

PROCESS

At the start of the development of an offshore wind farm in Scotland, a Scoping Report is written and submitted to the Marine Directorate *(on behalf of the Scottish Ministers)*.

The Scoping Report sets out the topics to be assessed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This helps the Developer and Statutory Consultees agree what information is needed, together with the methods used to identify and assess the impacts that could arise from the project, including effects relating to the onshore elements.

It also provides a Developer with the opportunity to identify those potentially significant environmental effects that should be considered further within the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

The Scoping Opinion will set out what the Marine Directorate, on behalf of the Scottish Ministers, expect to be included and excluded from the EIA. Information received from all the various organisations consulted as part of the scoping process will be considered and included within their Scoping Opinion.

A SCOPING REPORT WILL SET OUT:



The nature and purpose of the development.



The environmental issues and effects to be considered in the EIA.



How the effects will be assessed and documented in the EIAR.



What information will be used and needed for the assessment.



Any critical gaps and uncertainties in the information and how they will be accounted for.



Methods for surveys and assessment, based on industry standards and good practice requirements.



Criteria that will be used to determine the significance of effects.



Identification of those issues that are not likely to give rise to significant effects and the justification for not considering them further.



Why does the Scoping Report set out a range of minimum and maximum parameters?

Complex, large-scale infrastructure projects such as offshore wind farms are consented and constructed over lengthy timeframes, often in the region of five to ten years, or more.

Due to their scale and nature, some details of these projects may not be confirmed when a planning application is submitted, and flexibility in the consent application process can accommodate such uncertainties and ultimately deliver the best projects.

“It is important to ‘future proof the project’ and to ensure that new technologies can be adopted within pre-existing project consents.”

For example, one of the reasons why a degree of flexibility in offshore wind farm applications is necessary, is technology advancement. Significant technological progression can be made by the offshore wind industry in the time between a planning consent application being submitted for a project and construction commencing. It is important to ‘future proof the project’ and to ensure that new technologies can be adopted within pre-existing project consents. The potential benefits include the ability to install fewer, greater capacity turbines within a project site, making it more efficient and reducing environmental impacts associated with construction and operation.

“It is standard practice for a Scoping Report to consider maximum parameters for an offshore wind farm site area.”

In accordance with current best practice, we are following a process by which the effects of a project, where the final design is not available at the time of consent assessment, can be assessed against a series of minimum and maximum design parameters, with the extreme scenario for any given EIA topic always being assessed. This approach allows for the design of a project to vary within a given ‘design envelope’ whilst ensuring that the full maximum extent of significant effects have been adequately assessed. The approach allows for some flexibility in project design options, particularly the number and type of wind turbine generators together with the foundation designs that will eventually be used.

It is standard practice for a Scoping Report to consider the maximum parameters for an offshore wind farm site area, and to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment, based upon these extremities. The final number of wind turbines proposed will be dependent on the layout of the wind farm, the capacity of individual turbines selected and the site-specific survey results for the geotechnical, geophysical, and environmental surveys.

Who will see the Scoping Report and be asked for feedback?

The Scoping Report will be available to read and download from our website and from the Marine Directorate. It will also be sent to an extensive range of statutory and non-statutory consultees.

Once it’s complete, the Scoping Opinion will also be publicly available.

Further Information

Additional information on the project is available at www.spioradnamara.co.uk, including answers to the most frequently asked questions.



Following a recent application to the National Grid Electricity System Operator, it is now expected that the maximum installed capacity will be around:

900MW