

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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Figures (Volume 3)

Figure 1.1: Location Plan

Figure 1.2: Site Context

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 SSE Generation Ltd (SSEG), “the Applicant”, is proposing to construct a new onshore wind farm to generate renewable electricity from wind power. The proposed development is located on Glendoe and Garrogie Estates, adjacent to the operational 66 turbine Stronelairg Wind Farm and the 100 Megawatt (MW) Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme. The location of the proposed wind farm, approximately 11 kilometres (km) to the south-east of Fort Augustus, is shown on Figure 1.1: Location Plan.
- 1.1.2 The proposals for which consent under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 will be sought by the Applicant are referred to in this report as ‘the Proposed Development’ and are described below. The application for Section 36 consent has been prepared by SSE Renewables Development (UK) Limited (SSE Renewables), “the Developer”, on behalf of the Applicant. Deemed planning permission under Section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1997, as amended, will also be sought. SSEG holds the necessary generation licence required for the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.3 The total installed capacity of the Proposed Development is anticipated to be over 150 MW¹, comprising 36 turbines with a maximum tip height of 149.9 metres (m). The layout of the Proposed Development is shown on Figure 3.1: The Proposed Development.
- 1.1.4 The Proposed Development has been subject to an iterative and detailed engineering and operational design process, giving due consideration to environmental constraints specific to the site and surrounding areas. Detailed collaborative design (including peat probing data) has been enabled by the use of AutoDesk InfraWorks infrastructure design software, enabling a mature design to be presented with the application, and assessed as part of this Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report. The aim of this exercise is to provide more certainty on the layout of the Proposed Development at application stage, thus minimising further iterations during the detailed design and construction phases.

1.2 Development Context

- 1.2.1 The Proposed Development sits adjacent to the operational Stronelairg Wind Farm and Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme, as shown on Figure 1.2: Site Context. The Proposed Development comprises two clusters; an eastern cluster and a western cluster. These two clusters cover an area of approximately 15km² centred on OS Grid References 256665, 802745 (eastern cluster) and 247780, 802578 (western cluster). It is intended that the Proposed Development would be permitted, constructed and operated as a single project.
- 1.2.2 One of the benefits of constructing and operating a wind farm in this location would be the capacity to make use of existing infrastructure and access tracks created for Glendoe Hydroelectric scheme and Stronelairg Wind Farm, as well as the experience gained from construction of both of these projects.
- 1.2.3 Access to the Proposed Development would be taken off the B862 utilising the existing haul road through Glendoe Estate constructed originally as part of Glendoe Hydroelectric

¹ Dependent on the rated power of the turbine model procured.

Scheme, and utilised and upgraded as required during the construction of Stronelaig Wind Farm. Other existing infrastructure from the recent construction of Stronelaig Wind Farm (such as site compounds), would be utilised where possible or practicable as part of the Proposed Development.

- 1.2.4 The existing tracks built for Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme and Stronelaig Wind Farm would be used as far as practicable, with additional tracks to each turbine base also required. Each turbine would comprise permanent foundations and hard standing for cranes, and underground cable connections to a new on-site substation.

1.3 The Applicant

- 1.3.1 SSE Renewables is a leading developer and operator of renewable energy across the UK and Ireland, with a portfolio of around 4GW of onshore wind, offshore wind and hydro. Part of the FTSE-listed SSE plc, its strategy is to drive the transition to a zero-carbon future through the world class development, construction and operation of renewable energy assets.
- 1.3.2 SSE Renewables owns nearly 2GW of onshore wind capacity with over 1GW under development. Its offshore wind portfolio consists of 580MW across three offshore sites, two of which it operates on behalf of its joint venture partners. SSE Renewables has the largest offshore wind development pipeline in the UK and Ireland at over 7GW.

1.4 Need for Onshore Wind in Scotland

- 1.4.1 On 28th April 2019, Scotland's First Minister declared a climate emergency. Following this declaration, the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 ("the 2019 Act") was passed by the Scottish Parliament to amend the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The 2019 Act commits Scotland to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2045 at the latest. This compares with the UK Government target of net-zero by 2050.
- 1.4.2 The Scottish Government's Energy Strategy (Scottish Government 2017), sets out the target of achieving the "*equivalent of 50% of the energy for Scotland's heat, transport and electricity consumption... from renewable sources*" by 2030.
- 1.4.3 In order to meet this and wider UK renewable energy targets by 2030, approximately 17GW of installed capacity will be required. The document recognises that onshore wind offers the lowest cost renewable technology and is a vital component of the renewables industry in Scotland. As such, it will be a key part of achieving these targets.
- 1.4.4 The Scottish Government's Onshore Wind Policy Statement (Scottish Government 2017a), recognises the need to deliver new onshore wind farms subsidy free and acknowledges the technology shift towards larger turbines.
- 1.4.5 In June 2011, the 2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy in Scotland was launched which is an update and extension to the Scottish Government Renewables Action Plan (RAP) 2009, which set out targets and timelines for meeting the Scottish Government's renewable energy targets, with a particular focus over the first two to three years after its publication. The 2020 Routemap aims to drive forward renewables and meet the Governments green energy targets. It reflects the challenge of the new target to meet an equivalent of 100% demand for electricity from renewable energy by 2020, as well as 11% renewable heat.

- 1.4.6 The Proposed Development, as a generator of renewable electricity from wind, would contribute to these targets by adding over 150MW of installed onshore wind capacity.

1.5 Environmental Impact Assessment

- 1.5.1 This EIA Report is required to accompany the Section 36 Application under the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (“the EIA Regulations”) as the Proposed Development comprises a wind farm with a generation capacity greater than 50MW and for which Section 36 consent is required. It is therefore considered to fall within the definition of Schedule 2 development contained in Regulation 2(1) of the EIA Regulations.
- 1.5.2 This EIA Report is therefore submitted in support of the application for consent and assesses the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development. In terms of the application for Section 36 consent, deemed planning permission under Section 57 (2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, is also sought.
- 1.5.3 A request for a Scoping Opinion was made to the Scottish Ministers under Regulation 12 of the EIA Regulations in August 2018. A Scoping Report was submitted to support the request, which sought input from the Energy Consents Unit, and statutory and non-statutory consultees regarding the information to be provided within this EIA Report.
- 1.5.4 The Scoping Opinion of the Scottish Ministers was issued in December 2018 confirming the scope of the EIA Report. Subsequent consultations took place after the Scoping Opinion was issued and supplementary advice was provided by consultees. Further details of this are contained in Chapter 5: Scoping and Consultation, and accompanying appendices. The Scoping Opinion is provided in Technical Appendix 5.1.

1.6 EIA Report

- 1.6.1 The EIA Report consists of the following volumes:
- Volume 1 – Non-Technical Summary;
 - Volume 2 – Main Report;
 - Volume 3 – Figures;
 - Volume 3A – Landscape and Visual Photomontages (SNH Methodology);
 - Volume 3B – Landscape and Visual Photomontages (The Highland Council Methodology);
 - Volume 4 – Technical Appendices; and
 - Volume 5 – Confidential Annex²
- 1.6.2 Further details on the content of the EIA Report, the general approach to assessment and confirmation of the specialist consultants responsible for each of the technical assessments is included in Chapter 4: EIA Process and Methodology.

² Comprising sensitive environmental information and supplied to relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies only.

- 1.6.3 A Planning Statement is included with the application as supporting information. The Planning Statement considers the acceptability of the Proposed Development in the context of existing and emerging planning policies.

1.7 References

Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/15/enacted> (Accessed 22 January 2020).

Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/12/contents> (Accessed 22 January 2020).

Electricity Act 1989. Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/29/pdfs/ukpga_19890029_en.pdf (Accessed 22 January 2020).

Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2017/101/contents/made> (Accessed 22 January 2020).

The Scottish Government, (2011). *2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy in Scotland*. Available at: <https://www2.gov.scot/resource/0044/00441628.pdf> (Accessed 22 January 2020).

The Scottish Government, (2017). *Scottish Energy Strategy: The future of energy in Scotland*. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-energy-strategy-future-energy-scotland-9781788515276/> (Accessed 22 January 2020).

The Scottish Government, (2017a). *Onshore Wind Policy Statement*. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/onshore-wind-policy-statement-9781788515283/> (Accessed 22 January 2020).

Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/8> (Accessed 22 January 2020).