

Visual impacts - SLVIA outcomes

The Mooir Vannin Offshore Wind Farm will be visible from much of the east coast of the Isle of Man. In order to quantify and assess these visual impacts, a Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (SLVIA) is undertaken. SLVIAs are normally undertaken as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for most offshore wind farms that are visible from the coast and they follow a standard methodology and guidance. For the purposes of these events, we present below the outcomes of our assessment from four key areas: Ramsey, Laxey, Maughold Head and Douglas. The full SLVIA presents assessments from a variety of other settlements and viewpoints and will be presented as a chapter of the Environmental Statement which we will submit and publish as part of our application for Marine Infrastructure Consent in March 2025.

Ramsey

The Offshore Array would be located relatively close to the Ramsey coastline, approximately 16 km at its closest point. It would lie on the sea horizon, beyond a wide and relatively broad area of sea, against a distant backdrop of the Lake District fells. Ramsey is considered to be of high sensitivity to visual change due to the value placed on sea views by residents. Views from the town's coastal edge are expansive and dominated by the Irish Sea. Receptors within its settlements tend to be susceptible to changes in views from their homes and frequently visited locations.

From Ramsey, the Offshore Array would occupy quite a large proportion of the view and the proposed Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs) would appear relatively tall, due to their relatively short distance offshore. The towers and rotors of most of the proposed WTGs would be visible along with some of the Offshore Substations (OSSs). These would contrast with the skyline of open sea and fells in the UK. The Offshore Array would be a noticeable addition to views from the town that is largely unprecedented as little of the distant Walney offshore wind farm would be visible.

The effect of the Offshore Array on visual receptors (such as settlements and walkers of the coast path) within Ramsey is considered to be major and significant. This effect would occur across the coastal parts of the town, including Mooragh Park and south of the Sulby River to Queens Pier; and the higher part of the town to the north, including Grove Mount, Windsor Mount and Seamount Road. A similar effect would occur where the Offshore Array is glimpsed in views along roads that are perpendicular to the coastline. For remaining areas, that would have little to no visibility of the Offshore Array, the effect would be not significant.

Laxey

The Offshore Array would be located relatively close to the Laxey coastline, (approximately 12 km away at its closest point) and would lie on the open sea horizon, beyond a wide but foreshortened area of sea. Sensitivity to visual change within Laxey is considered high, due to the value placed on sea views by residents. Views from the town's coastal edge are expansive and dominated by the Irish Sea. The town is largely residential and is unusual for a coastal town due to the deep valley within which it is located. Receptors within its settlements tend to be susceptible to changes in views from their homes and frequently visited locations.

From Laxey, the Offshore Array would appear relatively large against the horizon of open sea and constituent WTs would appear relatively tall, due to their relatively short distance offshore. The towers and rotors of most of the proposed WTs would be visible in contrast to the horizon of open sea. The Offshore Array would be a noticeable addition to the sea horizon.

The effect of the Offshore Array on visual receptors (such as settlements and walkers of the coast path) within Ramsey is considered to be major and significant. Buildings within the town would restrict this impact to lower Laxey and the higher parts of the town such as the areas of Ard Reayrt, around Ballaragh Road; and west of New Road and Pinfold Hill. A similar effect would occur where roads that are perpendicular to the coastline provide glimpses of the Offshore Array, including Shore Road and Tent Road. Due to the topography of Laxey Glen, the high level of tree cover in the town and its development pattern and density, remaining areas which would not have visibility of the Offshore Array, the effect would be not significant.

Douglas

The Offshore Array would be located relatively close to the Douglas coastline (approximately 14 km at its closest point). The Offshore Array would lie to the northeast beyond Onchan Head, on the horizon and visible against a backdrop of the Lake District Fells and open sea. Douglas is considered to be of high sensitivity to visual change due to the value placed on sea views by residents. As the town lies on elevated ground that slope towards the sea, views from the town are reasonably wide and take in the Irish Sea. The town has a close association with the sea derived from this topography and the harbour at the southern end of the bay. Douglas is characteristic of a Victorian coastal resort and as such has historically been closely associated with the sea. While the sea and more distant coastline are largely natural, the urban character of the town detracts from the visual amenity. Receptors within in settlements tend to be susceptible to changes in views from their homes and frequently visited locations.

From Douglas, the Offshore Array would be contained within a moderate to large proportion of the view and constituent WTs would appear relatively tall, due to the distance offshore. The towers and rotors of most of the proposed WTs would be visible in contrast to the horizon of open sea. The scale and almost continuous frontage of the buildings along the seafront would prevent visibility from the settlement inland. Generally, only the upper storeys of inland buildings on elevated ground, or lower storeys along roads providing channelled views of the sea would have visibility of the Offshore Array.

The effect of the Offshore Array on visual receptors (such as settlements and walkers of the coast path) within Douglas is considered to be major and significant. This significant effect would occur where there is visibility of the Offshore Array, seaward of the Ramsey Road (A2) and along the

coastal edge. For other areas where the Offshore Array is screened by buildings and surface features; or by landform, such as landward of the Ramsey Road (A2) and within the River Dhoo's valley, the effect would be not significant.

Maughold Head

Although not a settlement, it is recognised that Maughold Head is a well-known viewpoint with elevated and direct view out to sea from the headland and is located on the Raad ny Foillan coastal path. It is also the closest point to the Offshore Array, with the closest proposed WTG located 11.5 km from the viewpoint. The Offshore Array would appear very wide and would occupy a large proportion of the view (approximately 93° of the field of view). The proposed WTGs would appear relatively big, due to their actual height and distance offshore. Although their isolation precludes any scale comparison with other structures or landform, the expansive scale of the surrounding seascape limits the apparent scale of the WTGs. The proposed WTGs would be uncharacteristic of the receiving view, as while similar existing WTGs are visible 31 km away at Walney (Extension 3), they lie towards the English coast and would appear much more distant, smaller in apparent scale and would extend over a narrower proportion of the view.

Relatively close proximity to the proposed WTGs means that their extension above the horizon would be notable, especially where they would appear against a horizon of open sea. However, a considerable proportion of the Offshore Array would be visible against a backdrop of the Lake District fells. The proposed turbines would appear taller than these with their hubs lying at approximately the same height and their blades piercing the skyline.

The effect would be significant (Major) for walkers and other visitors to the viewpoint. This effect would be experienced within a relatively small area defined by the tip of the elevated headland, between Cor Stack and Gob ny Portmoor. West of Cor Stack to Ramsey Harbour the northerly aspect of the coastline would limit the level of effect. South of Gob ny Portmoor the coastal edge is lower and, while visibility of the proposed WTGs would be reasonably similar, enclosure by Maughold Head means that the level of effect in this area would be lower. Inland of the viewpoint the landform of the headland screens much of the sea from view, restricting the effect to the coastal edge.

Next steps

It is acknowledged that there will be significant visual effects along the east coast of the Isle of Man as a result of Moor Vannin. Between now and early 2025, we will work to reduce the scale of these effects where possible (for example, by reducing the area of the development), whilst still maintaining a viable project. The full SLVIA will be presented as a chapter of the Environmental Statement which we will submit and publish as part of our application for Marine Infrastructure Consent in March 2025.