Lorg Wind Farm Grid Connection

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Chapter 1: Introduction

November 25

Land & Planning

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the Proposed Development

1.1.1 This Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) has been prepared by WSP on behalf of Scottish Power Transmission (SPT) (hereafter referred to as 'The Applicant').

1.1.2 The Applicant is applying to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU) under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989[1] (as amended), seeking consent and deemed planning permission to construct and operate a new 17.5 km 132 kV trident wood pole Overhead Line (OHL) between Lorg Wind Farm (currently in planning) and the proposed Holm Hill substation (which is being consented separately by SPT).

1.1.3 The proposed Lorg Wind Farm Connection (hereinafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development') is located near Carsphairn in Dumfries and Galloway, approximately 16 km south-east of Dalmellington, as illustrated in **Figure 1.1: Site Location**.

1.1.4 Further information on the Proposed Development is provided in **Chapter 3: Proposed Development**.

1.2 Need for The Development

1.2.1 The Applicant has a legal duty under the Electricity Act 1989 to provide grid connections to new electricity generating developments and has been approached by the developer for Lorg Wind Farm to provide a grid connection to the wider electricity transmission network. As the licence holder, The Applicant is required under the Electricity Act 1989 "*to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission*". Therefore, a new 132 kV OHL connection, the Proposed Development, has been designed and assessed to connect the Lorg Wind Farm to Holm Hill substation, thereby meeting the legal duty to provide a grid connection to new electricity developments.

1.2.2 The Proposed Development supports Scotland's transition to a low-carbon energy future by facilitating the transmission of renewable energy generated by Lorg Wind Farm. Further to this, the Proposed Development will aim to generate employment opportunities and support the regional supply chain where possible.

1.3 Statutory Context

1.3.1 There are a number of legal provisions which apply to the development of electricity transmission and distribution lines and associated infrastructure. The key provisions are as follows:

- The Electricity Act is the principal legislation which applies in the United Kingdom (UK);
- The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997[2]; and
- The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017[3].

Scottish Power Transmission's Statutory Duties

1.3.2 The Applicant's licensed businesses are authorised to transmit and distribute electricity within its network areas under the Electricity Act. As such, The Applicant has a statutory obligation to carry out the duties outlined within the Electricity Act.

1.3.3 Section 9 of the Electricity Act states that it shall be the duty of a license holder '*'to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission; and to facilitate competition in the supply and generation of electricity''*.

[1] UK Government (1989). Electricity Act 1989 (as amended). Available online at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/29/introduction?view=extent.

[2] Scottish Government (1997). Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. Available online at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/8/contents.

[3] Scottish Government (2017). The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. Available online at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2017/101/contents.

1.3.4 Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act requires SPT to take account of specific factors in formulating any relevant proposals. It states that the licence holder:

"(a) shall have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest; and

(b) shall do what he 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."

Consenting Requirements

1.3.5 Section 37 of the Electricity Act requires that, with the exception of certain specific examples, all electricity lines exceeding 20 kV will require consent to be granted by the Scottish Ministers. 'Section 37 consent' gives approval to install and keep installed, an overhead electricity line.

1.3.6 Section 57 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 provides that planning permission may also be deemed to be granted in the case of development with government authorisation. In certain circumstances, deemed planning permission may include works that are 'ancillary' or necessary to the operation of the OHL, such as cable sealing and compounds.

1.3.7 This EIAR has been provided to support an application to the Scottish Ministers seeking consent under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 ('the Act') for the 132 kV OHL. The Applicant is also seeking a direction under Section 57 (2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 from the Scottish Ministers that planning permission is deemed to be granted for the Proposed OHL and for all associated works (such as temporary access tracks for construction, laydown areas and pulling positions). The information presented in this EIAR will inform the Scottish Ministers, consultees and other stakeholders of the likely significant environmental effects of installing and keeping installed the Proposed Development and ultimately assist the Scottish Ministers in the determination of the applications for Section 37 consent and for deemed planning permission.

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

1.3.8 The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (hereafter referred to as 'the EIA Regulations') require that, before consent is granted for certain developments, an EIA must be undertaken. The EIA Regulations set out the types of development that are always subject to an EIA (Schedule 1 developments) and other developments which may require an EIA if they exceed certain thresholds and are likely to give rise to significant environmental effects (Schedule 2 developments). The Proposed Development currently falls under the following Schedule 2 definition as follows:

"(2) an electric line installed above ground—

(a) with a voltage of 132 kilovolts or more;

(b) in a sensitive area; or

(c) the purpose of which installation is to connect the electric line to a generating station the construction or operation of which requires consent under section 36 of the Electricity Act".

1.3.9 A Screening Opinion for the Proposed Development was not sought, as it was considered that the Proposed Development would likely require an EIAR.

1.3.10 Taking into account the specific characteristics of the Proposed Development and the environmental features likely to be affected, an EIAR is considered to be necessary. The EIAR has been undertaken as per the Scoping Opinion[4] issued by ECU (Scottish Government) dated 26th April 2019, and updated May 2022.

[4] Scoping Opinion (ECU Reference: ECU00001789). Available online at Scottish Government - Energy Consents Unit - Application Details

1.4 Purpose of the EIA Report

1.4.1 This EIAR has been prepared in accordance with the EIA Regulations. The EIA process is the systematic process of identifying, predicting and evaluating the environmental impacts of a Proposed Development. The EIA process is reported in this EIAR, which identifies the methodologies used to assess the environmental effects predicted to result from installing and keeping installed the Proposed Development. Where appropriate, it also sets out mitigation measures designed to prevent, reduce, and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse environmental effects. An assessment of residual effects, those expected to remain following implementation of mitigation measures, is also presented.

1.4.2 The main findings and conclusions of the EIA are summarised in a **Non-Technical Summary** (NTS), as required by the EIA Regulations. The NTS is a stand-alone document, summarising the key findings of the EIA in easily accessible, non-technical language, ensuring everyone with an interest in the Proposed Development can understand and access information on its predicted environmental effects.

1.4.3 This EIAR and NTS, comprise documentation in support of an application for consent under the terms of Section 37 of the Electricity Act and for a direction for planning permission under Section 57 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, submitted to the ECU.

1.5 Structure of the EIA Report

1.5.1 The EIAR has the following structure:

- Standalone Non-Technical Summary;
- EIAR Volume I – Main Text;
- EIAR Volume II – Figures; and
- EIAR Volume III – Technical Appendices.

1.6 EIA Project Team and Competency

1.6.1 In line with Regulation 5 (5) of the EIA Regulations, the EIAR and all technical assessments have been undertaken by a suitably qualified project team. A statement outlining the relevant expertise / qualifications for the discipline leads is provided in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1: EIA Project Team – Competent Experts

Topic	Technical Lead	Competency
EIA Project Management	Beverley Garner	BA (Hons), MSc, MRTPI with 8 years' experience
	Chloe Lewis	BA (Hons), MA, MIEMA, CEnv, MAPM with 19 years' experience
Landscape and Visual	Sophie Lockhart	MA, BA(Hons), Associate Member of the Landscape Institute, Landscape Architect with over 5 years' experience
	Dani Reeves	MLA, CMLI, EIA 15 years' experience
Biodiversity and Ornithology	Sabrina Bremner	BSc (Hons.), Member of CIEEM with 17 years' ecological consultancy experience.
	Graham Sparshott	Associate Member of CIEEM, BTec National Diploma in Rural Studies with 14 years consultancy experience and 30+ years of ornithology experience

Topic	Technical Lead	Competency
Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils	Sam Wainwright	MSc, BSc (Hons), FGS with 9 years' experience.
	Eleni Evrygeni	MSc, BSc (Hons), 8+ years' experience
Archaeology and Cultural Heritage	Abby Mynett	BA (Hons) Archaeology, MA Practical Archaeology, 15 years industry experience Assessment prepared by competent experts that are members of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) with relevant and appropriate experience, within a CIfA Registered Archaeological Organisation
	Helen Maclean	BSc (Hons), MA, MCIfA with over 22 years industry experience. Assessment prepared by competent experts that are members of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) with relevant and appropriate experience, within a CIfA Registered Archaeological Organisation
Forestry	Dan Harris	BSc (Hons), Prof Dip, 6+ years' experience
	Joe Atkinson	FdSc, MarborA with over 27 years experience.
Cumulative Effects	Lucy Ives	BA (Hons), MSc, PIEMA with 3.5 years experience
	Nic Macmillan	BSc (Hons), PGCert, PIEMA with over 20 years experience.

IEMA Quality Mark

1.6.2 The coordination, compilation and procedural review of the EIAR are in line with the requirements outlined by the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA)[5]'s Quality Mark scheme. The IEMA Quality Mark scheme provides best practice review criteria against which all EIARs are evaluated.

1.6.3 Best practice guidance as set out within the IEMA Quality Mark scheme requires identification of key limitations affecting the EIA process and the resultant EIAR. Limitations in methods are identified and discussed, particularly where this is likely to affect the outcomes of the assessment. As with any environmental assessment, there will be elements of uncertainty. Where relevant, these are identified and reported, together with a statement on any implications on the assessment and conclusions.

[5] IEMA has since been rebranded as the Institute of Sustainability & Environmental Professionals (ISEP)

1.7 Availability of the EIA Report

1.7.1 In accordance with Regulation 18 of the EIA Regulations, copies of the EIAR will be available for inspection by the public, notice of which location will be published in accordance with Regulation 14 of the EIA Regulations on The Applicant's website noted below, in the Edinburgh Gazette, and in a relevant newspaper in the locality of the Proposed Development.

1.7.2 Electronic copies of the EIA Report can be accessed at http://www.energyconsents.scot/ and The Applicant's website: http://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/pages/lorg_wind_farm.aspx

1.7.3 Hard copies of the NTS are available free of charge from The Applicant. An electronic copy (via USB) of the EIA Report documents can be obtained free of charge, and hard copies of the EIA Report Volumes 1-3 may be purchased for £1,000.

1.7.4 To obtain a copy, please contact lorg-connections@spenergynetworks.co.uk or write to:

Lorg Wind Farm Grid Connection
Land and Planning
SP Energy Networks
55 Fullarton Drive
Glasgow
G32 8FA

Representations to the Application

1.7.5 Any representations to the application should be made directly to the Scottish Government via the ECU website at www.energyconsents.scot/Register.aspx or by email to the Scottish Government, ECU mailbox at representations@gov.scot.

1.7.6 Representations can also be sent by post to:

Scottish Government
Energy Consents Unit
4th Floor
5 Atlantic Quay
150 Broomielaw
Glasgow
G2 8LU

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