Onshore Scheme is committed to adopting HDD installation methods at the landfall, which will see the cable installed underneath the intertidal zone, and the 'breakout' of the cables below MLWS in the nearshore environment. Direct impacts to receptors within the intertidal zone are therefore likely to be avoided; however, it is recognised that the length of HDD is subject to further engineering surveys.

I notr that your Scoping Report concludes that there are also potential indirect and secondary, temporary impacts that may occur to intertidal receptors during cable installation. Receptors within the intertidal zone that may be impacted are likely limited to benthic ecology (i.e., the benthic habitats and species associated with the sediments present adjacent to the landfall); ornithology, archaeology and recreational users of the intertidal area. These secondary and indirect impacts will be assessed within the discipline specific assessments of the EIAR, or within the Marine Scheme EIAR, where relevant, considering the activities of the Project both above and below MHWS and MLWS, respectively.

Overall, I am content that the assessment of impacts to these receptors, where necessary, from the Scottish Onshore Scheme will be undertaken using the specific sensitivity, magnitude and significance criteria set out in the discipline chapters

(Chapters 5-13). The assessment will consider potential direct and indirect, spatial and temporal impacts associated with the construction area between the MLWS mark and the MHWS mark.

Cumulative and In-Combination Effects

I have no comment to make at this time on the list/table of other developments included in the assessment of cumulative and in-combination effects, other than to say that this should be as up to date as possible at the time of writing the relevant chapter of the Onshore EIA.

Alternatives and Site Selection

A description of the main alternatives considered such as alternative sites, alternative technologies and alternatives for the proposed development within the site should be included in the EIAR. The description must include the main reasons for the choice made, taking into account the environmental effects of the decision. This should not focus on planning matters. This should also provide a “no development” scenario as an alternative.

Environmental Commitments

It is considered good practice in EIA assessment to include a chapter that would contain a summary of all mitigation methods proposed as part of the development. A robust EIAR submission would normally include such a chapter as a conclusion. Where relevant, the EIAR should also identify monitoring measures to prevent, reduce or offset significant adverse effects of the development identified through the EIA process.

EIA documents submission

As part of the planning application registration process, Fife Council is required to provide document submissions to be viewed online at www.fifedirect.gov. To allow this to be done in the most efficient manner it is requested that each document you submit is limited to less than 10MB in size. Documents submitted exceeding this capacity are required to be split into smaller units. Fife Council does not have the resources to actively decide how best to split documents at legible points and therefore it would be to your benefit if the documents were grouped together into associated order (preferably split into individual chapters where possible), each under 10mb in size. This would allow your documents to be viewed online by members of the public and consultees in a legible and concise format.

It should also be noted that, given that some of the information within any Ecology chapter may have information relating to the number and habitat location of protected species, this information should not be made public. To ensure the non-protected species information is still available to the public and consultees it is advisable to separate any protected species information from the remainder of the information and hold it within a separate appendix to the chapter to ensure this can be passed only to the relevant section. NatureScot can advise on the information to be left sensitive.

Closing Comments

I trust that the above comments and information enclosed is of assistance to you in developing the EIAR. Please note that this scoping opinion should not be construed as giving support for the development at the present time and that the above comments are made without prejudice to the eventual decision of the Planning Authority with respect to any future application submitted. Although every attempt has been made to present you with the information necessary in order to determine a planning application of this nature, this scoping opinion does not prejudice the ability of the Planning Authority to request further information during the application process should this be necessary. The consultation responses used to formulate this opinion are available to view within the online planning file for this submission (24/03149/SCO), and I would recommend that these are viewed prior to completion of the EIAR and submission of the planning application.

Yours sincerely

Martin McGroarty
Lead Professional (Minerals)

Mary J Stewart
Service Manager