atmos CONSULTING

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Swarclett Wind Farm

Chapter 1: Introduction

Swarclett Wind Energy Limited

wind2

June 2024

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Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
The Applicant	Swarclett Wind Energy Limited
Environmental Advisors and Planning Consultants	Atmos Consulting Limited
Environmental Impact Assessment	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a means of carrying out, in a systematic way, an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects from a development.
Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations	The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (EIA Regulations)
Environmental Impact Assessment Report	A document reporting the findings of the EIA and produced in accordance with the EIA Regulations
The Proposed Development	The Swarclett Wind Farm
The Proposed Development Footprint	The area within which the Proposed Development will be located
The Proposed Development Site	The full application boundary, i.e. the red line boundary (Figure 1-1 Site Location Plan).
The Planning Act	The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended)

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
AGER	Advisory Group on Economic Recovery
agl	Above ground level
ALGAO	Association of Local Government Archaeologists Scotland
ANC	Association of Noise Consultants
BEIS	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
BRES	Business Register and Employment Survey
CAR	Controlled Activities (Scotland) Regulations
CCC	Climate Change Committee
CCRA	Climate Change Risk Assessment
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologist
CMLI	Chartered Member of Landscape Institute
COP	Conference of the Parties
CO_2	Carbon dioxide
DBA	Desk-based Assessments
DECC	Department for Energy and Climate Change
EnvCoW/ECoW	Ecological/Environmental Clerk of Works
ECU	Energy Consents Unit
EDAS	Economic Development Association Scotland
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
ESJTP	Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan

Abbreviation	Description
ESRI	Environmental Systems Research Institute
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
GVA	Gross Value Added
HEPS	Historic Environment Policy for Scotland
HER	Historic Environment Record
HES	Historic Environment Scotland
HET	Historic Environment Team
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
HLAMap	Historic Land-use Assessment Map
HVAC	Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning
HWLDP	Highland Wide Local Development Plan
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
IEMA	Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment
IOA	Institute of Acoustics
LDP	Local Development Plan
LiDAR	Light Detection And Ranging
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
kV	Kilovolt
MW	Megawatt
NCAP	National Collection of Aerial Photography
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGR	National Grid Reference
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NPF	National Performance Framework
NPF4	National Planning Framework 4
NRHE	National Record of the Historic Environment
NRS	National Records for Scotland
NTS	Non-Technical Summary
OS	Ordnance Survey
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OnWPS	Onshore Wind Policy Statement
PAC	Pre-Application Consultation
PACR	Pre-Application Consultation Report
PAN	Planning Advice Note
PAS	Planning Aid Scotland
RCAHMS	The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SCADA	Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition
SES	Scottish Energy Strategy
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

Abbreviation	Description
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage Systems
THC	The Highland Council
WLA	Wild Land Area
ZTV	Zone of Theoretical Visibility

1 Introduction

Swarclett Wind Energy Limited ('the Applicant') is seeking planning permission under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) ('the Planning Act') for the construction and operation of an electricity generating station known as Swarclett Wind Farm (the 'Proposed Development').

The Proposed Development is located approximately 1km southeast of Mains of Durran, Castletown, Thurso, Highlands (the 'Proposed Development Site'). The Proposed Development Site is centred on Grid Reference (ND 21032 62606) and is illustrated in Figure 1-1 Site Location Plan.

This Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report has been produced to support the above application and has been prepared in accordance with the Regulation 5 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (the 'EIA Regulations').

In accordance with the EIA Regulations, this EIA Report is based on the Scoping Opinion received from The Highland Council (THC) on 28th March 2022 (Ref. 22/00790/SCOP). Consideration has also been given to the Pre-application consultation response undertaken with THC on 3rd November 2021 (Ref: 21/03943/PREMAJ).

The Proposed Development would consist of two wind turbines each with a tip height of 149.9m above ground level (agl) and a grid scale battery storage installation, consisting of up to three self-containerised air cooled batteries, plus ancillary infrastructure including:

- Substation;
- New access tracks;
- Construction of turbine foundations and crane hardstandings;
- Underground cabling; and
- Up to two watercourse crossings.

The Proposed Development will have an indicative electricity export output of approximately 9.6MW from wind generation and a battery storage capacity of up to 12MW. The total project capacity will be approximately 21.6MW. The site layout is presented in Figure 1-2 Site Layout.

Final layout Turbine location grid references are provided in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1: Turbine Location Co-ordinates and Base Elevations

Turbine ID	Easting	Northing	NGR	Base Elevation AOD (m)
1	321247	963173	ND 21247 63173	60
2	321252	962691	ND 21252 62691	52

1.1 The Applicant

The Applicant, Swarclett Wind Energy Limited, is a subsidiary of Wind2 Limited, a specialist wind developer founded in 2016. Wind2 Limited has staff based in Cromarty, Perth, Edinburgh, and Wales, with significant expertise in renewable energy, and a track record of successfully developing onshore wind farms throughout the UK.

Wind2 Limited is working on the development of a number of renewable energy projects and is committed to investing in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

1.2 Proposed Development Site and Context

1.2.1 Land use and Context

The land cover within the Proposed Development Site is predominantly grassland pastures including improved, semi-improved neutral and marshy grasslands, and is mainly used for rough grazing.

The closest residential properties to the Proposed Development Site are approximately 500m to the west, north and east whilst the nearest major settlement, Castletown, is located approximately 4km to the north.

The Proposed Development site features one main watercourse, the Burn of Durran in the western portion of the Site.

The nearest roads are an unclassified single track road that runs southeast-northwest through the north of the Site. The B876 runs southeast-northwest approximately 2.5km northeast of the Site boundary. The A9 runs approximately north-south 5km west of the Site boundary at its closest point.

Other commercial scale wind farms close to the Proposed Development Site are the operational Lochend Wind Farm located 8km to the northeast consisting of four turbines (99.5m tip height) and the consented Cogle Moss Wind Farm located 7km to the south east consisting of 12 turbines (100m tip height).

Figure 1-3 Cumulative sites within 15km shows these along with other, more distant wind energy developments, including those in-planning or consented and not yet built.

A part of the Proposed Development Site includes an area of Class 3 peatland according to the NatureScot Carbon and Peatland 2016 Map. Class 3 peatlands are defined as dominated by vegetation cover and not priority peatland habitat (NatureScot, 2016a).

The Carbon and Peatland Map is a predictive tool that provides an indication of the likely presence of peat at a coarse scale and not intended to be used in development management decision-making (NatureScot 2016b).

A site survey has been undertaken to determine the presence of peat and the depth and extent of peat at the Proposed Development Site with the results used to inform the assessment of the impact of the Proposed Development on peat (Chapter 8 Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Soils and Technical Appendix 8-1 Peat Survey Results).

Consideration of peatland has been incorporated into the design process of the Proposed Development and is discussed further in Chapter 3: Description of Development.

1.2.2 Statutory Designations

There are no environmental designations within the Site boundary.

Figure 1-4 Site Context shows the context of the Proposed Development setting, illustrating environmental designations within 10km.

Within 5km of the Site boundary the following environmental designations are present:

- Loch of Durran Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI), 1.5km north;
- Loch Scarmclate SSSI, Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar 1.5km southwest;
- Loch Watten, Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and SPA, Ramsar and SSSI 2km south; and
- Dunnet Links SSSI, 4km north.

Within 10km of the Site boundary a number of other designated sites are present:

- Dunnet Head SPA, 6km north;
- River Thurso SAC, 6km west;
- Shielton Peatlands SAC, Ramsar, SPA SSSI, 9.5km south;
- Stroupster Peatlands SAC, SPA, SSSI, Ramsar, 7km east;
- Loch Heilen SSSI, Ramsar and SPA, 6km north;
- Banniskirk Quarry SSSI, 6km south west;
- Achanarras Quarry SSSI, 8km south west;
- Spittal Quarry SSSI, 7km south west; and
- Weydale Quarry SSSI, 6km north west.

1.3 Purpose of the EIA Report

This EIA Report presents the findings of the EIA process by describing the Proposed Development, the current conditions at the Proposed Development Site and the likely environmental effects which may result from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

Where appropriate, mitigation measures designed to avoid, reduce or offset potentially significant effects are proposed and residual effects (those effects that are expected to remain following implementation of mitigation measures) are presented.

In addition, given the introduction of National Planning Framework 4 (approved and adopted by the Scottish Government in early 2023) the EIA Report seeks to identify areas for potential benefit and enhancement, particularly with respect to biodiversity, but also in relation to improving access, recreation and heritage enhancement where possible.

This will be addressed within each technical Chapter where relevant.

As required by the EIA Regulations, the findings and conclusions of the EIA are summarised in a standalone, easily accessible, Non-Technical Summary (NTS). This enables anyone with an interest in the Proposed Development to understand and access information on its potential environmental effects.

1.4 Structure of the EIA Report

The EIA Report is structured as follows:

- Volume 1: Non-Technical Summary;
- Volume 2: Environmental Impact Assessment Report;
- Volume 3: Technical Appendices;
- Volume 4a: Figures;

- Volume 4b: Visualisations (NatureScot Format);
- Volume 4c: Visualisations (THC Format) ; and
- Volume 5: Confidential Appendices.

The EIA Report is structured around the following chapter headings:

- Chapter 1: Introduction;
- Chapter 2: EIA Approach & Methodology;
- Chapter 3: Description of Development;
- Chapter 4: Planning and Energy Policy;
- Chapter 5: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;
- Chapter 6: Ecology;
- Chapter 7: Ornithology;
- Chapter 8: Hydrology, Geology and Hydrogeology;
- Chapter 9: Noise;
- Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage;
- Chapter 11: Transport and Access;
- Chapter 12: Socio-economics, Tourism and Recreation;
- Chapter 13: Climate Change and Carbon Balance;
- Chapter 14: Other Considerations;
- Chapter 15: Schedule of Mitigation; and
- Chapter 16: Summary of Predicted Residual Effects.

1.5 The EIA Team

The EIA was undertaken by Atmos Consulting with assistance from specialist consultants listed in Table 1-2. All are suitably qualified and competent experts in their field, as is required under the EIA Regulations.

Table 1-2: EIA Team

EIA Subject	Consultant	Statement of Competency
Planning, Ecology & Ornithology, Climate Change and Carbon Balance, Socio-economics, Other Considerations	**Atmos Consulting**	Atmos has a proven track record in the onshore wind sector built up over 15 years of experience working in the industry and leading EIA projects. The team are appropriately qualified and assessments are overseen by experts with at least ten years' experience in their field.
Landscape and Visual	**Hepla** Peter Dunmow (Landscape Architect)	HEPLA is led by Peter Dunmow, an experienced Chartered Landscape Architect. Peter has twenty-nine years of experience in Landscape Architecture and Renewables Planning, managing and working on a range of projects throughout the UK.
Cultural Heritage	**AOC Archaeology** Sam Williamson (Archaeological Consultant and Project Officer)	AOC is a Registered Organisation of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. AOC is ISO 9001:2015 accredited. The staff are qualified professional archaeologists and members of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) with

EIA Subject	Consultant	Statement of Competency
		extensive experience of the preparation of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology Impact Assessments for large scale wind farm developments.
Hydrology, Geology and Hydrogeology	**Ferry Hydro** John Ferry (Chartered Hydrogeologist)	Ferry Hydro have advised on over 70 wind farms at the pre-consent, planning and construction stage (many of which are Section 36 applications) and focus on the impact, protection and mitigation of the water environment resource (including peat, GWDTE and other drainage matters) with respect to wind farm infrastructure construction and operation.
Traffic and Transport	**Pell Frischmann** Stephen Cochrane (Associate Director), Gordon Buchan (Divisional Director)	Pell Frischmann's Transport Planning experience has been developed over four decades, providing consultancy services across the breadth of the Buildings, Highways & Transportation and Land Development sectors.
Noise	**Hayes McKenzie** Seth Roberts (Principle Consultant) Ed Guy (Assistant Consultant)	Hayes McKenzie Partnership Ltd has been involved with over 1000 onshore wind projects in the UK and overseas at the planning, post-planning and operational stages of development as well at public inquiry. Hayes McKenzie is a member of the UK Association of Noise Consultants (ANC). All work is carried out in line with recognised industry standards, and best practice of the IOA and ANC.

1.6 Additional Documents

1.6.1 Planning Statement

The Planning Statement is intended to allow the Applicant to demonstrate the benefits of the Proposed Development and assess it against policy background and policy requirements including the relevant policy provisions of the statutory Development Plan and any Supplementary Guidance relevant to Onshore Wind.

In contrast to the EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 4 Planning and Energy Policy, which summarises the policy which has informed the design of the Proposed Development, the Planning Statement assesses the Proposed Development against adopted and emerging planning policies and other material considerations.

The planning statement supports the Proposed Development, setting out a needs case and concluding with recommendations on the overall acceptability of the proposal in a planning context.

1.6.2 Design and Access Statement

The Design and Access Statement, in accordance with Regulation 13 of the Scottish Planning Series Circular 3/2022: Development Management Procedures (Scottish Government 2022), is used to explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied in developing the Proposed Development.

It sets out how the Proposed Development is considered a suitable development for the Proposed Development Site and its setting, and aims to demonstrate that the Proposed

Development can be adequately accessed throughout construction, into operation and onto de-commissioning.

1.6.3 Pre-Application Consultation Report

The purpose of the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) exercise is to engage with local communities, so they are better informed about Major and National development proposals and have an opportunity to contribute their views before the planning application is submitted to the Planning Authority.

The PAC seeks to improve the quality of planning applications, mitigate negative effects where possible, address misunderstandings, and discuss with community groups any issues that can be addressed in the development process.

A Pre-Application Consultation Report (PACR) is submitted alongside this EIA Report as a supporting document to the planning application for the Proposed Development. The PACR demonstrates the scope of consultation undertaken with the community and how feedback has been considered, in accordance with legislation and requirements.

1.7 Copies of the EIA Report

The EIA Report can be purchased from the Applicant (telephone: +44 (0) 1352 748 300 / email: info@wind2.co.uk) either in digital or hard copy. Charges for copies are:

- £1,250 for a paper hard copy (Full EIA and Supporting Documents, including Non-Technical Summary);
- £25 a paper hard copy of the Non-Technical Summary; or
- £30 for a CD/USB with access to all digital documents.

1.8 References

Scottish Government (2017). The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations [online] 2017 OQPS [Online]. Available at; http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2017/102/contents/made [Accessed: 01/05/2024].

Scottish Government (2022). Planning circular 3/2022: development management procedures [Online]. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/planning-circular-3-2022-development-management-procedures/ [Accessed: 01/05/2024].

UK Government (1997) Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) [Online]. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/8/contents [Accessed: 01/05/2024].