

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm

Planning Statement

December 2024



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Prepared by LUC on behalf of Orsted Onshore UK Limited

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Preface

This Planning Statement supports a planning application by Orsted Onshore UK Limited ('the Applicant') to Dumfries and Galloway Council (DGC) under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended ('the Act') to construct and operate the Revised Larbrax Wind Farm ('the Proposed Development'). The Proposed Development is located approximately 9 kilometres (km) west of Stranraer within the DGC administrative area. The Proposed Development will comprise up to four wind turbines with battery storage and other ancillary infrastructure.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report has also been prepared to accompany the application and presents the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development. The EIA Report comprises the following volumes:

- Volume 1: Non-Technical Summary;
- Volume 2: Main Report;
- Volume 3a: Figures;
- Volume 3b: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Visualisations (Part 1);
- Volume 3c: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Visualisations (Part 2) and Cultural Heritage Visualisations;
- Volume 4: Technical Appendices; and
- Volume 5: Confidential Documents.

In addition to the above, the application is also supported by a Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report and a Design and Access Statement (DAS).

A hard copy of the EIA Report and supporting documents will be available for public viewing during the application consultation period at the following address:

Dumfries and Galloway Council

Planning and Development

Economy and Infrastructure

Militia House

English Street

Dumfries

DG1 2HS

A hard copy of the EIA Report and supporting documents is available for £500 and can be requested via the following email address: larbrax@orsted.com. An electronic version of the EIA Report and supporting documents will be available to download from the project website at www.larbraxwindfarm.co.uk and the DGC planning portal: https://eaccess.dumgal.gov.uk/online-applications/.

Any public representations to the application may be submitted via the DGC planning portal at <u>https://eaccess.dumgal.gov.uk/online-applications/</u> or by email to <u>planningrepresentations@dumgal.gov.uk</u>, identifying the proposal and specifying the grounds for representation. DGC will advertise the submission of the EIA Report in local and national press and the DGC planning portal. The advert will state the deadline for submitting representations to the DGC in relation to the planning application.

Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction				
Purpose and Structure of the Planning Statement	1-1			
Statutory Framework	1-2			
The Applicant	1-2			
Pre-Application Consultation	1-2			
Planning History of the Site	1-2			
Statutory Framework The Applicant Pre-Application Consultation Planning History of the Site	1-2 1-2 1-2 1-2			

Chapter 2The Proposed Development2-1

Site Location	2-1
Site Selection and Design Strategy	2-2
Proposed Development	2-4
Integrated/Embedded Mitigation and Enhancement	2-4
Other Project Benefits	2-5

Chapter 3 Renewable Energy and the Climate Emergency

International Commitments	3-1
UK Context	3-2
Scottish Context	3-6
Renewable Energy and Climate Change Policy Conclusions	3-14

3-1

5-1

Chapter 4 The Development Plan

The Development Plan				
National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (2023)	4-1			
Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2	4-17			
Development Plan Policy Conclusions	4-25			

Chapter 5 Conclusion

Balance of Issues 5-1

Chapter 1 Introduction

Purpose and Structure of the Planning Statement

1.1 This Planning Statement has been produced to support an application to Dumfries and Galloway Council for permission to construct and operate the Revised Larbrax Wind Farm (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development') under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended ("the 1997 Act"). The Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA Report), Design and Access Statement and Pre-Application Consultation Report and where relevant, cross-references to those documents are made.

1.2 This **Planning Statement** sets out the planning case for the Proposed Development. There is no legislative requirement for the preparation of a **Planning Statement**; however, it has been adopted as common practice by developers and allows the opportunity for the Applicant to advocate for the Proposed Development.

1.3 The following structure has been adopted in this **Planning Statement**:

- Section 1: Introduction (this section) provides background detail relating to the statutory decisionmaking framework, the Applicant, the planning history of the Site and a summary of the Pre-Application Consultation which has been undertaken to date.
- Section 2: The Proposed Development provides details of the Site (i.e. the area delineated by the 'red line' application boundary on all figures) and surrounding area, details of the Proposed Development components proposed on the Site and the design principles used to reach the application design. Section 2 also provides details of the integrated/embedded mitigation and overall benefits of the Proposed Development.
- Section 3: Renewable Energy and Climate Emergency sets out key international, UK and Scottish policy considerations relevant to the Proposed Development in relation to renewable energy generation and greenhouse gas reduction targets.
- Section 4: The Development Plan covers the key national and local planning policy considerations relevant to the assessment of the Proposed

Chapter 1 Introduction Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

Development, including those which should be given considerable weight in the overall planning balance.

Section 5: Conclusions provides a conclusion on the balance of issues in respect of the planning case for the Proposed Development, taking into account national climate change and renewable energy targets, national planning policy, and the local planning context, as discussed in Sections 3 and 4.

Statutory Framework

1.4 As the Proposed Development comprises up to four wind turbines with generating capacity of up to 19.2 Megawatts (MW), an application for planning permission is required and is being submitted to Dumfries and Galloway Council to be determined under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).

1.5 Sections 25 and 37(2) of the 1997 Act require that applications for planning permission are determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The statutory development plan in this instance is National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2.

1.6 Whilst the Development Plan is the starting point for the decision-making process, it must also be considered in the context of the policy hierarchy (governed by Scottish Government policy) which in turn is informed by the wider suite of Scottish, UK and international policy and law relating to renewable energy development and climate change.

1.7 The development proposals fall within the schedule of Major Developments, as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009, by virtue of the overall generating capacity of the development being above 20 MW (19.2 MW of wind generation capacity and 10 MW of battery storage – see **Section 2: The Proposed Development**). In this regard, the application is accompanied by a Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report and a Design and Access Statement (DAS) in accordance with Regulation 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013.

The Applicant

1.8 The Applicant, Ørsted, is one of the world's leading renewable energy companies and is active in the USA, Europe, Asia, the UK and Ireland. Their headquarters are in Denmark. Since 2018, Ørsted has expanded significantly and now has a portfolio of 8.2 Gigawatts (GW) of operating and under construction capacity across wind, solar, and energy storage. In June 2021, Ørsted acquired BRUK, which subsequently was re-branded to Orsted Onshore UK Limited.

This allowed Ørsted to expand its presence into onshore renewables in the UK and enter into the Irish market.

Pre-Application Consultation

1.9 A **Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report** has been prepared by Message Matters and is submitted separately in support of the application.

Planning History of the Site

1.10 A planning application (14/P/1/0393) under the Act was submitted to DGC by PNE Wind UK in February 2015 (which was subsequently acquired by Brookfield Renewable UK (BRUK), for the construction and operation of eight turbines with a maximum height to blade to tip of 100 metres (m) and ancillary infrastructure. This was accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES) (PNE Wind UK, 2015) (hereafter referred to as the '2015 ES'). The application was refused by DGC on 28th August 2015. The reasons for refusal related to significant adverse cumulative impacts on landscape and visual amenity of the site surroundings and the wider area along with significant adverse strategic cumulative effects. DGC considered that the proposal was contrary to a number of Local Development Plan policies.

1.11 An appeal was lodged against the decision to the Department of Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) division of the Scottish Government on 27th November 2015 (appeal reference PPA-170-2105). The appeal was granted on 21st October 2016 subject to 33 planning conditions. The Reporter concluded that "the adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity mean the proposal is contrary to a number of provisions of the development plan. Even when one gives less weight to those policies where, in the consideration of a commercial-scale wind energy proposal, it appears that the policy approach is more restrictive than is expected in national policy, there remains a significant development plan policy conflict. However, the locations where adverse landscape or visual effects would be experienced are limited, and the benefits of the proposal, particularly the contribution it would make to renewable energy targets, are significant. The proposal can also draw considerable support from national planning, energy and climate change policies". Therefore, on balance the Reporter concluded that the "benefits outweigh the harm the proposal would cause and the consequent conflict with the development plan".

1.12 BRUK subsequently applied through Section 42 of the Act to vary a number of these conditions, including an extension to the implementation timescales from three to five years (18/1945/FUL) and the duration of the planning permission from 25 years to 30 years (20/1714/S42). These

Chapter 1

Introduction Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

planning consents have since expired as no work relating to these consents has been undertaken.

1.13 The Proposed Development is therefore the subject of a new planning application being made to DGC and will be constructed instead of the original Larbrax Wind Farm should planning permission be granted.

Site Location

2.1 The Site is located approximately 9 km west of Stranraer within a relatively remote area in the north-west of the North Rhins Peninsula. The Site lies wholly within the Dumfries and Galloway Council (DGC) administrative area. The Site is shown in **Figure 2.1** and occupies an area of 345 hectares (ha).

2.2 The Proposed Development Site occupies an area of improved pasture grassland associated with the working Meikle Galdenoch Farm. There are some areas of boggy marshland in the eastern part of the Site. The landform of the Site slopes down gently towards the coast and is relatively low-lying. The eastern section of the Site undulates gently and is characterised by a number of smooth hills and valleys which includes Hind Hill on Galdenoch Moor as well as an unnamed hill on Larbrax Moor. There are steeper slopes on the northern and southern parts of the Site. The western part of the Site lies on the coast and is characterised by sloping hills towards the coast with some steeper slopes present at Salt Pans Bay as well as steep cliffs of varying height. There are small areas of woodland cover which consists largely of small coniferous plantations and which act as shelter belts.

2.3 The Site contains a number of minor watercourses and field ditches, generally flowing west out to the North Channel. The Green Burn runs along the eastern boundary of the Site and drains into the Galdenoch Burn north of the Proposed Development. The Galdenoch Burn flows along the northern boundary of the Proposed Development draining to the North Channel north of Port Beg. There are areas of standing water within the Site including Loch More and Loch Beg.

2.4 There are no residential properties within the Site. A number of single rural dwellings, farmhouses and holiday cottages are located within the surrounding area. The closest properties to the Site include Greenburn, Meikle Galdenoch and Galdenoch Mill Cottage (north-east), Larbrax Lodge (east), Larbrax Cottages and Meikle Larbrax (south). Any residential properties within 2.5 km of the nearest wind turbine with theoretical visibility of the turbines were assessed as part of the EIA through the Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (see **Appendix 5.2** of the EIA Report). Within the wider area there are a number of small rural settlements including Portpatrick, approximately 7 km to the south and Leswalt, approximately 5.5 km to the east.

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

2.5 The Site lies within the Rhins Coast Regional Scenic Area (RSA) and the Salt Pans Bay Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is within the south-western part of the Site (see **Chapter 5: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** and **Chapter 7: Ecology** of the EIA Report for further site details).

Site Selection and Design Strategy

Policy Context

2.6 National Planning Framework 4¹ (NPF4) was adopted and published on 13 February 2023. However, the site selection exercise was undertaken under the planning policy in force at the time (Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) (June 2014)) which provided support for wind development in principle and encouraged local authorities to guide development towards appropriate locations within their boundaries. Paragraph 161 of SPP highlighted the requirement for planning authorities to define a "*spatial framework identifying those areas that are likely to be most appropriate for onshore wind farms*". 'Table 1: Spatial Frameworks' in SPP (page 39) provided guidance on how spatial frameworks should be set out. It set out three types of areas classified by their suitability for wind turbine development, including:

- Group 1: Areas where wind farms will not be acceptable;
- Group 2: Areas of significant protection; and
- Group 3: Areas with potential for wind farm development.

2.7 The Proposed Development falls wholly within the DGC administrative area. The statutory Development Plan for the DGC is the Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) (2019)² as well as the adopted NPF4. **Figure 2.2** shows the Site superimposed onto Map 8: Spatial Framework (page 71) of LDP2 Policy IN2, where the location of the proposed turbines is identified as being suitable for wind energy development. Whilst it is acknowledged that SPP has now been superseded with NPF4 which does not require the local authorities to prepare spatial frameworks, the spatial framework remains valid until such time as LDP2 is replaced.

2.8 In relation to NPF4, it should also be noted that the Site is not located within either a National Park or National Scenic Area, which are the only areas where NPF4 explicitly states that proposals for wind farms will not be supported (Policy 11). This is discussed further in **Section 4** of this Planning Statement.

Site Selection

2.9 The Proposed Development Site has been selected for a number of reasons including the following:

- The 'planning precedent' has already been established for wind energy development at this location through the Consented Larbrax Wind Farm (PPA-170-2105);
- The Site has an excellent wind resource given its exposed coastal location. This presents the opportunity to develop without the need for government support or subsidy, whilst providing a contribution towards climate change and renewable energy targets;
- The Site is not within a National Park or National Scenic Area (NSA) which preclude development of wind farms according to national planning policy (NPF4 Policy 11);
- The nature of the Site allows for good opportunities to explore and provide extensive habitat management and enhancement in accordance with NPF4 Policy 3;
- There are no key environmental constraints which will preclude development, or which cannot be avoided through careful design and mitigation;
- Existing land use (improved pasture grassland) is compatible with the development of a renewable energy scheme;
- With the exception of the operational North Rhins Wind Farm (approximately 5 km south-east of the Site), there are no other commercial scale wind farms on the Rhins peninsula;
- Access is possible to the Site from the public road network via the A77(T), A75(T) and B738 for construction traffic and turbine deliveries;
- The Site has good internal access through existing farm tracks which limit the need for new infrastructure and additional land-take;
- The Site is at distance from main settlements with the closest being the village of Leswalt approximately 5.5 km to the east. The distance to nearby properties, the closest of which is approximately 1 km from the nearest turbine, means that unacceptable noise and overbearing residential visual amenity impacts can be avoided; and,
- There is a feasible local grid connection.

Design Strategy

2.10 The design strategy sets out the overall approach to the design of the Proposed Development. It describes the starting

¹ Scottish Government, 2023, National Planning Framework 4

² <u>Dumfries and Galloway Council (2019). Dumfries and Galloway</u> Local Development Plan 2019

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

point for the Proposed Development's design, and subsequent alterations to this design that were made in response to various considerations including landscape and visual amenity, cultural heritage, noise, ecological, ornithological, hydrological and geological (including peat) constraints and effects, together with wind yield and feasibility of construction, as information emerged through the EIA process. The design strategy for the Proposed Development aimed to provide a balance between achieving the maximum energy yield possible from the Site, avoiding or minimising environmental effects where possible, and creating a legible layout which relates to the landform and scale of the Site and surrounding area and has a positive relationship with adjacent wind farm schemes.

Overarching Design Objectives

2.11 The key overarching objectives of the design strategy were:

- To maximise the potential energy yield of the Site.
- To use the latest wind turbine technology consisting of more efficient and larger turbines where these can be reasonably accommodated within the landscape, as supported by the Onshore Wind Policy Statement (OWPS) and NPF4;
- To explore opportunities for co-locating technology such as battery storage thereby enhancing the output capacity of the Site and providing back up to the local electricity network;
- To use a turbine size which avoids the need for visible aviation safety lighting at night;
- To create a layout and use a turbine scale which avoids breaching the residential visual amenity threshold from the nearest properties;
- To provide a cohesive turbine layout with a simple form which relates as well as possible to the coastal landscape character of the Site and its surroundings, and limits the visual effects on views across the peninsula towards the coastline;
- To design a small and well composed group of turbines that is seen as a discrete development and does not materially increase the perceived extent of wind farm development across the peninsula from key views;
- To develop a layout that meets operational noise limits at the closest residential properties;
- To explore opportunities to restore and enhance biodiversity; and,
- To develop a layout that fulfils the above objectives whilst respecting other environmental and technical

constraints including noise; ecological, ornithological; hydrological and ground conditions (including peat) related constraints identified during the EIA process.

Site-Specific Design Principles

2.12 In addition to the main objectives of the design strategy, site-specific design considerations were developed to inform the final design of the Proposed Development. These include:

- Avoid stacking of turbines;
- Arrange turbines as far as possible to form an evenly spaced group or array when seen from key scenic viewpoints and routes on the peninsula, such as from Killantringan Lighthouse, the Southern Upland Way (SUW), the A77, A718 and B738 and views from the sea such as from the Cairnryan to Belfast ferry route;
- Limit the potential effects on the special landscape qualities of the Rhins RSA as far as possible;
- Use intervening landform to limit visibility to localised areas across the peninsula whilst not materially increasing visibility compared to the Consented Larbrax Wind Farm;
- Develop a well composed layout in views from key cultural heritage assets in the wider area where theoretical intervisibility is possible including Agnew Monument (SM 2001) (LB 10115);
- Seek to avoid peat deposits over 0.5 m wherever possible for turbines and infrastructure;
- Avoid unacceptable peat slide risk;
- Develop a layout which is compatible with current farming practices on the Site and minimises the sterilisation of farm land;
- Seek to improve the infrastructure layout from the Consented Larbrax Wind Farm as far as possible, such as minimising the need for new track and upgrading existing track wherever possible;
- Design a layout which minimises visibility from nearby settlements and areas including Leswalt, Portpatrick, Stranraer and Loch Ryan to the east by using intervening and undulating landform as screening;
- Limit the loss of forestry within the Site by avoiding scattered shelter belts thereby also reducing operational effects on bats; and,
- Minimise watercourse crossings.

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

Proposed Development

2.13 The full project description of the Proposed Development is provided in **Chapter 4: Development Description** of the EIA Report and shown in **Figure 2.3**.

2.14 In summary, the Proposed Development comprises of:

- Up to four wind turbines each with a maximum tip height of up to 149.9 m with an indicative output capacity of up to 19.2 MW (subject to the final chosen turbine model);
- Foundations supporting each wind turbine;
- Associated crane hardstandings at each turbine location;
- Approximately 3 km of onsite access tracks (comprising 2 km of new tracks and 1 km of upgraded tracks);
- Up to eight watercourse crossings (comprising four new and four upgraded) and associated infrastructure;
- A network of underground cables to connect the turbines to the onsite substation;
- A control building and substation;
- A Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with a capacity of approximately 10 MW;
- A new Site access junction on the B738; and,
- Habitat management and enhancement proposals.

2.15 In addition to the above components associated with the operation of the Proposed Development, construction of the Proposed Development will require the following components/works:

- One temporary construction compound comprising site offices, car parking and laydown/storage areas;
- One temporary borrow pit (for the extraction of stone);
- Temporary clearance/laydown areas at each turbine location; and,
- Removal of 0.28 hectares (ha) of trees/vegetation to facilitate access into the Site.

2.16 The expected operational life of the Proposed Development is up to 35 years.

Micrositing Allowance

2.17 Within the Proposed Development, the turbines and other infrastructure will be subject to a 100 m micrositing allowance. This allowance will apply if there are adverse ground investigations, or more optimal ground conditions are available elsewhere. Movement of infrastructure will, however, be dependent on other onsite constraints and subject to advice from an Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW). This allowance will ensure that the final position of the turbines and

associated infrastructure are not varied to such a degree as to cause a notable change in the predicted environmental effects outlined in the EIA Report. Beyond this distance, any relocation of components will require either written approval from DGC in consultation with statutory consultees or will be treated as a formal variation to the application.

Integrated/Embedded Mitigation and Enhancement

2.18 Careful placement of the proposed turbines and ancillary infrastructure onsite in response to key environmental and technical constraints has facilitated effective embedded mitigation, with potentially significant effects avoided or minimised as far as reasonably practicable as a result of the design process.

2.19 The EIA Report assumes that certain measures form an inherent part of the Proposed Development and will be carried out to ensure regulatory compliance and/or as accepted good practice as well an environmental enhancement. In relation to the Proposed Development, this includes a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), Outline Peat Management Plan (OPMP), the Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (BEMP), and general good practice measures. Each of these are discussed below.

Good Practice Construction Measures

2.20 Good practice measures will be employed as standard techniques during the construction and operation of the Proposed Development. Therefore, these are not considered to be mitigation as such, but an integral part of the design, construction and operation of the Proposed Development. This is considered a realistic scenario given the current regulatory context and accepted good practice across the industry.

2.21 During construction, there will be a suitably qualified environmental manager appointed with responsibilities including training, liaison with Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and ensuring applicable licences are held, for example Construction Site CAR (Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011)) licences and abstraction licences. This role will have authority for halting works if necessary. Emergency procedures will be detailed and subsequently agreed with SEPA, including contact lists and the personnel responsible.

2.22 Good practice measures will include (but are not limited to) measures associated with:

- Pollution incidents;
- Erosion and sedimentation;

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

- Modification of surface water drainage patterns (including flooding);
- Modification of groundwater levels and flows;
- Compaction of soils; and,
- Peat stability.

Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

2.23 Prior to start of construction a CEMP will be prepared with an appointed Principal Contractor. The CEMP will reflect and expand upon measures identified within the EIA Report and will be agreed with DGC, SEPA, NatureScot and other stakeholders. The CEMP will be used to ensure that all mitigation measures identified within the EIA Report to protect, or mitigate effects on, the environment are implemented through agreed procedures and working methods. Adherence to the CEMP, as well as referenced legislation and guidance documents, will be a contractual requirement for the appointed Principal Contractor. A planning condition will require the preparation and implementation of the CEMP. The Principal Contractor will be responsible for the continual development of the CEMP.

2.24 The purpose of the CEMP will be to:

- Provide a mechanism to ensure that construction methods avoid, minimise and control potentially adverse significant environmental effects, as identified in the EIA Report;
- Ensure that good construction practices and all environmental legislation are adopted throughout the construction of the Proposed Development;
- Provide a framework for mitigating unexpected effects during construction;
- Provide assurance to third parties that agreed environmental performance criteria will be met;
- Establish procedures for ensuring compliance with environmental legislation and statutory consents; and,
- Detail the process for monitoring and auditing environmental performance.

2.25 The CEMP will be supported by the following documents:

- A Pollution Prevention and Incident Plan (PPiP);
- Construction Method Statements (CMS);
- Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP);
- Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) (following the principles set out in the draft CTMP presented in Appendix 11.1);
- Access Management Plan (AMP);

- Species Protection Plan;
- Bird Protection Plan;
- Site Restoration Plan; and,
- Decommissioning and Reinstatement Plan.
- Audit and inspection procedures.

Outline Peat Management Plan (OPMP)

2.26 Whilst the Proposed Development is designed to minimise disturbance to peatland, the OPMP (**Appendix 9.5** of the EIA Report) provides indicative volumes for peat extraction and outline recommendations for the handling, reuse and storage of peat during the construction of the Proposed Development. The OPMP provides a framework for the PMP that will be developed prior to construction, and which will form part of the CEMP.

Outline Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (OBEMP)

2.27 An outline BEMP is provided in **Appendix 7.5** of the EIA Report. The OBEMP proposes the following enhancement and management measures:

- Blanket bog restoration and enhancement;
- Moorland restoration and enhancement;
- Native broadleaved woodland enhancement; and,
- Rhododendron and bracken removal and management.

2.28 Substantial enhancement measures, over and above those required to mitigate the effects of the Proposed Development, are proposed through the OBEMP.

2.29 In compliance with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy, any trees removed to facilitate access into the Site from the B738 will be replaced via compensatory planting.

2.30 The final BEMP will only be implemented following consultation with NatureScot and DGC.

Other Project Benefits

2.31 In addition to the biodiversity enhancement measures proposed in the OBEMP, the Proposed Development will have a generating capacity of up to 19.2 MW from the wind turbines and up to 10 MW of storage capacity from the BESS, providing project benefits in relation to climate change and contributing national renewable energy targets. Generating electricity via the use of wind energy will reduce or avoid the use of fossil fuels contributing towards Scotland achieving net zero.

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

Carbon Emissions Offset

2.32 The use of the Scottish Government's latest carbon calculator with best estimate values, based on available information, indicates that the Proposed Development will pay back the carbon emissions associated with its construction, operation and decommissioning in approximately 0.7 years (roughly 8.5 months). The amount of carbon that will be offset by the Proposed Development is estimated to be approximately 16,000 tonnes of CO2 (tCO2) per year, giving a total of approximately 567,840 tCO2 over its operational lifetime (see **Appendix 12.1**). Additionally, 24,200 UK householders per year could be powered by green electricity when considering the Proposed Development's indicative capacity³.

2.33 In light of the ongoing war in Ukraine and the subsequent implications on energy security and future energy supplies, there is more focus, (as demonstrated through the Energy Act 2023 which seeks to build on the commitment of the Energy Security Bill 2022 to reduce the UKs dependency on improving domestic energy production) on the need for the country to expand its home grown energy sources to reduce the reliance on imported supplies. The Proposed Development will provide additional energy supply and storage to aid this.

Socio-Economic Benefits

2.34 The estimated construction cost of the Proposed Development is expected to be approximately £24 million based on an estimated capital expenditure of £1.2 million per installed MW⁴. Assuming up to 12% of construction costs are spent locally⁵, the overall value of contracts that could be realised locally could be up to £2.8 million.

2.35 The Applicant is committed to providing a community benefit fund equivalent to £5,000 per megawatt of installed capacity. This equates to £96,000 of income per annum (index linked) and £3.36 million (plus inflation adjustment) over the course of the Proposed Development's 35-year operational life, depending on the eventual turbine type and capacity installed.

2.36 A workforce of up to 20 people will be employed at any one time during the 12-month construction period for the proposed Development. It is standard practice in economic

appraisals to convert temporary employment levels into fulltime equivalents (FTEs). For the construction period, this employment is approximately 20 full-time jobs. Using a conversion factor of ten years of full-time employment to one permanent FTE⁶, the total employment generated through construction will be approximately 2 permanent FTEs. Once operational, the Proposed Development will require a small team of personnel to service, maintain and operate it. It is predicted that the equivalent of one permanent site operator (one FTE) will be employed who will be responsible for overseeing the operation and maintenance of the Proposed Development during its lifetime.

2.37 It is likely that there will be some local employment generated as an indirect result of the construction of the Proposed Development. This could include supply chain spinoffs for local businesses and sub-contracted works relating to the transportation of construction workers and materials. Any construction workers not living locally may choose to reside in local accommodation which will further benefit the local economy through spending in local hotels, B&Bs, shops and restaurants. Based on an average annual salary of £35,000 for onshore wind construction workers⁷, and assuming a 10% local spend rate, it is estimated that there will be a local expenditure by construction workers of approximately £7,000 per FTE per annum⁸.

2.38 The main contractor will be required to demonstrate how it has considered local content in its supply chain for the Project, including Dumfries and Galloway based subcontractors and suppliers of consumables, plant, and equipment such as oil, accommodation, concrete and vehicles. The main contractor is likely to be Scotland based, but it is assumed that whoever is appointed as the main contractor, that a proportion of the work will be carried out by subcontractors and labour resident in Dumfries and Galloway. The main contractor will provide a report to the Employer on a monthly basis indicating the quantities of local content procured to the Project. The Applicant aims, where possible, to create opportunities for local businesses through events such as 'Meet the Developer' days, so that local supply chain can get insight into the project and make connections with main contractor to showcase their services. If consented and constructed, the Proposed Development will offer opportunities for local businesses to share in the financial and

³ Based on the latest Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and Digest of UK Energy Statistics (DUKES) figures, which provide an average UK annual household electrical consumption of 3,239 KWh. Site specific wind data and modelling found that the Site has a capacity factor of 46.6%.

 ⁴ RenewableUK (2015), Onshore Wind: Economic Impacts in 2014.
 ⁵ <u>Scottish Government (2014) Input-Output Tables and Multipliers for</u> <u>Scotland</u>

⁶ Full-time equivalent (FTE) is a way to measure a worker's involvement in a project. An FTE of 1.0 means that the person is equivalent to a full-time worker. In this example, 20 people employed for 18 months is equivalent to 240 months of potential employment. For one year (12 months), this is equivalent to 45 full-time jobs and for 10 years, 4.5 full-time jobs.

⁷ cited in BiGGAR Economics (2012). Onshore Wind – Direct and Wider Economic Impacts

⁸ FTEs (2) x £35,000 x 0.10

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

employment benefits of the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

2.39 The Applicant is committed to supporting skills development and local job opportunities through the Proposed Development. In 2014, the Larbrax Wind Farm Skills Fund was announced as part of the original Consented Larbrax Wind Farm, which the Applicant wishes to continue. The Applicant will work with Dumfries and Galloway College to explore additional educational opportunities in the energy sector.

2.40 The Applicant will discuss shared ownership opportunities with the local community in further detail should planning permission be granted.

Chapter 3 Renewable Energy and the Climate Emergency

3.1 This section refers to the renewable energy policy framework with a discussion of relevant UK and Scottish energy policies. The overarching framework of international commitments, binding targets and global climate change advisory reports provide the foundation upon which national energy policy is based.

3.2 The Proposed Development can draw high level support from international and national policy, which demonstrate the needs case for renewable energy development.

3.3 The UK and Scottish legislative and policy provisions set out strong support for renewable energy developments, particularly onshore wind energy, which is set out below.

3.4 The Proposed Development will provide a valuable contribution towards meeting Scotland's renewable energy and electricity production targets in addition to supporting the current ecological and climate emergencies.

International Commitments

The Paris Agreement (2016)

3.5 In December 2015, 196 countries adopted a legally binding global climate deal at the Paris Climate Conference (COP21) which came into force in November 2016. The Paris Agreement sets out a global action plan towards climate neutrality with the aims of preventing an increase in global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to work towards limiting global warming to 1.5 °C.

3.6 The UK Government's commitment under the Paris Agreement links to the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) advice to both the UK and Scottish Governments on 'net zero' targets which have now been translated into new legislative provisions and targets for both 2045 (Scotland) and 2050 (UK).

3.7 The Paris Agreement does not itself represent Government policy in the UK or Scotland. However, the aim of domestic and renewable energy and greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets is to meet the UK's commitment in the Paris Agreement.



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CB: EB:robertson_s LUC 12469_EIA_PS_09/10/2024 Source: Ørsted, LUC



Figure 2.1: Site Location

Site boundary







Reference: Dumfries and Galloway LDP2 Oct 2019 Spatial Framework.



Figure 2.2: Wind Energy Spatial Framework

Site boundary









Figure 2.3: Site Layout

- Site boundary
 - Turbine
 - Hardstanding temporary
 - Hardstanding permanent
 - Temporary borrow pit
 - Temporary construction compound
 - Substation/battery storage
 - Track to be upgraded
 - Proposed new track/access junction
 - Tree/scrub removal
 - New watercourse crossing
 - Existing (upgraded) watercourse crossing



United Nations - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

3.8 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations Body for assessing the science linked to climate change.

3.9 The IPCC prepares assessment reports about the state of scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge on climate change, its impacts and future risks and ways that the speed of climate change could be reduced. IPCC reports are commissioned by Governments across the globe.

3.10 The IPCC's Special Report on Warming of 1.5 °C, published in 2018, was used as evidence for the CCC's recommendation to the UK Government for a 2050 net zero greenhouse gas emission target. The IPCC's reports have continued to provide an up-to-date estimate of global temperatures and whether they are near a global temperature of 1.5 °C.

3.11 The IPCC's 6th Assessment Report was published in March 2023. The Summary for Policymakers Report (page 10) states that it is likely that warming will exceed 1.5 °C during the 21st century and therefore make it more challenging to limit warming to 2 °C. It states (page 12):

"Continued greenhouse gas emissions will lead to increasing global warming, with the best estimate of reaching 1.5 °C in the near term in considered scenarios and modelled pathways.... Deep, rapid and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions would lead to a discernible slowdown in global warming within around two decades, and also to discernible changes in atmospheric composition within a few years (high confidence)".

COP 28, Dubai 2023

3.12 The United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) was held between 30th November and 12th December 2023. The UN press release states that:

"The stocktake recognises the science that indicates global greenhouse gas emissions need to be cut 43% by 2030, compared to 2019 levels, to limit global warming to 1.5 °C. But it notes parties are off track when it comes to meeting their Paris Agreement goals.

The stocktake calls on parties to take actions towards achieving, at a global scale, a tripling of renewable energy capacity and doubling of energy efficiency improvements by 2030."

UK Context

3.13 Energy is not a devolved matter, and the UK Government therefore retains control of the overall direction of energy policy, including the attainment of UK national targets on renewable energy generation. However, the UK Government have made it clear that the Devolved administrations must play an important role in helping the UK meet its international climate change commitments.

3.14 UK Government renewable energy policy and associated targets are an important material consideration. Principally, consideration of recent legally binding targets at both UK and Scottish level, as well as the declared Climate Emergency.

Energy Act 2023

3.15 The Energy Act 2023 received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023⁹. The Act seeks to build on the commitment set out in the April 2022 British Energy Security Strategy to reduce the UK's dependence on volatile fossil fuel markets, by improving domestic energy production and make the UK more self-sufficient when it come to the energy it uses.

Committee of Climate Change's (CCC) 'Net Zero – The UK's contribution to stopping global warming' (May 2019)

3.16 The CCC published its landmark report in May 2019, reassessing the UK's long-term carbon emissions targets. The foreword sets out that *"Net Zero is a more fundamental aim than previous targets. By reducing emissions produced in the UK to zero, we also end out contribution to rising global temperatures."* It also adds that *"we must now increase our ambition to tackle climate change. The Science demands it; the evidence is before you; we must start at once; there is no time to lose"*.

3.17 For both UK and Scottish targets, the report makes it evident that "*this is only possible if clear, stable and well-designed policies to reduce emissions further are introduced across the economy without delay. Current policy is insufficient for even the existing targets".*

3.18 The report makes recommendations for the UK economy, which include:

- A new emissions target for the UK overall of net-zero greenhouse gases by 2050, ending the UK's contribution to global warming and delivering on the commitment the UK made by signing the Paris Agreement; and,
- A target of net-zero GHG by 2045 in Scotland, reflecting the country's proportionately greater potential for emissions removal.

⁹ https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/52/contents

The UK Net Zero Target

3.19 On 27 June 2019 the UK Government became the first major economy in the world to pass legislation to end its contribution to global warming by 2050, by way of 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The target is now legally binding under amendment of the Climate Change Act 2008.

Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (2021)

3.20 The UK Government's Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (2021) sets out the polices and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy to meet the UK Government's net zero target. This includes a commitment to take action so that by 2035 all electricity will come from low carbon sources and to fully decarbonise the power system. In June 2021, the Government set in law the sixth carbon budget (CB6) limiting the volume of greenhouse gases emitted from 2033 to 2037. CB6 reduces emissions by approximately 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.

3.21 To deliver a decarbonised power system by 2035, the UK government seeks to "accelerate deployment of low-cost renewable generation, such as wind" and "deliver 40 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind, including 1 GW of innovative floating offshore wind by 2030" (page 94). As part of the transition to net zero, increased roll out of electric vehicles will create "additional demand for new wind turbine manufacture and installation" (page 66).

3.22 The Office for Budget Responsibility concluded that there could be substantial fiscal benefits from early action to transition to net zero, meaning lower energy costs.

The UK's Sixth Carbon Budget (December 2020)

3.23 The Sixth carbon budget, required under the Climate Change Act 2008, provides ministers with advice on the volume of greenhouse gases the UK can emit during the period 2033-2037. It builds upon the CCC's previous advice to government in relation to net zero. The CCC recommend that the UK requires a 78% reduction in territorial emissions between 1990 and 2035.

3.24 Some of the key points from the Sixth Carbon Budget include:

- UK climate targets cannot be met without strong policy action in Scotland;
- Electricity demand will rise 50% to 2035 and doubling or even trebling by 2050;
- There will need to be faster deployment of renewable energy developments; and,

New onshore wind generation needs to be increased by 2050.

The UK Energy White Paper (December 2020)

3.25 The UK Energy White Paper 'Powering our Net Zero Future' was published 14th December 2020, setting out that *"electricity is a key enabler for the transition away from fossil fuels and decarbonising the economy cost-effectively by 2050".* Electricity demand is forecast to double by 2050, requiring *"a four-fold increase in clean energy generation with decarbonisation of electricity increasingly underpinning the delivery of our net zero target"* (page 42).

3.26 Whilst offshore renewables are expected to grow substantially, the White Paper also sets out that *"onshore and solar energy will be key building blocks of the future generation mix"* (page 45). There is therefore a need to sustain growth in onshore wind energy to ensure that the zero emissions target is met whilst addressing future energy need.

3.27 The Paper also aims to support a 'green recovery' from COVID-19 by building on the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution by transforming energy, supporting green economic recovery by supporting green industries and green jobs, and by creating a fair deal for consumers. The Proposed Development will deliver a number of socio-economic benefits that contribute to the delivery of a green economic recovery from COVID-19 (see Section 5 of this Planning Statement).

British Energy Security Strategy (April 2022)

3.28 The British Energy Security Strategy (BEnSS) outlines the UK Government's approach for accelerating away from oil and gas, improving energy efficiency, reducing exposure to volatile fossil fuel markets and reducing dependence on foreign fossil fuel imports by building a British energy system that is more self-sufficient. It states that *"accelerating the transition away from oil and gas then depends critically on how quickly we can roll out new renewables"* (page 21).

3.29 In terms of onshore wind, the BEnSS states

"Onshore wind is one of the cheapest forms of renewable power. The UK already has 14 GW of onshore wind, with a strong pipeline of future projects in Scotland ... The government is serious about delivering cheaper, cleaner, more secure power, so we need to consider all options. This is why we included onshore wind in the latest Contracts for Difference auction round and will include it in future rounds ... In Scotland, which has its own planning system, we will work with the Scottish Government to ensure communities and landscape issues are considered for future projects" (page 18).

3.30 The BEnSS supports Scotland's positive approach to onshore wind.

Mission Zero: Independent Review of Net Zero (January 2022) 'Skidmore Report'

3.31 A clear message from respondents to the review stated that "net zero is creating a new era of opportunity, but government, industry, and individuals need to act to make the most of the opportunities, reduce costs, and ensure we deliver successfully".

3.32 The Review is split into two parts:

- Part 1 explains the opportunity and benefits to individuals and the economy. It places domestic action in an international context and emphasises that the UK must go further and faster to realise the economic benefits of net zero; and,
- Part 2 sets out how to achieve this opportunity, across six pillars. It makes recommendations to catalyse action in individual sectors of the economy, and to enhance the role of local authorities, communities, and individuals to deliver net zero.

3.33 The review identifies that infrastructure will be key to unlocking net zero including developing onshore wind. The review explicitly states that *"onshore wind would be one of the fastest, lowest cost solutions to rapid delivery of net zero making the transition affordable".*

Powering Up Britain (March 2023)

3.34 The UK Government published the Power up Britain document on the 30th March 2023 which contains a series of documents including an Energy Security Plan and Net Zero Growth Plan. The Energy Security Plan sets out the steps that the UK Government is taking to ensure that the UK is more energy independent with a resilient energy system. The report sets out that the Government is aiming to double Britain's electricity generation capacity before 2040. This aligns with the plan to fully decarbonise the power sector by 2035. This will support the transition to net zero allowing the UK to grow within the low carbon and renewable energy sector while meeting climate change targets.

The UK Battery Strategy (2023)

3.35 The UK Government published the UK Battery Strategy on 26 November 2023. Part of the vision for the strategy is *"for the UK to have a globally competitive battery supply chain that supports economic prosperity and the net zero transition".*

3.36 The Strategy was developed with the UK Battery Strategy Task Force, drawing upon a call for evidence and engagement with relevant business and stakeholders. The

Strategy is based around the design, build, sustain approach which includes the following key objectives:

- Continue to support innovation across the battery value chain;
- Maintain stringent battery safety and product standards;
- Strengthen the resilience of UK supply chains;
- Continue to support energy intensive industries and speeding up energy grid connections;
- Ensuring planning and permitting reform actions will benefit the emerging battery sector;
- Identify and facilitate the skills needed for the battery sector;
- Collaborate with our international partners on green trade to reduce barriers; and,
- Explore pro-growth regulation and industry standards to incentivise investment in the circular economy.

3.37 Batteries are seen as key to the net zero transition as they enable more flexibility in the use of energy such as maximising use of intermittent low carbon generation.

Climate Change Committee's (CCC) Annual Progress Report to Parliament (2023)

3.38 In June 2023, the Climate Change Committee (CCC) published its Annual Progress Report to Parliament. The key messages in the report are:

3.39 The slow progress being made in relation to the policy framework. This lack of urgency will mean the UK will struggle to meet targets.

- The Government should stay firm on existing commitments and aim to deliver the necessary measures to meet these;
- Retake a leadership role internationally;
- Actions are required to deliver the Governments targets;
- Develop demand-side and land use policies;
- Empower and inform households and communities to make low-carbon choices;
- Planning needs to support net zero;
- Expansion of fossil fuel production is not in line with net zero; and,
- The need for a framework to manage airport capacity.

3.40 The CCC Annual progress Report identified that renewable energy capacity has not increased at the capacity required. In addition, wind energy *"could have helped to"*

mitigate dependence on imported gas during the fossil fuel crisis".

Responding to the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) 2023 Annual Progress Report

3.41 The government response to the CCC Annual Progress Report outlines how much progress has been made since March's Powering Up Britain publications and the progress continuing to be made. The response:

- reiterates the government's priorities, demonstrating the UK will continue to have one of the most ambitious targets in the G20, cutting emissions by at least 68% by 2030 on 1990 levels;
- demonstrates the actions we will be taking this year, addresses the CCC's main areas of concern, and responds to all the CCC's recommendations; and,
- demonstrates the progress we are making towards net zero against the metrics outlined in the Net Zero Strategy.

3.42 Government is acting on 85% of the CCC's priority recommendations and is acting on the majority of the remaining 273 recommendations - demonstrating our commitment to seizing the economic opportunities presented from the energy transition and net zero and the value of the CCC's advice.

3.43 The response to the CCC annual progress report identified that wind is the one of the cheapest forms of power, and these technologies will continue to play an important role in our energy system.

Committee on Climate Change's Annual Progress Report to Parliament (2024)

3.44 The CCC published its Annual Report to UK Parliament (required under the Climate Change Act 2008) on 18 July 2023. The report lays out the CCC's annual assessment of UK progress in reducing emissions and adapting to climate change.

3.45 The Progress in Reducing Emissions Report provides a clear message to UK Government: *"the cost of key low-carbon technologies is falling, creating an opportunity for the UK to boost investment, reclaim global climate leadership and enhance energy security by accelerating take-up. Britishbased renewable energy is the cheapest and fastest way to reduce vulnerability to volatile global fossil fuel markets. The faster we get off fossil fuels, the more secure we become".*

CCC - Report on COP28: Key Outcomes and Next Steps for the UK (January 2024)

3.46 The CCC published a report and related Statement in January 2024 with reference to COP28 and next steps for the UK. The Statement set out that:

"2023 was the hottest year on record, with worsening extreme weather events across the world. With global greenhouse gas emissions at an all-time high, COP28 took important steps to try to change the direction of travel.

The UK played an important role in this hard-fought COP28 outcome. We may be further into the decarbonisation journey than many nations, but the obligation on every country is now to push even harder. This also frames the economic challenge for the UK. We must rapidly replace fossil fuels with low-carbon alternatives to get back on track to meet our 2030 goal."

3.47 Section 1.2.2 of the Outcomes Report covers the 'next steps for the UK'. There is a clear statement which refers to a number of actions that will be important for ensuring the UK meets its commitments made at COP28. This includes:

- Delivering rapid deployment of renewables;
- UK must continue to focus on addressing delivery gaps to the 2030 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). If the UK is to achieve its 2030 NDC then the rate of emissions reduction *"outside electricity supply must almost quadruple from 1.2 % annual reductions to 4.7 %"*; and,
- UK Government only has renewables deployment targets for offshore wind (aiming for up to 50 GW by 2030) and solar PV (aiming for up to 70 GW by 2035).

3.48 Following a change in UK Government, the new Labour Government is looking to remove a ban on onshore wind in England. This update is still to be made in national policy. Therefore, the onshore wind capacity will only come forward in Scotland and Wales for now.

Labour Government & Commitment to Renewables (2024)

3.49 The recent UK Government election led to a change in political party to a Labour government. The Labour Party Manifesto states that it has *"a national mission for clean power by 2030"* and states that this is achievable *"and should be prioritised"*. The Manifesto sees the transition to renewable energy as a huge opportunity to generate growth and help reduce the cost-of-living.

3.50 Although it is too early to understand the potential policy changes there is a clear indication that the new government wishes to speed up renewable energy development to ensure the UK meets its net zero targets. Energy policy falls under the

UK Government. However, through the planning system the Scottish Government has pushed forward its own agenda on renewable energy development.

3.51 The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero issued a Statement on 08 July 2024 which included reference to significantly increase UK onshore wind capacity from 15 GW to 30 GW capacity by 2030.

As evidenced by the above discussion, there is clear national policy direction at UK level for the deployment of renewable energy and the varying approaches of each of the UK nations. This includes the deployment of onshore wind in Scotland.

The Proposed Development will contribute to the aims of the UK Government by contributing to its legally binding net-zero commitments, contributing to a more diverse, secure and resilient energy system, and assisting with the aims of delivering a green economic recovery.

Scottish Context

3.52 The Scottish Government declared a global climate emergency on 28th April 2019. The importance of climate change has never been more prominent than in recent years and there is a clear national focus, to ensure a 'green recovery for Scotland'.

3.53 Much of the local planning policy (see **Section 4** of this **Planning Statement**) has still to align with the climate emergency and what this means in practice. Recently adopted national policy, however, in the form of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is clear about the important role that renewable energy generation can play in the battle against both the biodiversity and climate crises. Support for the Proposed Development is strengthened through national policy.

Climate

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

3.54 Following the Scottish Government's declaration of a Climate Emergency in April 2019, on 26th September 2019, the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill was passed. On 31st October 2019, the Bill received Royal Assent resulting in the statutory emissions targets placed on Scotland being the most stringent of any country in the world, at that time.

3.55 The Act strengthens Scotland's climate change targets for the reduction of emission levels from an 80% reduction by 2050 (as set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009), to 100% by 2045.

3.56 The Climate Change Act also sets out interim targets over the next 20 years approaching the main 2045 target. For this year (2024), emissions should be at least 59.1% lower, by 2030 emissions should be at least 75% lower and by 2040, the emissions should be at least 90% lower than the baseline. The baseline is defined in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 as the "aggregate amount of net Scottish emissions of carbon dioxide for 1990 and net Scottish emissions of each of the greenhouse gases other than carbon dioxide for the year that is the baseline year for that gas". Further to these, the Climate Change Act requires the Government to set annual targets from 2021 to allow progress to the 2045 targets to be monitored and reported.

3.57 Table 3.1 below sets out Scotland's annual emission reduction targets, including the interim targets for 2020, 2030, and 2040 leading to net zero by 2045. The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 (Interim Target) Amendment Regulations 2023 adjusts the interim 2020 target from 56% to 48.5%. It also revises down the annual targets for the 2020s. This new legislation follows advice from the Climate Change Committee (CCC) to the Scottish Ministers.

3.58 As shown in Table 3.1, the 2020 interim target was set at 56% and the Act also set emissions reduction targets for 2018 (54%) and 2019 (55%) (set for reporting purposes only). The October 2020 CCC Progress Report states that "after adjusting Scottish emissions to the 'base inventory' against which targets are measured Scotland's emissions were 37.8 MtCO2e in 2018, 50% below 1990 levels." This confirms that the 2018 target was therefore not met. The June 2021 Progress Report¹⁰ identifies that the 2019 target (55%) was also not met as emissions were reduced just 51.5% from the baseline period. With regards to the 2020 interim target of 56%, emissions reduced by 58.7% between the baseline period and 2020, meaning the interim target for 2020 has been met. The Scottish GHG Statistics for 2022 were released in June 2024. These show that the GHG reduced by 50% between the baseline and 2022 and therefore the target of 59.8% has not been met. According to the report¹¹, a drop was noted in emissions in the Buildings and product sector. However, this reduction in emissions was almost entirely offset by increases in emissions in all other sectors.

3.59 Table 3.1 illustrates that there is a long way to go for Scotland to achieve its net zero target by 2045; with the impacts of post COVID 19 restrictions being lifted still to be

¹¹ <u>Scottish Government. Official Statistics, Scottish Greenhouse Gas</u> <u>Statistics 2022, (June 2024)</u>

¹⁰ <u>https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/2021-progress-report-to-parliament/</u>

identified through the actual emissions reductions results. There is a heightened need for Scotland to progress with the development of renewable energy generation to feed into these ambitious targets, with onshore wind being a key player in this journey.

3.60 There has been recognition by the Government that renewable energy technologies will play a key role in the delivery of the emission reduction targets. The Government is required to lay a climate change plan before the Scottish

Parliament within five years of the Bill receiving Royal Assent (i.e. within five years of 31st October 2019). The plan should set out proposals and policies, and contributions required by each sector (energy supply, transport, business and industrial process, residential and public buildings, waste management, land use, land change, forestry and agriculture) towards the achievement of the targets. The Scottish Government published the planned update to the Scottish Climate Change Plan in December 2020; this is discussed below.

Year	Reduction Target	Actual Emissions reduction	Year	Reduction Target	Actual Emissions Reduction
2018	54%	50%	2032	78%	-
2019	55%	51.5%	2033	79.5%	-
2020	48.5% (Interim Target)	58.7%	2034	81%	-
2021	51.1%	49.2%	2035	82.5%	-
2022	53.8%	50%	2036	84%	-
2023	56.4%	-	2037	85.5%	-
2024	59.1%	-	2038	87%	-
2025	61.7%	-	2039	88.5%	-
2026	64.4%	-	2040	90% (Interim Target)	-
2027	67%	-	2041	92%	-
2028	69.7%	-	2042	94%	-
2029	72.3%	-	2043	96%	-
2030	75%	-	2044	98%	-
2031	76.5%	-	2045	100% (Net Zero)	-

Table 3.1: Scotland's Annual Emissions reduction Targets

Climate Change Plan (2020)

3.61 The Scottish Government published its updated Climate Change Plan (CCP) in December 2020. This sets out new ambitious targets to end Scotland's contribution to climate change by 2045. The plan sets out how Scotland would deliver its climate change target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030 relative to the 1990 baseline, as set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, and to net zero by 2045.

3.62 The Climate Change Plan (2020) announces further policies which seek to continue the rapid growth of the renewable energy generation seen over the past 20 years.

The CCP states that the Energy Strategy Update will set out the detailed role that electricity generation will play in the wider energy system, and that an updated Electricity Generation Policy Statement will review the contribution that renewable electricity generation is likely to make to the ambitions to achieve the Net Zero targets.

3.63 In terms of the electricity sector, the CCP states that by 2032:

Renewable energy generation in Scotland will account for the equivalent of 50% of our energy demand across electricity, heat and transport;

- Our electricity system will have deepened its transformation for the better, with over 100% of Scotland's electricity demand being met by renewable sources;
- More and more households, vehicles, businesses and industrial processes will be powered by renewable electricity, combined with green hydrogen production; and,
- There will also be a substantial increase in renewable generation, particularly through new offshore and onshore wind capacity.

3.64 Electricity sector specific recommendations in the CCP include "increased investment in renewable energy, particularly onshore and offshore wind" (page 42).

3.65 In recognition of the benefits of peatland restoration and woodland planting for mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change, the CCP sets a target to restore at least 250,000 ha of degraded peatland by 2030 and increase the current woodland planting levels from 12,000 ha in 2020/21 to 18,000 ha by 2024/25.

3.66 The CCP further notes support for onshore wind through a review of the energy consenting process to seek to make further improvements and efficiencies where possible and look to reduce determination timescales for complex electricity generation and network infrastructure applications. It is considered that improvements to the consent processes would be of particular benefit to the onshore wind industry.

3.67 The next Climate Change Plan will set out a pathway to achieving climate targets, contributing to net zero by 2045.

Advice from Committee on Climate Change to Cabinet Secretary Rosanna Cunningham MSP dated 6th May 2020

3.68 The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) provided advice to the Cabinet Secretary in relation to 'a green recovery for Scotland' and how climate policy could play a key role in rebuilding the country after the COVID-19 crisis.

3.69 The CCC states at the outset that *"reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change should be integral to any recovery package"*. The CCC then advises that UK governments should use climate investments to support economic recovery and jobs. It is also acknowledged that climate policies can support a resilient recovery, with policies being delivered in a timely and targeted way which will encourage growth, training and employment, all of which will provide clear co-benefits for public health, well-being and the environment.

CCC, Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland Report to Parliament (December 2022)

3.70 The report from the CCC published in December 2022 addresses Scotland's progress in emissions reduction. The report findings included:

- Scotland met its 2020 target because of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- To date, Scotland has missed 7 out of its 11 annual targets;
- There is a significant risk of the remaining annual targets for 2020s being missed;
- A stepped change in action across all sectors of the economy will be required;
- If targets for the 2020s and early 2030s are not met, there will require to be compensatory overperformance against the later targets; and,
- It is not yet clear how much overperformance will be required in that later period.

CCC Report to Scottish Parliament – Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland (March 2024)

3.71 The CCC produced a report to the Scottish Parliament entitled 'Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland' in March 2024. The related press release of the same date states that Scotland's 2030 climate goals are no longer credible. It states:

"Continued delays to the updated Climate Change Plan and further slippage in promised climate policies mean that the Climate Change Committee no longer believes that the Scottish Government will meet its statutory 2030 goal to reduce emissions by 75 %. There is no comprehensive strategy for Scotland to decarbonise towards Net Zero.

The Scottish Government delayed its draft Climate Change Plan last year despite the 2030 target being only six years away. This has left a significant period without sufficient actions or policies to reach the target; the required acceleration in emissions reduction in Scotland is now beyond what is credible."

3.72 The CCC calls in the report for Scotland's Climate Change Plan to be published urgently in order that the CCC can assess it and identify the actions which will deliver on its future targets.

3.73 The main report states that *"The Scottish Government should build on its high ambition and implement policies that enable the 75 % emissions reduction target to be achieved at the earliest date possible."*

3.74 Page 18 of the report addresses electricity supply, and it states that there has been some progress in delivering

Chapter 3 Renewable Energy and the Climate Emergency

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

renewable electricity generation in Scotland. The report notes that "The growth in onshore wind capacity has slowed, however, and is slightly off track to deliver its 2030 target, which will require operational capacity to more than double."

Statement to Scottish Parliament (18 April 2024) on 2030 Emissions Reduction Target

3.75 In light of the CCC Report, the Cabinet Secretary made a statement to the Scottish Parliament on 18 April 2024 entitled 'Climate Change Committee Scotland Report – Next Steps: Net Zero Secretary Statement'.

3.76 The key points in the statement include:

- The Scottish Government has an "unwavering commitment to ending our contribution to global emissions by 2045 at the latest, as agreed by Parliament on a cross-party basis";
- The Cabinet Secretary states that she is "announcing a new package of climate action measures which we will deliver with partners to support Scotland's transition to net zero" and the Statement goes out to reference these specific measures;
- The Statement sets out that in terms of the policies for these measures that "they sit alongside extensive ongoing work that will be built upon through our next Climate Change Plan and Green Industrial Strategy; and,
- The Cabinet Secretary states that, "The Climate Change Committee is clear that the 'UK is already substantially off track for 2030' and achieving future UK carbon budgets 'will require a sustained increase in the pace and breadth of decarbonisation across most major sectors'. Indeed, we do see climate backtracking at UK level."

3.77 The Scottish Government has reiterated its commitment to achieving net zero by 2045. It would seem therefore that the proposed approach to dealing with the position set out by the CCC in relation to the 2030 target being unachievable, is to amend the emissions reduction target for 2030 such that it better reflects reality and move to a multi-year carbon budget approach to measuring emissions reduction. However, the Scottish Government have dropped their annual and interim targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, greenhouse gas emissions will be measured every 5 years.

3.78 In addition, the CCC wrote to the Scottish Government (14 May 2024) advising on an approach to carbon budgets. They recommended a five yearly approach in line with UK and Wales. Among the key messages in this latter is:

"The Committee strongly urges the Scottish Government to act quickly to implement a new legal framework, bringing its

approach in line with the other nations of the UK. This is crucial to restore confidence and avoid a vacuum of ambition around Net Zero."

Energy Strategy

Scottish Energy Strategy (2017)

3.79 The Scottish Energy Strategy (SES) is dated with regards to the newer targets which have been established, however, it provides an overview of the challenges that are faced in relation to the different technologies to be deployed in Scotland.

3.80 Targets for electricity generation were set out in SES, (Scotland's first Energy Strategy) which was published by the Scottish Government in December 2017 and acts as a free-standing companion document to the CCP. The Strategy sets out a target for Scotland to achieve almost complete decarbonisation of energy and sets a new 2030 'all energy' target for the equivalent of 50% of Scotland's heat, transport and electricity consumption to be supplied from renewable sources, with Scotland a world leader in renewable and low-carbon technologies and services.

3.81 The Scottish Energy Strategy (SES) notes that *"in order* to achieve our climate goals, Scotland needs to build on the progress made in decarbonising electricity production ... this will not be simple, but Scotland is determined to play its part in the global effort to tackle climate change" (page 23).

3.82 The successful expansion of onshore wind has contributed greatly to the growth of renewable energy generation in Scotland. The SES highlights that *"we will push for UK-wide policy support for onshore wind, and take action of our own to prioritise and deliver a route to market-combined with Land Use Planning approach to support development while protecting our landscapes" and that <i>"our energy and climate change goals mean that onshore wind must continue to play a vital role in Scotland's future – helping to decarbonise our electricity, heat and transport systems, boosting our economy and meeting local and national demand"* (page 43)

3.83 The SES sets out strategic priorities for renewables and low carbon solutions, with regards to onshore wind it is noted that the Scottish Government has the following actions:

- "Push for UK-wide policy support for onshore wind and take action of our own to prioritise and deliver a route to market;
- Build on the positive and practical provision for onshore wind in our planning system under the next National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy; and,

Implement the new Onshore Wind Policy Statement, which underlines the continued importance of this established, low cost resource" (page 29).

3.84 In addition, SES recognises the role that onshore wind in particular has to play in meeting its climate change targets whilst boosting the economy and states, "Our energy and climate change goals mean that onshore wind must continue to play a vital role in Scotland's future – helping to decarbonise our electricity, heat and transport systems, boosting our economy, and meeting local and national demand" (page 43).

Draft Scottish Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (SESJTP)

3.85 The Scottish Government has recently consulted on the draft route map of actions they will take to deliver a "*flourishing net zero energy system that supplies affordable, resilient and clean energy to Scotland's workers, households, communities and businesses*".

3.86 The draft SESJTP was published on the 10th January 2023 and clearly sets out the Scottish Government's priorities and policy direction for realising their climate change ambitions and transforming the way that Scotland generates and uses energy until 2030. The weighting to be afforded to this document would be limited given its draft status, however it is a current indication of intended policy direction.

3.87 The Ministerial Forward provides a clear direction:

"The imperative is clear: in this decisive decade, we must deliver an energy system that meets the challenge of becoming a net zero nation by 2045, supplies safe and secure energy for all, generates economic opportunities, and builds a just transition...

It is also clear that as part of our response to the climate crisis we must reduce our dependence on oil and gas, and that Scotland is well positioned to do so in a way that ensures we have sufficient, secure and affordable energy to meet our needs, to support economic growth and to capture sustainable export opportunities."

'Renewable powerhouse'

3.88 The draft SESJTP states that "Scotland will be a renewable powerhouse ... There will be an additional 20 GW of renewable electricity capacity and 5 GW hydrogen production, as well as substantial growth in marine and solar capacity".

3.89 In relation to onshore wind, the draft SESJTP confirms actions to deliver an additional 12 GW of installed onshore capacity by 2030, in line with the Onshore Wind Policy Statement (OnWPS) (2022).

3.90 The draft SESJTP clearly emphasises the scale of development and pace required to transform Scotland's energy supply and meet national climate emissions reduction and net-zero targets, increasing energy security and reducing the impacts of global energy shocks. It also emphasises the benefits and opportunities associated with scaling up renewable energy including local community and socio-economic benefits, green jobs and a fairer, greener energy system.

Recognition of the role of Battery Storage

3.91 The draft Strategy reiterates the support for energy storage set out in NPF4 (page 130). It states that:

"Batteries can be combined to provide energy storage: In a domestic setting supporting the energy efficiency of individual homes; In communities and neighbourhoods, supporting the energy efficiency of the local low energy network; In strategic locations and through aggregating a large number of fixed and vehicle batteries to support regional energy and grid balancing a high energy network".

The Proposed Development is strongly supported by current climate change and energy policy and the draft SESJTP emphasises the clear trajectory of the Scottish Government in their support for renewable energy development. It reiterates the ambition set out in both NPF4 and OnWPS for a further 12 GW of onshore wind by 2030 and expansion of the renewable energy sector generally.

Consultation on the draft document finished on the 9 May 2023. Whilst awaiting the publication of the final document, the Proposed Development is strongly supported by the clear and ambitious policy direction of the Scottish Government.

Scotland's Energy Strategy Position Statement (2021)

3.92 The current SES remains in place until any further SES refresh is adopted by Scottish Ministers. This position statement (published March 2021) provides an overview of the approach to supporting the energy sector in the lead up to COP26.

3.93 Following the update to the Climate Change Plan (2020), the SES position statement aims to provide a clear overview of the Scottish Government's position and policies in relation to energy. It cross references the delivery of an updated OnWPS In relation to renewable energy, the Position Statement also states that *"The continued growth of Scotland's renewable energy industry is fundamental to enabling us to achieve our ambition of creating sustainable jobs as we transition to net zero. The Scottish Government is*

committed to supporting the increase of onshore wind in the right places to help meet the target of Net Zero" (page 22).

3.94 In relation to the socio-economic benefits of renewables, it notes, "In 2019, onshore wind investment in Scotland generated over £2 billion in turnover and directly supported approximately 2,900 full-time equivalent jobs across the country" (page 22).

Onshore Wind

Onshore Wind Policy Statement (OnWPS)

3.95 On 21st December 2022 the Scottish Government published its final Onshore Wind Policy Statement (OnWPS); providing an update to the 2017 OnWPS. The OnWPS sets out the Scottish Government's ambition to deploy a minimum installed capacity of 20 GW of onshore wind by 2030. This will require an additional 12 GW to be developed in this decade. The OnWPS demonstrates the clear position of the Scottish Government and its strong support for onshore wind. It states that:

"Deployment of onshore wind is mission-critical for meeting our climate targets" (page. 49).

3.96 In his Ministerial Forward, Michael Matheson (Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport) references the climate emergency and the damage already being observed that unmitigated climate change will cause. He also cites Russia's invasion of Ukraine, rising fossil fuel prices and energy costs as key drivers for why Scotland must transition to a net zero economy.

3.97 Paragraph 1.1.2 – 1.1.3 states:

"We must now go further and faster than before. We expect the next decade to see substantial increase in demand for electricity to support net zero delivery across all sectors including heat, transport and industrial processes.

National Grid's Future Energy Scenarios project that Scotland's peak demand for electricity will at least double within the next two decades. This will require a substantial increase in installed capacity across all renewable technologies.

Our renewed commitment to this technology will ensure we keep leading the way in onshore wind deployment and support within the UK. We are establishing a clear expectation of delivery with our ambition for a minimum installed capacity of 20 GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030 and providing a vehicle for that delivery through the creation of our Onshore Wind Strategic Leadership Group" (page. 49).

3.98 Section 1.3 sets out 'Our 20 GW Ambition' and states that:

"Our Programme for Government 2022/2023 committed the Scottish Government to publishing its final Onshore Wind Policy Statement and a Vision for Onshore Wind in Scotland, enabling up to 12 GW of onshore wind to be developed. It is vital to send a strong signal and set out a clear expectation on what we believe onshore wind capacity will contribute in the coming years.

In line with this commitment, and reflecting this natural life cycles of existing windfarms, this statement sets a new ambition for the development of onshore wind in Scotland:

A minimum installed capacity of 20 GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030

This ambition will help support the rapid decarbonisation of our energy system, and the sectors which depend upon it, as well as aligning with a just transition to net zero whilst other technologies reach maturity" (p.6).

3.99 As such, the Scottish Government has made it clear that the 20 GW target is considered a 'minimum' and that reaching this ambition will require the delivery of substantial additional onshore wind capacity. Scotland currently has an installed onshore capacity of 8.7 GW so meeting the minimum target will require adding more than 130% of Scotland's currently installed capacity. The provision of 19.2 MW of onshore wind capacity offered by the Proposed Development will therefore make an important and significant contribution to delivering the scale and capacity of onshore wind development set out in the Scottish Government's policy position.

3.100 Section 2.3 refers to the 'Vision for Onshore Wind in Scotland' (Annex 5 of the OnWPS) which summarises the vision (p.66):

- "We build on the almost 9 GW of existing capacity by constructing an additional 12 GW of new onshore wind generation by 2030;
- Onshore wind continues to play a key role in decarbonising the power sector, reducing consumer costs, and ensuring security of supply whilst playing a key role in the electrification of heat and transport;
- The selection of wind farm locations and technologies enables the use of the most productive modern turbines and balances the need to respect biodiversity and natural heritage;
- Land use for onshore wind is optimised and combined with other initiatives including reforestation and peatland restoration, as well as providing enhanced access to greenspace for recreation;
- New and repowering projects consistently receive high levels of public support;

- High skilled and sustainable jobs are created, including long term jobs in the operations phase;
- Material use is optimised, and carbon impact is minimised, through the principles of a circular economy, in turn creating opportunities in component reuse, remanufacturing and recycling;
- Community benefit and shared ownership provides lasting social and economic benefits in local areas; and,
- Onshore wind plays a central role in ensuring a just transition for communities and people.

3.101 To conclude, the OnWPS states that "Onshore wind will remain an essential part of our energy mix and climate change mitigation efforts, but we are also in a nature crisis. Onshore wind farms must strike the right balance in how we care for and use our land...".

3.102 The OnWPS also provides an overview of some of the key considerations and challenges for onshore wind development. Those relevant to the Proposed Development are set out below.

Battery Storage

3.103 The OWPS makes specific reference to battery storage at Section 8.4 (Security of Supply and Storage Potential) and it states (paragraph 8.4.1) that the Scottish Government believes that: "Onshore wind can play a greater part in helping to address the substantial challenges of maintaining security of supply and network resilience in a decarbonised electricity system".

3.104 At paragraph 8.4.5 the OWPS states that there has been an increase in onshore wind development co-located with battery storage facilities and:

"as we continue to progress towards the decarbonisation of our energy system, battery storage will be more and more prevalent. On site battery storage not only reduces pressures from the grid, but enables more locally focused energy provision, and reduces costs to consumers.

The Scottish Government will continue to support the colocation of both battery storage and hydrogen production facilities with onshore wind developments to help balance electricity demand and supply, add resilience to the energy system and support the production of renewable hydrogen to meet our future demands."

Land use - Forestry and Peatland

3.105 The OnWPS recognises the varying demands on land in Scotland and that balance must be found to best serve Scotland's ambitions, including its net-zero commitments:

"As Scotland moves towards a net zero economy there will need to be significant land use change from current uses to forestry and peatland. This needs to happen alongside ensuring space for essential activities such as food production, renewable energy generation, including onshore wind, and the protection and enhancement of habitats and biodiversity" (paragraph 3.2.4).

The Scottish Government recommends early and meaningful engagement with statutory and environmental consultees, creating a collaborative approach through the design and development of onshore wind sites:

"Given the established need for additional onshore wind turbines to tackle climate change and to ensure long-term availability of cheap, renewable energy, in some cases it may be necessary to construct onshore wind farms on areas of peat...

The Scottish Government wants to see the onshore wind sector continuing to contribute to peatland restoration as part of development and expects the sector to step up to the challenge of biodiversity loss" (para 3.3.9).

"The Scottish Government recognises that net zero cannot be attained without a considered balance of land use. Our ambitions for forestry and onshore wind can complement each other, and there are many good examples of sites supporting both land uses" (para 3.4.5).

Biodiversity

3.106 The OnWPS recognises that securing positive effects for biodiversity is one of the six statutory outcomes of NPF4. As such, the OnWPS suggests that the rate of onshore wind deployment in coming years offers significant opportunity to further contribute to biodiversity ambitions, including the target of halting biodiversity loss by 2030 and substantially restoring biodiversity by 2045, as set out in the draft Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045. Drawing on best practice, by proactively managing intact habitats and the species they support, restoring degraded areas and improving habitat connectivity, onshore wind can help address the biodiversity crisis as well as contributing to climate change targets.

Landscape and visual impacts

3.107 In relation to landscape and visual impacts, the OnWPS recognises that meeting the ambition of a minimum installed capacity for 20 GW by 2030 will require taller and more efficient turbines and that *"this will change the landscape"* (paragraph 3.6.1). Referencing NPF4, the OnWPS notes that *"stronger weight has been afforded to the contribution of the development to the climate emergency, as well as community benefits ... significant landscape and visual impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy and makes clear that where impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered acceptable" (paragraphs 3.6.2 – 3.6.3).*

3.108 Paragraph 3.6.5 further refers to Landscape Sensitivity Studies and advises that these should not be used in isolation when considering matters of acceptability, however they can be useful to assess specific sensitivities within an area.

Socio-Economic Benefits

3.109 The OnWPS recognises the socio-economic benefits that onshore wind can produce in Scotland and the part it can play in securing a just transition that benefits communities across Scotland. The potential socio-economic benefits from onshore wind are clear as it states that: "*the latest statistics from the UK Government show that onshore wind in the UK generated £2.4 billion in turnover in 2020 alone*" (paragraph 5.1.2).

3.110 The University of Strathclyde's study, published in October 2022 'The Economic Impact of Scotland's Renewable Energy Sector – Update' shows that onshore wind developments alone directly support over 2,600 FTE jobs in Scotland. Each direct job further supports 1.24 indirect jobs.

3.111 The OnWPS expressed the Scottish Governments commitment to *"increasing access to affordable energy, maximising community benefits from, and ownership of, energy projects, and providing regional and local opportunities to participate in our net zero energy future"* (paragraph 4.2.4).

The Proposed Development will make a valuable contribution to the aims and vision set out by the Scottish Government in the recent OnWPS. The Proposed Development will deliver 19.2 MW of installed onshore wind capacity contributing a substantial volume to the rapid and large-scale development of onshore wind required to meet the targets for a minimum of 20 GW of capacity in Scotland by 2030. Overall, the Proposed Development will deliver 19.2 MW from wind turbines and up to 10 MW of BESS, contributing a total of 29.2 MW in energy capacity. The Proposed Development will also positively contribute towards blanket bog/moorland restoration and woodland planting targets, which will help to mitigate the effects of climate change.

The Proposed Development has fully considered the technical and environmental considerations that the OnWPS has set out as important in the delivery of onshore wind and aligns with the policy position set out by the Scottish Government.

The Onshore Wind Sector Deal

3.112 The Onshore Wind Sector Deal for Scotland was agreed in September 2023. The Sector Deal sets out a number of key steps that will aid the Scottish Government in meeting its target of 20 GW of onshore wind by 2030. It

provides detail on how the Scottish Government and the onshore wind sector can work together in delivering onshore wind farms that will also benefit local communities.

3.113 The foreword sets out that:

"The Government is committed to working with developers and stakeholders, understanding the operational barriers to delivering onshore wind projects and setting out processes to help reduce them. We also commit to speeding up consenting decisions, working with planning authorities and statutory consultees to increase skills and resources, as well as streamlining approaches.

Jointly, we will work together on ensuring a balance is struck between onshore wind and the impacts on land use and the environment. We will collaborate to enable information to be collected and shared from monitoring and evidence purposes, and we jointly want to capitalise on the unique opportunity for Scotland to become a world leader in decommissioning, remanufacturing and recycling of onshore wind assets."

3.114 The Sector Deal states that:

"Balancing the need for more wind farms with the safeguards defined in NPF4 will be a crucial aspect of achieving the 2030 onshore wind ambition. Scotland will continue to be a world leader in responsible onshore wind development, demonstrating how onshore wind can co-exist with a diversity of species, sensitive habitats, peatland, carbon rich soils and forestry, ensuring positive outcomes for the climate and nature."

Economy

Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland, a report of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (2020)

3.115 Prior to the current COVID-19 crisis, Scotland was seeking to become a robust wellbeing economy; the crisis has placed even more emphasis on the need for this to be a key strategic aim in all walks of life.

3.116 The June 2020 report identifies that planning and regulation need to be reviewed in terms of key policies, planning and consenting frameworks, particularly for infrastructure investments to accelerate projects. There is a call for clearer strategic direction and an enabling approach to planning and regulation to ensure that process can be accelerated without the lowering of standards.

3.117 The report identifies that "there is a need now to considerably increase the pace and scale of deployment to meet low-carbon generating targets over the next 25 years, and to enable Scotland to grasp the tremendous opportunities for a green recovery which such a transition offers. This

imperative presents increased and urgent challenges for the existing policy, planning and licensing framework to identify and consent suitable projects with a sufficient level of impact in the light of the climate change emergency at a scale and to a timetable to deliver on Scotland's net zero targets." (page 43).

3.118 Further to this, the report acknowledges that Scotland has the opportunity to *"lever some of its natural advantages: the almost limitless quantities of renewable energy potential from wind, wave and tidal power can be used to generate electricity surpluses to export to the rest of the UK and elsewhere" (page 48). The Proposed Development aligns with the Scottish Government's aims of delivering a resilient wellbeing economy and green economic recovery from COVID-19, through its contribution to the creation of green jobs, supply chain opportunities and other direct and indirect socio-economic benefits associated with its construction and operation (as laid out in Section 4 of this Planning Statement).*

Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation 2022

3.119 Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation sets out the priorities for Scotland's economy as well as the actions needed to maximise the opportunities of the next decade to achieve our vision of a wellbeing economy.

3.120 The Strategy aims to "strengthen Scotland's position in new markets and industries, generating new, well-paid jobs from a just transition to net zero". This will require the continued development of renewable energy allowing Scotland to compete at a greater level at a domestic and international scale. Scotland has a quarter of Europe's offshore renewable energy potential.

3.121 The strategy also aims to have Scotland recognised as "an international benchmark for how an economy can transform itself, de-carbonise and rebuild natural capital whilst creating more, well-paid and secure jobs and developing new markets based on renewable sources of energy and low carbon technology".

Overall, the Proposed Development is strongly supported by the clear policy position and strategy direction of the Scottish Government through existing and draft policy. Significant weight should be given to the clear and consistent policy position that the Scottish Government assumes in their support of increased and accelerated expansion of renewable energy and halting the biodiversity crisis, and to which the Proposed Development will contribute and respond positively to.

Renewable Energy and Climate Change Policy Conclusions

3.122 It has been demonstrated that there is unequivocal, clear and consistent support in UK and Scottish energy policy, for renewable energy development (including onshore wind), as well as the diversification of the mix of energy sources in order to improve security of supply and achieve the legally binding emissions reductions targets.

3.123 The above discussion demonstrates the strength of material considerations that have arisen in relation to national climate change, net zero and biodiversity ambitions since the original Larbrax Wind Farm was granted planning permission. As such, greater weight should be given to the benefits of the Proposed Development in the context of current policy direction and its contribution in respect of addressing the Climate and Nature Emergency and meeting Net Zero targets.

3.124 Table 3.1 illustrates that the emission reductions are not consistently achieving the set targets as legally required by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, and failure to progress with suitable renewable energy sites will only see Scotland fall further behind in terms of reduction attainment.

3.125 Decision makers must give greater weight to the raft of energy policy objectives as discussed throughout this section (and **Section 4** of this Planning Statement), when assessing the planning balance of the Proposed Development in light of the need to achieve these legally binding targets. Whilst not all UK, national and local policy has caught up with the enhanced support for the deployment of renewable energy technologies, there is a clear steer from the Government that support is there for the increased and accelerated expansion of renewable energy.

3.126 The Proposed Development will contribute to the diversity and security of the UK's energy supply by generating electricity from a sustainable, domestic resource using a technology that is recognised as amongst the lowest cost forms of generating electricity.

The Proposed Development will play a valuable role in helping Scotland meet its renewable energy and electricity production targets, whilst simultaneously supporting efforts to combat the global Climate and Nature Emergency and providing socio-economic benefits to aid with Scotland's green recovery.

4.1 The statutory Development Plan as it relates to this application for planning permission comprises the following documents:

- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (2023);
- Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2 (2019); and,
- Adopted Supplementary Guidance (SG); Wind Energy Development: Development Management Considerations (2020)

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (2023)

4.2 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is the national spatial strategy for Scotland. It sets out the spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy.

4.3 Decisions through the planning system must be responsive to the position introduced by NPF4, affording significant weight to the energy policy objectives outlined in **Section 3** of this **Planning Statement**. The planning system must take full account of updated and emerging issues (evidenced in **Section 3** of this **Planning Statement**) in arriving at a decision on a proposal.

4.4 NPF4 was laid before Scottish Parliament on 8th November 2022 and approved on the 11th January 2023. NPF4 came into force on the 13th February 2023, forming a key part of the development plan and superseding NPF3 and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP).

4.5 A Chief Planner's Letter: 'Transitional Arrangements for NPF4' (dated 8th February 2023)¹² sets out that NPF3 and SPP no longer represent Scottish Ministers' planning policy and therefore will not be taken into account when determining planning applications on or after the 13th February 2023. It confirms that whether an LDP has been adopted prior to or after the adoption and publication of NPF4, legislation states that *'in the event of any incompatibility between a provision of NPF and a provision of an LDP, whichever of them is the later in date is to prevail'* (Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997; section 24(3)).

¹² Scottish Government (2023) Chief Planner's Letter: Transitional Arrangements for National Planning Framework 4.

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

New National Park (Galloway)

4.6 In July 2024, Galloway was confirmed as the proposed location for Scotland's third National Park. The geographical extent of the new National Park has still to be established through various stages of consultation, however, at the time of writing, the Proposed Development site is located within the initial extents.

4.7 In seeking bids for the new National Park, the New National Parks Appraisal Framework Guidance for Nominations stated: *"All areas of Scotland are eligible to submit nominations to become a new National Park (including those that have current or potential onshore wind developments). To ensure any National Park addresses the climate emergency and supports progressive development, we will develop new bespoke planning policy on onshore wind to be applied in new National Parks. This means that a new National Park will be treated differently to existing National Parks with respect to NPF4 policy for onshore wind'.*

4.8 The timescales for the issue of the new bespoke planning policy on onshore wind to be applied in new National Parks have still to be confirmed, however it is expected that the same restrictions regarding developments in National Parks will not be placed on the new National Park with regards to the consideration of onshore wind proposals.

National Spatial Strategy

4.9 NPF4 sets out six overarching spatial principles that aim to provide an integrated strategy for the delivery of environmental, social and economic objectives. These are: Just transition, Conserving and recycling assets, Local living, Compact urban growth, Rebalanced development, and Rural revitalisation. These six principles are designed to support the planning and delivery of:

- Sustainable places, where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity;
- Liveable places, where we can all live better, healthier lives; and,
- Productive places, where we have a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy' (p.4).

4.10 The strategy sets out that every decision made about future development must contribute to making Scotland a sustainable place. This includes the expansion of renewable energy generation. Page 6 of NPF4 comments on the legislative basis for Scotland's net zero greenhouse gas emissions target by 2045 and highlights *that "we must make significant progress towards this by 2030"*. Page 7 further notes that *"every decision on our future development must contribute to make Scotland a more sustainable place"*, which

includes support for the expansion of renewable energy generation.

The Proposed Development would provide a meaningful contribution to Scotland's net zero targets within the key timescales for delivery; with an installed capacity of 19.2 MW from the wind turbines and an additional 10 MW of energy storage from the proposed BESS. It is expected that, if consented, the Proposed Development is expected to have an operational period of 35 years. As is set out by National Development 3, NPF4 provides clear high-level support for all forms of renewable energy development, including onshore wind and battery storage which both form components of the Proposed Development.

4.11 Further discussion of the Scottish Government's high level support for the Proposed Development is provided in **Section 3** of this **Planning Statement**. **Section 3** provides an appraisal of the Draft Scottish Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023), which are referenced in NPF4, and the updated Onshore Wind Policy Statement (OnWPS) (2022).

4.12 'Part 2 – National Planning Policy' of NPF4, is structured around the three themes of delivering 'Sustainable Places', 'Liveable Places' and 'Productive Places'. Part 2 of NPF4 provides 33 national policies. Of primary relevance to the Proposed Development, Policy 11 will be considered first below and then other relevant policies will be discussed in numerical order.

Policy 11: Energy

4.13 For the Proposed Development, Policy 11 is considered the central policy. The intent of Policy 11 is:

4.14 "To encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore. This includes energy generation, storage, new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure and emerging low-carbon and zero emissions technologies including hydrogen and carbon capture utilisation and storage" (p.53).

Policy 11(a)

4.15 Policy 11 sets out that:

"(a) Development proposals for all forms of renewable, lowcarbon and zero emissions technologies will be supported. These include:

- (i) wind farms including repowering, extending, expanding and extending the life of existing wind farms;
- (ii) enabling works, such as grid transmission and distribution infrastructure;

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

- (iii) energy storage, such as battery storage and pumped storage hydro;
- (iv) small scale renewable energy generation technology;
- (v) solar arrays;
- (vi) proposals associated with negative emissions technologies and carbon capture; and,
- (vii) proposals including co-location of these technologies." (p.53, emphasis added).

As set out in Policy 11a, (i), (iii), and (vii), NPF4 provides support for each component of the Proposed Development, including onshore wind turbines and battery storage. The Proposed Development draws policy support from Policy 11(a) in principle.

Policy 11(b)

4.16 Policy 11(b) sets out that: "Development proposals for wind farms in National Parks and National Scenic Areas will not be supported".

The Proposed Development is not located within a National Park or National Scenic Area. Outside of these areas, the principle of wind farm development is generally supported by Policy 11. The Proposed Development can draw support from Policy 11(b) in principle.

Policy 11(c)

4.17 Policy 11(c) states that: "Development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impacts, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities".

Socio-Economic Benefits

The Proposed Development is predicted to have important socio-economic benefits (**Chapter 4: Development Description** of the EIA Report)

- It will power a total of 24,000 homes using renewable energy:
- It will provide a community benefit fund equivalent to £5,000 per megawatt of installed capacity per year.

This will result in an annual value of approximately £96,000 per year;

- A workforce of up to 20 people will be employed at any one time during the 12-month construction period;
- An estimated local expenditure by construction workers of approximately £7,000 per FTE per annum;
- The overall value of contracts that could be realised locally could be up to £2.8 million based on construction costs expenditure;
- It will provide shared ownership opportunities with the local community; and,
- Contribute to the diversity and security of the UK's energy supply by generating electricity from a sustainable, domestic resource using technology that is recognised as amongst the lowest cost forms of generating electricity, reducing reliance on imported energy.

4.18 When considering the Proposed Development's indicative capacity, 24,200 UK households per year could be powered by green electricity. This will reduce reliance on fossil fuels for domestic electricity.

4.19 A workforce of up to 20 people will be employed at any one time during the 12-month construction period for the Proposed Development. It is standard practice in economic appraisals to convert temporary employment levels into full-time equivalents (FTEs). For the construction period, this employment is approximately 20 full-time jobs. Using a conversion factor of ten years of full-time employment to one permanent FTE¹³, the total employment generated through construction will be approximately 2 permanent FTEs. Once operational, the Proposed Development will require a small team of personnel to service, maintain and operate it. It is predicted that the equivalent of one permanent site operator (one FTE) will be employed who will be responsible for overseeing the operation and maintenance of the Proposed Development during its lifetime.

4.20 It is estimated that the Proposed Development will generate the following benefits during the construction phase:

- £2.8 million in GVA and the equivalent of 2 FTE jobs in Dumfries and Galloway over ten years; and
- **£7,000 per FTE per annum local expenditure.**

4.21 During each year of the operational phase the Proposed Development will generate up to:

¹³ Full-time equivalent (FTE) is a way to measure a worker's involvement in a project. An FTE of 1.0 means that the person is

equivalent to a full-time worker. In this example, 20 people employed for 18 months is equivalent to 240 months of potential employment.

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

Operational creation of 1 FTE jobs.

4.22 A Community Benefit fund of £5,000 per MW per year (totalling up to £96,000 per annum) is proposed. This could enable the local communities surrounding the Proposed Development to spend on their local priorities. There will also be the opportunity for shared ownership opportunities with the local community giving local communities the chance to own part of the project.

4.23 Any construction workers not living locally may choose to reside in local accommodation which will further benefit the local economy through spending in local hotels, B&Bs, shops and restaurants. The personal spend rate by construction workers in the local area will be approximately 10% for the Proposed Development. Based on an average annual salary of £35,000 for onshore wind construction workers, and assuming a 10% local spend rate, it is estimated that there will be a local expenditure by construction workers of approximately £7,000 per FTE per annum.

4.24 The Applicant is committed to supporting skills development and local job opportunities through the Proposed Development. The Applicant will work with Dumfries and Galloway College to explore additional educational opportunities in the energy sector – helping to reinforce the College's existing offering in Stranraer and bridging local skills gaps.

4.25 The main contractor will be required to demonstrate how it has considered local content in its supply chain for the Project, including Dumfries and Galloway based subcontractors and suppliers of consumables, plant, and equipment such as oil, accommodation, concrete and vehicles. The main contractor is likely to be Scotland-based, but it is assumed that whoever is appointed as the main contractor that a proportion of the work will be carried out by sub-contractors and labour resident in Dumfries and Galloway. The main contractor will provide a report to the Employer on a monthly basis indicating the quantities of local content procured to the Project. The Applicant aims, where possible, to create opportunities for local businesses through events such as 'Meet the Developer' days, so that local supply chain can get insight into the project and make connections with main contractor to showcase their services. If consented and constructed, the Proposed Development will offer opportunities for local businesses to share in the financial and employment benefits of the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

4.26 Overall, it is considered that the Proposed Development will fully maximise its potential socio-economic benefits and is considered to be consistent with Policy 11(c).

Policy 11(d)

4.27 Policy 11(d) sets out that "development proposals that impact on international or national designations will be assessed in relation to Policy 4".

4.28 An appraisal of the Proposed Development in relation to Policy 4: Natural Places is provided later in this section.

Policy 11(e)

4.29 Policy 11(e) sets out the key impacts for consideration for renewable energy development: "...project design and mitigation will demonstrate how the following impacts are addressed:

- (i) impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact, noise and shadow flicker;
- (ii) significant landscape and visual impacts, recognising that such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable;
- (iii) public access, including impact on long distance walking and cycling routes and scenic routes;
- (iv) impacts on aviation and defence interests including seismological recording;
- (v) impacts on telecommunications and broadcasting installations, particularly ensuring that transmission links are not compromised;
- (vi) impacts on road traffic and on adjacent trunk roads, including during construction;
- (vii) impacts on historic environment;
- (viii) effects on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk;
- (ix) biodiversity including impacts on birds;
- (x) impacts on trees, woods and forests;
- (xi) proposals for the decommissioning of developments, including ancillary infrastructure, and site restoration;
- (xii) the quality of site restoration plans including the measures in place to safeguard or guarantee availability of finances to effectively implement those plans; and,
- (xiii) cumulative impacts.

4.30 In considering these impacts, significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emission reduction targets."

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

4.31 The EIA Report sets out how the impacts listed in Policy 11(e) are addressed, including details of project design and mitigation.

4.32 Each of these policy considerations of Policy 11(e) have been considered in turn below.

Impacts on Communities and Individual Dwellings – Residential Visual Amenity

4.33 As set out in **Chapter 5: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** of the EIA Report, careful consideration has been given to the visual effects of the Proposed Development from settlements and individual dwellings.

4.34 The nearest settlement to the Proposed Development is the small rural settlement of Leswalt, approximately 5.5 km east from the closest turbine. Stranraer is the closest sizeable settlement at 9 km to the east of the Proposed Development. The small rural settlement of Portpatrick is located approximately 8 km south of the Proposed development. Surrounding the proposed Development there is also a number of single rural dwellings and holiday cottages.

4.35 A Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) (EIA Report **Appendix 5.2**) has been undertaken for those residential properties within 2.5 km of the Proposed Development where there is theoretical visibility of the wind turbines.

4.36 Residents at nine properties considered in RVAA were identified as being likely to experience a high magnitude of change in views towards the Site from parts of their property and/or from their gardens, curtilage and access track. When combined with the high sensitivity of the residential receptor, there is the potential for these residential receptors to experience a significant visual effect.

None of these receptors will be subject to effects on residential visual amenity which are judged to appear overwhelming or oppressive and as such will not breach the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold described in LI TGN 2/19¹⁴, i.e. *"is the effect of the development on Residential Visual Amenity of such nature and / or magnitude that it potentially affects 'living conditions' or Residential Amenity"*.

Noise and Shadow Flicker

4.37 Construction and operational noise effects have been considered through the EIA Report – see **Chapter 10: Noise and Vibration**.

4.38 A shadow flicker assessment was undertaken (**EIA Report Appendix 4.3**). The shadow flicker assessment was undertaken at six locations within 1,330 m of the Proposed Development (based on 10 times the 133 m rotor diameter) and 130 degrees either side of north of the proposed wind turbine locations.

Due to the design considerations and good practice measures, there will be no significant construction or operational noise effects associated with the Proposed Development, including in relation to construction traffic.

4.39 The maximum theoretical occurrence of shadow flicker amounts to 47.9 hours per year and up to 0.71 hours per day, experienced at Labrax Cottages, located approximately 1.2 km to the south east of the nearest proposed wind turbine. This level of occurrence does not take into account weather conditions (i.e. when there is no sun or when there is partial cloud cover), local visual obstructions (such as trees, hedges or other structures), turbine orientation and turbine operation. In reality, the amount of time when shadow flicker occurs will be less than that predicted. Accordingly, an assessment was undertaken to estimate a more realistic shadow flicker occurrence taking into account typical sunshine hours for the region. A review of historical met data suggests that this typically occurs for 30% of all daylight hours. Considering this, the likely occurrence of shadow flicker at the most affected properties (Labrax Cottages) is predicted to be less than 14.37 hours per year.

No routine mitigation is proposed at this stage. If shadow flicker issues arise during operation, these issues will be investigated by the Applicant, and if considered necessary, mitigation measures (implemented in agreement with the Local Planning Authority) will be incorporated into the operation of the wind turbines to reduce the amount of shadow flicker experienced.

Landscape and Visual Effects

This section of the policy notes that the proposals will generally be acceptable where significant landscape and visual effects are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied. The policy does not require the significant effects to be localised <u>and</u> for appropriate design mitigation to be applied, and therefore is seeking compliance with an either/or scenario.

¹⁴ Landscape Institute (2019). Technical Guidance Note 02/19, Residential Visual Amenity Assessment.

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

4.40 Landscape and visual matters are addressed in **Chapter 5** of the EIA Report. The LVIA of the Proposed Development has established a limited range of potential significant effects; an inevitable and expected consequence of the development form (as accepted by Policy 11 of NPF4).

4.41 Potential landscape and visual effects were a key consideration throughout the design process, informing the key design principles, design evolution and final siting of the proposed turbines.

4.42 The design strategy within **Chapter 3: Site Selection and Design Strategy** of the EIA Report sets out the overall approach to the design of the Proposed Development including the site-specific design principles. The re-design process has been led by landscape and visual impact considerations, including landform and scale, and to what extent the landscape is capable of accommodating larger but fewer turbines than the Consented Larbrax Wind Farm, and within the context of the reasons for the previous DGC refusal. The design of the Proposed Development layout has aimed to meet the guidance contained within NatureScot's Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape.

4.43 Site specific design principles were adopted and considered to minimise visual and landscape effects:

- The turbines were arranged as far as possible to form an evenly spaced group or array with minimal stacking when seen from key scenic viewpoints and routes on the peninsula, such as from Killantringan Lighthouse, the Southern Upland Way (SUW), the A77, A718 and B738 and views from the sea such as from the Cairnryan to Belfast ferry route;
- The potential effects on the special landscape qualities of the Rhins RSA were limited as far as possible;
- The intervening landform was used to limit visibility to localised areas across the peninsula; and,
- The layout was designed to minimise visibility from nearby settlements and areas including Leswalt, Portpatrick, Stranraer and Loch Ryan to the east.
- There are no nationally designated landscapes within the 40 km of the Proposed Development. The Site is located within the Rhins Coast Regional Scenic Area (RSA). This is a local level landscape designation in Dumfries and Galloway.

4.44 The BESS as part of the Proposed Development has been carefully sited and designed respecting the landscape character of the Site and surrounding area.

The land use of the Site will be impacted as a result of the Proposed Development. The Site will change from an area of moorland near the coast to an active wind energy generating site. However, this is common within wind farm development. Therefore, significant effects are predicted on the landscape resource of the Site during construction and operation (Major).

4.45 The Site falls within the Peninsula Landscape Character Type (LCT) (156). During operation, significant (Moderate and above) effects on landscape character from the Peninsula LCT (in which the development are proposed) are predicted. This will result in Major effects within approximately 4 km, to the north and south of the Site, reducing to Moderate within approximately 7 km and Minor beyond. Any woodland to the east will closely contain effects on landscape character in this direction. The Site is located on the coastal edge to the west of the Rhins Peninsula, so any effects on character to the west of the Site will be sea based.

4.46 The Proposed Development is located in close proximity to the sea. Therefore, any wider views of the Proposed Development are focused along the coastal edge, or from more elevated slightly inland areas, which also reveal views of the sea. As such, the scale of the turbines in relation to the expansive sea views will reduce the perceived scale of the wind farm and associated effects on landscape character. The coastline is largely undeveloped, containing largely a working agricultural landscape with farmed fields, plantations, houses and modern farm buildings, poles and overhead lines, as well as a number of smaller wind generators which already exist in the landscape. The Proposed Development will be seen in this context.

4.47 The Proposed Development is located in the Rhins Coast RSA. As mentioned above, from the Peninsula LCT there will be localised and significant effects on landscape character within approximately 7 km to the north and south of the Site, and within the RSA. Beyond this, effects will fall below the threshold of significance. These localised effects on landscape character are not considered to compromise the overall integrity of the RSA.

Significant (Moderate and above) effects on views are predicted at 11 of the 17 LVIA viewpoints assessed. The majority of significant visual effects are contained within 5 km radius from the Site. Viewpoint 12: South Cairn represents middle distance views looking south along the coastal edge. This viewpoint is located within 7 km. Viewpoint 16: Stranraer to Belfast Ferry represents a sequential view from the Belfast Ferry, at 7.4 km distance. This viewpoint is on the edge of where significant visual effects may be experienced. As the ferry travels west, towards Belfast, effects will fall below the threshold of significance from this viewpoint.

Significant (Moderate and above) effects are also predicted from routes including from a localised section

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

of the Southern Upland Way (within approximately 7 km between Killantringan and Mulloch Hill); from the Rhins of Galloway Coastal Path, within 7 km to the north and south of the Site; and from the Core Path network within 5 km (and extending slightly further from the Core Path network on the coastal edge, where direct views towards the Proposed Development are available).

4.48 The Proposed Development will increase the influence of wind farm development on the Rhins Peninsula. Due to the separation between the Proposed Development and the North Rhins Wind Farm and difference in scale between the two wind farms, the Proposed Development will be seen as a distant scheme. There are also a number of small-scale operational turbines around the Proposed Development, which are visible in certain combined views.

4.49 Cumulative interactions between the Proposed Development, and the larger emerging cluster of wind farms on the upland plateau moorland to the east of Loch Ryan, will be limited in nature. The Proposed Development will affect a very different landscape context. Where views of the Proposed Development, and this larger emerging cluster are available, they will typically be successive and long distance.

The Proposed Development is considered to be an appropriate layout and design for the Site that has respected the landscape character of the area and has sought to minimise visual impacts on the surrounding landscape and nearby settlements as far as possible by halving the number of turbines now proposed.

Significant landscape effects are limited to the landscape resource of the Site, which is typical of all wind farm developments, LCT 156, and 11 viewpoints, the majority of which are within a 5 km radius of the Site and therefore **localised** in nature. The localised effects on the landscape character are not judged to compromise the overall integrity of the Regional Scenic Area and these effects are considered to be acceptable on balance with the positive benefits of the Proposed Development.

Public Access

4.50 Chapter 5 of the EIA Report considers public access including recreational routes and core paths in terms of the visual impacts on recreational receptors. The Proposed Development is judged to have a major to moderate significant effect on the Southern Upland Way (SUW) and Rhins of Galloway Coastal Path within 7 km from sections with theoretical visibility. The Proposed Development will generally be seen in medium to longer distance views from the section of the Southern Upland Way between Killantringan and Mulloch Hill. However, these views are indirect. As the Rhins

of Galloway Coastal Path pass through the site, the proposed turbines will be notable features in close proximity views. Users of Core paths within 5 km of the site will experience a major significant effect which may extend up to 7 km from Core Paths along the coastal edge, where direct views towards the Proposed Development are available. The proposed turbines will be notable features in close-proximity and more open views from the local Core Path network. Views will be a combination of direct and indirect as recreational receptors move around the Core Path network.

4.51 There are a number of core paths which provide access throughout the Site and which link with other paths and trails in the surrounding area, including the Rhins of Galloway Coastal Path. In addition, it is common for grouse shooting to take place within the Site as well as recreational walking.

4.52 Existing paths and access to the Site will only be restricted where it is absolutely necessary for health and safety purposes. Impacts on access will be kept to a minimum, and an Access Management Plan (AMP) will be produced as part of the CEMP to manage and minimise disruption to public access during construction.

The significant visual impacts on recreational routes are considered to be localised and not unacceptable when balanced alongside the benefits of the Proposed Development.

Aviation, Defence Interests and Telecommunications

4.53 As the Proposed Development's turbines are less than 150 m to tip, they will not need to have visible aviation lighting installed in accordance with the requirements of Article 222 of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Air Navigation Order (ANO). Each turbine will, however, have infra-red (non-visible) obstruction lighting installed in accordance with Ministry of Defence (MOD) specification (see **Chapter 4** of the EIA Report).

4.54 An Aviation Risk Assessment (**Appendix 4.2** of the EIA Report) has been undertaken for the Proposed Development to determine its potential impact on aviation operations. The primary risk identified is the potential impact on Belfast City Airport Primary Surveillance Radar. The Proposed Development is not understood to be in a sensitive location with respect to Belfast City Airport air traffic services as it is beyond the 30 km safeguarding area within which there could be impacts on Instrument Flight Procedures or Navigational Aids which will require consultation with the airport. Moreover, there were no concerns raised by Belfast City Airport, the CAA or NATS during the original Larbrax Wind Farm consultation process. Therefore, it is predicted that the impacts can be operationally accommodated. The Proposed Development is located within an area of low priority for military low flying.

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

Physical obstruction impacts to low flying will be mitigated by installing MoD accredited infra-red warning lights to each turbine nacelle.

4.55 No issues were raised by telecommunications stakeholders (BT, Vodafone, Atkins Global, MBNL, Arqiva, JRC, and 02.

Therefore, there will be no significant effects on aviation, defence interests and telecommunications as a result of the Proposed Development.

Impacts on Road Traffic and Trunk Roads

4.56 Chapter 11: Access, Traffic and Transport of the EIA Report considers the likely effects of the Proposed Development in relation to access, traffic and transport associated with the construction of the Proposed Development. The assessment has focussed on nearby roads which are likely to be used for access by construction traffic, namely the A75(T), A77(T) and B738.

4.57 Significant effects are expected due to the construction of the Proposed Development on B738 users; residents on the B738; A77 users at Craigenquarroch (including approach to Portpatrick); residents on the A77 at Craigenquarroch; and Core Path/Path users within the Site. Given that the effects are short lived then the significant effects are expected to be temporary. However, the implementation of appropriate mitigation will mitigate any adverse effects of construction related traffic during the temporary construction phase. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) is proposed to help reduce traffic numbers and minimise disruption to users of the public road network and local residents and communities. This will be agreed with DGC and Transport Scotland and implemented through the CEMP. An Outdoor Access Management Plan (if required), Staff Travel Plan and Abnormal Load Transport Management Plan will also be developed.

Following appropriate mitigation, no significant effects are identified in respect to traffic and transport issues.

Historic Environment

4.58 Cultural heritage effects are addressed in **Chapter 6: Cultural Heritage** of the EIA Report. The assessment considers the effects of the Proposed Development on a number of scheduled monuments located in the vicinity of the Site, including four located within the Site. Within 10 km of the Site there are approximately 31 Scheduled Monuments, one Inventory Garden and designated Landscape, five Category A Listed Buildings, 66 Category B Listed Buildings and two Conservation Areas. **4.59** There are four designated heritage assets (Scheduled Monuments) of high importance within the Site:

- Fort Point, fort and salt-pans (SM 1982);
- Farmstead 1040 m northwest of Meikle Larbrax (SM 4838);
- Hut circle 1000 m north-northeast of Meikle Larbrax (SM 4786); and,
- Hut circles 460 m northwest of Meikle Larbrax (SM 4792).

4.60 Seventeen non-designated assets were identified within the Site. One of these is assessed as being of medium sensitivity, eight are of low sensitivity, and eight are of negligible sensitivity. Taking account of the little change in land-use as unimproved pasture and the character of the identified cultural heritage baseline within the Site, the results of the study suggest that the Site has moderate archaeological potential.

4.61 One potential direct impact on a non-designated asset has been identified, arising from the construction of the Proposed Development, however this will not be significant. In addition, two heritage assets lie within the 100 m micrositing allowance and could be affected by any micrositing of the Proposed Development. One of these potential direct effects, on a possible Loch More prehistoric burnt mound, is assessed as being significant. Appropriate mitigation will be put in place which will include marking off and avoiding the mound during construction works. Given the moderate potential for the discovery of unrecorded archaeological remains, there is potential for a significant direct effect during construction. However, the implementation of an archaeological watching brief during ground-breaking works and agreement of protocols to be observed should discoveries be made, will result in a non-significant effect.

No significant effects were identified on the cultural significance of heritage assets through impacts on setting as a result of the operation of the Proposed Development.

Hydrology, the Water Environment and Flood Risk 4.62 Effects on hydrology, geology, hydrogeology and peat have been considered in Chapter 9: Geology, Hydrology, Geology, Hydrogeology and Peat of the EIA Report.

4.63 Hydrology within the Site is influenced by a number of small watercourses and small surface waterbodies.

4.64 There are a number of existing farm tracks already onsite with existing watercourse crossings. New watercourse crossings were reduced as far as practicable by using existing

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

tracks where possible and minimising the number of crossings during initial design iterations. The Proposed Development will use four existing crossings, all requiring upgrading, and proposes four new crossings.

4.65 The SEPA flood map indicates that there are some areas identified to be at risk of fluvial flooding for a 1 in 200-year event within the Site and associated with Green Burn. The SEPA flood map predicts small areas of medium to high risk of pluvial (surface water) flooding around Loch More.

4.66 There is potential for effects on surface water quality during the construction of the Proposed development. **Appendix 9.1: Watercourse Crossing Report** details mitigation which includes silt fences and settlement ponds to minimise significant effects.

4.67 For all watercourses, the effect on channel morphology (bank erosion and channel form) during construction is not expected to be significant, as embedded mitigation measures, including achieving a minimum 50 m buffer zone (where possible) and environmentally sensitive bridge/culvert design, have been incorporated into the Proposed Development design.

4.68 The access track crosses part of the Green Burn floodplain. A flood risk assessment (FRA) was completed to ascertain the extent of flood risk at this location and the effect of the track and new crossing on flood risk, particularly on the B738. The results show a minor increase in peak flood water level. There are no properties downstream which are predicted to flood in the 200 year + climate change event, meaning that receptors are considered to be of low sensitivity. Therefore, appropriate mitigation has been incorporated for the construction and operation of the Proposed development including; a 50 m buffer from watercourses and surface water bodies and new and upgraded watercourse crossings. Particular attention has been paid to the new watercourse crossing of the Green Burn to ensure that it is designed to withstand the 200 year + climate change peak flows and therefore minimises the occurrence of flooding during construction.

4.69 It is considered that the Proposed Development will not change groundwater flows or quality at the Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) during construction. Similarly, there is not expected to be any long-term effect on hydrology and sub-surface flows during operation.

4.70 There are no private water supplies within the Site. However, four private water supplies are within 1 km of the site boundary. Private water supplies were scoped out of further assessment due to the nearest public water supply being located at least 450 m from the proposed infrastructure on the Site. **4.71** Construction work on peat has the potential to cause peat instability, which may affect peat soils (and their inherent carbon stores), peatland habitats and nearby watercourses, infrastructure or land uses. The vast majority of the site has a Low or Very low baseline likelihood of peat instability with only one localised area of Moderate likelihood on the edge of Larbrax Moor. The peat depths are c. 0.5 m in this location, and due to very gentle slopes below the potential source zone in this location, calculated risks are Low to Negligible. The Outline Peat Management plan (PMP) (**Appendix 9.5** of the EIA Report) details appropriate mitigation, including the reuse of peat, resulting in no significant effects.

4.72 During the operation of the Proposed development, there is not expected to be any significant increase in surface water runoff.

There are no significant effects of the Proposed Development on Geology, Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Peat prior to additional mitigation and assuming embedded design and good practice mitigation measures are in place during construction.

Biodiversity Impacts (Moorland and Birds)

4.73 Ecology and ornithology are considered in **Chapter 7** and **Chapter 8** of the EIA Report respectively.

4.74 There is one statutory designated site within the Site that contains ecological qualifying interests; Salt Pans Bay SSSI. There are no other designated sites within 5 km of the Site. A minimum 70 m buffer for any infrastructure or construction activity will be required from the Salt Pans Bay SSSI to minimise any effects. Therefore, no significant effects are expected on the SSSI.

4.75 The scope of the assessment considered terrestrial habitats which includes effects from land take on blanket bog and wet modified bog.

4.76 An Outline Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (OBEMP) has been prepared and is provided in **Appendix 7.5.** The OBEMP proposes a Biodiversity Enhancement Area of approximately 24.62 ha, comprising six land parcels within which management and enhancement works will be implemented to create new habitats of ecological value. This will benefit flora and fauna. The overall goal of the OBEMP is to restore, enhance and create habitats of ecological value in these areas, which in turn will benefit existing flora and fauna as well as increase biodiversity in general.

4.77 The OBEMP proposes the following enhancement/mitigation within the Site:

Blanket bog restoration and enhancement;

- Moorland restoration and enhancement;
- Native broadleaved woodland enhancement; and,
- Rhododendron and bracken removal and management.

No significant adverse effects are likely in relation to direct and indirect impacts on blanket bog and wet modified bog habitats during construction. Effects on other species and habitats including designated sites, ancient woodland, terrestrial habitats (excluding blanket bog and modified bog), aquatic habitats, protected species and other species were scoped out of the EIA. The implementation of peatland restoration measures through the BEMP, in accordance with NatureScot requirements, is likely to result in a Moderate beneficial (significant) effect on peatland habitats within the Site in the long-term during operation.

No significant effects are predicted to ecological and ornithological receptors during the construction and operational period. The habitat management set out in the proposed OBEMP will provide benefit for wader species via the removal of the rhododendron and moorland enhancement.

Trees and Woodland Impacts

4.78 Approximately 0.28 ha of broadleaf trees and vegetation, the majority of which comprises dense and often impenetrable rhododendron will be required to be removed. The broadleaf trees include a mixture of native and non-native species; sycamore, birch and a variety of willows. The area of broadleaf woodland is currently in poor and declining condition with low canopy coverage due to the presence of rhododendron. The removal of this vegetation for the access junction will form part of wider biodiversity enhancement measures aimed at enhancing broadleaf woodland and associated tree diversity in the eastern part of the Site. As part of the Outline BEMP, native broadleaved enhancement will be delivered. Any trees removed as part of this felling will be replaced via compensatory planting in compliance with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy (CoWRP).

No significant effects are expected to forestry/woodland.

Decommissioning

4.79 The operational life of the Proposed Development and associated infrastructure will be 35 years. Following this, an application may be submitted to retain or replace the turbines, or they could be decommissioned. Decommissioning will involve the following activities:

- Dismantling and removal of wind turbines and electrical equipment;
- Restoration of the turbine areas, hardstanding and tracks; and
- Demolition and removal of substation equipment and energy storage equipment.

4.80 The CEMP will be updated as required to ensure best practice is adopted during decommissioning of the Proposed Development and that activities are carried out in line with the most recent legislation and guidance.

4.81 Turbine components and electrical equipment will be dismantled and removed in a similar fashion to their delivery and erection. Turbine components will be cut up offsite in controlled environments ready for reuse, recycling or appropriate disposal.

4.82 Some of the access tracks could be left onsite to ensure the continued benefit of improved site access for the landowner and the public or they could be reinstated. The exposed concrete plinth will be removed to a depth of 1 m below the surface and the entire foundation will be graded over with soil and replanted if appropriate.

4.83 The removal of the top of the turbine base will be undertaken requiring an excavated trench around the upstand. The cables will be cut level with the remaining concrete. Once the broken-out concrete has been removed, the area will be reinstated by backfilling with soil/peat.

Site Restoration

4.84 The CEMP will include a Site restoration Plan to be followed. As part of the site restoration, the BEMP proposals will be implemented. These are discussed earlier in this policy appraisal under biodiversity and under the Policy 3 appraisal.

Cumulative Impacts

4.85 Each chapter of the EIA Report has considered the potential for cumulative impacts associated with the Proposed Development.

No significant cumulative effects were found in relation to landscape and visual; cultural heritage; hydrology; geology and peat; noise and vibration; ecology and ornithology; and, access, traffic and transport.

4.86 Chapter 5: Landscape and Visual Impacts reports that the operational North Rhins Wind Farm (11 turbines at 100 m to tip) is the only large-scale wind farm on the peninsula. Other operational and proposed schemes are modest in scale, limited to single turbines or very small-scale groups of turbines.

4.87 Theoretically in the future, the Proposed Development will increase the influence of wind farm development on the Rhins Peninsula. However, the Proposed Development will generally be seen as a distinct scheme. This is due to the separation between it and the operational North Rhins Wind Farm, and difference in scale between the Proposed Development, and some of the operational and proposed smaller scale turbines in closer proximity on the Rhins.

4.88 Cumulative interactions between the Proposed Development, and the larger emerging cluster of wind farms on the upland plateau moorland to the east of Loch Ryan, will be limited in nature. The Proposed Development will affect a very different landscape context. Where views of the Proposed Development and this larger emerging cluster are available, they will typically be successive and over a long distance. As such, effects identified in the cumulative assessment will reflect those identified in the primary assessment (which considers operational and under construction wind farms as part of the baseline).

The Proposed Development, in combination with other onshore wind developments, will have a positive effect on offsetting emissions released from the burning of fossil fuels and will play an integral part in helping Scotland meet its climate change and energy targets. A Major (positive) and Significant effect is therefore identified.

Policy 11 conclusion

4.89 As the above noted commentary has presented, the Proposed Development is judged to only give rise to significant adverse residual effects in landscape and visual terms, where those significant effects have been judged to be localised in nature and would not result in compromising the overall integrity of the RSA.

4.90 The implementation of peatland restoration measures through the BEMP is also likely to result in a Moderate beneficial (significant) effect on peatland habitats within the Site in the long-term during operation.

4.91 As noted previously, Policy 11 clearly identifies and acknowledges that significant landscape and visual impacts *"are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy"* and that proposals will generally be acceptable where significant landscape and visual impacts are localised <u>and/or</u> appropriate design mitigation has been applied.

4.92 Whilst there is no policy guidance to provide a clear definition on how the term 'localised' is to be used in the policy context, experience from similar wind farms in Dumfries and Galloway shows that the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development could be described as localised in

Chapter 4 The Development Plan

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

nature and should therefore be considered acceptable in this context.

4.93 If the decision maker disagrees with this position regarding the interpretation of the localised nature of the significant effects of the Proposed Development, Policy 11 (e)(ii) also allows for design mitigation to be considered. **Chapter 3** of the EIA Report provides details of the design process which has considered the concerns raised by DGC through the earlier consenting process for the Consented Larbrax wind farm and how this has been factored into the design mitigation employed through the Proposed Development. In this regard, it is considered that the applicant has also applied appropriate design mitigation to limit significant landscape and visual effects as far as possible on balance with retaining a commercially viable scheme.

Policy 11 is also clear that significant weight should be placed on the contribution a proposal makes to achieving renewable energy targets. Specifically, the Proposed Development will generate a capacity of up to 19.2 MW and provide up to 10 MW of battery storage through the colocation of the site.

Therefore, the Proposed Development will contribute to meeting national targets and should be considered acceptable in terms of Policy 11 of NPF4.

Policy 1: Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises

4.94 Policy 1 states that "when considering all development proposals <u>significant weight</u> [emphasis added] will be given to the global climate and nature crises" (p.36).

4.95 The Chief Planner's Letter (dated 8th February 2023) gives some guidance in relation to Policy 1, stating that:

"It will be for the decision maker to determine whether the significant weight to be applied tips the balance in favour for, or against a proposal on the basis of its positive or negative contribution to the climate and nature crisis".

4.96 Page 8 of NPF4 further identifies that with regard to Policy 1, that the policy gives significant weight *"to the global climate emergency in order to ensure that it is recognised as a priority in all plans and decisions".*

Policy 1 Appraisal

4.97 Policy 1 is positioned front and centre of NPF4, demonstrating that tackling climate change and reducing carbon emissions is a core priority of the Scottish Government which should be afforded significant weight in decision making. The Proposed Development will deliver the following contributions to tackling the climate emergency and the nature

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

crisis, and significant weight should be given to these in decision making:

- The Proposed Development will deliver an installed capacity of 19.2 MW from the wind turbines and up to 10 MW of storage capacity from the BESS, making a meaningful contribution to Scotland's renewable energy generation targets of achieving net zero by 2045 where the Proposed Development has a confirmed grid connection date of 2029.
- The Proposed Development is anticipated to offset approximately 16,000 tonnes of CO₂ (tCO₂) each year, giving a total of approximately 567,840 tCO₂ over its operational life.
- The Proposed Development is anticipated to take around 0.7 years (roughly 8.5 months) to repay the carbon exchange to the atmosphere arising through construction and operation. The Site will be in a net gain situation following this period and will make an important contribution to national carbon emission reduction objectives.
- The Proposed Development will deliver significant biodiversity enhancements through the implementation of the OBEMP. This is further discussed in consideration of Policy 3: Biodiversity.

Overall, the Proposed Development is considered to be consistent with the Intent and Outcomes of Policy 1.

Policy 3: Biodiversity

4.98 The intent of Policy 3 is *"to protect biodiversity, reverse biodiversity loss, deliver positive effects from development and strengthen nature networks"* (p.38).

4.99 Policy 3(a) sets out that: "Development proposals will contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity, including where relevant, restoring degraded habitats and building and strengthening nature networks and the connections between them" (p.38).

4.100 Part 3(b) confirms that national and major developments, and development requiring EIA will *"only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention. This will include future management. To inform this, best practice assessment methods should be*

used. Proposals within these categories will demonstrate how they have met all of the following criteria:

- (i) the proposal is based on an understanding of the existing characteristics of the site and its local, regional and national ecological context prior to development, including the presence of any irreplaceable habitats;
- (ii) wherever feasible, nature-based solutions have been integrated and made best use of;
- (iii) an assessment of potential negative effects which should be fully mitigated in line with the mitigation hierarchy prior to identifying enhancements;
- (iv) significant biodiversity enhancements are provided, in addition to any proposed mitigation. This should include nature networks, linking to and strengthening habitat connectivity within and beyond the development, secured within a reasonable timescale and with reasonable certainty. Management arrangements for their long-term retention and monitoring should be included, wherever appropriate; and,
- (v) local community benefits of the biodiversity and/or nature networks have been considered."

4.101 NatureScot is currently undertaking work to develop a biodiversity metric for Scotland's planning system¹⁵. This will support the delivery of NPF4.

Policy 3 Appraisal

4.102 No direct or indirect residual adverse significant effects are expected on any designated or non-statutory designated sites, or any ecological receptor (i.e. sensitive habitats and protected/notable species) from the Proposed Development. Appropriate mitigation is proposed to minimise any potential effects on the Salt Pans Bay SSSI during construction of the Proposed development.

4.103 Furthermore, the enhancement measures proposed in the Outline BEMP will seek to restore and enhance peat and moorland habitat and will provide more than the suggested 1:10 compensation ratio plus 10% enhancement for priority peatland habitats as contained within NatureScot guidance. The Proposed Development could potentially impact up to 0.64 ha of blanket bog and wet modified bog. The compensation and enhancement requirements for priority peatland at the Proposed Development will be 10.36 ha. Bog/peatland restoration and enhancement measures that will

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

be applied to priority peatland habitats cover up to approximately 13.01 ha, with the potential to also reclaim up to approximately a further 2.31 ha of peatland habitats. The Outline BEMP also proposes a Biodiversity Enhancement Area which will cover an area of approximately 24.62 ha comprising of six identified land parcels. This will promote restoration and enhancement of habitats of ecological value benefiting flora and fauna. The Outline BEMP will also ensure that native broadleaved woodland is enhanced as part of the Proposed Development. The implementation of peatland restoration measures through the BEMP is likely to result in a Moderate beneficial (significant) effect on peatland habitats within the Site in the long-term during operation.

4.104 The measures proposed through the Outline BEMP will support moorland restoration and enhancement while restoring, enhancing and creating habitats of ecological value. The BEMP will be implemented in consultation with relevant stakeholders and landowners post consent and will include a programme of monitoring.

Therefore, the Proposed Development will provide appropriate mitigation **and** enhancement of biodiversity and therefore complies with Policy 3.

Policy 4: Natural Places

4.105 Policy 4 of NPF4 seeks to "protect, restore and enhance natural assets making best use of nature-based solutions" (p.40). It sets out that identified effects on landscape or ecological designations of national or local importance require to be assessed in accordance with the criteria set out in Policy 4.

- a. "Development proposals which by virtue of type, location or scale will have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, will not be supported.
- b. Development proposals that are likely to have a significant effect on an existing or proposed European site ... and are not directly connected with or necessary to their conservation management are required to be subject to an "appropriate assessment" of the implications for the conservation objectives.
- c. Development proposals that will affect a National Park, National Scenic Area, Site of Special Scientific Interest or a National Nature Reserve will only be supported where: i. The objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the areas will not be compromised; or ii. Any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance. All Ramsar sites are also European sites

and/ or Sites of Special Scientific Interest and are extended protection under the relevant statutory regimes.

- **d.** Development proposals that affect a site designated as a local nature conservation site or landscape area in the LDP will only be supported where;
 - Development will not have significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area or the qualities for which it has been identified; or
 - Any significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of at least local importance;
- e. The precautionary principle will be applied in accordance with relevant legislation and Scottish Government guidance;
- f. Development proposals that are likely to have an adverse effect on species protected by legislation will only be supported where the proposal meets the relevant statutory tests;
- g. Development proposals in areas identified as wild land in the Nature Scot Wild Land Areas map will only be supported where the proposal: i. will support meeting renewable energy targets; or, ii. Is for small scale development directly linked to a rural business or croft, or is required to support a fragile community in a rural area".

Policy 4 Appraisal

4.106 There is one statutory designated site within the Site that contains ecological qualifying interests: Salt Pans Bay SSSI. There are no other designated sites within 5 km of the Site. An access track as part of the Proposed Development will be constructed 70 m from the SSSI. Therefore, given the 70 m distance to the SSSI, the nature of construction works on the access track, and with good practice measures and embedded mitigation it is not expected there will be any adverse effects on the non-hydrologically dependent qualifying feature of this SSSI.

4.107 There are no statutory designations with ornithological features within the Site. There are two SPAs, three SSSIs and one Ramsar site within 20 km of the Site (refer to **Chapter 8** of the EIA Report). It was determined that there is no connectivity between the Proposed Development and the two SPAs on the basis of foraging ranges for the qualifying species - hen harrier (2 km) or Greenland white-footed goose (5-8 km) and all SPAs and associated SSSIs/Ramsar sites were therefore scoped out of the assessment. There are no adverse effects identified on the natural environment in terms of impacts on European or national designations.

4.108 Protected Species reporting can be found in **Appendix 7.2** of the EIA Report. To ensure all reasonable precautions are taken to avoid negative effects on habitats, protected species and aquatic interests, a suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be appointed prior to the commencement of construction to advise the Applicant and the Contractor on all ecological matters. A Species Protection Plan (see **Appendix 7.4** of the EIA Report) will also detail measures (pre-construction surveys and good practice measures) to safeguard protected species known or likely to be in the area.

4.109 The Proposed Development does not fall within a National Park or National Scenic Area. The Proposed Development will not affect any Wild Land Areas.

4.110 There are no nationally designated landscapes within 40 km of the Site. The site is located within Rhins Coast Regional Scenic Area (RSA). This is a local level landscape designation in Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan. As recognised in the landscape assessment from the Peninsula LCT, there will be localised and significant effects on landscape character within approximately 7 km to the north and south of the Site, and within the RSA. Beyond this, effects will fall below the threshold of significance. These localised effects on landscape character are not judged to compromise the overall integrity of the RSA. Furthermore, and from large areas of this locally designated landscape, the qualities of the RSA will be able to be experienced unaltered.

Considering the above, it is submitted that the Proposed Development is therefore in accordance with Policy 4.

Policy 5: Soils

4.111 Policy 5 seeks to "protect carbon rich soils, restore peatlands and minimise disturbance to soils from development" (p.42).

4.112 Part (c)(ii) notes that proposals for the generation of energy from renewable sources that optimise the contribution of the area to GHG emissions reduction targets are one of the identified land uses potentially permitted on areas of peatland, carbon-rich soils and priority peatland.

4.113 Part (d) sets out a requirement for a detailed sitespecific assessment to help understand the presence of peat and carbon-rich soils on site and to enable the likely effects of a development proposal on these resources to be considered. It continues and states that this should inform careful project design and that impacts should first be avoided and then minimised through best practice. The requirement for a peat management plan is also noted. Chapter 4 The Development Plan

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

Policy 5 Appraisal

4.114 The presence of peat and peatland habitat has formed a key consideration in the design process. Opportunities were taken to ensure that areas of deeper peat and blanket bog habitats were avoided.

4.115 As identified in the EIA Report, the Site contains areas of Class 1, 3 and 5 peat soils. The average depth of peat on the Site was between 50-100 cm with some peat over 100 cm in depth. The deepest peat recorded on site was 540 cm. A detailed peat depths survey has been undertaken with the results used to inform the design of the Proposed Development. No infrastructure is positioned on peat of > 1 m deep. Areas of Class 1 peatland are located close to the access track of the Proposed Development on Larbrax Moor but have largely been avoided.

4.116 The Outline Peat Management Plan (PMP) confirms that any peat excavated will be re-instated within their original location or used to tie-in (or landscape) the surroundings of infrastructure. Therefore, no excavated peat will be regarded as waste.

Overall, the findings of the EIA Report predict no significant effects on peat and as such the Proposed Development complies with Policy 5 of NPF4.

4.117 A Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessment (PLHRA) has been undertaken (**Appendix 9.6** of the EIA report). The PLHRA indicates that the vast majority of the site has a Low or Very low baseline likelihood of peat instability with only one localised area of Moderate likelihood on the edge of Larbrax Moor overlapping with the proposed access track. The peat depths are c. 0.5 m in this location, and due to very gentle slopes below the potential source zone in this location, calculated risks are Low to Negligible and manageable by good practice during construction.

Overall, the Proposed Development aligns with Policy 5.

Policy 6: Forestry, Woodland and Trees

4.118 Policy 6 looks to *"protect and enhance forests, woodlands and trees"* (p.44).

4.119 Policy 6 (c) advises that "development proposals involving woodland removal will only be supported where they will achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits in accordance with relevant Scottish Government policy on woodland removal. Where woodland is removed, compensatory planting will most likely be expected to be delivered".

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

4.120 Policy 6(d) advises that "development proposals on sites which include an area of existing woodland or land identified within the Forestry and Woodland Strategy as being suitable for woodland creation will only be supported where the enhancement and improvement of woodlands and the planting of new trees on the site (in accordance with the Forestry and Woodland Strategy) are integrated into the design".

Policy 6 Appraisal

4.121 There is no commercial forestry within the Site. However, there is a total of 9.3 ha of scattered conifer woodland present within the Site which acts as shelterbelts. None of this woodland will be affected by the Proposed Development.

4.122 Approximately 0.28 ha of broadleaf trees and vegetation, the majority of which comprises dense and often impenetrable rhododendron¹⁶ will be required to be removed. The broadleaf trees include a mixture of native and non-native species; sycamore, birch and a variety of willows. The area of broadleaf woodland is currently in poor and declining condition with low canopy coverage due to the presence of rhododendron. The removal of this vegetation for the access junction will form part of wider biodiversity enhancement measures aimed at enhancing broadleaf woodland and associated tree diversity in the eastern part of the Site. As part of the Outline BEMP, native broadleaved enhancement will be delivered. Any trees removed as part of this felling will be replaced via compensatory planting in compliance with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy (CoWRP).

The Proposed Development will therefore not result in the net loss of forestry. It is therefore considered that the Proposed Development will be compliant with Policy 6.

Policy 7: Historic Assets and Places

4.123 Policy 7 relates to historic assets and places. Its intent is to "protect and enhance historic environment assets and places, and to enable positive change as a catalyst for the regeneration of places" (p.45).

4.124 Of relevance to the Proposed Development, Policy 7 sets out that:

"(h) Development proposals affecting scheduled monuments will only be supported where:

- Direct impacts on the scheduled monument are avoided;
- Significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the setting of a scheduled monument are avoided; or,
- c. Exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify the impact on a scheduled monument and its setting and impacts on the monument or its setting have been minimised"

"(o) Non-designated historic environment assets, places and their setting should be protected and preserved in situ where feasible. Where there is potential for non-designated buried archaeological remains to exist below a site, developers will provide an evaluation of the archaeological resource at an early stage so that planning authorities can assess impacts" (p.45).

Policy 7 Appraisal

4.125 There are four designated heritage assets of high importance within the Site;

- Fort Point, fort and salt-pans (SM 1982);
- Farmstead 1040 m northwest of Meikle Larbrax (SM 4838);
- Hut circle 1000 m north-northeast of Meikle Larbrax (SM 4786); and,
- Hut circles 460 m northwest of Meikle Larbrax (SM 4792).

4.126 Seventeen non-designated assets were identified within the Site. One of these is assessed as being of medium sensitivity, eight are of low sensitivity, and eight are of negligible sensitivity. Taking account of the little change in land-use as unimproved pasture and the character of the identified cultural heritage baseline within the Site, the results of the study suggest that the Site has moderate archaeological potential.

4.127 Within 10 km of the Site there are approximately 31 Scheduled Monuments, one Inventory Garden and designated Landscape, five Category A Listed Buildings, 66 Category B Listed Buildings and two Conservation Areas.

4.128 One potential direct impact on a non-designated asset has been identified, arising from the construction of the Proposed Development, although this effect is not considered to be significant. In addition, two heritage assets lie within the 100 m micrositing allowance and could be affected by any micrositing of the Proposed Development. One of these potential direct effects, on a possible Loch More prehistoric

¹⁶ Rhododendron are considered an invasive species in the UK having negative impacts on the UK's native ecosystems.

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

burnt mound, is assessed as being significant. Appropriate mitigation will be put in place which will include marking off and avoiding the mound during construction works. Given the moderate potential for the discovery of unrecorded archaeological remains, there is potential for a significant direct effect during construction. However, the implementation of an archaeological watching brief during ground-breaking works and agreement of protocols to be observed should discoveries be made, will result in a non-significant effect.

No significant effects were identified on the cultural significance of heritage assets through impacts on setting as a result of the operation of the Proposed Development.

The potential effect of the Proposed Development, both individually and cumulatively, in combination with other wind farm developments in the locality has been considered. No significant residual cumulative effects on the setting of any heritage assets will arise.

In this regard, it is considered that the Proposed Development can be viewed positively in terms of Policy 7.

Policy 22: Flood Risk and Water Management

4.129 Policy 22 aims to "strengthen resilience to flood risk by promoting avoidance as a first principle and reducing the vulnerability of existing and future development to flooding" (p.74).

Policy 22 Appraisal

4.130 Effects on hydrology and flood risk have been considered in **Chapter 9: Geology, Hydrology, Geology, Hydrogeology and Peat** and **Appendix 9.4** of the EIA Report.

4.131 As set out earlier in Policy 11, the only area of potential flood risk is related to the new access track in the vicinity of the site access junction, and appropriate mitigation will be included within the design of the bottomless arched culvert crossing of the Green Burn to minimise flood risk on the B738. The operation of the Proposed development is also not expected to significantly increase surface water runoff.

The Proposed Development is not predicted to have any significant residual effects in relation to the water environment, including flooding. As such, the Proposed Development is considered to be in compliance with Policy 22.

Policy 23: Health and Safety

4.132 The intent of Policy 23 is to *"To protect people and places from environmental harm, mitigate risks arising from safety hazards and encourage, promote and facilitate development that improves health and wellbeing."* (p.76).

Policy 23 Appraisal

4.133 Adverse effects on health, such as noise, air pollution and shadow flicker, during construction and operation of the Proposed Development have been considered through the EIA Report. Due to the design considerations and good practice measures, the Proposed Development will not result in any significant effects from construction, operation or decommissioning phases in relation to noise and shadow flicker that will be deemed unacceptable.

The Proposed Development does not have a detrimental effect of the health and safety principles set out within Policy 23 and promotes health and well-being through socioeconomic and recreational benefits in line with the Policy.

Policy 25: Community Wealth Building

4.134 Policy 25 intends to "encourage, promote and facilitate a new strategic approach to economic development that also provides a practical model for building a wellbeing economy at local, regional and national levels" (p.79). It supports proposals which contribute to local or regional community wealth building strategies and are consistent with local economic priorities. Policy 25(a) states:

"This could include for example improving community resilience and reducing inequalities; increasing spending within communities; ensuring the use of local supply chains and services; local job creation; supporting community led proposals, including creation of new local firms and enabling community led ownership of buildings and assets."

Policy 25 Appraisal

4.135 As set out earlier in this section in response to Policy 11, the Proposed Development will deliver a number of local economic benefits. This will include the use of local supply chains and services, local job creation and working with local stakeholders to deliver benefits important to them. There may also be opportunities for local communities surrounding the Proposed Development to own part of the project and benefit financially from this.

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

The Proposed Development complies with the requirements of Policy 25.

Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2

4.136 The Scottish Government's Chief Planner issued a letter on 8 February 2023 relating to 'Transitional Arrangements for National Planning Framework 4' to provide advice on NPF4 becoming part of the statutory Development Plan. The letter reiterates that, as per Section 13(2)(3) of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, in the event of any incompatibility (which is not defined) between a NPF4 provision and a LDP provision, whichever of them is later in date shall prevail. In the case of the Proposed Development therefore, in the event of any policy incompatibility, NPF4 carries greater weight in the planning balance as the more recent statement of policy.

4.137 The statutory Development Plan for Dumfries and Galloway is the Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan (October 2019). Supplementary Guidance (SG): The Wind Energy Development: Development Management Considerations (February 2020), and Part 1 Wind Energy Development: Development Management Considerations Appendix C Dumfries, and Galloway Wind Farm Landscape Capacity Study also form part of the development plan.

4.138 Dumfries and Galloway Council have started preparing a new Local Development Plan (LDP3) for Dumfries and Galloway. LDP3 will cover a 10 year period. The Council are currently preparing the Evidence report as part of the Gate check process. LDP3 is not yet far enough advanced in its preparation to be considered through this current policy assessment.

4.139 LDP Policy IN1: Renewable Energy and IN2: Wind Energy are the 'lead' policies for the assessment of onshore wind farm proposals. It is acknowledged that the Proposed Development requires to be assessed 'in the round' against all policies in the LDP, however LDP Policies IN1 and IN2 are the key topic specific policy against which to assess the Proposed Development, noting also its criteria are wide ranging. Notwithstanding this, to ensure a comprehensive policy appraisal, other LDP policies are also briefly referenced.

4.140 The Wind Energy Development Management Considerations Supplementary Guidance provides further detail on Policy IN2. Regard has been had to the Supplementary Guidance as appropriate.

4.141 A detailed assessment of the Proposed Development against the LDP policies has not been undertaken as that has been covered earlier in this section against the policy provisions of NPF4.

Policy IN1: Renewable Energy

4.142 The policy is supportive of development proposals for all renewable energy generation and/or storage development. *"The acceptability of any proposed development will be assessed against the following considerations:*

- Iandscape and visual impact;
- cumulative impact;
- impact on local communities and individual dwellings, including visual impact, residential amenity, noise and shadow flicker;
- the impact on natural and historic environment (including cultural heritage and biodiversity);
- the impact on forestry and woodlands; and,
- the impact on tourism, recreational interests and public access".

4.143 The policy also requires the following to be submitted:

- "any associated infrastructure requirements including road and grid connections (where subject to planning consent);
- environmental and other impacts associated with the construction and operational phases of the development including details of any visual impact, noise and odour issues;
- relevant provisions for the restoration of the site;
- the scale of contribution to renewable energy generation targets;
- effect on greenhouse gas emissions; and,
- net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities".

Policy IN2: Wind Energy

4.144 The policy is supportive of *"wind energy proposals that are located, sited and designed appropriately"*. A wind energy proposal will be considered against the following:

- Renewable energy benefits;
- Socio-economic benefits;
- Landscape and visual benefits;
- Cumulative impact;
- Impact on local communities;
- Impact on infrastructure;
- Impact on aviation and defence interests; and,

Other impacts and considerations.

Policy Appraisal

Landscape and visual impact

4.145 Landscape and visual impact were covered in relation to Policy 11 of NPF4 earlier within this section.

4.146 The re-design process has been led by landscape and visual impact considerations as reflected by the design strategy and the key design objectives and principles.

4.147 There are no nationally designated landscapes within 40 km of the Proposed Development. The Site is located within the Rhins Coast Regional Scenic Area (RSA). This is a local level landscape designation in Dumfries and Galloway.

4.148 Some change will occur to the landform of the Site as a result of the Proposed Development. The Site will change from an area of moorland near the coast to an active wind energy generating site. Therefore, significant effects are predicted on the landscape resource of the Site during construction and operation (Major).

4.149 The Site falls within the Peninsula Landscape Character Type (LCT) (156). During operation, significant (Moderate and above) effects on landscape character from the Peninsula LCT are predicted. This will result in Major effects within approximately 4 km, to the north and south of the Site, reducing to Moderate within approximately 7 km and Minor beyond. The Dumfries and Galloway Wind Farm Landscape Capacity Study identifies the Peninsula LCT as being of high landscape sensitivity, with low capacity for very large turbines (100 m+ to tip height). The capacity study has been used as a basis for determining the underlying sensitivity of the landscape within the Site. It should be acknowledged that the concept of landscapes having a fixed 'capacity' is increasingly questioned. Policy imperatives such as the declared climate emergency and NPF4 Policy 11 imply that greater levels of landscape change must be accepted.

4.150 There will be localised and significant effects on the Rhins Coast RSA within approximately 7 km to the north and south of the Site, and within the RSA. These localised effects on landscape character are not considered to compromise the overall integrity of the RSA.

Significant (Moderate and above) effects on views are predicted at 11 of the 17 LVIA viewpoints assessed. Significant (Moderate and above) effects are also predicted from routes including from a localised section of the Southern Upland Way; from the Rhins of Galloway Coastal Path; and from the Core Path network.

Significant landscape effects are limited to landscape resource, which is typical of all wind farm developments, LCT 156, and 11 viewpoints, the majority of which are

within a 5 km radius of the Site. These effects are considered to be acceptable on balance with the positive benefits of the Proposed Development in line with NPF4. Therefore, any significant negative effects associated with landscape and visual are expected to be acceptable on balance with Policy IN1 and IN2 of the LDP.

Cumulative Impact

No significant cumulative effects were found in relation to cultural heritage; hydrology; geology and peat; noise and vibration; ecology and ornithology; and access, traffic and transport.

4.151 The operational North Rhins Wind Farm (11 turbines at 100 m to tip) is the only larger scale wind farm on the peninsula. Other operational and proposed schemes are modest in scale, limited to single turbines or very small-scale groups of turbines. Theoretically in the future, the Proposed Development will increase the influence of wind farm development on the Rhins Peninsula. However, the Proposed Development will generally be seen as a distinct scheme. Cumulative interactions between the Proposed Development, and the larger emerging cluster of wind farms on the upland plateau moorland to the east of Loch Ryan, will be limited in nature. As such, cumulative landscape and visual effects will be no different to those predicted for the primary assessment assuming the existing baseline.

Impact on local communities and individual dwellings, including visual impact, residential amenity, noise and shadow flicker

4.152 A Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) is contained within **Appendix 5.2** of the EIA Report. A total of 40 residential properties were considered in the assessment. The assessment concluded that a total of nine residential properties will experience a high magnitude of change in views towards the Site from parts of their property. However, none of these receptors will be subject to effects on residential visual amenity which are judged to appear overwhelming or oppressive and as such will not breach the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold described in Landscape Institute RVAA Technical Guidance Note 2/19 (LI TGN 2/19). The Proposed Development was found to not breach the Residential Visual Amenity threshold for any of the residential properties.

4.153 Noise and shadow flicker were covered in relation to Policy 11 of NPF4 earlier within this section.

No significant effects are expected as a result of this Proposed Development.

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

Impact on forestry

4.154 Trees and woodland were covered in relation to Policy 11 of NPF4 earlier in this section. Approximately 0.28 ha of broadleaf trees and vegetation, the majority of which comprises dense and often impenetrable rhododendron will be required to be removed. The broadleaf trees include a mixture of native and non-native species; sycamore, birch and a variety of willows. The area of broadleaf woodland is currently in poor and declining condition with low canopy coverage due to the presence of rhododendron. The removal of this vegetation for the access junction will form part of wider biodiversity enhancement measures aimed at enhancing broadleaf woodland and associated tree diversity in the eastern part of the Site. Any trees removed as part of this felling will be replaced via compensatory planting in compliance with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy (CoWRP).

No significant effects are expected as a result of this Proposed Development.

Impact on natural and historic environment (including cultural heritage and biodiversity)

4.155 Natural and historic environment were covered in relation to Policy 11 of NPF4 earlier within this section.

4.156 One potential direct impact on a non-designated asset has been identified, arising from the construction of the Proposed Development, but this effect is not considered to be significant. In addition, two non-designated heritage assets lie within the 100 m micrositing allowance and could be affected by any micrositing of the Proposed Development. One of these potential direct effects, on a possible Loch More prehistoric burnt mound, is assessed as being significant. Appropriate mitigation will be put in place which will include marking off and avoiding the mound during construction works. As noted above, given the moderate potential for the discovery of unrecorded archaeological remains, there is potential for a significant direct effect during construction. However, the implementation of an archaeological watching brief during ground-breaking works and agreement of protocols to be observed should discoveries be made, will result in a non-significant effect. No significant effects were identified on the cultural significance of heritage assets through impacts on setting as a result of the operation of the Proposed Development.

4.157 There is one statutory designated site within the Site that contains ecological qualifying interests; Salt Pans Bay SSSI. The scope of the assessment only considered terrestrial habitats which includes effects from loss and indirect effects on blanket bog and wet modified bog. No significant adverse effects are likely in relation to direct and

indirect impacts on blanket bog and wet modified bog habitats during construction. The implementation of peatland restoration measures through the Outline BEMP is likely to result in a Moderate beneficial (significant) effect on peatland habitats within the Site in the long-term during operation. No significant effects are predicted on ecological and ornithological receptors during the construction and operational period.

4.158 Impacts on trees and woodland were covered in relation to Policy 11 of NPF4 earlier within this section.

No significant effects are expected as a result of this Proposed Development.

Impact on tourism, recreational interests and public access

4.159 Impact on tourism, recreational interests and public access is covered in relation to Policy 11 of NPF4 earlier within this section. Existing paths and access to the Site will only be restricted where it is absolutely necessary for health and safety purposes. Impacts on existing access will be kept to a minimum.

No significant effects are expected as a result of this Proposed Development.

Impact on aviation and defence interests

4.160 Aviation and defence Interests were covered in relation to Policy 11 of NPF4 earlier within this section.

No significant effects are expected as a result of this Proposed Development.

Impact on telecommunications

4.161 Telecommunications were covered in relation to Policy 11 of NPF4.

No significant effects on telecommunication links are likely as a result of the Proposed Development.

Impact on infrastructure

4.162 Impacts on road traffic and trunks roads were covered in relation to Policy 11 of NPF4 earlier within this section. Access to the Site will be from the A77(T), A75(T) corridors and the B738. Significant effects are expected due to the construction of the Proposed Development on B738 users; residents on the B738; A77 users at Craigenquarroch (including approach to Portpatrick); residents on the A77 at

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

Craigenquarroch; and Core Path/Path users within the Site. Given that the effects are short lived then the significant effects are expected to be temporary. However, the implementation of appropriate mitigation will mitigate any adverse effects of construction related traffic during the temporary construction phase.

With the implementation of appropriate mitigation, no significant effects are expected as a result of the Proposed development.

Impact on Water Environment

4.163 Impacts on the water environment were covered in relation to Policy 11 of NPF4 earlier within this section. The Proposed Development is not expected to have any significant effects on hydrology including surface water run-off and impacts on water quality and supply (including PWS), GWDTEs and morphology of watercourses and waterbodies within the Site.

4.164 There are no private water supplies within the Site. However, four private water supplies are within 1 km of the site boundary. Private water supplies were scoped out of further assessment due to the nearest public water supply being located at least 450 m from the proposed infrastructure on the Site.

4.165 The SEPA flood map indicates that there are some areas identified to be at risk of fluvial flooding for a 1 in 200year event within the Site and associated with Green Burn. The SEPA flood map predicts small areas of medium to high risk of pluvial (surface water) flooding around Loch More. The access track crosses part of the Green Burn floodplain. A flood risk assessment (FRA) was completed to ascertain the extent of flood risk at this location and the effect of the track and new crossing on flood risk. The results show a minor increase in peak flood water level. There are no properties downstream which are predicted to flood in the 200 year + climate change event, meaning that receptors are considered to be of low sensitivity. Therefore, appropriate mitigation has been incorporated for the construction and operation of the Proposed development including; a 50 m buffer from watercourses and surface water bodies and new and upgraded watercourse crossings.

4.166 There is potential for effects on surface water quality during the construction of the Proposed development.
Appendix 9.1: Watercourse Crossing Report details mitigation which includes silt fences and settlement ponds to minimise significant effects.

During the operation of the Proposed development, there is not expected to be any significant increase in surface water runoff.

Site Restoration

4.167 The CEMP will include a Site restoration Plan to be followed. As part of the site restoration, the BEMP proposals will be implemented. These are discussed earlier in this policy appraisal under biodiversity and under the Policy 3 appraisal.

Effect on Greenhouse gas emissions and contribution to climate change

4.168 The Proposed Development will deliver an installed capacity of 19.2 MW from the wind turbines and up to 10 MW of storage capacity from the BESS, making a meaningful contribution to Scotland's renewable energy generation targets of achieving net zero by 2045. The Proposed Development is anticipated to take around 0.7 years (roughly 8.5 months) to repay the carbon exchange to the atmosphere (with CO2 debt) through construction of a wind farm. The amount of carbon that will be offset by the Proposed Development is estimated to be approximately 16,000 tCO₂ per year, giving a total of approximately 567,840 tCO₂ over its operational lifetime. The Site will be in a net gain situation following this period and it will contribute to national carbon emission reduction objectives.

Socio-economic Benefits

4.169 The Proposed Development is predicted to result in a number of socio-economic benefits. Full details of the socio-economic benefits are contained under the appraisal of Policy 11(c) earlier in this section.

Therefore, the Proposed Development is considered acceptable in relation to Policy IN1 and IN2.

Other Relevant Policies

Overarching Policies

Policy OP1: Development Considerations

4.170 Policy OP1 is the overarching policy that any development will be assessed against.

4.171 The Council requires the following to be considered:

- "noise and vibration;"
- odour and fumes;
- potential loss of privacy, sunlight and daylight on nearby properties;

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

- emissions including dust, smoke, soot, ash, dirt or grit or any other environmental pollution to
- water, air, or soil; and,
- light pollution.

4.172 Development proposals should protect and/or enhance the character, appearance and setting of the region's rich historic environment principally by ensuring they are sympathetic to nearby buildings, sites and features, integrate well and complement the surrounding area.

4.173 Development proposals should respect, protect and/or enhance the region's rich landscape character, and scenic qualities, including features and sites identified for their landscape qualities or wild land character as identified on the 2014 Scottish National Heritage map (or any subsequent revised or amended map) of wild land areas. They should also reflect the scale and local distinctiveness of the landscape.

4.174 Development proposals should respect, protect and/or enhance the region's rich and distinct biodiversity, geodiversity and sites identified for their contribution to the natural environment at any level including ancient and semi-natural woodland.

4.175 Development proposals should minimise the need for travel by car and encourage active and other more sustainable forms of travel whilst avoiding or mitigating any adverse impact on the transport network or road safety.

4.176 Development proposals should limit the impacts of climate change, support resilience, and promote sustainable development.

4.177 Development proposals should maintain or enhance water quality, and take account of the need to manage water quantity, including flooding".

Policy OP2: Design Quality and Placemaking

4.178 This policy requires development proposals to achieve "high quality design in terms of their contribution to the existing built and natural environment contributing positively to a sense of place and local distinctiveness". Development should also "relate well to the scale, density, massing, character, appearance and use of materials of the surrounding area and in so doing be sympathetic to the local built forms as well as respecting the important physical, historic and landscape features of the site and its vicinity".

Policy Appraisal

4.179 The Proposed Development is considered acceptable in relation to the criteria detailed within LDP Policy IN1 and IN2. An appraisal has also been undertaken against Policy 11 of NPF4. Therefore, the Proposed Development is considered acceptable in relation to LDP Policy OP1, which is the

overarching policy for all development, for the reasons detailed earlier in this section.

4.180 As is evidenced in **Chapter 3** of the EIA Report, the Proposed Development has been carefully sited and designed to minimise all environmental effects as far as reasonably practicable. The Proposed Development is considered to be of an appropriate layout and design for the Site that has respect to nature and the landscape character of the area, taking advantage of the natural topographical screening within the Site to inform the placement of turbines.

Therefore, the Proposed Development can be considered acceptable in relation to the Overarching Policies OP1 and OP2.

Historic Environment

Policy HE1: Listed Buildings

4.181 The policy supports *"development that makes effective, efficient and sustainable use of listed buildings"*. The policy also lists criteria if development is likely to impact the character or appearance of a listed building or its setting.

Policy HE2: Conservation Areas

4.182 This policy supports "development within or adjacent to a conservation area that preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the area and is consistent with any relevant conservation area appraisal and management plan".

Policy HE3: Archaeology

4.183 This policy will "support development that protects significant archaeological and historic assets, and the wider historic environment from adverse effects".

Policy HE6: Gardens and Designed Landscapes

4.184 This policy supports "development that protects or enhances the significant elements, specific qualities, character, integrity and setting, including key views to and from, gardens and designed landscapes included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes or the Non-Inventory List".

Policy Appraisal

4.185 Impacts on Historic environment were covered in relation to Policy 11 of NPF4 earlier within this section. No significant effects were identified on the setting of the heritage assets as a result of the operation of the Proposed Development.

Therefore, the Proposed Development can be considered acceptable in relation to the Historic

Natural Environment

Policy NE1: National Scenic Areas

Environment policies noted above.

4.186 Development within or that will have an effect on a National Scenic Area will only be permitted where it does not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the area or adverse effects are outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits.

Policy NE2: Regional Scenic Areas

4.187 Development within a Regional Scenic Area is required to respect the special qualities of the area. Development within or affects a Regional Scenic Areas will be supported where it would not significantly affect the area or there is a need for development at the location.

Policy NE4: Sites of International Importance for Biodiversity

4.188 Appropriate assessment will be required where a development proposal is likely to have significant effect on an existing or proposed Special Protection Area, existing or candidate Special Area of Conservation or Ramsar Site.

Policy NE5: Species of International Importance

4.189 Development proposals that could have an adverse effect on a European Protected Species will only be permitted where there is no suitable alternative; development is required for preserving public health or public safety or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest; and, development would not be detrimental to the maintenance of a species population.

Policy NE6: Sites of National Importance for Biodiversity and Geodiversity

4.190 Development that affects a Site of Special Scientific Interest will only be permitted where: development does not affect the integrity of the site or it's special qualities and the adverse effect is outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance.

Policy NE7: Forestry and Woodland

4.191 The policy supports the protection and creation of sensitively designed and damaged woodlands and forests. In addition, development proposals should seek to protect and/or enhance ancient and semi-natural woodlands and woodlands with a high nature conservation value.

Chapter 4 The Development Plan

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

Policy NE8: Trees and Development

4.192 This policy supports proposals which:

- promote additional tree planting;
- protect and enhance ancient woodland sites;
- maintain trees, woodlands (in particular ancient and semi-natural woodlands), and hedgerows (thereafter referred to as the 'woodland resource') and require developers to incorporate, wherever feasible, the existing woodland resource into their schemes;
- encourage planting of a type, scale, design, composition and species mix that is appropriate to its locality and appropriately incorporates the woodland resource into the overall design of the scheme; and,
- show how existing trees will be appropriately protected during the construction period.

Policy NE9: Developed and Undeveloped Coast

4.193 The policy states that "development proposals outwith the developed coast are unlikely to be suitable for development unless the Council is satisfied that:

- the proposal has a requirement for a coastal location that cannot be satisfied within the developed coast; and,
- taking account of climate change and in particular sea level rise, the proposal would maintain or improve the integrity and quality of the coastal environment".

Policy NE11: Supporting the Water Environment

4.194 Development that would result in the deterioration in the status of a waterbody or would impede improvements in waterbody status as set out in the Solway Tweed River Basin Management Plan will not be supported.

4.195 Culverting of a waterbody should not normally be part of a development proposal. If culverting is required then appropriate mitigation will be required to protect habitats, passage of fauna, and river form and flow. Any other physical alterations to a waterbody should be avoided.

4.196 "Development proposals which could adversely affect Drinking Water Protection Areas identified by the Scottish Government will be subject to consultation with SEPA. Where the likely adverse effect cannot be avoided or mitigated against, the development will not be permitted".

Policy NE12: Protection of Water Margins

4.197 The water margins will be protected, subject to Policy NE11 and Section 18 of the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 if development is proposed adjacent to or in vicinity of waterbodies.

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

Policy NE14: Carbon Rich Soil

4.198 This policy supports the role of soils as natural carbon sinks. "Developments proposed on areas of carbon rich soil will need to clearly justify the loss of the carbon sink. Development may be permitted if it can be demonstrated that in accordance with the Scottish Government's 'carbon calculator' or other equivalent independent evidence the balance of advantage in terms of climate change mitigation lies with the development proposal".

Policy NE15: Protection and Restoration of Peat Deposits as Carbon Sinks

4.199 The role of natural carbon sinks in retaining carbon dioxide will be maintained by safeguarding and protecting peat deposits, including those not already designated for habitat conservation.

4.200 The council supports peatland restoration.

Policy Appraisal

4.201 Impacts on Natural environment were covered in relation to Policy 11 and Policy 3 of NPF4 earlier within this section. The Site is not within a National Scenic Area and therefore no effects are expected. There are no designated sites for geodiversity interests of international, national and regional/local importance.

4.202 The Proposed Development will not result in the net loss of forestry.

4.203 No residual significant adverse effects have been identified in relation to ecology as a result of the Proposed Development. Significant (positive) effects are expected as a result of blanket bog restoration during the operation of the Proposed Development. No significant effects are predicted to ecological and ornithological receptors during the construction and operational period.

4.204 The Proposed Development is not expected to have any significant effects on hydrology including surface water run-off and impacts on water quality and supply (including PWS), GWDTEs, and morphology of watercourses and waterbodies within the Site.

4.205 The Site contains areas of Class 1,3 and 5 peat. Peat soils have been taken into consideration in the design of the Proposed Development with areas of deeper peat avoided. Overall, there will be no surplus of peat or soil materials following their re-use. Overall, the findings of the EIA Report predict no significant adverse effects on peat.

Therefore, the Proposed Development can be considered acceptable in relation to the Natural Environment policies noted above. **Community Services and Facilities**

Policy CF4: Access Routes

4.206 Any development proposal should not have an adverse effect on an access route or core path. The Council act as an access authority and therefore aim to protect and keep open and free from obstruction any route with access rights. If the loss of an existing route is required within a development proposal, then an alternative route or mitigation will be required.

4.207 When a new access route is required to a development, this should be considered at the earliest opportunity. An Access Route Plan is required to be submitted for all major developments. Planning conditions or legal agreements may be used to maintain and improve access to a site.

Policy Appraisal

4.208 As discussed earlier in this section under Policy 11 of NPF4, the Proposed development is expected to have a significant effect on the users of Core Paths within the Site during the construction of the Proposed Development. These effects are expected to be temporary and only during the short construction period. The Core Paths through the Site will only be restricted where it is absolutely necessary for health and safety purposes. Impacts on access will be kept to a minimum, and an Access Management Plan (AMP) will be produced as part of the CEMP to manage and minimise disruption to public access during construction.

Therefore, the Proposed Development is unlikely to have adverse effects on Community Services and Facilities of the local area and is considered consistent with the DGC LDP policy in this regard.

Infrastructure

Policy IN7: Flooding and Development

4.209 Development will not be permitted if it could lead to unacceptable on-site or off-site flood risk. A Flood Risk Assessment may be required where a development leads to an unacceptable flood risk. Where applicable, a Drainage Impact Assessment may be required to ensure surface water flows are taken into account within development design.

Policy IN8: Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

4.210 Drainage is a planning requirement for every development proposal. In order to manage surface water and flow rates, Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) will be required as part of a development. A Drainage Impact Assessment may be required to ensure drainage issues are considered within the development design.

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

Policy Appraisal

4.211 Impacts on Hydrology, including flood risk, were covered in relation to Policy 11 of NPF4 earlier within this section. The Proposed Development is not expected to have any significant effects on hydrology including surface water run-off and impacts on water quality and supply (including PWS), GWDTEs and morphology of watercourses and waterbodies within the Site.

Therefore, the Proposed Development can be considered acceptable in relation to the infrastructure policies.

Transport

Policy T2: Location of Development/Accessibility

4.212 This policy requires development proposals to prioritise the most sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling with car and other motorised vehicle travel considered last. Consideration should also be given to the provision of electric vehicle charging points.

4.213 Developers may be required to prepare and implement a Travel Plan or prepare a Transport Assessment or Transport Statement.

Policy T5: Former Transportation Routes

4.214 This policy does not support development on or adjacent to former railway lines that could be brought back into use or converted to other transport uses such as walking, riding or cycling.

Policy Appraisal

4.215 Impacts on Transport were covered in relation to Policy 11 of NPF4 earlier within this section. Significant effects are expected due to the construction of the Proposed Development on B738 users; residents on the B738; A77 users at Craigenquarroch (including approach to Portpatrick); residents on the A77 at Craigenquarroch; and Core Path/Path users within the Site. Given that the effects are short lived then the significant effects are expected to be temporary. However, the implementation of appropriate mitigation will mitigate any adverse effects of construction related traffic during the temporary construction phase.

Therefore, the Proposed Development can be considered acceptable in relation to the Transport policies.

Supplementary Guidance: Wind Energy Development: Development Management Considerations 2020

4.216 The purpose of this Supplementary Guidance is to provide further detail in support of the development management considerations in Policy IN1: Renewable Energy and Policy IN2: Wind Energy. It provides a statement of the main factors that will be taken into account in reaching planning decisions and details the criteria contained in the policy. The policy appraisal provided previously within this section of this Planning Statement demonstrates how the Proposed Development aligns within Policy IN1 and IN2 and therefore the supplementary guidance.

Dumfries & Galloway Wind Farm Landscape Capacity Study February 2020

4.217 The Dumfries and Galloway Wind Farm Landscape Capacity Study (DGWLCS) which forms part of the Wind Energy Development: Development Management Considerations Supplementary Guidance assesses the sensitivity of landscape character types, and more locally defined character areas, to different sizes of wind turbine development. The study was reviewed and updated in 2016. The Dumfries and Galloway landscape is diverse with a range of different character types and high-quality scenery. The Study also sets out detailed policy considerations against which all proposals for wind energy will be assessed. It contains an onshore spatial framework, identifying areas of low, medium and high sensitivity to wind farm development. The entirety of the Site is within an area of high sensitivity for the turbine typology proposed (80-150 m to blade tip).

4.218 The Proposed Development falls within the Peninsula Character Type. The Dumfries and Galloway Wind Farm Landscape Capacity Study identifies the Peninsula Landscape Character Type as being of high landscape sensitivity, with low capacity for very large turbines (100 m+ to tip height). The study outlines that the character area exhibits "strong gualities of remoteness and naturalness associated with the northern. western and southern coasts", and the existence of smaller wind turbines "have resulted in cumulative impacts particularly where turbine designs vary". The study outlines that within the character area "care should be taken to attain a compatibility of size between existing and proposed turbines from key views. Turbines around 100 m high are more likely to be appropriate in terms of achieving compatibility of size with existing wind turbines within the North Rhins wind farm (located 7 km to the south-east) and avoiding dominating nearby smaller scale landscapes and the backdrop to Stranraer."

4.219 Although the Peninsula Landscape Character Type is identified as having low capacity for very large turbines, it should also be acknowledged that the concept of landscapes

Revised Larbrax Wind Farm Planning Statement December 2024

having a fixed 'capacity' is increasingly questioned. The declared climate emergency and NPF4 Policy 11 imply that greater levels of landscape change must be accepted. Therefore, NatureScot state that "wind energy studies should not be referred to as capacity studies, as no local or regional targets are available on which to determine the capacity for development"¹⁷. However, the capacity studies do provide useful guidance and have been used as a basis for determining the underlying sensitivity of the landscape, which does not change with policy. This has been taken into account through the LVIA and reported in Chapter 5 within the EIA Report. The findings are summarised with reference to Policy 11 of NPF4 and Policy IN1 and IN2 of the LDP above. It is concluded the Proposed Development is acceptable in landscape and visual terms. This has been considered under the appraisal of the Policy IN2 of the LDP.

Development Plan Policy Conclusions

4.220 The EIA Report has considered the effects of the Proposed Development in relation to a series of environmental topics. The findings of the EIA Report have been used to assess the compliance of the Proposed Development against relevant Development Plan policies, with a focus on those limited effects which are assessed to be significant.

4.221 As noted in **Section 2** of this Planning Statement, the EIA assumes that certain measures form an inherent part of the Proposed Development and would be carried out to ensure regulatory compliance and/or as accepted good practice and to achieve environmental enhancement. In relation to the Proposed Development, this includes the Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), the Outline Peat Management Plan (OBEMP) and general good practice measures (discussed in **Section 2** of this Planning Statement). In addition, the design process for the Proposed Development has been used effectively to avoid impacts, where possible, and to minimise and mitigate any impacts in line with good practice and policy requirements.

4.222 Significant residual adverse effects determined in the EIA Report relate to landscape and visual amenity only. However, these effects are expected to be localised and when balanced against the importance of contributing to the biodiversity and climate crises, the Proposed Development is considered to be acceptable in relation to the provisions of NPF4 policies when viewed as a whole. Significant positive effects relate to peatland habitat given the proposed peat management and enhancement measures.

4.223 The Proposed Development will make a meaningful contribution to helping deliver the national energy generation

targets. It will make a valuable contribution to tackling the climate emergency and nature crises (Policy 1 of NPF4) and full consideration of the environmental effects of the Proposed Development has been undertaken, as a renewable energy development (Policy 11 of NPF4).

4.224 The Proposed Development also complies with other policies within NPF4, Policies 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 by protecting the environment including biodiversity assets; minimising impacts on important soils and trees/woodland; and minimising effects on cultural heritage and historic assets. Significant weight is afforded to Policy 1 which places tackling climate change and reducing carbon emissions as a core priority of the Scottish Government.

4.225 The Proposed Development can also be considered positively against LDP Policies IN1 and IN2 which provide for renewable energy and specifically wind energy development in Dumfries and Galloway. Understanding the landscape and landform of the Site along with careful design, including site specific design principles, has helped to minimise significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development also aligns with other relevant policies within LDP2 including, overarching, historic environment, natural environment, community services and facilities, infrastructure and transport policies.

4.226 There are clear climate change benefits (carbon offsetting) associated with the Proposed Development. These benefits are supported by national and local planning and energy policy objectives, which attract weight in decision making.

Overall, the Proposed Development is in accordance with the Development Plan.

¹⁷ NatureScot Landscape Sensitivity Studies

Chapter 5 Conclusion

Balance of Issues

5.1 Unlike the policy framework which existed when the original Larbax Wind Farm application was determined, in accordance with NPF4, there is now a clear recognition that the global climate and nature crises must be a key consideration for all plans and decisions, and that this should be given significant weight in the overall planning balance when considering development proposals. Significant weight has been given to the climate emergency and the contribution of individual developments to tackling climate change and meeting greenhouse gas reduction targets (through Policy 1 of NPF4). The Onshore Wind Policy Statement (OnWPS) was revised in December 2022 and provides a further level of support for onshore wind. The OnWPS sets an onshore wind deployment target of 20 GW of installed capacity by 2023, therefore supporting a substantial increase in the installation of onshore wind in Scotland in the intervening period. NPF4 and the OnWPS should be given significant weight in the determination of renewable energy proposals such as the Proposed Development.

5.2 The Proposed Development has positive policy support in the context of national climate change, energy and economic policy (**Section 3** of this Planning Statement), with particular emphasis on the more recent Government ambition to achieve carbon reduction targets and progress towards a green recovery for Scotland. At a national level, there is clear support and an acknowledged need for renewable energy generation within Scotland. The Proposed Development will help to meet the Scottish Government's net zero GHG emission target by 2045 of a 75% reduction compared to 1990 levels.

5.3 The Proposed Development has been developed through an iterative design process, utilising site-specific design objectives. The EIA process has ensured that environmental and amenity considerations have been incorporated into the design of the scheme. The EIA Report, which accompanies the application, outlines the EIA process and the predicted likely significant effects of the Proposed Development, noting that some limited significant landscape and visual effects are a feature of almost all commercial scale wind farms and are, to some degree, inevitable. Indeed, the only residual significant effects identified in the EIA are landscape and visual related.

5.4 When assessing the application for the Proposed Development, Dumfries and Galloway Council is required to give significant weight to NPF4 as part of the Development Plan alongside the Local Development Plan.

5.5 As evidenced in Section 4 of this Planning Statement, NPF4 provides high level support for the Proposed Development, with the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the role of planning in the Government's aim of meeting renewable energy and carbon reduction targets. Significant weight must now be given to addressing the global climate and nature crises (NPF4 Policy 1) as well as the contribution that the Proposed Development makes to meeting renewable energy generation and GHG reduction targets (NPF4 Policy 11). The Proposed Development aligns with NPF4 Policies 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 20, 22, 23 and 25.

5.6 The relevant policies of the DGC LDP and the SG were considered in **Section 4** of this Planning Statement. The Proposed Development was considered primarily in relation to Policy IN1 and Policy IN2 and other relevant policies within the LDP. The Proposed Development was also assessed against the Dumfries & Galloway Wind Farm Landscape Capacity Study February 2020. The Proposed Development was found to align with the policies of the Local Development Plan.

5.7 The only significant adverse effects identified by the EIA are localised landscape and visual effects. NPF4 Policy 11 is clear that such effects are inevitable for wind energy development and are acceptable. Beneficial effects are predicted in relation to peatland habitats through restoration and enhancement measures.

5.8 The Proposed Development is predicted to have important socio-economic benefits and climate change benefits (carbon offsetting). These benefits are supported by national and local planning and energy policy objectives (NPF4 Policies 11 and 25 and LDP Policy IN1), which attract weight in decision making. If approved, the Proposed Development will provide the following important benefits:

- The Proposed Development will have a generating capacity of up to 19.2 MW, along with up to 10 MW of BESS, providing project benefits in relation to climate change and contributing the renewable energy targets;
- The Applicant is committed to providing a community benefit fund equivalent to £5,000 per megawatt of installed capacity per year. Based on assumed installed capacity of 19.2 MW, this will result in an annual value of approximately £96,000 per year (index linked). With a 35-year lifespan, this will provide approximately £3.36 million (plus inflation adjustment) in community benefit;
- A workforce of up to 20 people will be employed at any one time during the 12-month construction period for the proposed Development;

- Any construction workers not living locally may reside in local accommodation which will further benefit the local economy through spending in local hotels, B&Bs, shops and restaurants. It is estimated that there will be a local expenditure by construction workers of approximately £7,000 per FTE per annum;
- The overall value of contracts that could be realised locally could be up to £2.8 million based on construction costs expenditure;
- Shared ownership opportunities with the local community giving local communities the chance to own part of the project; and,
- Contribute to the diversity and security of the UK's energy supply by generating electricity from a sustainable, domestic resource using technology that is recognised as amongst the lowest cost forms of generating electricity, reducing reliance on imported energy.

5.9 An outline Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan is provided in **Appendix 7.5** of the EIA Report. The Proposed Development has been designed to minimise the loss of sensitive habitats of importance for nature conservation such as blanket bog. The outline BEMP proposes opportunities such as restoring and enhancing the quality of blanket bog and moorland habitats (up to approximately 13.01 ha), native broadleaved woodland enhancement and Rhododendron and bracken removal and management within the Site. The BEMP proposes a total Biodiversity enhancement area covering approximately 24.62 ha which will cover the restoration, enhancement and creations of habitats of ecological value.

5.10 The EIA Report demonstrates that significant effects on environmental receptors have been avoided, minimised or mitigated as far as reasonably practicable through the design of the Proposed Development.

5.11 When set against the positive outcomes listed above, particularly the contribution towards net zero targets through the co-location of the mix of wind and BESS; the Proposed Development will provide a meaningful contribution to the renewable energy and climate change targets in Scotland and the UK.

Overall, the Proposed Development, when balanced against the importance of contributing to the biodiversity and climate crises, is compliant with the Development Plan as set out in NPF4 and local planning policy.

On this basis, it is respectfully recommended that planning permission be granted for the Proposed Development.