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Our Reference: ECU00001822
Your Reference:
LUK1222885-ScreeningRequest-3.docx

Dear Ms Fryday,

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989 THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

On 11 March 2019 the Energy Consents Unit received a request for an EIA Screening Opinion from Ramboll on behalf of Scottish Power Energy Networks (“the Applicant”) for a proposed new 132kV single circuit overhead line (“the proposed Development”) within the South Ayrshire Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council planning authority areas.

Under regulation 8 of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (“the Regulations”) the Scottish Ministers are required to adopt a screening opinion for the proposed Development. This letter contains such a screening opinion.

Characteristics of the proposed Development

The proposed Development is to connect both the consented Stranoch wind farm and Chirmorie wind farm to the transmission network at Mark Hill substation. It will comprise of a new single circuit 132kV overhead line supported on wood poles approximately 15 metres in height, with span lengths of approximately 100 metres. A mix of both double and single wood poles are likely to be utilised. The proposed Development will be approximately 16 kilometres in length.

There are no concerns relating to the following:

- cumulative impacts with other existing development and/or approved development;
- the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;
- the risk of major accidents and/or disaster relevant to this development including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge;
- risks to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution).

Location of the proposed Development

The proposed Development will be located to the east of the Ayrshire coast, between Cairnryan and Lendalfoot, It runs through the administration areas of South Ayrshire Council and Dumfries & Galloway Council through mostly land used for forestry and agriculture.

The proposed development is routed through rural, sparsely populated land with no industrial activities in the immediate vicinity.

Characteristics of the potential impact

The proposed Development does not pass through any nationally designated sites, the nearest being the Glen App and Galloway Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest (“the SSIS” and Special Protection Area (“the SPA”) which is approximately 1.3 kilometres away. It may have a visual impact on the South Ayrshire Scenic Area but this is unlikely to be significant. Appropriate mitigation can overcome any potential impacts to this, to the SSSI and the SPA.

With regards to land usage, only a very small area will be required for the siting of the wood poles. When the overhead line requires to cross watercourses, the poles are likely to be sited within the functional floodplain.

Any excavation which is required for the proposed development would be small scale and highly localised. No significant effects upon geology and soils within the site or the surrounding vicinity are anticipated. Although some poles may have to be installed within peat, peat habitats will be avoided where possible. A draft Construction Environmental Management Plan setting out measures to prevent or minimise damage to peat during construction to be agreed to by the Applicant, SEPA, South Ayrshire Council and Dumfries & Galloway Council will accompany the application for consent when submitted.

The proposed Development does not pass through any sites designated for their natural heritage and no significant effects are anticipated upon the settings of Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings or statutory designated cultural heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets within its vicinity.

The potential loss of commercial plantation and woodland due to the construction of proposed Development would be calculated and relevant compensation agreed with landowners including Scottish Forestry.

Consultation

The Scottish Ministers consulted the planning authorities; South Ayrshire Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council, within whose land the proposed development is situated.

South Ayrshire Council considered that an EIA is not required but noted that part of the development lies within Dumfries and Galloway and highlighted that the response related only to the part of the development within South Ayrshire.

Dumfries and Galloway Council considered that the proposed Development is unlikely to have significant impacts on the environment and will therefore not require an EIA.

The Scottish Ministers also consulted with SNH and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (“SEPA”).

SNH commented that generally speaking they agree with the Applicant’s conclusion that the environmental sensitivity of the route is currently low and in all likelihood, impacts will be insignificant. They ask however, that measures be taken to ensure that to be the case..

SEPA stated that regardless if an EIA is or is not required, they consider that a number of key issues must be addressed. They go on to provide a summary of the requirements that they expect must be addressed as part of any future application/EIA report for the proposed development.

EIA Screening and Conclusions

Having considered the views of South Ayrshire Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council, as well as taking account of the information received from SNH and SEPA, the Scottish Ministers consider that the proposed Development is not EIA development and any forthcoming application for consent (under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989) does not require to be accompanied by a full Environmental Impact Assessment report.

The Scottish Ministers advise in addition to the advice and guidance provided by in their consultation responses, note should be taken of all assessment and mitigation requirements stated by consultees as being required to be included in the "Environmental Appraisal" when the application is submitted.

In reaching this conclusion, the Scottish Ministers have had regard to the information supplied by Ramboll in the request for a screening opinion and the selection criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the Regulations as relevant to the proposed Development.

Any application for consent under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 submitted in respect of the proposed Development should be accompanied by an assessment of any potential impacts along with full details of any necessary and proposed mitigation measures.

The consultation responses from the planning authorities and additional responses from SNH and SEPA have been provided to you for your full consideration. In accordance with regulation 7(4) this screening opinion is copied to South Ayrshire Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council as the planning authorities.

Yours sincerely



Angela Doris
Energy Consents Unit