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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA Report) has been prepared by LUC on behalf of Ørsted Onshore UK Limited (hereafter referred to as ‘the Applicant’) to accompany a planning application being made 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 (hereafter referred to as ‘the Proposed Development’) for a period of 35 years.

1.1.2 This chapter is accompanied by the following figures:

- **EIA Report Volume 3a: Figures:**
 - **Figure 1.1: Site Location.**

1.1.3 The following technical appendices also support this chapter:

- **EIA Report Volume 4: Technical Appendices:**
 - **Technical Appendix 1.1: Statement of Expertise.**

1.2 The Proposed Development

1.2.1 The Proposed Development will comprise the following:

- Up to four wind turbines each with a maximum tip height of up to 149.9 metres (m);
- Foundations supporting each wind turbine;
- Associated crane hardstandings at each turbine location;
- Approximately 3 kilometres (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);
- A new Site access junction on the B738; and
- Habitat management and enhancement proposals.

1.2.2 In addition to the above components associated with the operation of the Proposed Development, construction of the Proposed Development will also 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); and
- Removal of 0.28 hectares (ha) of trees/vegetation to facilitate access into the Site.

1.2.3 The proposed site (‘the Site’), which covers an area of approximately 345 ha, is located approximately 9 km west of Stranraer within the DGC administrative area – see **Figure 1.1**.

1.2.4 The expected operational life of the Proposed Development is 35 years from the date of commissioning. Approximately 12 months are required for construction (an indicative construction programme can be found in **Chapter 4: Development Description**). Following the 35-year operational period, the Proposed Development will be fully decommissioned, or an application may be made to extend the operational life of the Proposed Development or replace the turbines. Decommissioning will last approximately six months. This will involve the removal of the turbines, hardstandings, electrical equipment, substation compound and buildings.

1.3 Site Planning History

- 1.3.1 In February 2015, a planning application (14/P/1/0393) was submitted under the Act to DGC by PNE Wind UK (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 m and ancillary infrastructure. The application 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 following which 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. 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). No works have been commenced under these planning permissions, and planning permission has subsequently expired. The Proposed Development is therefore the subject of a new planning application being made to DGC and will be built out instead of the original Larbrax Wind Farm, should planning permission be granted.

1.4 The Applicant

- 1.4.1 This application is being made by Ørsted Onshore UK Limited ('the Applicant'). Headquartered in Denmark, Ørsted is one of the world's leading renewable energy companies and is active in the USA, Europe, Asia, the UK and Ireland. 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 rebranded to Ørsted Onshore UK Limited. Through the acquisition of BRUK, as well as the business in Ireland, Ørsted expanded its presence into onshore renewables in the UK and entered the Irish market.

1.5 Climate Change and Renewable Energy Legislation and Policy

- 1.5.1 The issues of climate change, renewable energy generation and carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions have become increasingly important in the UK, as well as in international policy and legislation in recent years. A key aim of the UK government is to move the UK towards a zero carbon economy. This applies to all sectors of the economy and all policy frameworks that affect the general public.
- 1.5.2 UK legislation and policy is driven by international co-operation to cut the emission of greenhouse gases, through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This includes the 'Kyoto Protocol'¹, which became a legally binding treaty on 16 February 2005, and the 'Paris Agreement'. Ratified in the UK in November 2016, the Paris Agreement sets out the ambition of holding the increase of global average temperature to "well below 2°C" and pursuing efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C. The commitments set out in the Agreement were reaffirmed at the most recent 2023 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 28)² in Dubai where almost every nation represented committed for the first time to transition away from fossil fuel usage.
- 1.5.3 In response to the declaration of a national climate emergency in May 2019, a net-zero carbon emissions target by 2050 became UK law as a result of the update to the UK Climate Change Act, compared to an 80% reduction by 2050, as set by the Climate Change Act 2008³. Like the UK Government, the Scottish Government also responded to the climate emergency and in 2019, former First Minister Nicola Sturgeon called on the Scottish Government to set a net-zero emissions target for 2045, five years ahead of the UK Government. The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019⁴ received Royal Assent on 31 October 2019 and the net-zero target was enacted by law.
- 1.5.4 Although energy policy is reserved to the UK Government, the devolved Scottish Government has also published a suite of policies in relation to renewable energy and climate change which continues to drive Scotland's low carbon ambitions. The following publications are particularly relevant:
- The Scottish Climate Change Plan Update (2020)⁵.

¹ United Nations (1998) Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

² United Nations (2015) The Paris Agreement

³ UK Government (2008) The Climate Change Act

⁴ Scottish Government (2019) Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act

⁵ Scottish Government (2018) The Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan, Third Report on Proposals and Policies 2018-2032 (RPP3)

- The Scottish Energy Strategy (2017)⁶;
- The Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (January 2023); and
- The Onshore Wind Policy Statement (2022)⁷.

- 1.5.5 The Scottish Government also committed to updating its Climate Change Plan to account for the new targets. In 2020, the Climate Change Plan 2018 was updated to represent the latest set of targets over the period to 2032. These were based on the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019.
- 1.5.6 The Scottish Energy Strategy, which calls for a 50% 'all energy' from renewables target by 2030, emphasises that onshore wind is now one of the cheapest forms of electricity and will therefore continue to play an important role in realising the Scottish Government's Climate Change ambitions. Scottish energy and climate change goals mean that onshore wind is vital to Scotland's future, and will help to decarbonise our electricity, heat and transport systems, boosting our economy, and meeting local and national demand.
- 1.5.7 The Onshore Wind Policy Statement 2022 sets out the Scottish Government's support and ambitions for the onshore wind sector and states:

"Scotland has been a frontrunner in onshore wind and, while other renewable technologies are starting to reach commercial maturity, continued deployment of onshore wind will be key to ensuring our 2030 targets are met."

It adds that:

"This statement, which is the culmination of an extensive consultative process with industry, our statutory consultees and the public, sets an overall ambition of 20 GW of installed onshore wind capacity in Scotland by 2030."

and that:

"By acting now, we can set Scotland on a pathway to meeting our ambitious climate change targets in a way that is aligned to the needs of our citizens, supports a just transition and delivers opportunities for all."

- 1.5.8 More detail on the decision making, statutory and policy framework is provided in the **Planning Statement** which accompanies the application.

1.6 Purpose of the EIA Report

- 1.6.1 This EIA Report has been prepared to accompany the application for planning permission for the Proposed Development in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (the 'EIA Regulations'). It presents the findings of the EIA process undertaken for the Proposed Development, specifically the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development, and, where possible, how these effects will be mitigated. Further details on the EIA process and the approach taken to establish the scope of the EIA assessments, assessment methodologies etc, are included in **Chapter 2: Approach to the EIA**.

1.7 Structure of the EIA Report

- 1.7.1 The EIA Report comprises five 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;

⁶ Scottish Government (2017) The Scottish Energy Strategy: The Future of Energy in Scotland

⁷ Scottish Government (2022) Onshore Wind Policy Statement

- Volume 4: Appendices; and
- Volume 5: Confidential Documents⁸.

1.7.2 **Chapters 1-4** of Volume 2 of the EIA Report are introductory chapters and comprise the following:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction** (this chapter) which provides a brief introduction to the Proposed Development, the Applicant and an outline of the structure of the EIA report.
- **Chapter 2: Approach to the EIA** which provides more detail on the EIA process including EIA Scoping and consultation.
- **Chapter 3: Site Selection and Design Strategy** which summarises the reason for site selection and provides details of the approach to the design strategy and alternatives considered.
- **Chapter 4: Development Description** which provides a detailed description of the Proposed Development, explains the context of the Site and provides details on construction activities and proposed environmental management measures. **Chapter 4** also provides details of how aviation and shadow flicker related operational effects will be managed.
- **Chapters 5-12** of Volume 2 describe the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development in relation to the topic areas below:
 - **Chapter 5: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;**
 - **Chapter 6: Cultural Heritage;**
 - **Chapter 7: Ecology;**
 - **Chapter 8: Ornithology;**
 - **Chapter 9: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Peat;**
 - **Chapter 10: Noise & Vibration;**
 - **Chapter 11: Access, Traffic and Transport;** and
 - **Chapter 12: Climate Change**
- **Chapter 13: Summary of Significant Effects** provides a consolidated summary of all likely significant effects of the Proposed Development identified through the EIA process.

1.8 Other Documents Supporting the Application

1.8.1 The following documents are provided separately to accompany the application and do not form part of the EIA Report:

- A Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report (prepared by Message Matters);
- A Design and Access Statement (DAS) (prepared by LUC); and
- A Planning Statement (prepared by LUC).

1.9 The EIA Project Team

1.9.1 This EIA Report has been compiled by LUC on behalf of the Applicant. Whilst LUC had overall responsibility for the coordination and preparation of the EIA Report, a team of technical specialists prepared the topic-based assessment chapters and provided advice/input to the design of the Proposed Development and the EIA. The members of the EIA project team and their respective roles are presented in **Table 1.1**.

⁸ This volume includes information relating to protected species and will be provided to DGC, NatureScot and RSPB only.

Table 1.1: Project Team and Responsibilities

Team Member	Role and Responsibilities
LUC	EIA coordination and EIA Report production, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Climate Change (with input from Carbon Forecast in relation to carbon balance assessment).
Kaya Consulting L& OWC	Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Peat
MacArthur Green	Ecology and Ornithology
TNEI Services	Noise and Shadow Flicker
CFA Archaeology	Cultural Heritage
Pell Frischmann	Access, Traffic and Transport and Civils Design
Bidwells	Forestry
Pager Power	Aviation

Statement of Competence

1.9.2 Regulation 5 (5) (a-b) of the EIA Regulations states:

“In order to ensure the completeness and quality of the EIA report—

(a)the developer must ensure that the EIA report is prepared by competent experts; and

(b)the EIA report must be accompanied by a statement from the developer outlining the relevant expertise or qualifications of such experts”.

1.9.3 The Applicant has ensured that the EIA Report has been prepared by 'competent experts' as noted in **Table 1.1**. The competent experts hold the appropriate professional qualifications for their area of expertise as detailed in **Technical Appendix 1.1**. The EIA Report has been compiled and reviewed by professional EIA practitioners at LUC, holding relevant undergraduate and post-graduate degrees, membership of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and Chartered Environmentalist status with the Society for the Environment. LUC is a Registrant of IEMA's EIA Quality Mark Scheme. This scheme allows organisations that lead the co-ordination of statutory EIAs in the UK to make a commitment to excellence in EIA activities, and to have this commitment independently reviewed on a regular basis.

1.10 Availability of the EIA Report

1.10.1 A hard copy of the full 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

1.10.2 A hard copy of the EIA Report is available for £500 and can be requested via the following email address: larbrax@orsted.com.

1.10.3 An electronic version of the reports supporting the application, including the EIA Report, will also 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/>.

1.11 Commenting on the Application

- 1.11.1 When the application for the Proposed Development is lodged, DGC will advertise the submission of the EIA Report in accordance with Regulation 21 in a local newspaper, the Edinburgh Gazette and the DGC planning portal. The advert will describe the application, state where copies of the EIA Report are available for public viewing (as noted above) and state a deadline date by which any persons should make comments to the DGC in relation to the application.

1.12 Key EIA Report Definitions

- 1.12.1 Key definitions used throughout the EIA Report are noted below. Topic specific definitions are set out in the 'Glossary/Abbreviations' section at the end of **Chapters 5-12**.
- **The Site:** Shown as the area delineated by the red line planning application boundary on all figures.
 - **The Proposed Development:** Shown as the components within the red line planning application boundary for which planning permission is being sought. Details of the components of the Proposed Development are provided in **Chapter 4**.
 - **The Study Area:** the area(s) within which effects are assessed for each individual topic area. The Study Area varies depending on the nature of the potential effects within each discipline, as informed by professional guidance and EIA best practice. The study areas are therefore explained within the approach and methods section of the relevant technical chapters (**5 to 12**) of this EIA Report.
 - **The Consented Larbrax Wind Farm:** Refers to the consented but unbuilt Larbrax Wind Farm comprising eight turbines of up to 100 m to blade tip.
 - **The Consented Larbrax Wind Farm ES:** Refers to the 2015 Environmental Statement (ES) prepared for the Consented Larbrax Wind Farm and which accompanied the planning application in 2015.