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2. Approach to the EIA

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is the process of identifying, assessing and presenting the likely significant environmental impacts (both beneficial and adverse) of proposed developments to assist the consenting authority in considering and determining an application. Early identification of potentially significant impacts allows for appropriate mitigation, management, and enhancement measures to be incorporated into the project design to avoid, reduce, and ultimately, if possible, resolve potentially significant environmental impacts. As the Proposed Development exceeds the threshold for wind farms outlined in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017¹ ('the EIA Regulations') and as it is considered to potentially result in significant environmental impacts, an EIA is required. It should be noted that a significant environmental effect does not necessarily equate to the refusal of an application for planning permission. It would be one factor which would need to be balanced against a broad range of factors in the decision-making process.
- 2.1.2 This chapter presents an overview of the approach used in the EIA for the Proposed Development and also provides details of the way in which the Likely Grid Connection Route has been considered. It provides an overview of the key stages that have been followed, in line with statutory requirements and good practice.
- 2.1.3 This chapter is supported by the following technical appendices which are referenced throughout the text:
- EIA Report **Volume 4: Technical Appendices:**
 - **Technical Appendix 2.1: Scoping Consultation Table;** and
 - **Technical Appendix 2.2: Schedule of Mitigation, Good Practice, Enhancement and Monitoring.**

2.2 The EIA Process

- 2.2.1 This EIA Report presents the outputs of the EIA process informed by the Scoping process presented in Section 2.3 below. The information reported in this EIA Report fulfils the requirements of the EIA Regulations, and once submitted, will enable the decision maker (in this case East Ayrshire Council (EAC)), to make a decision on the Proposed Development.
- 2.2.2 Regulation 5(2) the EIA Regulations states that the following information is required in the EIA Report:
- A description of the proposal comprising information on the site, design, size, and other relevant features of the Proposed Development.;
 - A description of the likely significant effects of the proposal on the environment;
 - A description of the features of the proposal and any measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce, and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment;
 - A description of the reasonable alternatives relevant to the development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment;
 - A non-technical summary (NTS); and
 - Any other information specified in Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations relevant to the specific characteristics of the proposal and to the environmental features likely to be affected.
- 2.2.3 In addition to the EIA Regulations, this EIA Report has been prepared in accordance with the latest applicable guidelines and advice on good practice, including;
- Planning Circular 1/2017²: The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017;

¹ The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. Available [online] at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2017/102/contents> [Accessed: 23rd February 2026]

² Scottish Government (2017) Planning Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations. Available [online] at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/planning-circular-1-2017-environmental-impact-assessment-regulations-2017/documents/> [Accessed: 23rd February 2026]

- NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) (2018) (5th Edition), A Handbook on Environmental Impact Assessment³;
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) (now Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals) (ISEP) (2017), Delivering Proportionate EIA⁴;
- Planning Advice Note 1/2013 (PAN 1/2013) Environmental Impact Assessment (2013) (amended in June 2017)⁵; and
- Scottish Renewables Guidelines on Streamlining Environmental Impact Assessment for Onshore Wind Farms 2025⁶.

2.2.4 This EIA Report provides a clear and concise assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development (as well as in-combination with the Likely Grid Connection Route) including primary, secondary, direct, indirect and cumulative effects, on the natural, built and human environments. This EIA Report provides EAC, in consultation with statutory consultees and the wider community, with sufficient information to make an objective judgement as to the acceptability of the Proposed Development, within the context of national, regional and local planning, energy, climate change and environmental policy.

2.3 EIA Methodology

2.3.1 Good practice EIA is defined in several sources as set out above. The methods followed in this EIA Report have drawn on these sources to generate a robust assessment. The EIA Report preparation process adopted for the Proposed Development is summarised below:

- Scoping and consultation with statutory consultees, non-statutory consultees and the local community to identify the key issues on which the EIA should focus;
- Establishing baseline environmental conditions through desktop research and site surveys;
- Determining how likely significant effects could be avoided or reduced through good practice measures and design evolution ('embedded design mitigation');
- Identifying the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the identified receptors based on agreed methodology and defined criteria and taking into account good practice and embedded design mitigation;
- Identifying any mitigation needed to address these effects ('additional mitigation');
- Assessing the significance of residual environmental effects following the application of additional mitigation;
- Describing how likely significant effects will be monitored (e.g., through conditions attached to a consent), where relevant; and
- Reporting the process, results and conclusions.

Scoping

2.3.2 Consultation has formed an integral part of the EIA Report preparation process, and the EIA team and the Applicant have contacted a number of interested parties over the course of the project to determine their views on the Proposed Development and to collect baseline information.

Scope of the EIA Report

2.3.3 The purpose of the EIA Scoping process is to ensure that the EIA focusses on the identification of likely significant environmental effects; identifies those effects which are unlikely to need detailed study; and provide a means to

³ NatureScot (2018) Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook V5. Available [online] at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/handbook-environmental-impact-assessment-guidance-competent-authorities-consultees-and-others> [Accessed: 23rd February 2026]

⁴ Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2017), Delivering Proportionate EIA: A collaborative Strategy for Enhancing UK Environmental Impact Assessment Practice. Available [online] at: <https://www.iema.net/media/lb0d3ten/delivering-proportionate-eia-july-2017.pdf> [Accessed: 23rd February 2026]

⁵ Scottish Government (2013) Planning Advice Note 1/2013: Environmental Impact Assessment. Available [online] at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/planning-advice-note-1-2013-environmental-impact-assessment/> [Accessed: 23rd February 2026]

⁶ Scottish Renewables (2025) Guidelines on Streamlining Environmental Impact Assessment for Onshore Wind Farms. Available [online] at: <https://www.scottishrenewables.com/publications/2096-new-eia-report-guidance> [Accessed: 23rd February 2026]

discuss and reach agreement with statutory and non-statutory consultees on the most appropriate methods of impact assessment. A 'Scoping Opinion' can be requested from the local planning authority on the information to be provided within an EIA Report under Regulation 17(1) of the EIA Regulations. On behalf of the Applicant, LUC submitted a request to EAC for a Scoping Opinion on 29th August 2025 (25/002/EIASCP). This request was accompanied by a Scoping Report prepared by LUC, which set out a summary of the proposals; identified the issues proposed to be included in the EIA Report; and proposed an approach to the assessment of effects for each proposed topic area⁷. EAC adopted an EIA Scoping Opinion on 11th December 2025 and included the consultation responses from statutory consultees. Regulation 5(3) of the EIA Regulations states that an EIA Report must be based on the Scoping Opinion. A summary of the key issues raised by consultees in response to Scoping, and how these have been addressed in the EIA Report, is provided in **Technical Appendix 2.1**.

Topic Areas Scoped Out

- 2.3.4 PAN 1/2013 provides advice on the general requirements relating to the preparation and content of an EIA Report (formerly Environmental Statement (ES)) and states:

"Whilst every ES should provide a full factual description of the development, the emphasis of Schedule 4 is on the significant environmental effects to which a development is likely to give rise. Some effects may be of little value or no significance for the particular development in question. They will therefore need only very brief treatment to indicate that their possible relevance has been considered."

- 2.3.5 Furthermore, PAN 1/2013 (as amended) notes that Scoping forms a key part of the EIA process, and that its purpose is to:
- Identify the key issues to be considered;
 - Identify those matters which can either be scoped out, or which need not be addressed in detail;
 - Discuss and agree appropriate methods of impact assessment, including survey methodology where relevant; and
 - Identify any other project level assessment or survey obligations which may apply.
- 2.3.6 In line with the above guidance, where effects have been identified (whether at Scoping or during detailed assessment) as being not significant to warrant further assessment, these have been 'scoped out' and given only brief treatment in the relevant topic chapters. Effects scoped out of the EIA are detailed in **Chapters 5-12**. Full topics scoped out are detailed below.

Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation

- 2.3.7 Socio-economic, tourism and recreation assessments of onshore wind farms over the last decade have typically not identified adverse significant effects in terms of the EIA Regulations. In addition, Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations does not list this topic as being a requirement for consideration in an EIA context. As a result, this topic has been scoped out of the EIA as agreed with EAC through the formal scoping process. However, a standalone **Socio-Economic, Tourism and Recreation Impact Assessment** has been prepared in support of the application to determine whether the Proposed Development complies with Policy 11(c) of Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) which states that, "development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business, and supply chain opportunities".
- 2.3.8 The **Socio-Economic, Tourism and Recreation Impact Assessment** report has also considered the potential impact on tourism and recreation receptors as part of the assessment, but not in an EIA context. It considers the theoretical mechanisms (visual change and behaviour change) by which an impact could occur for tourism and recreation assets within 15 Kilometres (km), and through this assesses the way in which the Proposed Development could impact on the region's visitor economy.

⁷ The Scoping Report only related to the Proposed Development as the decision to include the Likely Grid Connection Route in the EIA came at a later date – see details below.

Telecommunications

- 2.3.9 Wind turbines can cause electromagnetic interference through physical and electrical interference. Physical interference can cut across electromagnetic signals resulting in a 'ghosting' effect which largely affects television signals and radar. Electrical interference arises as a result of the operation of the generator within the nacelle of the turbine and can also affect communication equipment in proximity to the turbines. Consultation has been undertaken with telecommunications stakeholders to identify any links crossing the Site which could act as a constraint to design. There are two telecommunication links within the Site operated by Airwave Solutions and Arqiva, of which one runs north-south through the western side and one runs on the eastern side – see **Figure 3.1: Site Constraints Plan**. Scoping consultation feedback was received from Arqiva identifying the telecommunication link on the western side of the Site and to stay blade length plus 100 Metres (m) away from the link. Turbines have been positioned carefully with respect to the telecommunication links identified on the Site through consultation and, an appropriate buffer of at least 181 m (100 m safeguarding zone plus blade length) has been applied to these links as part of the iterative design process. As such, there is not considered to be a risk of interference from the operation of the Proposed Development turbines on these links, and effects on telecommunications is scoped out of the detailed assessment. Any micro-siting provision will ensure that all turbines remain at least 181 m from the identified links.

Population and Human Health (including Dust)

- 2.3.10 In reviewing the potential for human health effects, consideration has been given to the significance of primary effects identified throughout the EIA Report to determine if there could be 'secondary effects' on human health. Where primary effects are not predicted to be significant, e.g., operational and cumulative noise, shadow flicker etc, public and private water supply quality etc then there is not considered to be a potential health effect.
- 2.3.11 Deterioration of water quantity and quality of public and private water supplies have been considered in **Chapter 9: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Peat**. No private water supplies are hydrologically connected to the Proposed Development construction works; therefore, there is no opportunity for secondary effects on health.
- 2.3.12 Health effects that could be a result of construction and operational noise and construction traffic accidents have not been considered in detail, as these effects have either been scoped out as primary effects or have been found not to be to be residually significant as primary effects – see **Chapter 10: Noise and Vibration** and **Chapter 11: Access, Traffic and Transport**.
- 2.3.13 Shadow flicker occurrence has been considered in **Technical Appendix 4.4: Shadow Flicker Assessment** for 20 properties that are within x10 rotor diameter distance (1,620 m) and 130 degrees either side of north. This has found that whilst shadow flicker may theoretically occur for properties within the study area, the levels expected under a realistic scenario (once historic weather data has been considered albeit still considered to be conservative) are not considered to be such that they would give rise to a significant effect in accordance with the methodology. With respect to shadow flicker having the potential to induce photosensitive epilepsy wind turbines of the scale proposed have a maximum rotational speed of around 16-17 Rotation Per Minute (RPM). Given that the wind turbines would have three blades, the blade pass frequency (and therefore the frequency of any shadow flicker effects) will be up to approximately 0.85 flashes per second (hertz). This is significantly less than the 3 to 30 hertz frequency range generally thought to induce photosensitive epilepsy. Further details are provided in **Technical Appendix 4.4**.
- 2.3.14 With respect to dust effects during construction and operation of the Proposed Development, the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) states that the locations of 'sensitive receptors' within 200 m of construction areas should be identified and mitigation measures to reduce dust effects be applied. There are no properties within 200 m of where construction works are proposed. Notwithstanding, the Applicant will commit to adopting good practice measures for dust management during construction and will implement these through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), thereby controlling and reducing any potential effects that dust generation may have on health. No significant health effects relating to dust are therefore predicted. During operation of the Proposed Development, there will be limited dust-raising maintenance activities and vehicular movements to and from the Site will also be limited.
- 2.3.15 It is not considered that there will be a change to any wider determinants of health as a result of the Proposed Development. As such, potential effects on population and human health have been scoped out of detailed assessment.

Major Accidents and Disasters

- 2.3.16 As required by paragraph 8 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations, consideration has been given to the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to major accidents and disasters as well as the risk it poses to causing a major accident or disaster. The Site is not located in an area with a history of natural disasters such as extreme weather events. The construction and operation of the Proposed Development will be managed within the requirements of a number of health and safety related legislation, including the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015⁸ and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974⁹. As the Proposed Development is not considered vulnerable to any major accidents or disasters that could result in likely significant environmental effects, it is proposed that this topic is scoped out from further assessment within the EIA Report.
- 2.3.17 All other effects assessed in the EIA which could be deemed to cause a major accident or disaster have been assessed elsewhere, and these are deemed to be low likelihood but potentially high consequence events. These relate primarily to potential traffic accidents which have been assessed in **Chapter 11** and peat slide risk which has been assessed in **Chapter 9** and **Technical Appendix 9.4: Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessment**.
- 2.3.18 In accordance with the latest IEMA guidance on delivering a proportionate EIA⁴, major accidents and disasters can also be scoped out where proposed design measures or compliance with legislation and best practice will minimise the likelihood of a major accident or disaster occurring. Specific to the Proposed Development, this relates to a failure of the structural integrity of a turbine(s) or a mechanical fault. Modern turbines are fitted with sensors which detect if wind speeds are too high to operate safely, resulting in their shut down. This prevents excessive wear and damage to the gearbox and reduces the risk of turbines catching fire, the occurrence of blade failure or even a failure of the structural integrity of the turbine itself. Turbines will also be constructed to very high design standards specified by the manufacturer and will be maintained on a regular basis to ensure that they are structurally sound.
- 2.3.19 The occurrence of wind turbines catching fire from suspected lightning strikes is also very rare, and there is no evidence that human life has been at risk from such events occurring in the past; assisted by turbine designs that include an embedded lightning protection system.
- 2.3.20 The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 have formed an integral part of the conceptual design of the Proposed Development. Through the appointment of a Principal Designer as required by the Regulations, any health and safety risks have been taken account of and their consideration reflected in the design. Surveys and investigations have been undertaken throughout the pre-consent phase to, as far as reasonably practicable, identify, manage and if possible, avoid any potential risks during construction.
- 2.3.21 All construction activities will be managed within the requirements of the Regulations and will also comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 as noted above. To further reduce possible health and safety risks, a Health and Safety Plan for the project will also be drawn up. All staff and contractors working on the construction will be required to comply with the safety procedures and work instructions outlined in the plan at all times.
- 2.3.22 To ensure that hazards are appropriately managed, risk assessments will be undertaken for all major construction activities, with measures put in place to manage any hazards identified.
- 2.3.23 With respect to turbine icing, the Scottish Government web-based renewables advice for onshore wind turbines states that *"The build-up of ice on turbine blades is unlikely to present problems on the majority of sites. When icing occurs, the turbines' own vibration sensors are likely to detect the imbalance and inhibit the operation of the machines"*. Whilst this advice was withdrawn in December 2025, the industry position on icing on turbines has not changed. As such, the Applicant will implement measures to ensure the safety of workers and the general public in relation to ice throw and ice fall, including notices throughout the Site alerting members of the public of the possible risk of ice throw and ice fall under certain conditions.
- 2.3.24 The overall approach to considering major accidents and disasters in the EIA aligns with what was agreed with EAC through EIA Scoping.

⁸ UK Government (2025) The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. Available [online] at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/51/regulation/2> [Accessed: 26th February 2026]

⁹ UK Government (1994) The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Available [online] at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/contents> [Accessed: 26th February 2026]

Consultation

Consultation with Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultees

- 2.3.25 In addition to the EIA Scoping process, the EIA team has been in discussion with statutory and non-statutory consultees regarding the proposals, to obtain baseline data and agree methods of assessment during the course of the EIA. These consultations are detailed in **Chapters 5-12** of this EIA Report, together with commentary as to how comments have been addressed as part of the EIA process.

Public Consultation and Public Exhibitions

- 2.3.26 Public consultation is a key component of the EIA process. For 'Major' developments, Regulation 7 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 (as amended)¹⁰ (the 'Development Management Regulations') places a requirement on applicants to hold at least two public events whereby members of the public can make comments to the prospective applicant as regards to a proposal. Prior to consultation, the Applicant submitted a Proposal of Application Notice (PoAN) on 21st of August 2025 to EAC in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Development Management Regulations outlining the proposed means and timings for the consultation. A copy of the PoAN was issued to East Ayrshire Community Councils (Stewarton and District Community Council and Fenwick Community Council), East Renfrewshire Community Councils (Broom Kikrhill Mearnskirk (Mearns East) Community Council), Kilmarnock East and Hulford Ward members and Annick Ward members.
- 2.3.27 Two rounds of in-person public consultation were held. The first round (one event) was held on the 15th of September 2025 in Stewarton, and the second round (two events) was held on the 23rd and 24th of February 2026 in Stewarton and Fenwick, respectively. These events were advertised in the local press, via a newsletter to residents living within 7 km of the Site and on social media. The consultation events provided the opportunity for members of the public to view the proposals (including visualisations) and learn how the design had evolved between rounds, learn about the EIA process, community benefits and next steps for the project. An opportunity was also provided for members of the public to provide online feedback, complete a feedback questionnaire or speak to a member of the project team face-to-face (at the in person drop-in events).
- 2.3.28 Further details on public consultation are provided in the **Pre-Application Consultation Report (PAC) Report** which accompanies the planning application.

Baseline Characteristics

- 2.3.29 Paragraph 3 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations states that an EIA Report should include:

"A description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (the "baseline scenario") and an outline of the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the development as far as natural changes from the baseline scenario can be assessed with reasonable effort on the basis of the availability of relevant information and scientific knowledge."

- 2.3.30 The purpose of the EIA is to predict how environmental conditions may change as a result of a development. This requires that environmental conditions now and, in the future, assuming no development on the Site, are established. These conditions are referred to as the 'baseline' and are usually established through a combination of desk-based research, site survey, consultation and empirical studies and projections. Together, these describe the current and future character of the Site and surroundings, and the value and vulnerability of key environmental resources and receptors.
- 2.3.31 Making predictions about how parameters such as land use, landscape, views and other environmental characteristics may change in the future relies on assumptions about future development and environmental trends. For this reason, where other development is not proposed in the vicinity of the Site, the baseline adopted for the EIA is normally taken as the current character and condition of the Site and surrounds, and the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development are then assessed in the context of the current conditions alone.

¹⁰ The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013. Available [online] at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2013/155/contents> [Accessed: 26th February 2026]

- 2.3.32 It is accepted that the baseline conditions may gradually alter through time as a result of climate change which has the potential to alter the landscape and the baseline environmental conditions. However, these climate change effects are unlikely to materially alter the findings of the EIA. Further details are provided in **Chapter 12: Climate Change**.
- 2.3.33 As natural processes and/or human activities can affect the baseline ('status quo'), it is important to establish future baseline scenario in the absence of the Proposed Development, i.e. the likely environmental conditions that will exist should the Proposed Development not be constructed. Establishing the future baseline scenario requires transparent decision making as to what natural process changes and/or changes as a result of human activity should be included or excluded from the future baseline scenario.
- 2.3.34 Consideration of the future baseline scenario which acknowledges the absence of the Proposed Development is described in **Chapters 5-12** of this EIA Report.

Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives

- 2.3.35 The EIA Report is required to consider reasonable alternatives for the Proposed Development, as specified in Schedule 4, paragraph 2 of the EIA Regulations:

"A description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects."

- 2.3.36 The EIA Report provides a description of the site selection and design evolution of the Proposed Development and the alternative designs that this process suggested, along with consideration of these alternatives in **Chapter 3: Site Selection and Design Strategy**.

Avoidance of Effects through Design and Good Practice

Embedded Design Mitigation

- 2.3.37 EIA is an iterative process which aims to ensure early consideration of environmental issues at all stages of project development. In this way, the findings from the EIA can be fed into the design process, to avoid, reduce and if possible, offset adverse environmental effects. This approach has been followed in the design of the Proposed Development and is considered to represent 'embedded design mitigation', i.e., mitigation which has been incorporated into the design of the Proposed Development.
- 2.3.38 Where potentially adverse significant environmental effects were identified through environmental baseline surveys, or later in the design process, consideration was given as to how the design should be modified to 'design out' adverse significant environmental effects, i.e., through embedded design mitigation, or where this was not possible, to determine appropriate mitigation for any remaining significant adverse effects. This process is explained further in **Chapter 3** and in the subsequent assessment chapters (**Chapters 5 to 12**).
- 2.3.39 It should be noted that mitigation for one effect may result in the creation or increase of another effect, for example, moving a turbine to avoid an area of deep peat may result in the turbine being located in an area that is more visible to human receptors. Therefore, it is sometimes necessary to make compromises to strike a balance between potentially competing effects and produce a design which is considered, on balance, to be the most appropriate considering all factors.

Good Practice

- 2.3.40 The EIA Report also details good practice measures of relevance to each topic that will be employed during the construction and operational phase of the Proposed Development. Good practice is not considered as mitigation but the minimum standards which are expected to be implemented in accordance with best practice guidelines. As such, they are to be treated as an inherent part of the construction process and are considered during the course of the assessments. All good practice measures proposed within the assessments are included in **Technical Appendix 2.2**.

Identification of Likely Significant Effects

2.3.41 Paragraph 5 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations states:

“...The description of the likely significant effects on the factors specified in regulation 4(3) should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, transboundary, short-term, medium-term and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development....”

- 2.3.42 Each technical chapter contains a section that identifies the likely significant effects on the environment that may arise as a result of the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development, where relevant. The significance of environmental effects is typically assessed by considering both the magnitude of the change (i.e., the size and duration of the effect) and the value/sensitivity of the environmental resource that experiences this effect (i.e. the receptor).
- 2.3.43 In accordance with the EIA Regulations, effects may be direct, indirect, primary, secondary or cumulative. Within these categories, they may also be short, medium or long term, permanent or temporary, beneficial or adverse. Direct (or primary) effects are changes to the baseline arising directly from activities that form part of the Proposed Development, for example, a localised increase in noise during construction. Indirect (or secondary) effects are those that arise as a result of a direct effect, for example, deterioration of water quality in a watercourse due to a discharge could have secondary effects on aquatic biodiversity.
- 2.3.44 Effects and receptors have been described using quantitative criteria wherever possible using those factors listed below. Where different terminology has been used, this is stated clearly in the relevant chapter:
- The nature of the effect, described as adverse, neutral or beneficial;
 - The magnitude of the effect, based on a scale of major, moderate, minor or none;
 - The likelihood of the effect occurring, based on a scale of certain, likely or unlikely;
 - The duration of the effect, based on a scale of long, medium and short term;
 - The reversibility of the effect, being either reversible or irreversible;
 - The value of the receptor, based on a scale of international, national, regional, local and negligible;
 - The sensitivity of the receptor to the effect, based on a scale of high, medium and low and in some instances negligible; and
 - The occurrence of the effect during the phased implementation of the project.
- 2.3.45 Each of the technical chapters provide the specific criteria, including sources and justifications, for quantifying the significance of effects¹¹, and this is predominantly done by combining sensitivity of receptor and magnitude of change. Where possible, this has been based upon quantitative and accepted criteria/guidance together with the use of professional judgement and expert interpretations. The threshold at which effects are likely to be ‘significant’ is defined in each of the technical chapters where relevant.
- 2.3.46 Unless otherwise stated in methodologies set out in the individual assessment chapters, effects of ‘Major’ or ‘Moderate’ significance are considered to be ‘Significant’ in the context of the EIA Regulations in this EIA Report. Each assessment chapter concludes with a summary of the likely significant effects identified. All likely significant effects identified in each assessment chapter are included in **Chapter 13: Summary of Likely Significant Effects**.

Consideration of Likely Grid Connection Route in the EIA

- 2.3.47 In February 2026, the Raeshaw Farms Limited v Scottish Ministers and Energiekontor UK Ltd [2026] CSIH 10 judgment was published, relating to a proposed onshore wind farm project known as Wull Muir Wind Farm. Initially refused by Scottish Borders Council at application stage, the developer (EnergieKontor UK Ltd) submitted a planning appeal, which was allowed and granted planning permission. Judicial review proceedings were launched against that

¹¹ This excludes aviation as there are currently no relevant benchmarks or standards upon which to assess likely significant effects in EIA terms. As such, the purpose of this assessment is to understand the potential impact and what mitigation may be required (if necessary) to suitably manage these impacts.

appeal decision. The challenge focused on whether planning permission for Wull Muir Wind Farm had been lawfully issued given that the proposed grid connection was neither included within the planning application nor assessed as part of the EIA process. The central issue before the Court was whether the wind farm and its grid connection should be treated as a single project for the purposes of EIA.

- 2.3.48 The Court has been clear that it is for the decision maker to determine what constitutes the 'EIA project'. The Wull Muir judgment directs that this is "...*subject to review by the court on a conventional Wednesbury basis*". Put simply, the decision maker should assess whether they have sufficient information to reasonably understand the environmental effects of the project as a whole and is free to decide either way provided that the decision is reasonable.
- 2.3.49 In coming to a view on what constitutes the 'EIA project', account should be taken of the factors (and anything else of relevance) considered as part of the *R (Wingfield) v Canterbury City Council* [2020] JPL 154 case, including whether: there is common ownership of the sites; the applications would be determined simultaneously; there is functional interdependence between the proposals; and if the proposals are stand-alone projects in their own right.
- 2.3.50 Applying these factors to the Proposed Development, there are clearly competing factors. That the connection point and Likely Grid Connection Route works will be the subject of a separate consenting process and by another party (and therefore not part of the application for planning permission for the Proposed Development), is indicative of it being a separate project. However, on balance, and as the Proposed Development cannot export electricity to the national grid without a grid connection, and taking into account what is known about the likely nature and location of the grid connection point, the Applicant's view in this case is that the Likely Grid Connection Route and the Proposed Development can be treated as a single project for the purposes of the EIA¹². As such, each topic chapter of the EIA has given consideration to the likely significant effects of the Likely Grid Connection Route (as detailed in **Chapter 4: Development Description** and shown on **Figure 4.8a** in **Volume 3a**) using the same assessment methodologies adopted for each discipline.
- 2.3.51 For the purposes of assessment, it is assumed that the transmission operator (TO) (ScottishPower Energy Networks) (SPEN) will be subject to its statutory environmental duties under the Electricity Act 1989. Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act includes a duty to have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, conserving flora/fauna and features of special interest, and protecting cultural heritage, and to do what they reasonably can to mitigate adverse effects arising from their proposals. These duties apply to the formulation and execution of works such as the installation of electric lines (including underground cables) and associated infrastructure and are reflected in industry practice through formal Schedule 9 compliance arrangements and embedded mitigation during design and construction. Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that SPEN will apply recognised good practice construction techniques within the delivery of the Likely Grid Connection Route works, consistent with their published approach.
- 2.3.52 If the Likely Grid Connection Route is provided by a contractor appointed by the Applicant, it is assumed that the same good practice measures exercised by SPEN in discharging its Schedule 9 duties will be applied during construction.
- 2.3.53 It is further assumed that works will be undertaken under the guidance of SEPA Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPP) publications, in particular:
- GPP1: Understanding your environmental responsibilities – good environmental practices;
 - GPP5: Works and maintenance in or near water; and
 - GPP6: Working at construction and demolition sites.
- 2.3.54 For the assessment of the Likely Grid Connection Route, consideration has been given to its likely significant effects on a standalone basis as well as in-combination with the Proposed Development, with the latter being important so that all effects of the Proposed Development and Likely Grid Connection Route as a single project can be understood. Due to its nature as a buried underground cable in the road or roadside verges, it has been necessary to take a pragmatic approach informed by professional judgement and experience as to which phases of development are likely to give rise to significant effects. For example, all decommissioning effects are expected to be

¹² As noted in **Chapter 1: Introduction**, the 'Proposed Development' comprises all components for which planning permission is being sought as shown on **Figure 4.1** and **Figures 4.1a-b**. As the Likely Grid Connection Route will be subject to a separate consenting process, it is therefore not considered to be part of the 'Proposed Development', but it has, along with the 'Proposed Development', been treated as a single project for EIA assessment purposes and in the interests of completeness.

no worse than construction effects, noting that it is expected that all cables would be made safe and left in situ. Clear justification for which phases of development the Likely Grid Connection Route is assessed is provided in **Chapters 5-12**.

- 2.3.55 Further details of the Likely Grid Connection Route, and the routeing principles which have been considered when determining the route at this stage, can be found in **Chapter 3: Site Selection and Design Strategy** and **Chapter 4**.

Interrelationships between Effects

- 2.3.56 Although the EIA Report is structured in standalone topic specific chapters, many of the considerations are interrelated, such as ecology and hydrology. As such, the interrelationship between potential effects between two or more topic areas is also considered in accordance with the EIA Regulations and addressed in **Chapters 5-12**.

Cumulative Effects

- 2.3.57 As required by paragraph 5 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations, the EIA Report considers the possible cumulative effects that the Proposed Development (and Likely Grid Connection Route as a single project for EIA purposes) will have with consented or application stage developments. The EIA Regulations state that EIA Report should include an assessment of:

“...the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved development, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources.”

- 2.3.58 NatureScot guidance¹³ defines cumulative effects as “*the combined effect of a set of developments*”. These are typically the ‘additional’ effects caused by a proposed development together with other similar developments, or as the ‘total’ effect of a set of developments, collectively. Additional effects result from the incremental changes associated with the addition of a proposed development to a baseline which is already supporting similar developments that are considered to have similar effects, i.e. the cumulative effects of the contribution of a proposed development to the existing baseline. The ‘total’ effect is the combined effects of several developments, for example, several developments each producing insignificant effects may have a combined effect that is considered significant.
- 2.3.59 For the purposes of this EIA, and for the majority of topics, cumulative effects have been defined as the likely ‘additional’ effects that the Proposed Development (and the Likely Grid Connection Route as a single project) may have on a given receptor in combination with other wind farms which are at application stage or are consented. Generally, cumulative developments which are operational or under construction are considered as part of primary assessments (i.e. the assessment of the Proposed Development and Likely Grid Connection Route) given that they form part of the baseline environment. Cumulative developments at EIA Scoping stage are not included due to the uncertainty that they will progress to an application, as well as the lack of quantitative data available for them which is otherwise required to enable a robust and meaningful cumulative assessment. In addition to assessing the additional cumulative effects of the Proposed Development and Likely Grid Connection Route with other cumulative developments, **Chapter 5: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** assesses combined cumulative effects assuming that all current and future developments identified in the study area are constructed/become operational. This should not be confused with the assessment of ‘in-combination’ effects of the Likely Grid Connection Route with the Proposed Development as discussed above.
- 2.3.60 It should be noted that the specific wind farms which are included within the cumulative effect assessment varies from one technical chapter to another according to the particular effects and study areas which are under consideration, for example all of the cumulative developments within a 45 km radius are included within **Chapter 5**, however this approach is not appropriate for other chapters due to the potential receptors being more localised, thus requiring a smaller study area. All technical specialists were provided with the same cumulative data as was gathered to inform the assessment in **Chapter 5** to ensure consistency. This was then supplemented where required.

¹³ NatureScot (2021), Guidance - Assessing the cumulative landscape and visual impact of onshore wind energy developments, Available [online] at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/guidance-assessing-cumulative-landscape-and-visual-impact-onshore-wind-energy-developments>.

- 2.3.61 The cut-off date for cumulative data collection was 28th January 2026 as agreed through consultation with East Ayrshire Council and NatureScot. Changes to the cumulative baseline have not been included after this cut-off date to allow time for the assessments, visualisations and figures to be prepared. Should additional cumulative developments enter into planning after this date, then it will be for the EIA for those cumulative developments to consider the Proposed Development cumulatively¹⁴.
- 2.3.62 In addition to wind farms, there is also a proposal for a whisky maturation warehouse facility covering an area of 34 ha (23/0370/PP) to the east of the Site on the opposite side of the M77/A77 (to the south of South Drumboy Farm) which was granted planning permission by Scottish Ministers on 24th March 2025. Where relevant, the potential cumulative effects of the Proposed Development and the Likely Grid Connection Route with this facility are assessed in **Chapters 5-12**.

Additional Mitigation and Monitoring

- 2.3.63 Paragraph 7 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations states that an EIA Report should include:

“A description of the measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified significant adverse effects on the environment and, where appropriate, of any proposed monitoring arrangements (for example the preparation of a post-project analysis). That description should explain the extent to which significant adverse effects on the environment are avoided, prevented, reduced or offset, and should cover both the construction and operational phases.”

- 2.3.64 The EIA has identified where there are likely to be any significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development, and where possible, taking into account other effects on other receptors, has identified the ‘additional mitigation’ which will be committed to and implemented to address these effects. It should be noted that ‘additional mitigation’ goes one step beyond any identified embedded design mitigation or good practice measures (discussed above) which may not be sufficient to avoid or address likely significant effects. As such, any additional mitigation may become part of agreed planning conditions to guarantee their implementation. Where additional mitigation is proposed, a judgement on the likely effectiveness of proposed measures is then documented within this EIA Report as ‘residual effects’. All likely significant effects identified in each assessment prior to, and post-additional mitigation are summarised at the end of each chapter. In addition, this information is also provided in a consolidated format for all chapters in **Chapter 13: Summary of Likely Significant Effects** and **Technical Appendix 2.2**. Moreover, details are provided of any further survey requirements that may be necessary to be undertaken prior to or during construction as well as how the effectiveness of additional mitigation implemented will be monitored. For the Likely Grid Connection Route, given that it will be subject to a separate consenting process, it has been necessary to solely rely on the expected good practice measures exercised either by SPEN in discharging its Schedule 9 duties or by a contractor following the same measures, within the assessments; therefore, all effects identified for the Likely Grid Connection Route are considered to be residual.

Enhancement

- 2.3.65 Opportunities for environmental enhancement measures within the Site have been given due consideration throughout the design evolution process. Enhancement refers to measures to be implemented which do not form mitigation by avoiding, reducing or offsetting effects; but instead provide an opportunity to improve the characteristics, features, land use or habitats onsite to make them into a better state than are currently present prior to the Proposed Development being constructed. Enhancement therefore represents a net or new benefit to the environment which is over and above any measures implemented to compensate for loss such as forestry or habitats (see **Chapter 6: Ecology** and **Technical Appendix 4.1: Wind Farm Forestry Plan**). Further details on proposed environmental enhancement measures are provided in **Technical Appendix 7.6: Outline Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (OBEMP)**.
- 2.3.66 All proposed enhancement measures are set out on a topic-by-topic basis in **Technical Appendix 2.2**.

¹⁴ It is acknowledged that an EIA Scoping Opinion request was submitted for Whitelee Wind farm Repowering on 17th July 2026 - ECU00006441. Given that this was after the cumulative cut-off date and that there is limited information available at this stage due to the project's status, this scheme has therefore not been assessed as a cumulative development in this EIA Report.

Micrositing

- 2.3.67 During the construction of the Proposed Development, there may be a requirement to microsite elements of the Proposed Development infrastructure. This is an important measure which allows for further minimisation of environmental effects, under the supervision of the Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) who is responsible for overseeing and managing the implementation of environmental policies and procedures on a construction site, and for ensuring that the construction activities comply with relevant environmental legislation, regulations, and best practices. It is proposed that a 50 m micrositing tolerance of turbines and all other infrastructure (excluding the Likely Grid Connection Route works which will have a similar provision under its relevant consent) would be applied to the Proposed Development (so long as infrastructure does not move into the watercourse buffers or other environmental constraints (including deeper peat) identified onsite and remains within the Site boundary. **Chapters 5-12** have considered this micrositing allowance to determine: (i) how its implementation could change the significance of effects assessed for the application layout (as presented on **Figure 4.1**, **Figures 4.1a-b** and detailed in **Chapter 4**), and (ii) if there are any restrictions that should be applied to the micrositing tolerance to avoid increasing the significance of effects assessed.

Data Gaps, Assumptions and Uncertainty in Assessment

- 2.3.68 Paragraph 6 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations requires that EIA Reports provide:

"...details of difficulties (for example technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge) encountered compiling the required information and the main uncertainties involved."

- 2.3.69 Whilst any assessment limitations are discussed in **Chapters 5-12**, it is considered that this EIA Report contains adequate information to enable EAC and consultees to review and form a reasoned conclusion on the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development and Likely Grid Connection Route (including in-combination with the Proposed Development) and cumulatively with other developments on the environment.
- 2.3.70 Each topic chapter also lists the relevant assumptions that have been made when completing the assessment. Again, it is not considered that these assumptions present limitations to understanding potential significant effects.

Competent Experts

- 2.3.71 Regulation 5(5)(a) and (b) of the EIA Regulations states that: *"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"*. As set out in **Chapter 1: Introduction**, **Technical Appendix 1.1: Statement of Expertise** includes a statement of competency, setting out the qualifications and experience of lead chapter authors.

References and Terminology

- 2.3.72 Paragraph 10 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations requires that EIA Reports include:

"A reference list detailing the sources used for the descriptions and assessments included in the EIA Report."

- 2.3.73 All references to sources of information, legislation, guidance etc used in preparing the EIA Report are provided as footnotes within each chapter, where relevant. In addition, a glossary of key terms used is provided at the end of each technical chapter for completeness.