Ravengill Energy Park

Other Documents

Planning Statement

June 2026

DAVID BELL PLANNING
CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS

Ravengill Energy Park
Section 36 Application:

Planning Statement

June 2026

dbplanning.co.uk

Confidential

Contents

1.	**Introduction**	**2**
1.1	Background	2
1.2	The Applicant	2
1.3	The Statutory Framework	3
1.4	Site Location and Description	3
1.5	The Proposed Development: Summary	5
1.6	Structure of Statement	7
2.	**The Renewable Energy Policy & Legislative Framework**	**8**
2.1	Introduction	8
2.2	International Commitments	8
2.3	UK Climate Change & Energy Legislation & Policy	11
2.4	Scotland: Climate Change & Emissions Reduction Legislation and Advice	20
2.5	Scotland: Climate Change and Renewable Energy Policy	24
2.6	Conclusions on the Renewable Energy Policy & Legislative Framework	34
3.	**The Benefits of the Proposed Development**	**36**
3.1	The Benefits: Summary	36
4.	**Appraisal against NPF4**	**39**
4.1	Introduction	39
4.2	The National Spatial Strategy – Delivery of Sustainable Places	40
4.3	National Developments	41
4.4	National Planning Policy	42
4.5	NPF4 Policy 1: Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises	43
4.6	NPF4 Policy 11: Energy	44
4.7	NPF4 Policy 3: Biodiversity	55
4.8	NPF4 Policy 4: Natural Places	57
4.9	NPF4 Policy 5: Soils	58
4.10	NPF4 Policy 7: Historic Assets and Places	60
4.11	NPF4 Policy 22: Flood Risk and Water Management	62
4.12	Conclusions on NPF4 Appraisal	62
5.	**Appraisal against the Local Development Plan**	**64**
5.1	Introduction	64
5.2	LDP Policies	64
5.3	Emerging LDP	70
5.4	Conclusions on the LDP	70
6.	**Conclusions**	**71**
6.1	The Climate Crisis & Renewable Energy Policy Framework	71
6.2	The Planning Balance	71
6.3	Overall Conclusion	74

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by David Bell Planning Ltd ('DBP') on behalf of Ravengill Energy Park Limited ('the Applicant') in relation to the proposed Ravengill Energy Park ('the Proposed Development'). The Proposed Development, covering an area of approximately 2,555 hectares ('ha') is located at a site approximately 1 km north of Leadhills village and 1.5km south of Abington village, with the A74(M) motorway located to the east. The Site is entirely within the administrative boundary of South Lanarkshire Council ('SLC')

1.1.2 The Proposed Development comprises up to 21 wind turbines (with a currently estimated capacity of approximately 147 mega watts ('MW')[1]) and associated infrastructure. The Proposed Development also includes a battery energy storage system ('BESS') of approximately 50 MW capacity.

1.1.3 The Planning Statement supports a Section 36 application submitted under the Electricity Act 1989 ('the 1989 Act'), for consent to construct and operate the Proposed Development. In addition, the Applicant is also seeking consent for deemed planning permission under Section 57 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 ('the 1997 Act').

1.1.4 The application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report ('EIA Report') which has been undertaken in accordance with the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations'). The Environmental Impact Assessment Report ('the EIA Report') presents information on the identification and assessment of the likely significant positive and negative environmental effects of the Proposed Development.

1.1.5 This Planning Statement presents an assessment of the Proposed Development against relevant considerations, including national energy and climate change policy and legislation, the Development Plan now made up of both National Planning Framework 4 ('NPF4') and the Local Development Plan for the Council area, and other relevant considerations.

1.1.6 This Planning Statement is supplementary to, and should be read in conjunction with, the EIA Report submitted with the Section 36 application. The Planning Statement considers the potential benefits and adverse effects which may arise from the Proposed Development and presents findings in relation to the relevant policy and legislative framework and other relevant considerations.

1.2 The Applicant

1.2.1 Ravengill Energy Park Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Renewco Power Limited ('Renewco Power'). Renewco Power is a renewable energy developer focussed on developing utility-scale wind, solar and energy storage projects across the UK and Europe. Headquartered in Glasgow and with offices in Edinburgh and London, Renewco Power blends experienced entrepreneurial talent with commercial, operational and technical expertise across the clean energy and environmental sectors. The team have developed and delivered wind, solar and BESS projects across the UK and internationally.

[1] This total installed capacity is based on existing turbine technology at the time of assessment and may change based on progression of turbine technology. It is also subject to detailed wind analysis and turbine procurement activities prior to construction. For the purposes of the Section 36 application the installed capacity is over 50 MW.

1.3 The Statutory Framework

1.3.1 An application under Section 36 of the 1989 Act for consent for the construction of an electricity generating station whose capacity exceeds 50 MW is significantly different from an application for planning permission for a generating station whose capacity is 50 MW or less.

1.3.2 Section 25 of the 1997 Act does not apply to the determination of applications under Section 36 of the 1989 Act, as confirmed in the case of *William Grant & Sons Distillers Ltd v Scottish Ministers* [2012] CSOH 98 (paragraphs 17 and 18).

1.3.3 Schedule 8 of the 1989 Act references consents under Section 36 and 37 of the Act. In addition, there are certain environmental duties in relation to preservation of amenity and fisheries provisions in Schedule 9, paragraph 3 that apply to the Scottish Ministers as decision maker.

1.3.4 The Applicant does not hold a generation licence or exemption under the 1989 Act and therefore the statutory duties set out in paragraph 3(1) of Schedule 9 to the 1989 Act do not currently apply to the Applicant when formulating proposals for consent under Section 36 of the 1989 Act. The Applicant has however, through the EIA process, had full regard to and has addressed the matters set out in paragraph 3(1)(a) of Schedule 9 in formulating the Proposed Development.

1.3.5 The EIA Report identifies how various factors were taken into account in the formulation of the application. In addition, each EIA Report chapter includes assessment of the likely significant effects and also, where appropriate, the identification of appropriate mitigation. This includes both embedded mitigation which is integral to the design, construction and operation of the Proposed Development and also additional specific measures which have been identified, along with proposed monitoring as appropriate.

1.3.6 In accordance with paragraph 3(2) of Schedule 9 to the 1989 Act, the Scottish Ministers are obliged to have regard to the desirability of the matters mentioned in paragraph 3(1)(a). The Applicant has provided sufficient information to enable the Scottish Ministers to address their duties under sub-paragraph 3(1)(a) of Schedule 9 to the 1989 Act. The duty on the Ministers is to have regard to the matters specified in Schedule 9 which is not a development management test.

1.3.7 In considering the overall statutory and regulatory framework within which the Proposed Development should be assessed, the statutory Development Plan is a relevant consideration which should be taken into account in the round with all other relevant considerations. It is important to note, however, that Section 25 of the 1997 Act is not engaged as there is no 'primacy' of the Development Plan in determining an application made under the 1989 Act.

1.4 Site Location and Description

1.4.1 The Site, covering an area of approximately 2,554.5 hectares ('ha'), is located north of Leadhills village, south of Abington village and west of the A74(M) motorway. The Site predominantly comprises open moorland, improved grassland and semi-improved grassland, with areas of forestry located in the valleys, predominantly to the east of the B797. The Site terrain is undulating with multiple hills within the boundary such as Ravengill Dod (499 m Above Ordnance Datum ('AOD')), Coom Dod (553 m AOD) and Brown Dod (489 m AOD). This landscape is typical of the wider location within the Southern Uplands.

1.4.2 There are multiple watercourses and waterbodies located within the Site, including tributaries of the River Clyde such as Glengonnar Water in the north, Snar Water in the west and Elvan Water in the south. The River Clyde lies approximately 1 km to east of the Site boundary at its closest point.

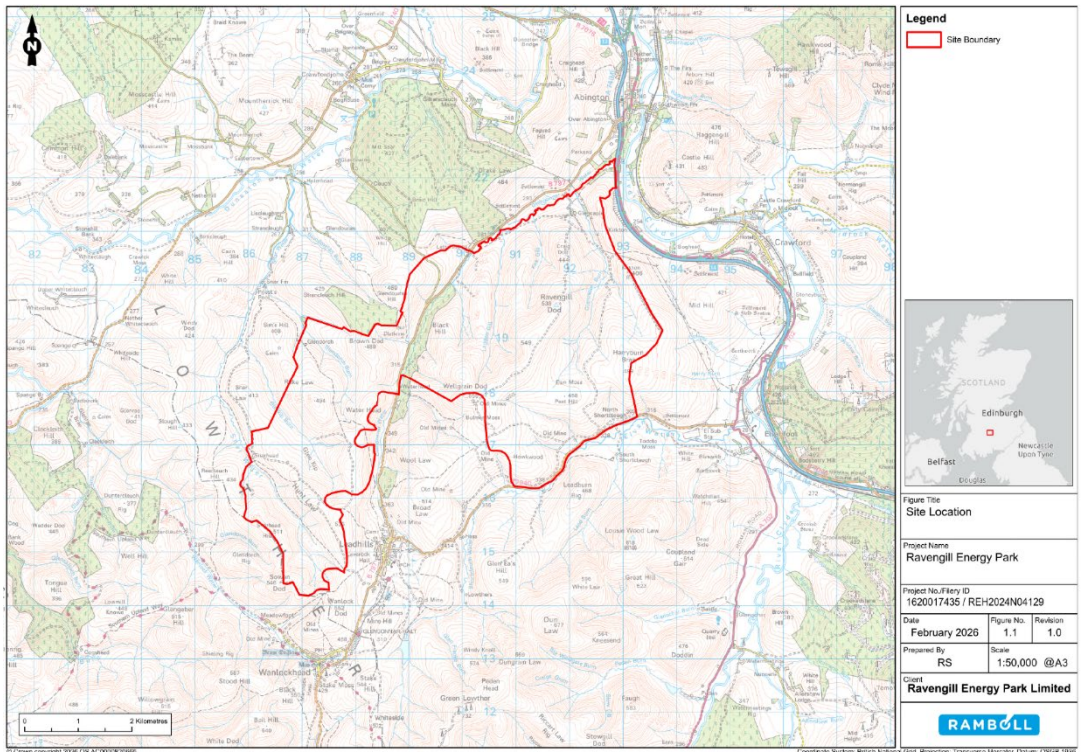
1.4.3 The immediate vicinity of the Site is sparsely populated, with settlement largely confined to the valleys. Key settlements within the vicinity of the Site include the villages of Leadhills, Abington, Elvanfoot, Wanlockhead, and Crawfordjohn. Other residential properties are located sporadically in the vicinity of the Site, with three residential properties located within the Site boundary. The Site location is illustrated in **Figure 1.1** below.

1.4.4 There is one statutory site designated for nature conservation within the Site boundary; the Raven Gill Site of Special Scientific Interest ('SSSI') which is designated for geological stratigraphy features: Arenig-Llanvirn. No development is proposed within the SSSI.

1.4.5 There is one designated heritage asset (a scheduled monument) present within the Site boundary (Waterhead, platform settlement (SM 4714)), as well as three sites recorded in the Historic Environment Record ('HER') that are classed as being of potential national importance. There are also a number of Scheduled Monuments immediately outside the Site boundary, mainly associated with historic mining activity and prehistoric settlement in the area.

1.4.6 There is extensive wind energy development within this part of southern Scotland and there are several wind farms at various stages in the consenting process and operational wind farms within the surrounding landscape. These include the consented and under construction Priestgill Wind Farm to the northeast; the operational Clyde Wind Farm to the east; the consented Lion Hill Wind Farm to the southeast; the operational Andershaw Wind Farm to the northwest; and the Middle Muir Wind Farm to the northwest. Additionally, proposed developments in the area include the M74 West Wind Farm to the north; the Grayside Wind Farm to the northeast; the Clyde South Energy Park to the southeast; the Watchman Energy Park to the southeast; the Glensalloch Wind Farm to the southwest; and the West Andershaw Wind Farm to the northwest.

Figure 1.1: Site Location Plan



1.4.7 Chapter 1 of the EIA Report contains a more detailed Site description including reference to the Site's land use history.

1.4.8 In this regard, the Site is located within the historic Leadhills–Wanlockhead mining district of South Lanarkshire, an area known for metal mining activity dating back to at least the sixteenth century. The upland landscape surrounding Leadhills has been shaped by centuries of mineral extraction, principally for lead, with additional working for silver, zinc, copper and gold. Mining activity in the wider district is recorded from the late 1500s and continued intermittently through to the early twentieth century, with the main period of intensive working occurring during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.

1.4.9 Lead mining is the dominant historic land use influence on the Site. Mineralisation occurs within steeply dipping veins, which were typically worked using underground methods accessed by vertical shafts and horizontal adits driven into hillsides. Evidence of the mining legacy in this area remains widespread in the form of abandoned shafts, adits, spoil tips, drainage levels and disturbed ground; some of which are visible within and adjacent to the Site.

1.4.10 The area is also historically important for gold extraction, particularly alluvial gold recovered from river and burn sediments. Evidence of former gold workings survives along watercourses within and near the Site, most notably around Shortcleuch Water and Long Cleuch. These activities have contributed to localised ground disturbance within valley floors and lower slopes.

1.4.11 Most mining activity within the Site had ceased by the mid-nineteenth century, although lead mining continued in parts of the wider Leadhills and Wanlockhead area until the early twentieth century. This was followed by a gradual reversion of the land to rough grazing and open moorland, which comprises the predominant land use today. The legacy of historic mining remains an important consideration for development, in terms of both ground conditions and cultural heritage, which is reflected in the designation of Scheduled Monuments within and adjacent to the Site.

1.4.12 The history of mining in the area, and its potential environmental effects, are well documented and have been taken into account in the preparation of the EIA Report. Potential contamination risk arising from historic mining activity, including the risk of mobilisation of contaminants, are addressed in EIA Report **Chapter 8: Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Geology.** Chapter 8 sets out the mitigation measures to be implemented throughout the construction, operation and decommissioning phase of the Proposed Development, including but not limited to, pre-construction investigation to ensure site safety. Mitigation measures would be formalised within the Construction Environmental Management Plan ('CEMP') before construction begins, and would include, where relevant, regular sampling of soil, water and vegetation, together with defined management procedures for excavations and soil disturbance.

1.5 The Proposed Development: Summary

1.5.1 A detailed description of the Proposed Development is contained in EIA Report **Chapter 2: Project Description**. The Proposed Development layout is illustrated in **Figure 2.1** of the EIA Report and reproduced below as **Figure 1.2**.

1.5.2 In summary, the main components of the Proposed Development are as follows:

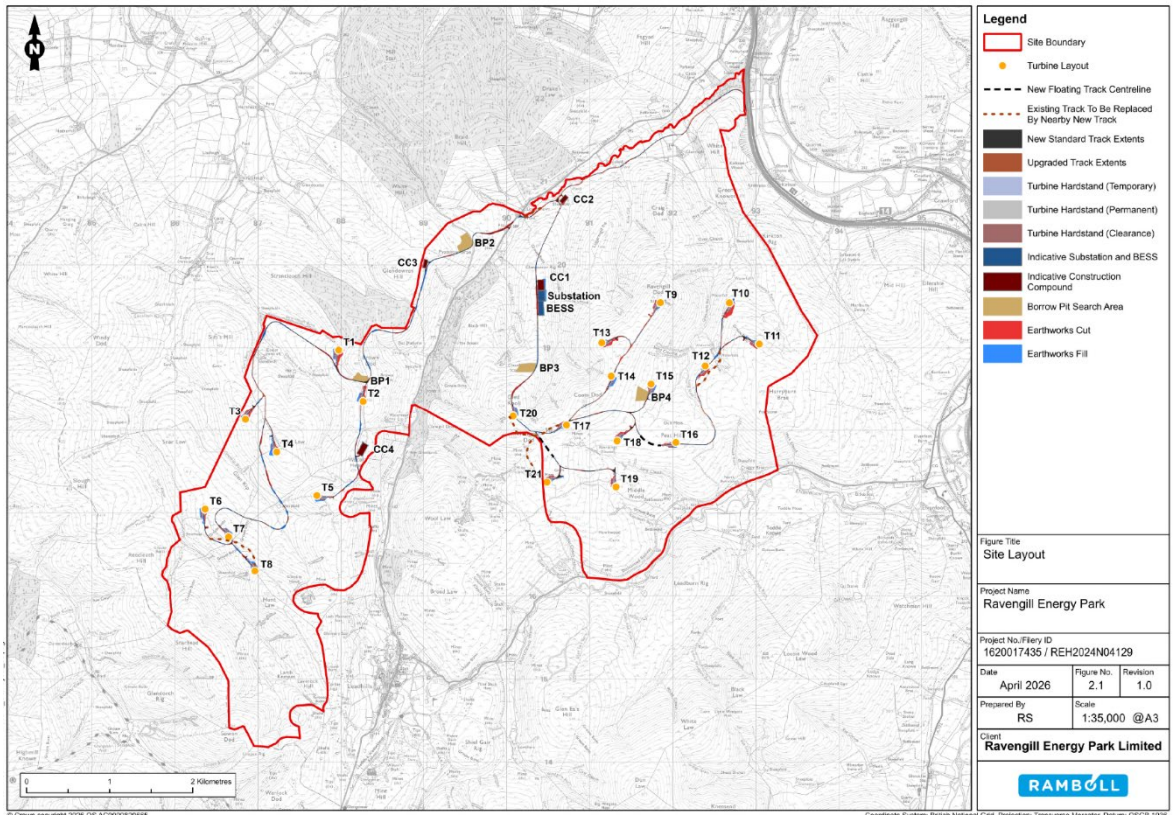
- up to 21 wind turbines with a maximum tip height of 220 m;
- permanent foundations supporting each wind turbine, and associated crane hardstanding at each wind turbine base;
- a temporary construction site entrance from the A74(M) motorway, to allow delivery of only abnormal indivisible loads ('AIL') required for turbine component delivery. Empty AIL vehicles would return to the road network via the B797 road, rejoining the M74 at Junction 14;
- two new junctions on the B797 road for site traffic and two new junctions on the C class road between the B797 and Crawfordjohn, one to the west and one to the east;
- a series of new on-site access tracks with associated watercourse crossings (where the final layout dictates), which may include upgrade and/or relocation of existing access tracks across the Site;
- underground power cables, generally laid in trenches alongside access tracks;
- on-site substation and control building;
- temporary construction compounds and laydown areas; and

- a BESS, with approximately 50 MW capacity, co-located with the on-site substation; and
- four temporary construction compounds and laydown areas, the main one located adjacent to the substation and BESS sites and three satellite compounds: two located in the western area of the Site and the other located in the northern area.

1.5.3 In addition, the following ancillary works would be necessary:

- extraction of rock from borrow pits. Four borrow pit search areas have been located within the Site;
- temporary on-site concrete batching plant. This would be located within the temporary compound areas and/or one of the borrow pit search areas; and
- where necessary, works on land outside the main development area and immediately adjacent to the A74(M) to facilitate the delivery of AIL (e.g. construction of over-run areas and temporary modifications to street furniture etc).

Figure 1.2: Site Layout Plan



1.5.4 The expected operational lifetime of the Proposed Development is 40 years from the date of commissioning.

1.5.5 The locations of the proposed turbines and other infrastructure would be subject to 'micrositing'. This process allows for minor changes in turbine or infrastructure locations to respond to possible variations in ground conditions across the Site, which would only be confirmed following detailed site investigation work carried out immediately prior to construction. This process also provides scope for further mitigation of localised potential environmental effects through avoidance of sensitive features. It is anticipated that a micrositing distance of 100 m would form a condition accompanying any consent.

1.5.6 The Proposed Development has a grid connection offer for 2036 to connect to the Elvanfoot Substation, approximately 4.5 km southeast of the on-site substation. Under ongoing grid reforms there is potential that the date and location of the connection will differ from that currently contracted. It would be the responsibility of Scottish Power Energy Networks ('SPEN') to provide the grid connection, including any necessary consents; however, to address potential impacts associated with the grid connection, a separate environmental appraisal has been completed and is included in EIA Report **Technical Appendix 1.8**.

1.5.7 At time of Application (June 2026) the Proposed Development has a signed grid connection agreement ('GCA') for 2036 to connect to the Elvanfoot Substation, approximately 4.5 km southeast of the proposed on-site substation. Under ongoing grid reform, the Proposed Development has been confirmed as a 'Gate 1' project, meaning there is no confirmed location or date for the grid connection and the existing GCA will be cancelled and replaced with a Gate 1 offer in due course. There is no longer any certainty that the Proposed Development would connect at Elvanfoot, or the timing of any such connection.

1.5.8 On grant of a Section 36 consent, the Applicant will be in a position to apply for a Gate 2 offer which would indicate a grid connection date and location. Any grid connection date and location in a Gate 2 offer would remain subject to change as the Proposed Development moves forward in the grid connection queue, with the Proposed Development potentially changing connection location and date depending on availability of capacity that it could fill on the network.

1.5.9 Subject to attrition in the grid connection queue, and assuming a timely grant of consent, the Ravengill development could potentially receive a much earlier connection date than previously contracted with a prospect of contributing towards 2030 renewable energy and carbon reduction targets discussed elsewhere in this Planning Statement. However, like all large-scale projects that require to connect to the electricity grid, the timing of any connection is under the control of the relevant electricity network operator(s) – in this case SPEN and National Energy System Operator ('NESO') who administer the transmission grid connection queue and provide a strategic planning function for the UK's electricity network.

1.5.10 At the point of a Gate 2 offer progressing towards being delivered, it would be the responsibility of SPEN to provide the grid connection, including identification of the most suitable route, technology, and to secure any necessary consents.

1.6 Structure of Statement

1.6.1 This Planning Statement is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** sets out the up-to-date position with regard to the renewable energy policy and emissions reduction legislative framework and includes reference to the Onshore Wind Policy Statement and the Scottish Government's draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan;
- **Chapter 3** describes the benefits of the Proposed Development;
- **Chapter 4** appraises the Proposed Development against the most up to date element of the Development Plan, namely the relevant provisions of NPF4;
- **Chapter 5** appraises the Proposed Development against the relevant provisions of the Local Development Plan and related guidance; and
- **Chapter 6** examines the planning balance and presents overall conclusions.

2. The Renewable Energy Policy & Legislative Framework

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This chapter refers to the renewable energy policy and emissions reduction legislative framework with reference to relevant international, UK, and Scottish provisions. The framework of international agreements and obligations, legally binding targets and climate change global advisory reports is the foundation upon which national energy policy and greenhouse gas emissions ('GHG') reduction law is based. This underpins what can be termed the need case for renewable energy from which the Proposed Development can draw a high level of support.

2.1.2 The Proposed Development requires to be considered against a background of material, UK and Scottish Government energy and climate policy and legislative provisions, as well as national planning policy and advice. These taken together provide very strong support for the Proposed Development in principle.

2.1.3 It is evident that there is clear and consistent policy support at all levels, from international to local, for the deployment of renewable energy generally, to combat the global climate crisis, diversify the mix of energy sources, achieve greater security of supply, and to attain legally binding emissions reduction targets.

2.1.4 UK and Scottish Government renewable energy policy and associated renewable energy and electricity targets are important considerations. It is important to be clear on the current position as it is a fast-moving topic of public policy. The context of international climate change commitments is set out below. This is followed by reference to key UK level statutory and policy provisions and then a detailed description of relevant Scottish Government statutory and policy provisions is set out.

2.2 International Commitments

The Paris Agreement (2015)

2.2.1 In December 2015, 196 countries adopted the first ever universal, legally binding global climate deal at the Paris Climate Conference ('COP21'). It came into force in November 2016. The Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change sets out a global action plan towards climate neutrality with the aims of stopping the increase in global average temperature to well below 2^0C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit global warming to 1.5^0C.

2.2.2 It is clear that moving to a low carbon economy is a globally shared goal and will require absolute emission reduction targets. The UK Government's commitment under the Paris Agreement links to the Climate Change Committee's ('CCC') advice to both the UK and Scottish Governments on 'net zero' targets which have now, at both the UK and Scottish levels, been translated into legislative provisions and targets for both 2045 (Scotland) and 2050 (UK). This is referred to below.

2.2.3 The Paris Agreement does not itself represent Government policy in the UK or Scotland. However, the purpose of domestic renewable energy and GHG reduction targets is to meet the UK's commitment in the Paris Agreement.

United Nations - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

2.2.4 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ('IPCC') is the United Nations ('UN') body for assessing the science related to climate change.

2.2.5 The IPCC prepares comprehensive assessment reports about the state of scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge on climate change, its impacts and future risks and options for reducing the rate at which climate change is taking place. IPCC reports are commissioned by the world's Governments and are an agreed basis for COP[2] negotiations.

2.2.6 The IPCC's Special Report on Warming of 1.5°C, published in 2018, was a key piece of evidence for the CCC's recommendation to the UK Government for a 2050 net zero greenhouse gas emission target. The IPCC's reports since 2018 have provided estimates of how close global temperatures are to 1.5°C of warming above pre-industrial levels and the remaining volume of global cumulative carbon dioxide that could be emitted to be consistent with keeping global warming below any particular threshold (such as the 1.5°C and 2°C levels referred to in the Paris Agreement).

2.2.7 The IPCC's 6th Assessment Report was published in March 2023. The Summary for Policymakers Report (paragraph A.4 on page 10) states that it is likely that warming will exceed 1.5°C during the 21st century which will therefore make it harder to limit warming below 2°C. Page 24 of the report states "*There is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all (very high confidence)*".

COP 28, Dubai 2023

2.2.8 The United Nations Climate Change Conference ('COP28') closed on 13 December 2023. The UN press release of the same date states that the agreement reached "*Signals the 'beginning of the end' of the fossil fuel era by laying the ground for swift, just and equitable transition, underpinned by deep emissions cuts and scaled up finance*."

2.2.9 The statement adds:

"*The stocktake recognises the science that indicates global greenhouse gas emissions need to be cut 43% by 2030, compared to 2019 levels, to limit global warming to 1.5°C. But it notes parties are off track when it comes to meeting their Paris Agreement goals.*

The stocktake calls on parties to take actions towards achieving, at a global scale, a tripling of renewable energy capacity and doubling of energy efficiency improvements by 2030. The list also includes accelerating efforts towards the phase down of unabated coal power, phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, and other measures that drive the transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, with developed countries continuing to take the lead." (underlining added)

COP 29, Baku 2024

2.2.10 The 29th UN Climate Conference hosted in Baku, Azerbaijan concluded on 24 November 2024. New financial goals agreed at COP 29 aimed at building on the significant strides on global action at COP 27, which agreed a historic Loss and Damage Fund, and COP 28, which delivered a global agreement to transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems in a swift and fair manner as well as triple renewable energy and boost climate resilience. The Climate Change Committee in its summation[3] of the conference and finance agreement reached, noted that the new climate finance goal of at least $300 billion per year from the developed world by 2035 was a compromise outcome, with some developing countries expressing frustration and disappointment. There was recognition of the much greater scale of overall finance needed, marking a shift to formally recognising the wider mobilisation required, which will only be achieved if climate change investment is mainstreamed into wider public and private finance flows.

[2] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Conference of the Parties (COP).

[3] Climate Change Committee (2024) COP29: Key outcomes and next steps for the UK Available at: https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/cop29-key-outcomes-and-next-steps-for-the-uk/ accessed 17 February 2026.

2.2.11 Unlike COP 27 and 28 however, COP 29 reached an agreement on carbon markets which will help countries deliver their respective climate plans on a quicker and cheaper basis, as well as make faster progress in halving global emissions.

COP 30, Belém 2025

2.2.12 COP30 was the 2025 UN Climate Conference, held in Belém, Brazil, from November 10–21, 2025. The conference focused on implementing past agreements and key outcomes included a new "global mutirão" decision for collective action and a call to triple adaptation finance by 2035.

2.2.13 Despite support from over 80 countries (including the UK) for a "roadmap" toward phasing out fossil fuels, oil-producing nations voted against this being included from the formal deal and therefore no new "roadmaps" for phasing out fossil fuels were agreed upon. However, Colombia and the Netherlands co-hosted the first International Conference on the Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in April 2026 in Santa Marta, Colombia. This initiative aims to build on the momentum from COP30 to create a roadmap for phasing out fossil fuels and to move this discussion outside of the formal UN COP negotiations.

UN Emissions Gap Report (2025)

2.2.14 The UN Emissions Gap Report (November 2025) entitled "Off Target" provides the annual independent science-based assessment of the gap between the pledged GHG reductions, and the reductions required to align with the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement.

2.2.15 The Executive Summary Report comments on the background of GHG emission increases and the new Nationally Determined Contributions ('NDCs') submitted ahead of COP30 in Brazil as follows (page xii):

"As this sixteenth Emissions Gap Report shows, the new NDCs have limited effect on narrowing the emissions gap by 2030 and 2035, leaving global warming projections well above the Paris Agreement's temperature goal. New scenarios show that limiting warming to 1.5°C by 2100 remains technically possible. However, due to the continued delay in deep emission cuts, 1.5°C pathways now imply higher and higher temporary exceedance of this temperature target. The magnitude and duration of this overshoot must be limited as much as possible. Each year of delayed action locks in carbon intensive infrastructure results in greater losses for people and ecosystems, higher adaptation costs and a heavier reliance of costly and uncertain carbon dioxide removal. Each year of inaction makes the path to net zero by 2050 and net negative emissions thereafter steeper, more expensive and more disruptive."

2.2.16 Section 7 of the Executive Summary sets out that "*despite the increasing likelihood of higher and longer temperature overshoot, pursuing efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C remains as critical and relevant as ever*".

2.2.17 The report adds: *"accelerated mitigation action provides benefits and opportunities. In many cases, mitigation aligns with economic growth, job creation, energy security and achievement of other pressing development needs and the sustainable development goals. The required technologies are available, and wind and solar energy development continue to exceed expectations, lowering deployment costs and driving market expansion. Yet deployment remains insufficient, and accelerated emission reductions require overcoming policy, governance, institutional and technical barriers….."*

2.2.18 The latest Gap Report is expressly clear that the international position in relation to combating climate change is worsening. The conclusions also make clear that deployment of renewable energy, including wind energy, remains key to combating the climate emergency.

2.3 UK Climate Change & Energy Legislation & Policy

The Climate Emergency

2.3.1 A critical part of the response to the challenge of climate change was the climate emergency which was declared by the Scottish Government in April 2019 and by the UK Parliament in May 2019. The declaration of climate emergency needs to be viewed in the context in which it was declared (advice from the CCC), and in response to commitments under the Paris Agreement and what followed from it as a result of the declaration (new emissions reduction law).

The Climate Change Act 2008 & Carbon Budgets

2.3.2 The Climate Change Act 2008 (the 2008 Act) provides a system of carbon budgeting. Under the 2008 Act, the UK committed to a net reduction in GHG emissions by 2050 of 80% against the 1990 baseline. In June 2019, legislation was passed that extended that target to at least 100% against the 1990 baseline by 2050, with Scotland committing to net zero by 2045.

2.3.3 The 2008 Act also established the CCC which advises the UK Government on emissions targets, and reports to Parliament on progress made in reducing GHG emissions.

2.3.4 The CCC has produced seven, four yearly carbon budgets, covering 2008 – 2042. These carbon budgets represent a progressive limitation on the total quantity of GHG emissions to be emitted over the five-year period as summarised in **Table 2.1** below. Essentially, they are five yearly caps on emissions.

2.3.5 These legally binding 'carbon budgets' act as stepping-stones toward the 2050 target. The CCC advises on the appropriate level of each carbon budget and once accepted by Government, the respective budgets are legislated by Parliament.

Table 2.1: Carbon Budgets and Progress[4]

Budget	Carbon budget level	Reduction below 1990 levels	Progress on Budgetary Period
1st carbon budget (2008 – 2012)	3,018 $MtCO_2e$	26%	-27%
2nd carbon budget (2013 – 2017)	2,782 $MtCO_2e$	32%	-42%
3rd carbon budget (2018 – 2022)	2,544 $MtCO_2e$	38% by 2020	-50%[5]
4th carbon budget (2023 – 2027)	1,950 $MtCO_2e$	52% by 2025	n/a
5th carbon budget (2028 – 2032)	1,725 $MtCO_2e$	57% by 2030	n/a
6th carbon budget (2033 – 2037)	965 $MtCO_2e$	78% by 2035	n/a
7th carbon budget (2038 – 2042)	535 $MtCO_2e$	87% by 2042	n/a
Net Zero Target	100%	By 2050	

2.3.6 The Sixth Carbon Budget ('CB6') requires a reduction in UK greenhouse gas emissions of 78% by 2035 relative to 1990 levels. This is seen as a world leading commitment, placing the UK "*decisively on the path to net zero by 2050 at the latest, with a trajectory that is consistent with the Paris Agreement*" (CB6, page 13).

[4] Source: CCC.

[5] Confirmed by CCC in 'Final Statement for the Third Carbon Budget' May 2024. By the end of the period in 2022, UK net GHG emissions were 50% lower than the base year emissions.

2.3.7 Page 23 of CB6 refers to the devolved nations and sets out that UK climate targets cannot be met without strong policy action across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Key points from CB6 include:

- UK climate targets cannot be met without strong policy action in Scotland.
- The CCC is clear in setting out that new demand for electricity will mean that electricity demand will rise 50% by 2035 and double or even treble by 2050.
- CB6 needs to be met and that will need more and faster deployment of renewable energy developments than has happened in the past.
- The related 'Methodology Report' from the CCC advice, states that in all scenarios for the carbon budget and looking ahead to 2050, the CCC sees new onshore wind generation being deployed by 2050. They set out that their modelling reflects this by almost doubling onshore wind capacity to 20-30 GW in all scenarios by 2050.

2.3.8 Following the CB6, the UK Government announced on 20 April 2021 that it would set the world's most ambitious climate change target into law (by the Carbon Budget Order 2021 (the Order)[6]) to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels. This brought forward the UK's previous commitment of an 80% reduction by 2050 by 15 years.

2.3.9 The Seventh Carbon Budget ('CB7') was published by the CCC in February 2025. The CCC's recommended level for CB7, namely a limit on the UK's GHG emissions over the five-year period 2038 to 2042, is 535 MtCO2e including emissions from international aviation and shipping.

2.3.10 Page 12 of the CB7 states:

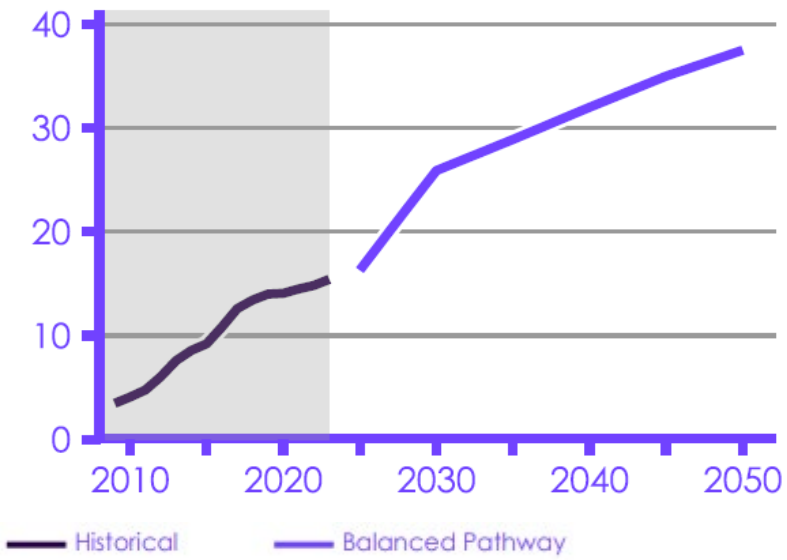
"*By the middle of the Seventh Carbon Budget on our pathway, emissions in the UK will be only a quarter of the level they are today, and 80% lower than levels in 1990 (90% lower excluding emissions from international aviation and shipping.) Achieving this will require a significant reduction in emissions across sectors including surface transport, buildings, industry and agriculture*."

2.3.11 It sets out (page 12) that achieving CB7 will mean that UK based renewable energy provides the bulk of generation and this will replace oil and gas across most of the economy. It adds that "*this requires twice as much electricity as today by 2040*".

2.3.12 It further states that low carbon supply by 2040 will see offshore wind grow sixfold from 15 GW of capacity in 2023 to 88 GW by 2040. It adds that *"onshore wind capacity doubles to 32 GW by 2040 and solar capacity increases to 82 GW"* (page 13). The anticipated growth of onshore wind capacity is shown in the Report (page 109) and illustrated in **Figure 2.1** below.

[6] The Order sets the carbon budget for the 2033-2037 budgetary period at 965 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. The net UK carbon account is defined in section 27 of the Climate Change Act 2008.

Figure 2.1: Onshore Wind Operational Capacity (GW) in CCC 'Balanced Pathway'



2.3.13 The report notes that this will require recent annual installation rates to treble this decade, requiring installation rates comparable to the annual roll-out rates previously sustained during the mid-2010s.

2.3.14 The Balanced Pathway requires an average deployment rate of 0.8 GW per year, with deployment peaking at 1.9 GW in 2030, which is comparable to the historical peak of 1.8 GW in 2017.

2.3.15 CB7 states that *"there are a range of barriers that will need to be overcome to enable the levels of deployment required. This will require concerted action on several areas, including planning, grid connections, and supply chain bottlenecks."*

The UK Energy White Paper (December 2020)

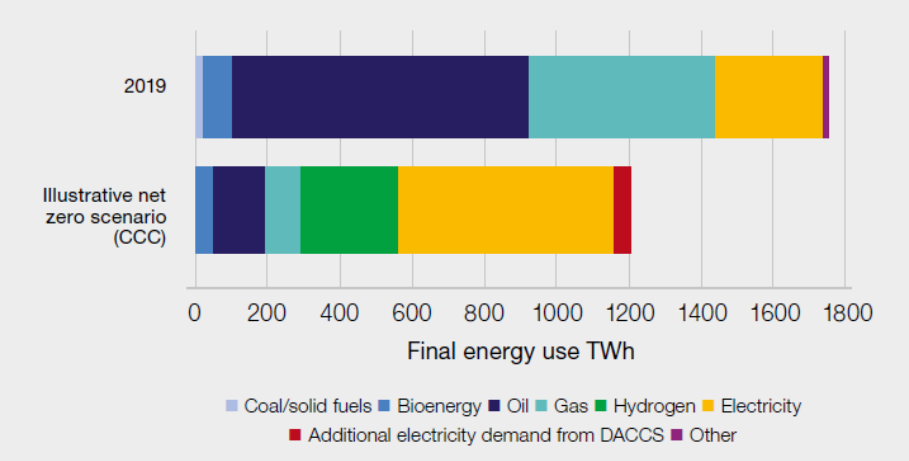
2.3.16 The Energy White Paper 'Powering our Net Zero Future' was published on 14 December 2020, and while more than five years old, at the time represented an important step in UK energy policy, highlighting the importance of renewable electricity.

2.3.17 It set out that "*electricity is a key enabler for the transition away from fossil fuels and decarbonising the economy cost-effectively by 2050".* A key objective was set out to *"accelerate the deployment of clean electricity generation through the 2020s*" (page 38).

2.3.18 Electricity demand is forecast to double out to 2050, which will "*require a four-fold increase in clean electricity generation with the decarbonisation of electricity increasingly underpinning the delivery of our net zero target*" (page 42).

2.3.19 This anticipated growth of renewable electricity is illustrated in the graph below – **Figure 2.2**.

Figure 2.2: Illustrative UK Final Energy Use in 2050[7]



2.3.20 **Figure 2.2** illustrates that a reduction in energy usage is predicted in the net zero scenario. However, the majority of the energy used in 2050 will be generated from electricity. The White Paper notes at page 10 that clean electricity will become the predominant form of energy, entailing a potential doubling of electricity demand and consequently a fourfold increase in low-carbon electricity generation, which will be required to reach net zero emissions.

2.3.21 Whilst offshore renewables are expected to grow significantly, the White Paper also sets out that "*onshore wind and solar will be key building blocks of the future generation mix, along with offshore wind. We will need sustained growth in the capacity of these sectors in the next decade to ensure that we are on a pathway that allows us to meet net zero emissions in all demand scenarios*" (page 45). (underlining added)

The British Energy Security Strategy (April 2022)

2.3.22 The British Energy Security Strategy[8] was published by the UK Government on 7 April 2022. It focuses on energy supply and states that in the future nuclear will have an expanded role and that renewables have an important role: the foreword states *inter alia*:

"*Accelerating the transition away from oil and gas then depends critically on how quickly we can roll out new renewables….*

The growing proportion of our electricity coming from renewables reduces our exposure to volatile fossil fuel markets."

2.3.23 Reducing Scotland's and the wider UK's dependency on hydrocarbons has important security of supply, electricity cost and fuel poverty avoidance benefits. Those actions already urgently required in the fight against climate change are now required more urgently for global political stability and insulation against dependencies on rogue nation states.

The UK Battery Strategy (2023)

2.3.24 The UK Government published the UK Battery Strategy[9] on 26 November 2023. The UK Battery Strategy brings together Government activity to achieve a globally competitive battery supply chain by 2030 that supports economic prosperity and the net zero transition in the UK.

[7] Source: Energy White Paper page 9 (2020).
[8] UK Government (2023) The UK Battery Strategy Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-battery-strategy
[9] UK Government (2023) The UK Battery Strategy Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-battery-strategy

2.3.25 In summary, the Government's vision is for the UK to continue to grow a thriving battery innovation system and to become a world leader in sustainable design, manufacture and use.

2.3.26 The UK Battery Strategy was developed with the UK Battery Strategy Task Force, drawing upon a call for evidence and engagement with business and stakeholders. It is based around the 'design, build, sustain' approach and through the strategy sets the key objectives that the UK will:

- Design and develop batteries for the future;
- Strengthen the resilience of UK manufacturing supply chains; and
- Enable the development of a sustainable battery industry.

2.3.27 In the Foreword to the document (page 3), the Minister of State for Industry and Economic Security at the Department of Business and Trade states that:

"Batteries will play an essential role in our energy transition and our ability to successfully achieve Net Zero by 2050."

2.3.28 Batteries are seen as key to the net zero transition as they enable more flexible use of energy such as maximising use of intermittent low carbon generation.

Climate Change Committee Report to UK Parliament (June 2025)

2.3.29 The CCC published its report 'Progress in reducing emissions – 2025 Report to Parliament[10]' (the CCC 2025 Report) in June 2025. It highlights that "*greenhouse gas emissions have more than halved since 1990, with the pace of reduction having more than doubled since the introduction of the UK's Climate Change Act in 2008*" (Page 10).

2.3.30 The CCC 2025 Report identifies ten priority actions for the year 2025-2026, one of which is:

"Effectively deliver rapid expansion of the low-carbon electricity system. An effective Allocation Round 7 will be critical to achieving this, given that projects typically take several years to come onstream." (Page 19)

2.3.31 The CCC 2025 Report highlights (page 15) that renewable electricity generation expanded more in 2024 than in any of the previous six years, driven by wind and solar. However, the pace still needs to accelerate significantly to meet 2030 goals. This will require a tripling in annual installations of both offshore and onshore wind (and a four-fold increase in solar compared to the average rate seen since the start of the decade).

2.3.32 Total operational capacity for onshore wind in the UK was 16 GW in 2024, and further capacity is currently contracted to bring total capacity to 20 GW by 2027. The report goes on to state in relation to reaching the 27GW 2030 target (UK) for onshore wind, which is the lower end of the Government's capacity range, *"will require more than 1.8 GW to be added each year on average, the same as the peak seen in 2017. However, only 0.8 GW of onshore wind was installed in 2024. Onshore wind installation rates will need to triple compared to the average pace of deployment since the start of the decade."* (page 60)

2.3.33 In terms of the required emissions savings to achieve the 2030 Nationally Determined Contributions ('NDC') the CCC 2025 Report highlights some risks. One of which include *"delivery risks for planning, grid connections, and successful Contracts for Difference auctions to deliver the rest of the renewables deployment required by 2030 under the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan".* (page 17)

2.3.34 On page 105 the role of low carbon electricity is highlighted further in reducing emissions. In the Committee's Seventh Carbon Budget advice, 60% of the required emissions reduction is delivered through electrification and low-carbon electricity. The CCC 2025 Report sets out at Box 3.5:

[10] CCC (2025) Progress in reducing emissions – 2025 Report to Parliament https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/progress-in-reducing-emissions-2025-report-to-parliament/

"Delivering this requires continued growth of renewables deployment over the coming years, to ensure a rapid scale-up in supply of low-carbon electricity.

- *Renewable generation from wind and solar is well established and is the cheapest form of new electricity generation capacity.*
- *The UK also benefits from extensive wind resources.*
- *As such, renewables have an essential role to play in achieving Net Zero and meeting the vast majority of demand in the Balanced Pathway. This will require strong and sustained deployment of renewables capacity…*

These technologies need to be accompanied by rapidly expanding the transmission grid, upgrading the distribution network, and speeding up the grid connection process."

2.3.35 In relation to transmission and grid readiness, these are highlighted as critical enablers for renewable deployment and electrification.

Labour Government & Commitment to Renewables (2024)

2.3.36 The UK Government changed at Westminster in 2024 and a Labour administration for the UK is of relevance in terms of the new UK Government policy approach to net zero.

2.3.37 Energy policy is reserved to Westminster and although the Scottish Government has progressed its own energy policy in parallel with its full devolved authority over the planning system in Scotland, UK Government policy is an important material consideration.

2.3.38 The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero ('DESNZ') issued a Statement on 8 July 2024 which included references to doubling UK onshore wind capacity from its current level of approximately 15 GW to a planned capacity of 30 GW by 2030.

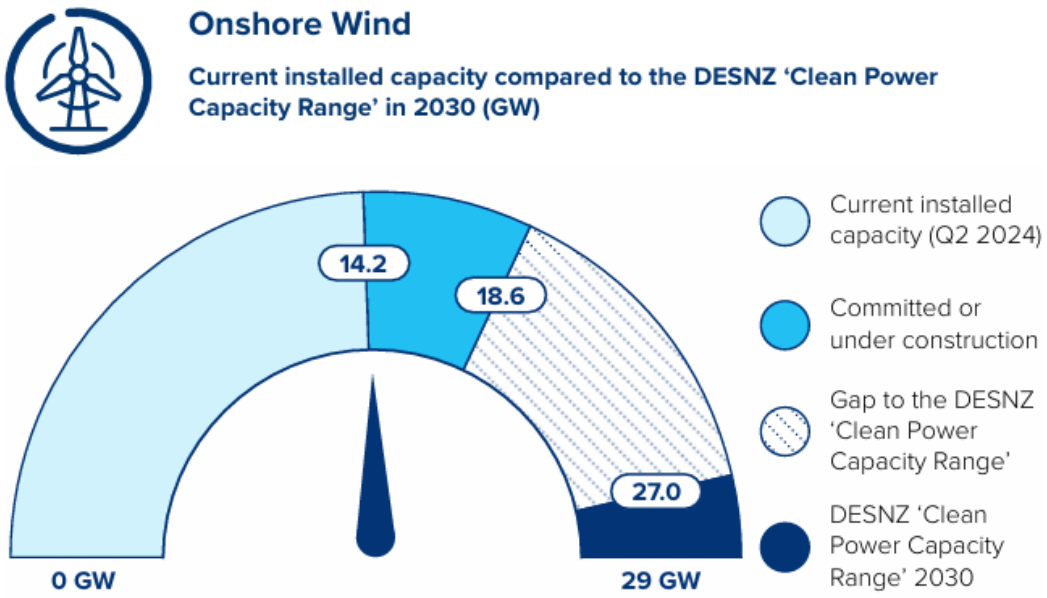
UK Government: Clean Power 2030 Action Plan (2024)

2.3.39 The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan was published by DESNZ in December 2024. It sets out (page 9) that Britain needs to install "*clean sources of power at a pace never previously achieved*". It further adds (page 10):

"*Clean power by 2030 will herald a new era of clean energy independence and tackle three major challenges: the need for secure and affordable energy supply, the creation of essential new energy industries supported by skilled workers in their thousands, the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit our contribution to the damaging effects of climate change. Clean power by 2030 is a sprint towards these essential goals*".

2.3.40 The Action Plan sets out that by 2030 there should be 27-29 GW of onshore wind operational within the UK. At the time of the publication of the CP2030, there was 14.2 GW of installed onshore wind capacity in the UK, illustrated below at **Figure 2.3**. Figure 2.3 illustrates the gap between current onshore wind installed capacity compared to the DESNZ requirement to 2030.

Figure 2.3: Onshore Wind & 'Gap' to reach 2030 UK Target



2.3.41 Renewable UK's Onshore Wind Report[11] indicates that at September 2025 the UK had 15.8 GW of onshore wind capacity in operation.

2.3.42 The document adds that "*Meeting the clean power 2030 goal is key to accelerating to net zero, not only in eliminating emissions that currently come from electricity generation, but also via the application of clean power in the buildings, transport and industry sectors… The shift to a clean power system by 2030 forms the backbone of the transition to net zero, as we move to an economy much more reliant on electricity*".

2.3.43 Page 74 of the Action Plan states that "*Meeting the renewable capacity set out in the DESNZ 'clean power capacity range' is achievable but will require deployment at a sharply accelerated scale and pace*".

2.3.44 The Action Plan (Connections Reform Annex) also sets out technology capacity ranges that NESO proposes to use as an indication of what is required by 2035 and references onshore wind as having a range of 31-32 GW by 2035. It is important to note that the capacity figures referenced in the Action Plan are not caps.

The Onshore Wind Taskforce Strategy (July 2025)

2.3.45 DESNZ published the Onshore Wind Taskforce Strategy ('OWTS') in July 2025, which sets out over 40 actions, primarily Government commitments to resolve key blocks to onshore wind within the UK. The OWTS's overall aims are to boost onshore wind deployment and to deliver economic benefits for local communities, businesses and the consumer.

2.3.46 The Ministerial Foreword by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero states:

"As one of the cheapest and fastest to build sources of power we have, onshore wind will play a critical role in boosting our energy independence with clean power by 2030. The reality is that every turbine we build helps protect families, businesses and the public finances from future fossil fuel shocks.

That's why in our first 72 hours in office, we lifted the onshore wind band in England - in place for nine years under the previous Government. And it's why last July we established the

[11] Renewable UK (2025) Onshore wind pipeline report 2025 Available at: https://www.renewableuk.com/energypulse/reports/uk-onshore-wind-pipeline-report-2025/

Onshore Wind Taskforce to bring Government, industry and trade unions together to explore how we can radically accelerate deployment of this critical technology.

The Onshore Wind Taskforce strategy is the outcome of that work. It sets out more than 40 steps Government and industry will take to help deliver up to 29GW of onshore wind by 2030. That includes driving ambitious reforms to planning, grid connections, and routes to market, while building the supply chains and skilled workforce we need."

2.3.47 In addition, within the foreward the statement by the Head of Clean Power 2030 within DESNZ states (page 5) *inter alia*:

"Clean Power 2030 is our ambitious mission to grow rapidly Britain's clean electricity infrastructure, reducing Britain's dependency on imported oil and gas, securing key clean industries and readying the country for the expected growth in electrical demand over the next 20 years.

Our Clean Power Action Plan targets a near doubling of onshore wind capacity up to 29GW by 2030. That will require rapid development of new onshore wind across Britain and repowering of existing sites to bring British consumers some of the cheapest homegrown power that can be produced. We are already working with NESO to slash the queue of projects waiting to connect to the grid to accelerate the best onshore wind development.

Rapid deployment of onshore wind is our first line of defence against future gas price spikes - every megawatt added displaces imported gas in the power system. With the steps in this new strategy, we will cement the growth of an important homegrown industry. The momentum behind clean power continues to grow."

2.3.48 As noted above, whilst 2030 is a key target date but a milestone en route to attaining net zero, generation capacity figures are not caps and there will still be a requirement for new generation capacity post 2030. A connection date post 2030 should not diminish the weight to be afforded to the benefits of the Proposed Development.

2.3.49 The various commitments and actions within the strategy cover:

- Scoping, planning and consenting improvement for onshore wind projects;
- Networks and systems reform;
- Communities and public perception actions;
- Aviation and defence commitments to improve the interface between wind energy and civil and military radar and related matters including Eskdalemuir;
- Finance and routes to market; and
- Supply chains, skills and workforce.

2.3.50 The OWTS refers to the Government's Clean Power Action Plan, which was published in December 2024 and which set out a pathway to achieving the mission of clean power by 2030. Page 10 of the strategy states that:

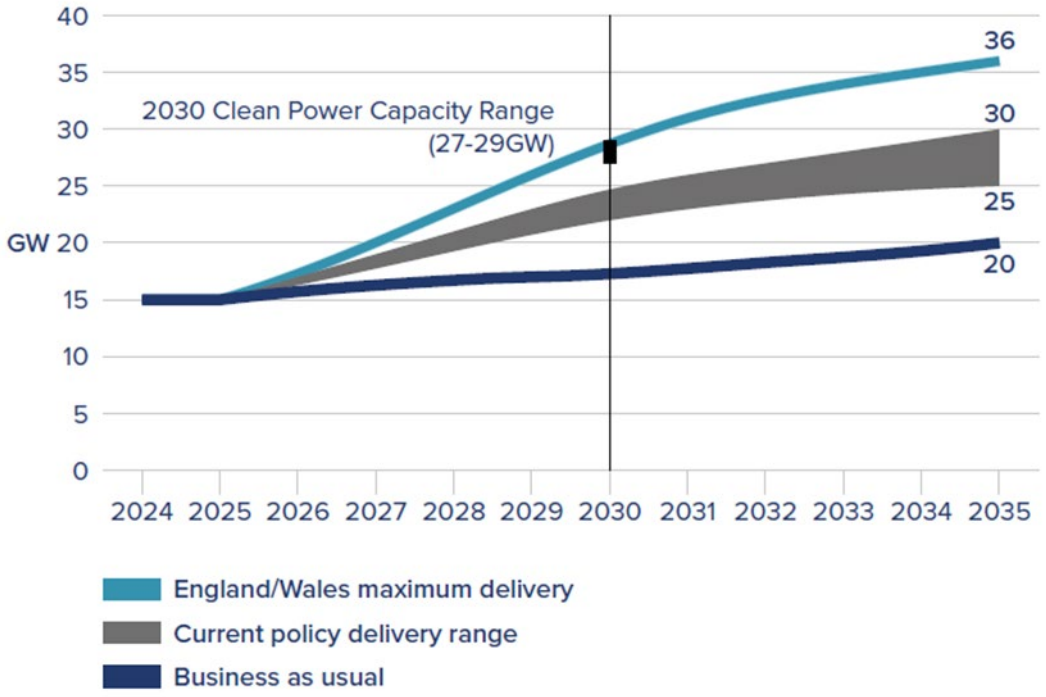
"All routes to achieving this mission are reliant on mass deployment of renewable electricity technologies, including onshore wind. The Clean Power Plan stated that to decarbonise the power sector by 2030, 27 to 29GW onshore wind will be needed within GB . That is a significant increase above the current installed capacity, which stands at 14.8 GW in GB (over 16GW in the UK)".

2.3.51 It is explained that the delivery of up to 29 GW of onshore wind by 2030 would involve around 10-12 GW more than would have been deployed under historic growth rates, with England contributing around 2 GW by 2030.

2.3.52 The OWTS also emphasises the significant economic opportunity that further onshore wind deployment will deliver (pages 10 and 11). It states that meeting the onshore wind 2030 targets together with the actions within the strategy, could deliver up to 45,000 direct and indirect jobs in Great Britain and result in £70 million per year of extra investment in community benefits.

2.3.53 At page 18 of the OWTS, reference is made to illustrative deployment scenarios which it states emphasises *"the challenge in meeting the 2030 clean power range in GB which will require significant deployment in Scotland, England and Wales."* This is illustrated in **Figure 2.4** below (reproduction of Figure 5 from the OWTS).

Figure 2.4: Clean Power Deployment Scenarios (Onshore Wind)



2.3.54 The scenarios as illustrated in **Figure 2.4** include:

- *Business as usual* - under this scenario onshore wind only reaches in the region of 17 GW by 2030 and 20 GW by 2035.
- *Current policy delivery range* - this assumes the "seamless implementation" of the reform announced as part of the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan and the actions set out in the Onshore Wind Taskforce Strategy. In this scenario up to around 25 GW is installed by 2030 and 30 GW by 2035.
- *England / Wales maximum delivery* - this is set out as the most optimistic scenario and shows the potential of increasing onshore wind deployment through strengthened policies in England and Wales. Under this scenario onshore wind deployment could reach levels consistent with the 2030 Clean Power range but also increases to in excess of 35 GW by 2035.

2.3.55 The OWTS addresses implementation and states (page 71) that the Government is committed to delivering the level of onshore wind needed by 2030.

Government Statement on Energy Security (March 2026)

2.3.56 The Energy Secretary (The Right Hon Ed Miliband MP) issued a statement on 15 March 2026 outlining a package of measures to go "further and faster" in the pursuit of national energy security, as a response to events in the Middle East. The Energy Secretary announced various energy interventions to boost the UK's energy security, including relating to solar deployment and stated an intention to bring forward the Government's next annual renewables option to July 2026. The Energy Secretary stated:

"*Global events demonstrate there is not a moment to waste in our drive for clean power because there can be no energy security while we are so dependent on fossil fuels… everything we are doing is about one purpose: fighting the corner of the British people by taking back control of our energy*".

2.4 Scotland: Climate Change & Emissions Reduction Legislation and Advice

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019

2.4.1 The Scottish Government has put in place a legal framework to decarbonise and reduce emissions. Most notably, the Scottish Government has a statutory target to achieve "net zero" by 2045. It is clear that to have any hope of achieving the net zero target, significant expansion of renewable generation capacity is required.

2.4.2 When it was enacted, the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 set world leading greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, including a target to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050. The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 amended the 2009 Act setting even more ambitious targets to reach net zero by 2045.

2.4.3 Scotland will need significant expansion of renewable generation capacity to achieve these ambitious targets by 2045.

CCC Report to Scottish Parliament – Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland (March 2024)

2.4.4 The CCC produced a report to the Scottish Parliament entitled 'Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland' in March 2024. The related press release of the same date stated that Scotland's 2030 climate goals, of reaching 75% emissions reduction by 2030, were no longer credible, stating:

"*Continued delays to the updated Climate Change Plan and further slippage in promised climate policies mean that the Climate Change Committee no longer believes that the Scottish Government will meet its statutory 2030 goal to reduce emissions by 75%. There is no comprehensive strategy for Scotland to decarbonise towards Net Zero.*

The Scottish Government delayed its draft Climate Change Plan last year despite the 2030 target being only six years away. This has left a significant period without sufficient actions or policies to reach the target; the required acceleration in emissions reduction in Scotland is now beyond what is credible."

2.4.5 The related press release stated that there is a path to Scotland's post-2030 targets, but stronger action is needed to reduce emissions across the economy.

2.4.6 The main report (page 10) states that "*The Scottish Government should build on its high ambition and implement policies that enable the 75% emissions reduction target to be achieved at the earliest date possible*."

2.4.7 Page 18 of the report addresses electricity supply, and it states that there has been some progress in delivering renewable electricity generation in Scotland. Reference is made to the Government's aim to develop 8-11 GW of offshore wind and 20 GW on onshore wind capacity, both by 2030. The report notes that "*The growth in onshore wind capacity has slowed, however, and is slightly off track to deliver its 2030 target, which will require operational capacity to more than double*."

2.4.8 Page 40 states that in terms of onshore wind, Scotland must increase the deployment rate by more than a factor of 4 to an average annual rate of 1.4 GW in order to meet the 2030 targets. In terms of Onshore Wind, the most recent statistics released in December 2025[12] by the Scottish Government note that onshore wind capacity grew by 0.2 GW between the third quarter of 2024 and the third quarter of 2025. While this is only a snapshot of one year, this is far removed from the rate of deployment recommended by the CCC.

2.4.9 In light of the CCC Report, the Scottish Government stated it remained committed to achieving net zero but would move to a multi-year carbon budget approach to measuring emissions reduction (instead of annual targets) which would bring the Scottish Parliament in line with the Welsh and UK approaches.

The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2024

2.4.10 The Climate Change (Emission Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2024 ('the 2024 Act') received Royal Assent on 22 November 2024 and was brought into force the following day. The 2024 Act repealed the annual and interim emissions reduction target framework that was established under the 2009 Act and establishes a carbon budget approach to target setting, with budgets to be set through secondary legislation using the latest advice from the CCC, to replace the concept of statutory annual and interim targets. The 2024 Act also makes provision for a new Climate Change Plan to be published that reflects the carbon budgets.

2.4.11 The 2024 Act followed advice from the CCC that Scotland's interim emissions reduction target for 2030 could not be achieved. The 2024 Act does not change the existing statutory target of net zero emissions by 2045.

2.4.12 The emissions reductions targets set out are significant, as the 2009 Act states the Scottish Ministers have a duty to ensure the targets are met. The Scottish Ministers have duties to keep the Scottish Parliament informed about whether the targets are being met and to publish plans for meeting those targets. All Scottish public authorities also have a duty to exercise their functions in a way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of the targets.

CCC Report, Scotland's Carbon Budgets, Advice for the Scottish Government (May 2025)

2.4.13 This CCC Report was published in May 2025, and it sets out the CCC's advice on the level of Scotland's four proposed carbon budgets, covering the period 2026 to 2045. It recommends that the Scottish Government set carbon budgets.

2.4.14 The report states (page 9) that getting to net zero by 2045 will require immediate action, at pace and scale and adds that decisions on the exact pathway and policies are for the Scottish Government.

2.4.15 The Report explains that progress to date has largely come from electricity decarbonisation, reflecting Scotland's abundant renewable resources. It goes on to state (page 9) that:

"Action will increasingly be required in predominantly devolved policy areas to hit the Net Zero 2045 target and the proposed carbon budgets. Now that the framework for climate action has been reset, the Scottish Government has the opportunity to use its powers to match its ambitions with action."

[12] Scottish Government (2025) Quarterly Energy Statistics Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/energy-statistics-for-scotland-q3-2025/pages/key-points/

2.4.16 The Report identifies priority actions, which over the period of the first two carbon budgets will be the remaining decarbonisation of electricity generation as well as further electrification of key technologies, particularly the roll-out of EVs and heat pumps.

2.4.17 The Report identifies the sources of future emissions reductions and notes that in the next decade, over the next two carbon budgets, they are predominantly met from electrification of key technologies across the economy and measures to reduce demand for high-carbon activities.

2.4.18 Specifically in relation to electricity and low carbon supply the Executive Summary explains (page 12) that in the Balanced Pathway set out by the CCC:

*"the capacity of variable renewables in Scotland (including offshore and onshore wind and solar) more than triples from 15 GW in 2023 to 49 GW by 2035**, increasing to 66 GW by 2045**. This provides 98% of electricity generation in Scotland in 2035 and caters for increasing demand in Scotland and the rest of Great Britain (GB). Grid storage, use of storable fuels on the GB-wide network, and smart demand flexibility ensure a reliable supply of electricity even in adverse weather years. These technologies need to be accompanied by rapidly expanding the transmission grid, upgrading the distribution network, and speeding up the grid connection process. To deliver clean electricity, the planning process to approve large electricity infrastructure projects in Scotland needs to be urgently improved."* (Emphasis added)

2.4.19 Scotland currently has approximately 17.8 GW[13] of renewables operating capacity, a 4.5% increase compared to 17.0 GW at the end of the second quarter of 2024. Therefore, to achieve the Balanced Pathway figure of 66 GW by 2045 will require an additional 48.2 GW to be deployed. This would equate to approximately 2.4 GW of operating capacity coming online each year over the next 20 years.

2.4.20 The Report sets out in more detail the key actions to deliver the Balanced Pathway in electricity supply. At page 94 it refers to the key action for the Scottish Government which is to *"Urgently improve the planning process to approve large electricity infrastructure projects in Scotland, such as transmission lines and onshore wind farms."* citing that it can currently take up to four years to approve large electricity infrastructure projects in Scotland.

2.4.21 The Report makes reference to the Scottish Government and the UK Government's commitment to reform the energy consents system in Scotland, including through measures in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill (now the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025). It states that *"Both governments should ensure that these reforms are now implemented at pace. All bodies involved in the planning and consenting process must also be adequately resourced and skilled."*

2.4.22 Following the CCC's recommendations, the **Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 (Scottish Carbon Budgets) Amendment Regulations 2025 ('2025 Regulations')** came into force on the 10th October 2025. These Regulations reinforce the Scottish Government's commitment to achieving the climate targets. The 2025 Regulations amend the 2009 Act to include the Scottish carbon budgets for the five-year periods of 2026 to 2030, 2031 to 2035, 2036 to 2040 and 2041 to 2045 and align with the recommendations of the CCC in May 2025.

2.4.23 Scotland's Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy Gillian Martin said in a statement to Parliament on 8 October 2025[14]:

"This Government's commitment to tackling the climate emergency remains unwavering, and enshrining carbon budgets in legislation is a crucial step towards our net zero goal…It remains our intention to publish a draft climate change plan in the autumn, to allow sufficient time for the final version to be published before the end of this session of Parliament.".

[13] Scottish Government (December 2025) Energy Statistics for Scotland – Q3 2025

[14] https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-08-10-2025?meeting=16625&iob=141948

2.4.24 Following consultation on the draft Plan, a final Climate Change Plan was published on 24 March 2026, and is discussed below. It is an important tool in policy terms to set the direction of travel on how the targets will be achieved in practice within each of the key sectors.

Climate Report to Scottish Parliament - Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland (February 2026)

2.4.25 The CCC produced a report to the Scottish Parliament entitled 'Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland'[15] in February 2026 ('CCC 2026 Report'). The CCC assessment of the Scottish Government's progress in reducing emissions found that there are 'credible plans' and 'plans with only some risks' in place for 91% of the emissions reduction needed to achieve Scotland's First Carbon Budget (2026 to 2030). Action in several areas has improved in the last two years. Achievements include a rise in the roll-out of electric vehicles and related charging infrastructure, as well as the highest rates of peatland restoration seen to date.

2.4.26 The CCC 2026 Report acknowledges the progress made stating that *"the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament have made rapid progress in legislating the levels of the four carbon budgets, covering the period 2026 to 2045."* This was secured through the 2025 Regulations as referenced above.

2.4.27 The CCC 2026 Report welcomed the publication by the Scottish Government of its draft Climate Change Plan in November 2025 *"setting out – for the first time – policies and plans with quantified emissions reductions attached to policy outcomes across all sectors of the economy and providing an emissions pathway that achieves the carbon budgets."* (Page 10)

2.4.28 However, the CCC highlight that the draft CCP *"does not include deployment pathways for each key indicator. Nor does it include annual sectoral emissions pathways, with only carbon budget averages given…The framework in the final CCP should include indicative annual sectoral emissions and indicator pathways, so that progress can be effectively monitored."*

2.4.29 In relation to Energy supply the CCC 2026 Report states that (page 20):

"deployment of variable renewable electricity generation is continuing to increase in Scotland, with 1.1 GW of offshore and 1.3 GW of onshore wind capacity deployed in 2024. Remaining emissions in electricity generation come predominantly from the Peterhead gas-fired power station. Reducing emissions further relies on the continued roll-out of wind and solar generation and of network capacity to accommodate it. The draft CCP sets out plans to replace Peterhead with a CCS-enabled gas plant."

2.4.30 The CCC 2026 Report states that *"Scotland will need to continue its strong progress in rolling out renewable electricity generation and ensure development of electricity networks can keep pace. The Scottish Government should act to accelerate planning and consenting for transmission infrastructure to achieve this."* (Page 22)

2.4.31 At Page 77 this is discussed in further detail and it notes that *"To achieve the Scottish Government's target of 20 GW of onshore wind by 2030, nearly 10 GW needs to be installed in the next five years, which would be a doubling of capacity. This equates to a rate of deployment approximately two and a half times higher than the average annual deployment in 2023 and 2024."*

2.4.32 The CCC 2026 Report acknowledges the progress in emission reductions relating to the energy supply noting that *"around two-thirds of the emissions reductions seen since the introduction of the Act in 2009 have been in the energy supply sector. Electricity supply in Scotland is now almost fully decarbonised".* (Page 58)

[15] CCC (2026) Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland
https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/progress-in-reducing-emissions-in-scotland-2025/

2.4.33 However, it goes on to state that *"further expanding low-carbon generation and supporting transmission network infrastructure in Scotland remains critical to enable decarbonisation of other sectors and to supply low-carbon electricity to the rest of the UK."* (Page 58)

2.4.34 The CCC call on the Scottish Government to enable *"rapid expansion of renewable energy and ensure timely planning approval of the transmission infrastructure required to move power from generation sites to where it will be used".* (Page 108)

2.4.35 The CCC 2026 Report identified positive progress over the last year in securing emissions reduction but identifies a lot more to do, including continued deployment of renewable energy infrastructure and the acceleration of the transmission infrastructure needed to support the route to net zero by 2045.

2.5 Scotland: Climate Change and Renewable Energy Policy

2.5.1 This section references the key Scottish Government climate change and energy policy and related documents. These are:

- The Scottish Energy Strategy (2017);
- The Onshore Wind Policy Statement (2022);
- The Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023);
- The Green Industrial Strategy (2024); and
- The Climate Change Plan (2026).

The Scottish Energy Strategy (2017)

2.5.2 The Scottish Energy Strategy ('SES') was published in December 2017. The SES preceded almost all of the important events and publications referred to above but nevertheless sets out that onshore wind is recognised as a key contributor to the delivery of renewable energy targets – specifically 50% of energy to be attained from renewable sources by 2030. The SES did not and could not take account of what may be required in terms of additional renewable generation capacity to attain the new legally binding 'net zero' targets so it is out of date in that respect.

2.5.3 The SES refers to "Renewable and Low Carbon Solutions" as a strategic priority (page 41) and states *"we will continue to champion and explore the potential of Scotland's huge renewable energy resource, its ability to meet our local and national heat, transport and electricity needs – helping to achieve our ambitious emissions reduction targets".*

2.5.4 The SES sets out what is termed the "opportunity" for onshore wind and there is explicit recognition that onshore wind is amongst the lowest cost forms of power generation. It is also recognised as *"a vital component of the huge industrial opportunity that renewables creates for Scotland".*

2.5.5 The SES sets out the Government's clear position on onshore wind namely:

"our energy and climate change goals mean that onshore wind must continue to play a vital role in Scotland's future – helping to decarbonise our electricity, heat and transport systems, boosting our economy, and meeting local and national demand." (page 44)

The Onshore Wind Policy Statement (2022)

2.5.6 The Scottish Government published an updated Onshore Wind Policy Statement (OWPS) on 21 December 2022. It replaced the version published in November 2017.

2.5.7 The Ministerial Foreword makes it clear that seeking greater security of supply and lower cost electricity generation are now key drivers alongside the need to deal with the climate emergency. In this regard, the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport states (page 3):

"*that is why we must accelerate our transition towards a net zero society. Scotland already has some of the most ambitious targets in the world to meet net zero but we must go further and faster to protect future generations from the spectre of irreversible climate damage*".

"*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*".

2.5.8 The Foreword states that onshore wind has the ability to be deployed quickly, is good value for consumers and is also widely supported by the public. The Minister further states 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."*

2.5.9 The OWPS is structured on the basis of eight chapters which contain a mix of policy guidance and also technical information. Key content of relevance to the Proposed Development is referenced below.

Increasing the Rate of Deployment & Forecast Increase in Electricity Demand

2.5.10 Chapter 1 "Ambitions and Aspirations" (page 5) refers to current deployment of onshore wind in Scotland and states:

"*We must now go further and faster than before. We expect the next decade to see a substantial increase in demand for electricity to support net zero delivery across all sectors, including heat, transport and industrial processes*."

2.5.11 It is explained that National Grid's Future Energy Scenarios[16] project concludes that Scotland's peak demand for electricity will at least double within the next two decades and that this will require a substantial increase in installed capacity across all renewable technologies.

Onshore Wind Target & Development Pipeline

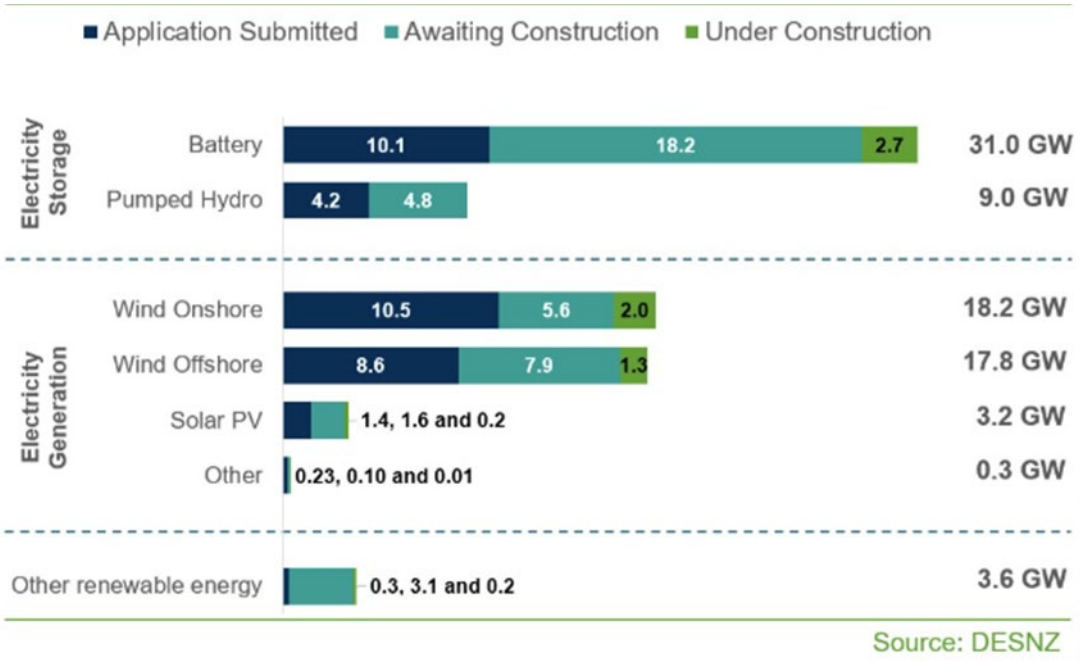
2.5.12 In terms of existing deployment, paragraph 1.1.5 of the OWPS states that as of June 2022 the UK had 14.6 GW of installed onshore wind, with around 8.7 GW of this capacity within Scotland. Reference is made to a figure of 11.3 GW of onshore wind "*currently in the pipeline, spread over 217 potential projects*".

2.5.13 Updated figures on deployment and pipeline are provided by the Scottish Government in the Energy Statistics for Scotland which are released quarterly. The most recent statistics were published in December 2025[17]. Figure 8 illustrates that Scotland had 10.4 GW of onshore wind installed capacity as of the end of September 2025. In terms of pipeline, Figure 9 (reproduced below as **Figure 2.5**) illustrates that 18.2 GW was at Application stage; Awaiting construction or Under construction. The majority, 10.5 GW, was Application stage, with 5.6 GW Consented / Awaiting construction, and 2 GW Under construction.

2.5.14 This means that 12.4 GW of onshore wind is committed (i.e. operational and under construction). There are no guarantees that the 5.6 GW of consented projects will be built out, for various reasons. However, if all of this was built out before 2030 this would only achieve 18 GW of the 20 GW minimum target. Although other schemes are likely to be consented, it is important to reiterate that the 20 GW is not a cap and is a minimum target, not forgetting the wider generation and emission reduction targets beyond 2030 that still need to be met.

[16] National Grid has set out a range of different, credible ways to decarbonise the energy system with regard to attaining Net Zero for the UK by 2050.
[17] Scottish Government (2025) Energy Statistics for Scotland https://www.gov.scot/publications/energy-statistics-for-scotland-q3-2025/

Figure 2.5: Estimated Capacity (GW) by technology and planning stage for renewable energy projects in pipeline as of end September 2025



2.5.15 The footnote to the figures set out on page 6 of the OWPS is pertinent and is as follows:

"*Developments in the planning/consenting process have not yet been considered and given permission to proceed. Some of these projects will receive consent, but some may not, and it is unlikely that all of this noted capacity will be fully realised. A degree of duplication within the planning system must also be considered, where developments which have consent re-apply to adjust the parameters of that consent. This will also reduce the capacity which is deliverable from this overall figure*".

Government commitment to 20GW of Onshore Wind by 2030

2.5.16 Section 1.2 of the OWPS refers to the Deployment Ambition to 2030. Reference is made to the CCC's position as set out in their exploratory scenarios for emissions to 2050 and also as referred to within the Sixth Carbon Budget.

2.5.17 Paragraph 1.2.2 of the OWPS states that: "[the explanatory scenarios] *estimate that, in every scenario, the UK will require a total of 25-30 GW of installed onshore wind capacity by 2050 to meet government targets - which would mean doubling the current UK installed capacity*".

2.5.18 Section 1.3 of the OWPS further refers to the new 20 GW ambition and acknowledges that the Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2022/2023 committed Government to enabling up to 12 GW of onshore wind to be developed. The Programme for Government stated that:

"*It is vital to send a strong signal and set a clear expectation on what we believe onshore wind capacity will contribute in the coming years.*

In line with this commitment, and reflecting the natural life cycles of existing wind farms, this statement sets a new ambition for the deployment of onshore wind in Scotland:

A minimum installed capacity of 20 GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030.

This ambition will help support the rapid decarbonisation of our energy system, and the sectors which depend upon it, as well as aligning with a just transition to net zero whilst other technologies reach maturity".

2.5.19 This statement is followed by reference to the "Legislative Context", in particular the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 and the related net zero greenhouse gas emissions targets. The OWPS states (paragraph 1.4.1) "*meeting these targets will require decisive and meaningful action across all sectors*".

2.5.20 Paragraph 2.4.2 of the OWPS states that "*onshore wind will play a crucial role in delivering our legally binding climate change targets*".

2.5.21 The OWPS makes clear that the 20 GW ambition of installed capacity is a "minimum" (page 6). In short, there is a substantial shortfall to address in order to attain that figure and projects that are not yet in the planning system are unlikely to provide installed capacity by 2030. This underlines the importance of the benefits that the Proposed Development can deliver – namely near-term delivery of a substantial volume of installed capacity.

2.5.22 Based on current installed capacity, there is a shortfall of 2.2 GW of onshore wind resource required to be met by 2030. The Proposed Development and its contribution must be considered in the context of the scale and urgency of the stated Scottish Government policy position.

Delivering the Government's 20 GW Ambition for Onshore Wind

2.5.23 Section 2.3 refers to a "Vision for Onshore Wind in Scotland" and states that Scottish Renewables, on behalf of the sector in Scotland, has produced a Vision Statement which the Government considers "*to lay the basis of a more detailed sector deal that the SLG will develop*".

2.5.24 The Onshore Wind Sector Deal was finalised and published in September 2023 and is referenced further below.

2.5.25 The **Vision Statement** is contained within Annex 5 of the OWPS (page 66). A summary of the Vision for the onshore wind industry in Scotland is a future where:

- An additional 12 GW of new onshore wind generation is constructed by 2030.
- Onshore wind continues to play a key role in decarbonising the power sector, reducing consumer costs and ensuring security of supply whilst playing a key role in the electrification of heat and transport.
- The selection of wind farm locations and technologies enables the use of the most productive modern turbines and balances the need to respect biodiversity and natural heritage.
- Land use for onshore wind is optimised and combined with other initiatives including reforestation and peatland restoration, as well as providing enhanced access to green space for recreation.
- High skilled and sustainable jobs are created, including long term jobs in the operational phase.
- Material use is optimised, and carbon impact is minimised, through the principles of a circular economy.
- Community benefit and shared ownership provides lasting social and economic benefits; and
- Onshore wind plays a central role in ensuring a just transition for communities and people.

2.5.26 The Vision Statement states (page 67) that:

"*Onshore wind remains vital to meeting this increasing demand, providing fast deployment whilst minimising cost to the consumer. This will be achieved by deploying the most productive modern turbines that are taller than older models, by re-powering existing sites where possible and by maximising the use of our exceptional natural wind resource where environmental effects are acceptable*."

Balancing Environmental Considerations and Benefits

2.5.27 Chapter 3 of the OWPS "Environmental Considerations: Achieving Balance and Maximising Benefits" refers to matters relating to specific environmental topics as follows:

- Shared Land Use;
- Peat and Carbon-Rich Soils;
- Forestry;
- Biodiversity;
- Landscape and Visual Amenity; and
- Noise.

2.5.28 Section 3.3 addresses peat and carbon rich soils. It highlights that approximately 75% of Scotland's peatlands are degraded through drainage, extraction and other actions. It explains that reversing degradation through peatland restoration is central to mitigating and adapting to the linked climate and nature crises.

2.5.29 Paragraph 3.3.6 states: "*The continued deployment of onshore wind and restoration of peatlands and carbon rich soil will both play vital roles in delivering Scotland's emissions reductions targets….. Given the established need for additional onshore wind turbines to tackle climate change and to ensure long term availability of cheap, renewable energy, in some cases it may be necessary to construct onshore wind farms on areas of peat*".

2.5.30 The document goes on to explain that the onshore wind sector has made remarkable advances over the past decade in mitigation and restoration solutions for peatland. It states that the identification of the condition of existing peatland is a vital part of the wind farm design process and bespoke management plans have an important role. It adds that "*by assessing the net carbon impacts of proposed developments on carbon rich soils and peatlands we will ensure that planning and consenting regimes result in the right projects in the right places, with all applications considered on a case-by-case basis within the relevant planning regime*." (paragraph 3.3.13)

2.5.31 Section 3.5 addresses biodiversity and paragraph 3.5.6 states that "*as the rate of onshore wind deployment increases in the coming years, we see a great opportunity for wind energy developments to further contribute significantly to our biodiversity ambition. By proactively managing intact habitats and the species they support, restoring degraded areas and improving connectivity between nature rich areas, onshore wind projects will contribute to our climate change targets and help address the biodiversity crisis*". (paragraph 3.5.6)

2.5.32 Landscape and Visual Amenity is addressed at Section 3.6 with direct cross references to NPF4. Paragraph 3.6.1 states (original emphasis):

"*Meeting our climate targets will require a rapid transformation across all sectors of our economy and society. This means ensuring the right development happens in the right place. Meeting the ambition of a minimum installed capacity of 20 GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030 will require taller and more efficient turbines. This will change the landscape."*

2.5.33 As referenced below, NPF4 policy 11 expressly recognises that significant landscape and visual impacts are to be expected and the OWPS emphasises that as a result there will be changes in Scotland's landscape.

2.5.34 Paragraph 3.6.2 of the OWPS, in cross-referencing NPF4, makes it clear that outside of National Parks and National Scenic Areas "*the criteria for assessing proposals have been updated, including stronger weight being afforded to the contribution of the development to the climate emergency, as well as community benefits*".

2.5.35 There is therefore express direction of greater weight attaching to the benefits of the development in terms of how it contributes to tackling the climate emergency. The removal of the Spatial Framework for onshore wind farms, as previously required by Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), also gives rise to fewer locational constraints.

2.5.36 Paragraph 3.6.5 makes reference to Landscape Sensitivity Studies and makes it clear that these should not be used in isolation to determine matters of acceptability but can be a useful tool in assessing specific sensitivities within an area. It should be noted that the term is now landscape sensitivity, in comparison with SPP paragraph 162 which encouraged Landscape Capacity Studies. This reflects NatureScot's 2022[18] guidance.

2.5.37 Paragraph 3.6.3 also makes reference to the NPF4 Policy 11 criteria with regard to energy development stating that "*where impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable*".

2.5.38 Section 3.7 relates to noise and makes reference to the 'The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms' (Final Report, Sept 1996, DTI), (ETSU-R-97) which provides the framework for the measurement of wind turbine noise. All applicants are required to follow the framework and use it to assess and rate noise from wind energy developments.

OWPS Conclusions

2.5.39 Page 49 of the OWPS sets out overall conclusions and these include *inter alia* the following key points:

- Deployment of onshore wind is "*mission critical for meeting our climate targets*".
- As an affordable and reliable source of electricity generation, "*we must continue to maximise our natural resource and deliver net zero in a way that is fully aligned with, and continues to protect our natural heritage and native flora and fauna*".
- A renewed commitment to this technology will ensure we keep "*leading the way in onshore wind deployment and support within the UK*".
- The Scottish Government has established "*a clear expectation of delivery with our ambition for a **minimum installed capacity of 20GW** of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030 and providing a vehicle for that delivery through the creation of* [the] *Onshore Wind Strategic Leadership Group*" (emphasis added).

2.5.40 It is stated that "*Onshore wind will remain an essential part of our energy mix and climate change mitigation efforts, but we are also in a nature crisis. Onshore wind farms must strike the right balance in how we care for and use our land…*".

2.5.41 The term "mission critical" is strong language and indicates onshore wind is crucial and extremely important to the attainment of the Government's policy and legislative objectives. This is fundamentally different policy language to that contained within National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3) and SPP.

[18] NatureScot, Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance, paragraph 8 (2022).

The Onshore Wind Sector Deal

2.5.42 The Onshore Wind Sector Deal (the 'Sector Deal') for Scotland was finalised in September 2023. It sets out a series of key measures which will support the Scottish Government in reaching its target of a minimum of 20 GW of onshore wind by 2030. It describes how the Scottish Government and the onshore wind sector will work together to deliver onshore wind farms quickly, sustainably and to the benefit of local communities and with the overall objective of attaining Scotland's net zero target.

2.5.43 The Foreword sets out that:

"*The Government is committed to working with developers and stakeholders, understanding the operational barriers to delivering onshore wind projects and setting out processes to help reduce them. We also commit to speeding up consenting decisions, working with planning authorities and statutory consultees to increase skills and resources, as well as streamlining approaches.*

Jointly, we will work together on ensuring a balance is struck between onshore wind and the impacts on land use and the environment. We will collaborate to enable information to be collected and shared from monitoring and evidence purposes, and we jointly want to capitalise on the unique opportunity for Scotland to become a world leader in decommissioning, re-manufacturing and recycling of onshore wind assets."

2.5.44 It further adds that:

"*The Sector Deal is more than just a document; it is a testament to our determination, a celebration of our potential, and a promise to future generations. Let us work together to usher in an era where innovation, sustainability, and prosperity converge, as we power Scotland's greener future through the boundless energy of onshore wind*."

2.5.45 The matters within the Sector Deal to be actioned by a collaborative approach and also by specific actions from the sector and Government relate to:

- Supply chain, skills and the circular economy;
- Community and benefits;
- Land use and the environment;
- Planning;
- Legislative and regulatory actions; and
- Technical actions.

2.5.46 In terms of land use and the environment, the Sector Deal sets out that NPF4 Policy 1 makes it clear that significant weight needs to be given to the global climate and nature crisis and that "*New onshore wind projects in Scotland will enhance biodiversity and optimise land use and environmental benefits*" (page 11).

2.5.47 It further adds that:

"*Balancing the need for more wind farms with the safeguards defined in NPF4 will be a crucial aspect of achieving the 2030 onshore wind ambition. Scotland will continue to be a world leader in responsible onshore wind development, demonstrating how onshore wind can co-exist with a diversity of species, sensitive habitats, peatland, carbon rich soils and forestry, ensuring positive outcomes for the climate and nature*."

2.5.48 In terms of planning, a key matter is that there is an ambition to reduce the time it takes to determine Section 36 consent applications. The Sector Deal also states (page 13) in relation to planning that:

"*The ambition of 20 GW of installed onshore wind capacity by 2030 will require a significant number of new sites, the repowering and extension of existing sites and the realisation of unbuilt consented sites. Meeting this ambition will require the determination of applications to be made much more quickly than in recent years.*"

The Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)

2.5.49 The Scottish Government published a new draft 'Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan' entitled 'Delivering a fair and secure zero carbon energy system for Scotland' on 10 January 2023. The new Strategy is to replace the one previously published in 2017. The consultation period ended in April 2023. As a draft document it can only be afforded limited weight. The draft document is however consistent with the adopted policy set out in NPF4 and the identification of the 2020s as a crucial decade for the large-scale delivery of renewable energy projects supporting urgent transition to net zero.

2.5.50 The Ministerial Foreword states:

"*The imperative is clear: in this decisive decade, we must deliver an energy system that meets the challenge of becoming a net zero nation by 2045, supplies safe and secure energy for all, generate economic opportunities, and builds a just transition…*

The delivery of this draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan will reduce energy costs in the long term and reduce the likelihood of future energy cost crises….

It is also clear that as part of our response to the climate crisis we must reduce our dependence on oil and gas and that Scotland is well positioned to do so in a way that ensures we have sufficient, secure and affordable energy to meet our needs, to support economic growth and to capture sustainable export opportunities….

For all these reasons, this draft Strategy and Plan supports the fastest possible just transition for the oil and gas sector in order to secure a bright future for a revitalised North Sea energy sector focused on renewables."

2.5.51 The Foreword adds that the draft Strategy sets out key ambitions for Scotland's energy future including:

- More than 20 GW of additional renewable electricity on and offshore by 2030.
- Accelerated decarbonisation of domestic industry, transport and heat.
- Generation of surplus electricity, enabling export of electricity and renewable hydrogen to support decarbonisation across Europe.
- Energy security through development of our own resources and additional energy storage.
- A just transition by maintaining or increasing employment in Scotland's energy production sector against a decline in North Sea production.

2.5.52 The draft Strategy states (page 7, Executive Summary) that the vision for Scotland's energy system is:

"*…that by 2045 Scotland will have a flourishing, climate friendly energy system that delivers affordable, resilient and clean energy supplies for Scotland's households, communities and business. This will deliver maximum benefit for Scotland, enabling us to achieve a wider climate and environmental ambitions, drive the development of a wellbeing economy and deliver a just transition for our workers, businesses, communities and regions.*

In order to deliver that vision, this Strategy sets out clear policy positions and a route map of actions with a focus out to 2030".

2.5.53 A fundamental part of the draft Strategy is expanding the energy generation sector. The Executive Summary states (page 8) that Scotland's renewable resources mean that:

"*….we can not only generate enough cheap green electricity to power Scotland's economy, but also export electricity to our neighbours, supporting jobs here in Scotland and the decarbonisation ambitions of our partners.*

We are setting an ambition of more than 20 GW of additional low-cost renewable electricity generation capacity by 2030, including 12 GW of onshore wind….

An additional 20 GW of renewable generation will more than double our existing renewable generation capacity by 2030……".

Green Industrial Strategy (2024)

2.5.54 The Scottish Government published a Green Industrial Strategy ('GIS') in September 2024. The Executive Summary sets out the mission of the GIS, namely:

"*This Green Industrial Strategy's mission is to ensure that Scotland realises the maximum possible economic benefit from the opportunities created by the global transition to net zero*".

2.5.55 The GIS sets out five opportunity areas for Scotland where identified strengths are most likely to lead to growth and the potential to grow Scotland's exports. The sectors relate to Scotland's wind economy, carbon capture and storage, supporting the green economy by way of professional and financial services, growing the hydrogen sector and establishing Scotland as a competitive centre for clean energy intensive industries of the future.

2.5.56 Page 6 sets out that the GIS forms a key part of the Government's broader National Strategy for Economic Transformation. It states that "*It also links explicitly to our Just Transition Plans which describe how the transition to net zero in the most emitting sectors will be achieved in a way that delivers economic, social and community benefits, including fair work, environmental preservation and reduced poverty and inequality*."

2.5.57 The first of the five opportunity areas is in relation to 'maximising Scotland's wind economy'. It states (page 7) that this:

"*is about making the most of our natural resources, established onshore and offshore wind sectors and first-mover advantage in floating offshore wind to generate clean electricity; participating in global supply chains as well as expanding our domestic supply chain capacity and seizing opportunities across the offshore wind supply chain, from infrastructure to manufacturing; positioning Scotland as a leader in material circularity of wind turbines and components.*"

2.5.58 Actions include, *inter alia*:

- Supporting investment to improve essential infrastructure, expanding supply chains and secure manufacturing opportunities;
- Developing and maintaining a pipeline of investment propositions backed by clear information about the timing and nature of renewable energy opportunities;
- Delivering planning and consenting systems which enable Scotland's net zero development pipeline; and
- Exploring the circularity opportunity in onshore wind.

2.5.59 Page 13 states clearly that the single goal of the GIS is to help Scotland realise economic growth opportunities from the global transition to net zero.

2.5.60 Onshore wind is referred to in some detail at page 21 where the GIS states:

"*Onshore wind is the biggest single technology in Scotland's current mix of renewable electricity generation, comprising 62% of installed capacity.*

A thriving onshore wind sector is therefore critical to the decarbonisation in Scotland and the UK. As set out in our 2022 Onshore Wind Policy Statement, Government and industry are focused on delivering at least 20 GW of onshore wind by 2030 (doubling current capacity) and recent pipeline analysis shows that we should be on track to deliver this.

This trajectory is underpinned by the Onshore Wind Sector Deal which sets out a set of specific collaborative actions which include commitments by both the Scottish Government and the onshore wind industry to help deliver the 20 GW ambition.

A supportive policy environment and successful industry collaboration via the Onshore Wind Strategic Leadership Group confirms the shared commitment of Government and industry to achieve this successful and responsible growth.

The onshore wind workforce is highly skilled and opportunities in installation, consulting, operations and maintenance are anticipated to rise in response to growth ambitions. Specialised engineering consultancy services such as wind farm design and financial due diligence related to onshore developments are expected to grow and offer additional export potential. There is commercial opportunity in circular supply chains related to the UK wind industry. Scotland's established, and now ageing onshore wind assets may also offer opportunities for innovative solutions in remanufacturing, recycling, and decommissioning end of life assets."

2.5.61 It is clear therefore that to progress the Government's objectives with regard to wind energy there needs to be clear support for new investment and growth in onshore wind development. Realising the economic and social opportunities will only be achieved through the development and consenting of additional wind energy developments. Such deployment will not only be critical towards achieving the net zero target, given the important contribution that wind energy will make in that regard, but will also help deliver the Government's clear green infrastructure mission.

Scotland's Climate Change Plan (2026)

2.5.62 The Scottish Government published 'Scotland's Climate Change Plan – 2026-2040' ('CCP') on 25 March 2026. The CCP covers the period 2026 to 2040 and aligns with three five-year "carbon budget" periods: 2026-30, 2031-35 and 2036-40. The CCP sets out the policies and proposals the Scottish Government will take forward to enable the carbon budgets set out in legislation to be met. The carbon budgets have been set in line with the levels proposed by the CCC in May 2025, referred to above, and provide a clear pathway towards Scotland achieving net zero by 2045.

2.5.63 The CCP confirms that Scotland remains committed to achieving net zero GHG emissions by 2045 at the latest and that as of 2023, Scotland had reduced emissions by 51.3% since 1990 — the largest reduction in the UK.

2.5.64 The CCP notes that the key driver of the transition to date has been the transformation in the way energy is generated - from coal and gas to a thriving renewables sector. In 2023, 70% of electricity generated in Scotland was from renewable sources.

2.5.65 It acknowledges the opportunity the transition to net zero provides in terms of growing the economy, noting that the net zero transition can support significant economic opportunities for Scotland.

2.5.66 The CCP sets out average reductions in GHG emissions (compared to 1990 baseline) for each five-year period:

- 57% lower than baseline levels for 2026-2030;
- 69% lower than baseline levels for 2031-2035;
- 80% lower than baseline levels for 2036-2040; and
- 94% lower than baseline levels for 2041-2045.

2.5.67 These budgets provide a "pathway" toward net zero by 2045, and the Plan is designed to ensure policies are in place to meet them.

2.5.68 The CCP sets out sectoral policies relating to a range of sectors, which are prescribed in legislation, including energy supply, agriculture and transport, amongst others. Key policies and actions have been set out for each sector to meet the carbon budgets. The CCP outlines the emissions pathway for each sector covered by the Plan, some of the key actions which will be taken to achieve it and the economic opportunities and benefits this action will support.

2.5.69 Annex 2 of the CCP contains the Sectoral Annexes which support the CCP. Energy supply is one of the key areas of focus. At page 84, the document sets out the vision for Scotland stating that:

"By 2035, we will have expanded our renewable capacity significantly to meet the increasing demand as other sectors decarbonise. We already have an ambition to have delivered 20GW of onshore wind by 2030 and in January 2026, we published the 'Offshore Wind Policy Statement 2020 update: Scotland's Offshore Wind Ambition'. This set out an increased offshore wind ambition for Scotland of up to 40GW of new offshore wind capacity by 2040."

2.5.70 It continues that as we transition to net zero and reduce reliance on fossil fuel generation *"energy storage will play a larger role in ensuring a secure and resilient electricity system by providing a reliable and flexible electricity supply."* (page 84, Annex 2)

2.5.71 One of the actions identified to achieve the vision of emissions reduction for the energy generation sector means *"moving to an electricity system in which the residual amount of unabated gas is displaced by low carbon and renewable sources. To deliver this target, whilst ensuring a safe and secure supply, we must grow our renewables capacity, including from offshore and onshore wind, and solar."* (Page 89, Annex 2)

2.5.72 The publication of the CCP demonstrates the continued commitment and needs case for delivering additional renewable energy capacity. One can take from that that the associated need for new generation infrastructure to achieve net zero is in turn strengthened.

2.6 Conclusions on the Renewable Energy Policy & Legislative Framework

2.6.1 It is considered that the Proposed Development is very strongly supported by the climate change and renewable energy policy and legislative framework.

2.6.2 The trajectory, in terms of the scale and pace of action required to reduce emissions, grows ever steeper, and it is essential that rapid progress is made otherwise the legally binding target in Scotland of net zero by 2045 will not be met.

2.6.3 It is clear from the UK Energy White Paper and the forecasts by the CCC that electricity demand is expected to grow substantially (scenarios vary but potentially by a factor of three or four) as carbon intensive sources of energy are displaced by electrification of other industry sectors, particularly heat and transport. This expected substantial increase in electricity demand is also highlighted in the OWPS.

2.6.4 The change from annual Scottish emission reduction targets to a system of carbon budgets has served to show that Scotland is not on track to attain net zero by 2045, and it strengthens the case for rapidly approving schemes that can contribute to this goal. The overall target of net zero remains unchanged in the move to carbon budgets.

2.6.5 Decisions through the planning and wider consenting system must be responsive to this position. Decision makers can do this by affording substantial weight to the energy policy objectives, articulated above, in the planning balance in a given case.

2.6.6 In terms of the energy policy considerations, it is helpful to reference the recent position of the Scottish Ministers with regard to a Section 36 wind farm decision. Section 36 consent was granted by the Scottish Ministers on 09 May 2025 for the Chrathaich Wind Farm. From paragraph 90 *et seq* of the Decision Letter, the Scottish Ministers in commenting on the acceptability of the development stated:

"*As set out above, the seriousness of climate change, its potential effects and the need to cut carbon dioxide emissions, remain a priority for the Scottish Ministers. Scotland's renewable energy targets and climate change ambitions, energy policies and planning policies are all relevant considerations when weighing up this proposed development. NPF4, Scotland's Energy Strategy and the Onshore Wind Policy Statement ("OWPS") make it clear that renewable energy deployment remains a priority of the Scottish Government. These are all matters which should be afforded significant weight in favour of the Proposed Development".*

The transition to a low carbon economy is an opportunity for Scotland to take advantage of our natural resources to grow low carbon industries and create jobs.

The Scottish Ministers are satisfied that the deployment of this amount of renewable energy the proposed Development could generate is entirely consistent with the Scottish Government's policy on the promotion of renewable energy and its target date for net zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045."

2.6.7 In the most recent renewable energy policy documents referred to, there is a consistent and what might be termed a 'green thread', which ties a number of related policy matters together: namely the urgent challenge and imperative of attaining and sustaining net zero and the need to substantially increase renewable capacity, notably onshore wind.

2.6.8 The OWPS, draft Energy Strategy, Clean Power 2030 and the recently published Climate Change Plan form part of the strengthened policy approach alongside NPF4. These documents confirm the Scottish Government's policy objectives and related targets, reaffirming the important role that onshore wind will play in response to the climate crisis which is at the heart of all these policies.

2.6.9 The Scottish Government commitment to achieve a minimum of 20 GW of onshore wind by 2030 has been referenced. The Proposed Development and its contribution must be considered in the context of the scale and urgency of the stated Scottish Government policy position. As explained, new generation will still be required post 2030 and the overall key net zero target dates remain 2045 for Scotland and 2050 for the UK.

2.6.10 As explained above, the CCC in their May 2025 Report to the Scottish Government explain that in the CCC Balanced Pathway the capacity of variable renewables in Scotland (including offshore and onshore wind and solar) more than triples from 15 GW in 2023 to 49 GW by 2035**,** increasing to 66 GW by 2045. Scotland currently has approximately 18 GW of renewables operating capacity therefore will require an additional 48 GW to be deployed by 2045.

2.6.11 It must follow that the need case for the Proposed Development is to be afforded substantial weight in the planning balance. The way that decision makers can do that is by properly recognising the seriousness and importance of energy policy related considerations in the planning balance, and the contribution of the Proposed Development to meeting net zero and low carbon energy targets. It is the cumulative effect of a large number of individual projects which will move Scotland towards where it needs to be in order to attain net zero.

3. The Benefits of the Proposed Development

3.1 The Benefits: Summary

3.1.1 This chapter summarises the benefits that would arise from the Proposed Development.

Renewable Energy Generation

- With an estimated installed capacity of approximately 147 MW of onshore wind energy and 50 MW of BESS capacity, the Proposed Development would make a valuable and important contribution to the attainment of the UK and Scottish Government policies of encouraging renewable energy developments; and in turn contribute to the achievement of UK and Scottish Government renewable energy and net zero targets. As explained, there is now a distinct shift in policy emphasis from the displacement of higher carbon electricity generation to extending the use of electricity as the critical energy response to the climate emergency.
- The UK legally binding target of net zero GHG emissions by 2050 and the Scottish Government target of net zero by the earlier date of 2045 are major challenges, as explained in the previous chapter. The Scottish Government has made it clear that onshore wind plays a vital and indeed "*mission critical*" role in the attainment of future targets in relation to helping to combat the crisis of global heating.
- The earlier that steps towards decarbonisation are introduced, the greater their contribution to limiting climate change. The Proposed Development's delivery of renewable energy capacity in the near term will have a disproportionately higher benefit than the same capacity delivered later.

Emissions Savings

- The CO_2 emission savings for the operational lifetime (40 years) would provide a net benefit with regards to reducing the impacts of climate change.
- The carbon balance calculations establish that the Proposed Development could result in the saving of approximately 130,233 tonnes CO_2 (tCO_2) per annum when compared against grid mix electricity generation (where electricity generation is made up of a mix of fossil fuels and renewable energy sources).
- The 'pay back' period for the Proposed Development is calculated as 0.5 – 3.0 years (with an expected value of 2.2 years) when compared against grid-mix electricity generation. The Carbon Balance Assessment is provided at **Technical Appendix 2.4** of the EIA Report.

Security of Supply & Energy Storage

- The British Energy Security Strategy has been referenced. It provides an increase to the requirements for both the scale and the urgency of delivery of new low carbon generation capacity, by refocussing the requirement for low-carbon power for reasons of national security of supply and affordability, as well as for decarbonisation.
- With this context, the attractiveness of onshore wind, as a proven technology which will deliver significant benefits to consumers through decarbonisation, security of supply and affordability this decade, becomes clear.
- The Proposed Development, if consented, would provide a valuable contribution to security of supply for the wider region, Scotland and for the wider Great Britain ('GB') area. Consenting the development, would contribute to an adequate and dependable Scottish

and GB generation mix, through enabling the generation of more low carbon power from renewable resources, and would enable the Proposed Development to make a significant contribution to Scottish and wider UK energy security and decarbonisation needs.

> BESS will play a vital role in ensuring the full potential capacity of existing and future renewable energy generation is exploited and the successful transition to a net-zero future. In doing so, it ensures the economic use of grid infrastructure, by increasing the flexibility of energy generation and when it is exported to the grid, through the use of battery storage. The greater consistency in terms of export capacity the more efficient it will be for consumers.

Socio-Economic Benefits

> A Report entitled 'Ravengill Energy Park Maximising Socio-economic Benefits' accompanies the Section 36 application. It sets out a detailed socio-economic appraisal of the Proposed Development. In summary, it states that it is estimated that during the development and construction phase, which is expected to cost approximately £204 million, the Proposed Development could generate:

- £14.4 million Gross Value Added ('GVA') and a peak of 198 jobs in South Lanarkshire;
- £46.1 million GVA and a peak of 606 jobs in Scotland; and
- £78.0 million GVA and a peak of 1,021 jobs in the UK as a whole.

> During development and construction, the main opportunities for local suppliers would be related to the balance of plant contracts, including plant hire, civil engineering and construction, fencing, forestry and other skilled trades activities.

> On average in each year of its 40-year operational life, the Proposed Development is expected to generate:

- £4.6 million GVA and 28 jobs in South Lanarkshire;
- £9.1 million GVA and 73 jobs in Scotland; and
- £13.0 million GVA and 101 jobs in the UK.

> In total, over the development, construction and operation phases of the Proposed Development, it was estimated that it could contribute:

- £198 million GVA in South Lanarkshire;
- £411 million GVA in Scotland; and
- £598 million GVA in the UK.

> This economic activity, and the commitments outlined above, would contribute to the human, economic, social, and natural capital of South Lanarkshire. This will increase the resilience of these communities and support their long-term economic development.

Community Benefits

> As set out in the Applicant's Maximising Socio-economic Benefits Report the Applicant has invested resources to understand the local needs and aspirations that can be supported through the Community Benefit Funding ('CBF') and other benefits. This has included in-person events and virtual consultation through BizGive's AssetFace engagement platform. This was to identify the opportunities raised by the community and consider further work to develop the practicalities of supporting these projects through the CBF with a long-term vision. This will be shared with other developers in the area. A Community Benefit Agreement between the Applicant and the local community will be established and reviewed every 5 years to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. The

potential projects to be supported will be decided by the community and South Lanarkshire Council.

- The Applicant is proposing a tailored package of benefits for the community from the Proposed Development and according to the current layout design, this could equate to a CBF for the local area worth up to £735,000 annually, which is equivalent to £29.4 million over its operational lifetime. This could support local aspiration and projects and generate economic impacts. The presence of the Proposed Development would provide local communities with additional funding, which could support them in delivering larger interventions.
- The Applicant also follows an innovative approach working with relevant companies with the aim of installing solar panels and batteries to local households. Subject to confirmation of the final delivery model, the infrastructure ownership will likely be passed to the individual households.

Biodiversity Enhancement

- An outline Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP) has been included as **Technical Appendix 6.7** of the EIA Report detailing proposed significant biodiversity enhancement measures.

4. Appraisal against NPF4

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 NPF4 was approved by resolution of the Scottish Parliament on 11 January 2023 and was adopted on 13 February 2023.

4.1.2 A Chief Planner's Letter was issued on 8 February 2023 entitled 'Transitional Arrangements for National Planning Framework 4'. It contained advice intended to support consistency in decision making ahead of new style Local Development Plans ('LDPs') being in place.

Development Management

4.1.3 Section 13 of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 Act amends Section 24 of the 1997 Act regarding the meaning of the statutory 'Development Plan', such that for the purposes of the 1997 Act, the Development Plan for an area is taken as consisting of the provisions of:

"(a) the National Planning Framework,

(b) any strategic development plan for the time being applicable to the area, together with—(i)the Scottish Ministers' notice of approval of that plan, and (ii)any supplementary guidance issued in connection with that plan, and

(c) any local development plan for the time being applicable to the area."

4.1.4 The Chief Planner's letter of 8th February 2023 states supplementary guidance associated with LDPs which was in force before 12th February 2023 (the date on which section 13 of the 2019 Act came into force) will continue to be in force and be part of the development plan.

4.1.5 The statutory Development Plan covering the Site consists of NPF4 and South Lanarkshire Council Local Development Plan 2[19] (SLC LDP2) (adopted 9th April 2021). There is no statutory Supplementary Guidance associated with the LDP2.

4.1.6 The publication of NPF4 coincided with the implementation of certain parts of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 (the '2019 Act'). A key provision is that in the event of any incompatibility between a provision of NPF4 and a provision of an LDP, then whichever of them is the later in date will prevail. In this case, NPF4 is the later element of the Development Plan.

How NPF4 is to be used

4.1.7 Annex A (page 94) of NPF4 explains how it is to be used. It states:

"*The purpose of planning is to manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest … Scotland in 2045 will be different. We must embrace and deliver radical change so we can tackle and adapt to climate change, restore biodiversity loss, improve health and wellbeing, reduce inequalities, build a wellbeing economy and create great places*."

4.1.8 Annex A states that NPF4 is required by law to set out the Scottish Ministers' policies and proposals for the development and use of land. It adds:

"*It plays a key role in supporting the delivery of Scotland's national outcomes and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals[20]. NPF4 includes a long-term spatial strategy to 2045*."

[19] South Lanarkshire Council (2021) South Lanarkshire Council Local Development Plan 2 https://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/developmentplan2

[20] The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals are set out at page 95 of NPF4 and include *inter alia* 'affordable and clean energy' and 'climate action'.

4.1.9 In terms of how NPF4 should be used; it states at page 95 that *"NPF4 should be read as a whole. It represents a package of planning policies to guide us to the place we want Scotland to be in 2045."*

4.1.10 NPF4 contains a Spatial Strategy and Scottish Government development management policies to be applied in all consenting decisions, and it identifies national developments which are aligned to the strategic themes of the Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan[21] ('IIP').

4.1.11 Annex A adds that NPF4 is required by law to contribute to six outcomes. These relate to meeting housing needs, health and wellbeing, population of rural areas, addressing equality and discrimination and also, of particular relevance to the Proposed Development, "*meeting any targets relating to the reduction of emissions of greenhouses gases, and, securing positive effects for biodiversity*".

4.2 The National Spatial Strategy – Delivery of Sustainable Places

4.2.1 Part 1 of NPF4 sets out the Spatial Strategy for Scotland to 2045 based on six spatial principles which are to influence all plans and decisions. The introductory text to the Spatial Strategy starts by stating (page 3):

"*The world is facing unprecedented challenges. The global climate emergency means that we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the future impacts of climate change*."

4.2.2 The principles are stated as playing a key role in delivering the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals and the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework[22].

4.2.3 The Spatial Strategy is aimed at supporting the delivery of:

- 'Sustainable Places': "*where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity*";
- 'Liveable Places': "*where we can all live better, healthier lives*"; and
- 'Productive places': "*where we have a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy*".

4.2.4 Page 6 of NPF4 addresses the delivery of sustainable places. Reference is made to the consequences of Scotland's changing climate, and it states, *inter alia*:

"*Scotland's Climate Change Plan, backed by legislation, has set our approach to achieving net zero emissions by 2045, and we must make significant progress towards this by 2030…Scotland's Energy Strategy will set a new agenda for the energy sector in anticipation of continuing innovation and investment*."

4.2.5 The National Spatial Strategy in relation to 'sustainable places' is described (page 7 of NPF4) as follows:

"*Scotland's future places will be net zero, nature-positive places that are designed to reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change, whilst protecting, recovering and restoring our environment.*

Meeting our climate ambition will require a rapid transformation across all sectors of our economy and society. This means ensuring the right development happens in the right place.

Every decision on our future development must contribute to making Scotland a more sustainable place. We will encourage low and zero carbon design and energy efficiency,

[21] The Scottish Government's five-year Infrastructure Investment Plan (2021-22 to 2025-26) was published in February 2021. It set out a vision for Scotland's future infrastructure in order to support and enable an inclusive net zero emissions economy.
[22] The Scottish Government National Performance Framework sets out 'National Outcomes' and measures progress against a range of economic, social and environmental 'National Indicators'.

development that is accessible by sustainable travel, and expansion of renewable energy generation."

4.2.6 Six National Developments ('ND') support the delivery of sustainable places, one being 'Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure'.

4.2.7 A summary description of this ND is provided at page 7 of NPF4 as follows:

"*Supports electricity generation and associated grid infrastructure throughout Scotland, providing employment and opportunities for community benefit, helping to reduce emissions and improve security of supply*".

4.2.8 Page 8 of NPF4 sets out 'Cross-cutting Outcome and Policy Links' with regard to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It states:

"*The global climate emergency and the nature crisis have formed the foundations for the spatial strategy as a whole. The regional priorities share opportunities and challenges for reducing emissions and adapting to the long-term impacts of climate change, in a way which protects and enhances our natural environment*."

4.2.9 A key point in this statement is that the climate emergency and nature crisis are expressly stated as forming the foundations of the National Spatial Strategy; recognising that tackling climate change and the nature crisis is an overriding imperative which is key to the outcomes of almost all policies within NPF4.

4.3 National Developments

Overview

4.3.1 Page 97 of NPF4 sets out that 18 NDs have been identified. These are described as:

"*significant developments of national importance that will help to deliver the spatial strategy … National development status does not grant planning permission for the development and all relevant consents are required*".

4.3.2 It adds that:

"*Their designation means that the principle for development does not need to be agreed in later consenting processes, providing more certainty for communities, businesses and investors. … In addition to the statement of need at Annex B, decision makers for applications for consent for national developments should take into account all relevant policies*".

4.3.3 Annex B of NPF4 sets out the various NDs and related Statements of Need. It explains that NDs are significant developments of national importance that will help to deliver the Spatial Strategy. It states (page 99) that:

"*The statements of need set out in this annex are a requirement of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and describe the development to be considered as a national development for consent handling purposes*".

National Development 3 "Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure"

4.3.4 Page 103 of NPF4 describes National Development 3 ('ND3') and states:

"*This national development supports renewable electricity generation, repowering, and expansion of the electricity grid.*

A large and rapid increase in electricity generation from renewable sources will be essential for Scotland to meet its net zero emissions targets. Certain types of renewable electricity generation will also be required, which will include energy storage technology and capacity, to provide the vital services, including flexible response, that a zero carbon network will require. Generation is for domestic consumption as well as for export to the UK and beyond, with new

capacity helping to decarbonise heat, transport and industrial energy demand. This has the potential to support jobs and business investment, with wider economic benefits.

The electricity transmission grid will need substantial reinforcement including the addition of new infrastructure to connect and transmit the output from new on and offshore capacity to consumers in Scotland, the rest of the UK and beyond. Delivery of this national development will be informed by market, policy and regulatory developments and decisions."

4.3.5 The location for ND3 is set out as being all of Scotland and in terms of need it is described as:

"*Additional electricity generation from renewables and electricity transmission capacity of scale is fundamental to achieving a net zero economy and supports improved network resilience in rural and island areas*. …"

4.3.6 Reference is made to the designation and classes of development which would qualify as ND3, and it states in this regard:

"*A development contributing to 'Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission' in the location described, within one or more of the Classes of Development described below and that is of a scale or type that would otherwise have been classified as 'major' by 'The Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009', is designated a national development:*

(a) on and off shore electricity generation, including electricity storage, from renewables exceeding 50 megawatts capacity .." (emphasis added)

4.3.7 The Proposed Development would therefore have national development status, and it would make a valuable contribution to the delivery of the National Spatial Strategy.

4.4 National Planning Policy

4.4.1 Part 2 of NPF4 (page 36) addresses national planning policy by topic with reference to three themes formulated with the aim of delivering sustainable, liveable and productive places.

4.4.2 In terms of planning, development management and the application of the national level policies, NPF4 states:

"*The policy sections are for use in the determination of planning applications. The policies should be read as a whole. Planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is for the decision maker to determine what weight to attach to policies on a case by case basis. Where a policy states that development will be supported, it is in principle, and it is for the decision maker to take into account all other relevant policies*".

4.4.3 In terms of "sustainable places" the most relevant policies to the Proposed Development include the following:

- Policy 1: Tackling the climate and nature crises;
- Policy 3: Biodiversity;
- Policy 4: Natural places;
- Policy 5: Soils;
- Policy 7: Historic assets and places; and
- Policy 11: Energy.

4.4.4 In terms of "liveable places", the most relevant polices to the Proposed Development include:

- Policy 22: Flood risk and water management.

4.4.5 These policies are addressed in turn below.

4.4.6 The Chief Planner's Letter of 8 February 2023 provides advice in relation to applying NPF4 policy. It states that the application of planning judgement to the circumstances of an individual situation remains essential for all decision making, informed by principles of proportionality and reasonableness. It states:

"*It is important to bear in mind NPF4 must be read and applied as a whole. The intent of each of the 33 policies is set out in NPF4 and can be used to guide decision making. Conflicts between policies are to be expected. Factors for and against development will be weighed up in the balance of planning judgement.*" (emphasis added)

4.4.7 The Letter adds:

"*It is recognised that it may take some time for planning authorities and stakeholders to get to grips with the NPF4 policies, and in particular the interface with individual LDP policies. As outlined above, in the event of any incompatibility between the provision of NPF and the provision of an LDP, whichever of them is the later in date is to prevail. Provisions that are contradictory or in conflict would be likely to be considered incompatible*".

4.5 NPF4 Policy 1: Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises

Policy 1 & Principles

4.5.1 The intent of Policy 1 is "*to encourage, promote and facilitate development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crisis*".

4.5.2 Policy 1 directs decision makers that "*when considering all development proposals significant weight will be given to the global climate and nature crises.*"

4.5.3 This is a radical departure from the usual approach to policy and clearly denotes a step change in planning policy response to climate change. The matter of weight is no longer left entirely to the discretion of the decision maker. Significant weight should therefore be attributed to the Proposed Development given it would be consistent with the intent of Policy 1, would make a positive contribution by helping to attain the outcome of net zero, and would also deliver biodiversity enhancement helping to address the nature crisis.

4.5.4 The Chief Planner's Letter refers to Policy 1. It states:

"*This policy prioritises the climate and nature crises in all decisions. It should be applied together with the other policies in NPF4. It will be for the decision maker to determine whether the significant weight to be applied tips the balance in favour for, or against a proposal on the basis of its positive or negative contribution to the climate and nature crises.*"

4.5.5 This statement from the Chief Planner confirms that the decision maker must apply significant weight to Policy 1, but it is for the decision maker to decide if it is for or against the proposal. The Proposed Development's contribution to the climate emergency and nature crisis is positive and therefore the significant weight in this case is in favour of the proposal.

4.5.6 The term "Tackling" the respective crises in Policy 1 is also important – this means that decision makers should ensure an urgent and positive response to these issues and take positive action. Furthermore, NPF4 (page 8) refers to cross cutting outcomes and states with regard to Policy 1 that the policy gives significant weight "*to the global climate emergency in order to ensure that it is recognised as a priority in all plans and decisions*".

The application of Policy 1

4.5.7 Given the nature of the Proposed Development, it would make a valuable contribution in relation to renewable energy generation and greenhouse gas reduction targets. It will directly further the policy intent and outcomes of Policy 1 and should be afforded significant positive weight in terms of tackling the climate and nature crises. The specific emissions and carbon saving benefits are set out below in the context of NPF4 Policy 11 which requires the contribution that a development would make to targets to be taken into account.

4.5.8 The point is made later in this chapter that it is important to recognise the greatest threat to biodiversity is climate change. The principal and essential benefit of the Proposed Development is a valuable contribution of renewable energy, to facilitate the earliest possible decarbonisation of the energy system and the achievement of net zero no later than 2045. The purpose of achieving net zero is also to protect biodiversity and the earlier it can be achieved, the greater the benefits to biodiversity.

4.5.9 Furthermore, as explained below with reference to NPF4 Policy 3, biodiversity enhancement measures are proposed as part of the Proposed Development.

4.6 NPF4 Policy 11: Energy

Policy 11 & Principles

4.6.1 For the consideration of wind energy development, Policy 11 'Energy' (page 53) is the lead policy. Policy 11's intent is set out as:

"*to encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore. This includes energy generation, storage, new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure and emerging low carbon and zero emission technologies including hydrogen and carbon capture utilisation and storage.*"

4.6.2 Policy Outcomes are identified as: "*expansion of renewable, low carbon and zero emission technologies*".

4.6.3 Policy 11 is in the following terms:

"a) Development proposals for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies will be supported. These include:

i. wind farms including repowering, extending, expanding and extending the life of existing wind farms;

ii. enabling works, such as grid transmission and distribution infrastructure;

iii. energy storage, such as battery storage and pumped storage hydro;

iv. small scale renewable energy generation technology;

v. solar arrays;

vi. proposals associated with negative emissions technologies and carbon capture; and

vii. proposals including co-location of these technologies.

b) Development proposals for wind farms in National Parks and National Scenic Areas will not be supported.

c) 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.

d) Development proposals that impact on international or national designations will be assessed in relation to Policy 4.

e) In addition, project design and mitigation will demonstrate how the following impacts are addressed:

i. impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact, noise and shadow flicker;

ii. significant landscape and visual impacts, recognising that such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/ or

appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable;

iii. public access, including impact on long distance walking and cycling routes and scenic routes;

iv. impacts on aviation and defence interests including seismological recording;

v. impacts on telecommunications and broadcasting installations, particularly ensuring that transmission links are not compromised;

vi. impacts on road traffic and on adjacent trunk roads, including during construction;

vii. impacts on historic environment;

viii. effects on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk;

ix. biodiversity including impacts on birds;

x. impacts on trees, woods and forests;

xi. proposals for the decommissioning of developments, including ancillary infrastructure, and site restoration;

xii. the quality of site restoration plans including the measures in place to safeguard or guarantee availability of finances to effectively implement those plans; and

xiii. cumulative impacts.

In considering these impacts, significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

Grid capacity should not constrain renewable energy development. It is for developers to agree connections to the grid with the relevant network operator. In the case of proposals for grid infrastructure, consideration should be given to underground connections where possible.

f) Consents for development proposals may be time-limited. Areas identified for wind farms are, however, expected to be suitable for use in perpetuity".

The application of Policy 11

4.6.4 **Paragraph a) of Policy 11** states a position of express "support" for wind farm development.

4.6.5 The intent and desired outcome of the policy is clear – the expansion of renewable energy, through encouragement, promotion and facilitation, all of which the Proposed Development would help to deliver. The wording of Policy 11 Paragraph (a)(i) makes it clear that the policy supports new wind farms, such as the one which would be delivered by the Proposed Development.

4.6.6 **Paragraph b)** of Policy 11 does not apply in this case as there is no development within a National Park or National Scenic Area.

4.6.7 **Paragraph c) of Policy 11** requires developments to "maximise net economic impact". The socio-economic effects that would arise have been summarised in Chapter 3 above and set out in the Maximising Socio-economic Benefits Report which accompanies the application.

4.6.8 The Proposed Development will maximise the socio-economic benefits it will have on the local community and South Lanarkshire through the actions and commitments made by the Applicant.

4.6.9 **Paragraph d) of Policy 11** states that development proposals that impact on international and national designations "*will be assessed in relation to Policy* 4".

4.6.10 Policy 4 also deals with impacts in relation to local landscape designations. Therefore, the matter of the impacts of the Proposed Development in relation to such (international, national and local) designations is examined further below with specific regard to the provisions of NPF4 Policy 4.

4.6.11 **Paragraph e) of Policy 11** states that project design and mitigation *"will demonstrate how"* impacts are addressed. These are listed in the quotation of the policy above and are addressed in turn below. The Applicant has through project design and mitigation addressed impacts on the matters set out at Policy 11 (e). This has been set out within EIA Report **Chapter 3: Design Evolution**, and within relevant topic specific chapters of the EIA Report where relevant. It is considered that appropriate "design mitigation" has been applied.

(i) Impacts on Communities and Individual Dwellings - Residential Visual Amenity

4.6.12 As set out in EIA Report **Chapter 4: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** ('LVIA') a detailed Residential Visual Amenity Assessment ('RVAA') was undertaken and is contained in Technical Appendix 4.7 of the EIA Report. Individual properties have been assessed in detail with respect to Residential Visual Amenity Threshold ('RVAT').

4.6.13 The assessment found that whilst there were 15 properties judged to have a high magnitude of change, and two a medium magnitude of change to views, no properties were judged to receive effects on visual aspects of residential amenity such that they would reach the RVAT. This is due to a combination of elements including distance from the proposed turbines, influence of screening by intervening landform, and orientation of views from the properties involved. These are considerations that have been addressed through project design.

(i) Impacts on Communities and Individual Dwellings - Noise and Shadow Flicker

4.6.14 Noise is addressed in EIA Report **Chapter 10: Noise**. Noise impacts during the construction phase will be controlled through the production and implementation of a CEMP (an outline CEMP is provided in **Technical Appendix 2.1 to** the EIA Report). Compliance with the proposed construction phase noise limits will result in construction phase noise effects being not significant.

4.6.15 Operational noise (including cumulative noise from the Proposed Development and other wind farm developments) is assessed with reference to ETSU-R-97 The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms and the Institute of Acoustics document A Good Practice Guide to the Application of ETSU-R-97 for the Assessment and Rating of Wind Turbine Noise.

4.6.16 The predicted noise levels at all noise sensitive receptors ('NSRs') are considered to be not significant. The Applicant is committed to meeting appropriate noise limits identified. This will be achieved by selection of an appropriate turbine which can meet the noise limits.

4.6.17 Cumulative effects have been assessed for the Proposed Development in combination with the surrounding operational and proposed wind farms (Clyde Windfarm, Middle Muir Windfarm, Andershaw Windfarm, and M74 West Renewable Energy Park) and the potential effects are considered to be not significant.

4.6.18 An assessment of potential shadow flicker effects associated with the Proposed Development has been carried out, with the results presented in **Technical Appendix 2.5** of the EIA Report.

4.6.19 The results of the assessment state that two receptors would potentially be affected by shadow flicker as a result of the Proposed Development; Waterhead Toll Cottage and New Glendorch. However, mitigation is proposed in the form of a Wind Farm Shadow Flicker Mitigation protocol, and it is considered that potential impacts could be reduced to an acceptable level.

4.6.20 Following mitigation therefore, the Proposed Development will not have significant adverse shadow flicker effects on any residential properties.

(ii) Landscape and Visual Considerations

4.6.21 Before examining the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development, Paragraph e(ii) of NPF4 Policy 11 makes it clear and recognises that significant landscape and visual impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy and where localised and/or subject to appropriate design mitigation, they should generally be acceptable. The LVIA (as contained within **Chapter 4** of the EIA Report) should be referred to for its detail, but summary points are referenced below.

Design Approach

4.6.22 Potential landscape and visual effects have been a key consideration in the iterative design process and have played an important role in shaping the final layout of the Proposed Development. The design evolved iteratively, with potential landscape and visual effects reviewed at each stage of the process. Multiple turbine and infrastructure layout options were examined, and the layout was progressively refined to respond to landscape and visual constraints, including views from surrounding viewpoints and nearby residential receptors. Specific design objectives in terms of the landscape and visual design strategy have been set out in **Chapter 3 Design Evolution and Alternatives** of the EIA Report.

4.6.23 In addition, reference should be made to the Design Statement. The Design Statement decribes an approach based on a detailed landscape analysis of the Site in the wider context which involved placement of turbines in specific lines along the apex of ridges within the Site. As explained within the document, the positioning of turbines close to valleys and upland glens has been identified so that whilst the turbines would be visible, the development does not change the overall context of the upland glen. The document specifically responds to points raised by NatureScot in relation to the distinctive character of the Lowther Hills and the setting of the settlement of Leadhills and its associated Conservation Area. The document also takes into account views and visual amenity considerations. It explains that the geometric configuration of the turbines has the greatest effect on how the wind farm would be seen and understood by viewer. The principles set out have been reflected in the proposed layout and it is considered that the Proposed Development successfully fits into the Site and wider context while respecting key characteristics of the wider landscape and conforming to the broad pattern of development.

Landscape Character

4.6.24 The Site is located within a predominantly upland landscape area, and from many of the hill summits there are extensive views across the Southern Uplands including summits in the Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire, East Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway.

4.6.25 The Site is located across one Landscape Character Type (LCT) as defined by as units of landscape with consistency of character. The majority of the Site, including all 21 turbines, is located within NatureScot, 217 Southern Uplands – 'Glasgow & Clyde Valley', characterised by an extensive, large-scale upland landscape with strong but smooth glacier carved relief.

4.6.26 The assessment identified potential significant (localised) residual effects during operation in relation to landscape character (in terms of effects on key characteristics of relevant LCTs) and the potential for visual changes to existing views as experienced by people in the surrounding area. Significant landscape character effects are predicted to arise within approximately 8 km from the proposed turbines.

4.6.27 Where effects on landscape character have been predicted as significant these are considered to be localised. This matter is further addressed below.

Designated Landscapes

4.6.28 The Site is located within the Leadhills and Lowther Hills Special Landscape Area (SLA), a local landscape designation. Significant effects were predicted for the SLA in relation to reducing the 'sense of emptiness' in the southern half of the SLA as identified in the special qualities. No other special qualities, including cultural artefacts, extensive moorland etc, are impacted upon and whilst there is some loss of the sense of emptiness in the southern half of the SLA, these effects would not result in a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the SLA.

4.6.29 It is explained in the LVIA that it was not judged that the special qualities of the Thornhill Uplands local landscape designation would be altered due to limited theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines predicted from the area.

Visual Effects

4.6.30 A detailed assessment of the likely effects on the visual amenity is provided as part of the LVIA, which considers a range of viewpoint locations.

4.6.31 The M74 Motorway, A74 (M), A73, A702, B797, B7040, B7078 and West Coast Railway Line, as well as National Cycle Route (NCR) 74 are within visual range of the Site. A section of the B797 road passes through the Site.

4.6.32 Other visual receptors with visibility of the Proposed Development include the Southern Upland Way ('SUW'), a series of Scottish Hill Tracks, including core paths.

4.6.33 The change to views experienced from the M74 Motorway, A74(M)/, A73, A702, B797, B7040, B7078 roads, SUW, five Scottish Hill Tracks, Core Paths within 5 km and hill tops within 25 km are assessed as significant. Effects in relation to the change to views largely reduces for respective receptors based on distance due to the effect of screening from landform and forestry/woodland, as well as the relative distance from the proposed turbines.

4.6.34 The most pronounced effects would be from areas within or adjoining the Site, with significant effects extending to within 10 km of the Site. Overall, the significant visual effects would be largely localised in spatial extent.

Cumulative Effects

4.6.35 The cumulative assessment in the LVIA is presented in **Technical Appendix 4.5.** It considered the potential additional effects of the Proposed Development with two scenarios:

- Consented Scenario: with consented wind farms present in the baseline (in addition to existing wind farms and developments currently under construction), i.e., a likely future scenario; and
- In-Planning scenario: with undetermined proposals in planning, including those at appeal, present in the baseline (in addition to the above), i.e., a less certain future scenario.

4.6.36 From a cumulative perspective there would be no increase to effects assessed in the LVIA in relation to landscape character and changes to views from visual receptors.

Hours of Darkness Assessment

4.6.37 It is explained in the LVIA that the Proposed Development would be lit with ten turbines, (Turbines 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 16, 20 and 21) each having medium intensity 2000 candela ('cd') steady red lights on the top of the hub (a second light on each hub would be installed as backup, but would not be lit when the primary light is functional). No mid-tower lights would be used. The hub lights would come on at half an hour after sunset and would be switched off at half an hour before sunrise (to be on during nautical twilight).

4.6.38 Proposed mitigation includes the reduction of intensity of the lights during conditions of clearer visibility, such that the lights would only operate at full intensity of 2000 cd when visibility is less than 5 km; at other times they would be at 10%, i.e., 200 cd. Meteorological data for the local area suggests that the 2000 cd lights would be at 2000 cd for 7 to 10% of the time and at 200 cd for 90 to 93% of the time. The lights used would be designed to emit a horizontal beam of light with reduced upward and downward spill of light, such that the brightness of the light emitted is decreased for viewers close to the turbines viewing the lights from below.

4.6.39 The assessment of the effects of the lighting on views after dark considered selected footpaths and hill-top areas and assessed the appearance of the proposed lighting relative to existing lights in the views and the change to the nighttime viewing experience. Off-road locations are likely to have very few viewers, but the potential for people to be out at night is also considered for off-road viewpoints and footpaths.

4.6.40 The assessment of the effects of aviation lighting on non-aviation receptors concluded that there would be significant effects from the SUW, five Scottish Hill Tracks, Core Paths within 5 km, hills to the north, northeast to southeast, south and west, and residential properties within 2.5 km. It should be noted that the potential effect on these receptors would be an extension of the overall effects into hours of darkness affecting a small number of people.

Localised Landscape & Visual Effects

4.6.41 The landscape and visual impacts are judged to be largely localised. As such the extent and nature of effects is considered to be acceptable when considered against the policy criteria in NPF4 which specifically states, *"Where impacts are localised and/ or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable".* While the term 'local' is not defined in this context in planning policy or guidance, it is helpful to examine how the Scottish Ministers have defined 'localised'.

4.6.42 The term requires a judgement on the geographical extent of influence from a wind farm, having regard to the type of landscape in which the impacts would arise. In this regard, it is relevant to consider two relatively recent wind farm Section 36 decisions.

4.6.43 In the Chleansaid Section 36 decision[23], (16 turbines at 200 m to blade tip height) the Scottish Ministers at page 13 of their Decision Letter, stated:

"The Scottish Ministers agree with the EIA Report conclusions that the proposed development will have some significant landscape and visual impacts but overall these would remain relatively localised, with the majority of significant effects not occurring more than 12 km from the proposed development. It is, therefore, considered by the Scottish Ministers that the landscape and visual impacts are acceptable."

4.6.44 This position is repeated on page 16 of the Decision Letter, where it is stated:

"….these impacts are considered acceptable in the context of the benefits that the proposed development will bring in terms of net economic benefit, contributing to renewable energy and climate change targets, while protecting the natural environment."

4.6.45 Furthermore in the Bunloinn Section 36 Decision[24] (10 turbines at 200 m to blade tip height), at paragraph 24 of the Decision Letter it states that the planning authority acknowledges there will be significant landscape and visual impacts but *"it is satisfied that by virtue of the proposed development's location, setting and design, these are largely localised and are acceptable when all matters are taken into account."*

4.6.46 At paragraph 93 it is set out that *"The Scottish Ministers acknowledge that the proposed development will have some significant landscape and visual impacts but overall, these would remain relatively localised with the majority of significant effects occurring within 12 km of the proposed development none at a distance greater than 14.7 km."*

[23] Scottish Ministers (2023) Chleansaid Wind Farm Decision ECU Reference: ECU00002031
[24] Scottish Ministers (2024) Bunloinn Wind Farm Decision ECU Refernece: ECU00003304

4.6.47 It is fully accepted that each development needs to be considered on its respective merits, but it is important that there is consistency in decision making with regard to this particular aspect of NPF4 policy 11 e) and its application. In the two Scottish Ministers' decisions referenced above they reference the landscape and visual effects as being "relatively localised" and "largely localised" which implies Ministers are prepared to take a view that there could be some effects which may be greater than localised, but in the round are considered to be acceptable.

(iii) Public Access

4.6.48 The Applicant intends to improve the access opportunities and where possible, link existing access networks during the operational phase of the wind farm, as well as improving signposting and information about the routes. An Outdoor Access Management Plan ('OAMP') is proposed as is contained at **Technical Appendix 9.2** of the EIA Report.

(iv) Aviation and Defence Interests and (v) Telecommunications & Broadcasting

4.6.49 Aviation matters are addressed in **Technical Appendix 2.3** of the EIA Report. It sets out with regard to aerodromes that no Primary Surveillance Radar ('PSR') or Instrument Flight Procedures ('IFP') issues arising from the proposed development are predicted for Glasgow, Glasgow Prestwick Airport ('GPA') or Edinburgh Airport. With regard to NATS en Route Ltd PSR, the assessment identifies that there would be an impact in relation to Lowther Hill and Cumbernauld PSR. It is set out that the Applicant understands that this PSR impact can be mitigated and the Applicant is prepared to identify and agree the selected mitigation.

4.6.50 In addition, the turbines would be lit and as modified by the CAA approved reduced lighting scheme, Ministry of Defence ('MoD') lighting requirements would also be addressed to address any low flying concerns of the MoD. Post mitigation therefore no significant adverse effects are predicted in relation to aviation matters.

4.6.51 In terms of telecommunications, this topic is addressed in **Technical Appendix 1.6** of the EIA Report. The assessment indicates that there would be some potential for interference issues to arise as a result of the Proposed Development. Recommendations are set out with regard to proposed mitigation approaches which could be secured by way of standard planning conditions.

(vi) Impacts on Road Traffic and Trunk Roads

4.6.52 EIA Report **Chapter 9 Traffic and Transport,** addresses impacts relating to construction traffic and transport.

4.6.53 It is explained in the assessment that the Proposed Development would lead to increased traffic volumes on a number of roads in the vicinity of the Site during the construction phase compared to the predicted future baseline. These would be of a temporary timescale and transitory in nature.

4.6.54 Construction vehicles would enter the Site from the B797 via newly provided access junctions, which would facilitate access to the eastern section and the western section of the Site. A crossing point would be provided on the C16 Crawfordjohn Road between the B797 and B740 at Crawfordjohn.

4.6.55 Abnormal Indivisible Load delivery vehicles would access the Site via a newly provided temporary construction Site entrance from the A74(M), with a crossing of the B797 to access the western turbine group. Empty Abnormal Indivisible Load delivery vehicles would return to the road network via the B797 road, rejoining the M74 at Junction 14. It should be noted that HGVs would avoid both Abington and Leadhills.

4.6.56 The peak of construction activity is expected to occur in month 11 of an estimated 18-month construction period.

4.6.57 The movement of Abnormal Indivisible Load ('AIL') traffic would require small scale and temporary remedial works at a number of locations along the likely delivery route, which routes from Glasgow King George V (KGV) Docks. AILs would likely route to the Site via the M8, M74, A74(M), M6, Junction 42 Golden Fleece, M6 and A74(M). Loads would exit A74(M) at a newly provided off-slip access junction on the A74(M) to the south of Junction 13 near Abington, which would provide direct access to the Site.

4.6.58 It is stated in the assessment that with the implementation of appropriate mitigation, no significant residual effects are anticipated in respect of traffic and transport. Residual effects are assessed to be minor; these would principally occur during the construction phase only and would be temporary and reversible.

4.6.59 Traffic levels during the operational phase of the Proposed Development would comprise up to two vehicles per week for maintenance purposes.

4.6.60 Details of the mitigation measures would be set out in the final Construction Traffic Management Plan ('CTMP'). Other measures include:

- An AIL Transport Management Plan;
- Staff Travel Plan; and
- An Outdoor Access Management Plan;

(vii) Historic Environment

4.6.61 **EIA Report Chapter 5: Cultural Heritage** addresses the archaeological and historic environment value of the Site and assesses the potential both for direct and indirect physical impacts and setting impacts on archaeological features and heritage assets resulting from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

4.6.62 The baseline assessment for the EIA has established that there is one designated asset, Waterhead, platform settlement 900 m N of (SM4714) within the Site boundary. This asset has been avoided through design and there would be no direct construction impact on it.

4.6.63 It is explained in the assessment that there are a further 92 non-designated heritage assets that lie within the Site. These assets have mostly been avoided by the design of the renewable energy park layout and, where appropriate, mitigation has been proposed that would address direct effects upon these and upon any previously unrecorded cultural heritage assets that may be encountered. Taking account of the current land-use and historic landscape character of the Site and its surroundings, it is concluded in the assessment that the potential for further archaeological discoveries within the Site is assessed as being low to moderate.

4.6.64 The assessment has considered the effect of the Proposed Development on the settings of heritage assets within the Site and in the wider landscape. One impact has been identified as being significant in EIA terms: an effect of moderate significance on the setting of Leadhills Conservation Area (CA393). While there would be an impact of moderate significance on this asset, it is assessed that the Proposed Development would adequately preserve its context and siting as a former mining village set within a remote and upland landscape.

4.6.65 The potential for cumulative construction, operational and decommissioning effects on cultural heritage has also been considered. No significant cumulative effects in relation to cultural heritage assets have been identified.

4.6.66 Effects in relation to the historic environment are further examined below in terms of NPF4 Policy 7 (Historic assets and places).

(viii) Hydrology, the Water Environment and Flood Risk

4.6.67 EIA Report **Chapter 8 Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Geology** addresses the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on hydrological interests. An assessment has been undertaken of the potential effects on the water environment including potential for flood risk during the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development.

4.6.68 The assessment considers effects on water quality (including both surface water and groundwater bodies), flood risk, water resources (private and public water supplies), Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems ('GWDTE') and the potential for effects on geology and soils including mining and contamination risk, carbon rich soils and deep peat, including potential for peat landslide effects.

4.6.69 The hydrological assessment identified the presence of several watercourses within the Site and along the application boundary. The identified watercourses are all located within the River Clyde catchment. Aquifers underlying the Site are found to be of Low productivity, with an area of High productivity located immediately northwest of the western Site boundary. Consultation with Scottish Water and SEPA mapping shows that the Site is not located within any drinking water catchments nor are there any water abstraction sources.

4.6.70 The findings of the Stage 1 site-wide low-density peat probing, along with Stage 2 targeted high-density probing and coring surveys found that the majority of the Site is either absent of peat or, where organic soils are present, they are relatively shallow. The maximum peat depth recorded during the Stage 2 surveys (within the Site), was 3.7 m and the average (mean) was 0.36 m.

4.6.71 Most of the infrastructure of the Proposed Development has been located in areas where the peat depth is expected to be absent or 0.5 m or less. This includes all of the turbines and their associated hardstanding areas, with the exception of turbines T6 and T10, where the peat depth is expected to be up to 0.51 m and 0.53 m respectively.

4.6.72 The peat depth beneath the proposed substation and BESS compound, and the borrow pits and borrow pit search areas are located in areas with peat depths of 0.5 m or less.

4.6.73 It is explained in the assessment that there are areas of deeper peat within the Site that interface with sections of the proposed permanent access tracks, specifically the area west of T16 where it has not been possible to completely avoid deep peat. Floating track has been proposed in this area to minimise disturbance and excavation of peat in this section.

4.6.74 The Proposed Development has been sited outwith areas of mining instability or associated contamination where practicable through the design process. Mitigation has been applied to areas of the Site where historical mining and contamination risks are present.

4.6.75 Based on the design of the Proposed Development (including the siting of the Proposed Development at a suitable buffer from watercourses, minimising the number of proposed watercourse crossings and locating development away from deeper peat locations where practicable), the implementation of best practice measures during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of development and the implementation of mitigation measures, no significant effects to the water environment or to geology and peat resources are predicted.

(ix) Biodiversity including impacts on birds

4.6.76 EIA Report **Chapter 7 Ornithology and Chapter 6: Ecology** of the EIA Report address potential effects on Important Ornithological Features ('IOFs') and Important Ecological Features ('IEFs') respectively associated with the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

Ecology

4.6.77 The ecology assessment evaluates the potential for likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on non-avian ecology, including designated sites, terrestrial and aquatic habitats, and protected species.

4.6.78 Baseline field surveys have established that the Site and immediate surrounding area is used by a number of protected species including bats, otter, common lizard, brown trout and water vole. The risk to protected species is considered to be low based on the levels and distribution of species activity recorded in relation to the Proposed Development.

4.6.79 Habitats within the Site are mixed, with various habitat types, often in a complex mosaic of communities. The more extensive habitats within the Site are typical upland moorland habitats for the region and include acid dry dwarf shrub heath, marshy grassland, unimproved acid grassland, blanket bog, wet dwarf shrub heath and wet modified bog. The blanket bog within the Site is generally considered to be degraded and is categorised as a mixture of artificially drained, actively eroding, and modified bog condition due to historical and the ongoing legacy effects of anthropogenic impacts.

4.6.80 It is explained in the assessment that the Proposed Development has been designed to minimise impacts on priority habitats, peatland and protected species in so far as practicable. Embedded mitigation, good practice measures, and pre-construction checks – as directed by a suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works ('ECoW') – would ensure the protection of protected species during the construction phase.

4.6.81 Assessment of potential effects and their significance were determined through consideration of the sensitivity of the IEFs and the magnitude of change arising from the Proposed Development. The most tangible effect during the construction phase of the Proposed Development is identified in the assessment as direct habitat loss due to the construction of new infrastructure. Potential effects upon blanket bog/wet modified bog were taken forward for assessment however no significant effects are predicted.

4.6.82 In addition to habitat reinstatement following the cessation of construction works, the Proposed Development provides an opportunity to deliver long term beneficial habitat enhancement measures for habitats and species and as noted below this is an obligation under the terms of NPF4 Policy 3.

4.6.83 A Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan ('BEMP') would be developed to compensate for the habitat loss within the Site, and further enhance habitats, thus delivering significant biodiversity enhancement. The Outline BEMP (EIA Report **Technical Appendix 6.7)** provides for various measures including:

- peatland habitat restoration and enhancement;
- creation of native broadleaved woodland and scrub and riparian cover;
- bracken management;
- habitat management for ground nesting raptors; and
- long-term retention of Agri-Environment Schemes (AECS) to ensure the long-term sustainable grazing management of the moorland within the Site.

4.6.84 The assessment concludes that adverse residual effects upon identified IEFs are predicted to be not significant as a result of the Proposed Development alone, or cumulatively, with any other wind farm development.

Ornithology

4.6.85 The Site does not form part of any statutory designated site for nature conservation with qualifying ornithological interests or lie within potential connectivity distances for any Special Protection Area ('SPA').

4.6.86 It is explained in the assessment that baseline studies established that the Site and adjacent habitats are used by Schedule 1 raptors including red kite and golden eagle. The Site has also been recorded to support an assemblage of ground nesting waders. The Site and immediate surrounding area are not identified as being of importance for migratory waterfowl.

4.6.87 Collision mortality risks to the proposed turbine locations have been estimated using the NatureScot Collision Risk Model ('CRM'), with risks predicted as being not significant for any species. Displacement effects for golden eagle, red kite, curlew, golden plover and lapwing are also assessed and concluded as not significant.

4.6.88 Embedded standard mitigation, including the appointment of an Ecological Clerk of Works ('ECoW'), completion of pre-commencement surveys and implementation of a Bird Disturbance Management Plan ('BDMP'), would enable the protection of IOFs, including breeding birds, during construction and operational maintenance works associated with the Proposed Development.

4.6.89 In addition to habitat reinstatement following the cessation of construction works, the Proposed Development will also provide for the delivery of long-term beneficial habitat enhancement measures for bird species and wider biodiversity. This would include in areas away from operational infrastructure. As noted, a BEMP for the Proposed Development would be developed to compensate for the habitat loss within the Site, and further enhance habitats, thus delivering biodiversity enhancement. The Outline BEMP provides for habitat restoration and enhancement, including habitat management for ground nesting raptors. Additional specific measures are set out within the ornithology chapter to further minimise collision mortality risks for red kite and golden eagle.

4.6.90 Following the consideration of potential impacts for all identified IOFs, no significant residual adverse effects are predicted, for either the Proposed Development alone, or in combination, with other wind farm developments.

(xi) Decommissioning and (xii) site restoration plans

4.6.91 A Decommissioning Plan would set out environmental protection measures and restoration principles which would be submitted to and approved by SLC and then implemented by the Contractor appointed to undertake the decommissioning works. An outline Decommissioning Plan is included in the OCEMP **(Technical Appendix 2.1, EIAR Volume 4**).

xiii) cumulative impacts

4.6.92 Cumulative matters have been assessed above through each of the individual topic areas [with no significant residual adverse effects being predicted].

Balancing the Contribution of a Development and Conclusions on Policy 11

4.6.93 Paragraph e (ii) of Policy 11 makes it clear and recognises that in terms of significant landscape and visual impacts, such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy and this will clearly include wind energy given its nature. This is a very clear steer that significant effects are to be expected, and where localised and/or subject to appropriate design mitigation, they should generally be acceptable. The LVIA concludes that the significant landscape and visual impacts would be largely localised, and that appropriate design mitigation has been adopted.

4.6.94 In addition, the Proposed Development is considered to be acceptable in relation to all of Policy 11's environmental and technical topic criteria.

4.6.95 The second to last paragraph of **Paragraph e) of Policy 11** is expressly clear that in considering any identified impacts of renewable energy developments, significant weight must be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. The "contributions" are inextricably related to the scale of a proposed development and policy recognises that any identified impacts must be assessed in the context of these contributions.

4.6.96 In terms of contribution to targets, the Proposed Development's contribution has been set out in Chapter 3 above.

4.7 NPF4 Policy 3: Biodiversity

Policy 3 & Principles

4.7.1 Policy 3 has an intent to protect biodiversity, reverse biodiversity loss, deliver positive effects from development and strengthen nature networks. Outcomes of the policy are that biodiversity is enhanced and better connected, including through strengthened nature networks and nature-based solutions.

4.7.2 In summary, there are no significant adverse effects arising in relation to biodiversity matters, nor in relation to nature conservation designations which NPF4 **Policies 3 and 4** (the latter in terms of designations – see below) respectively address.

4.7.3 **Policy 3** requires developments to, wherever feasible, provide nature-based solutions that have been integrated and made best use of and for significant biodiversity enhancements to be provided.

4.7.4 **Paragraph b)** states that:

"*Development proposals for national or major development or for development that requires an Environmental Impact Assessment will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention. This will include future management. To inform this, best practice assessment methods should be used. Proposals within these categories will demonstrate how they have met all of the following criteria*."

4.7.5 The policy goes on to reference the need for an understanding of the existing characteristics of a site and states that an assessment of potential negative effects should be undertaken which should be fully mitigated in line with the mitigation hierarchy prior to identifying enhancements.

4.7.6 Paragraph b) iv) of the policy sets out a requirement that "*significant biodiversity enhancements are provided, in addition to any proposed mitigation. This should include nature networks, linking to and strengthening habitat connectivity within and beyond the development, secured within a reasonable timescale and with reasonable certainty. Management arrangements for their long-term retention and monitoring should be included, wherever appropriate*."

4.7.7 Paragraph d) adds that "*any potential adverse impacts, including cumulative impacts, of development proposals on biodiversity, nature networks and the natural environment will be minimised through careful planning and design. This will take into account the need to reverse biodiversity loss, safeguard the ecosystem services the natural environment provides, and build resilience by enhancing nature networks and maximising the potential for restoration*".

Current Guidance Position

4.7.8 The **letter from the Chief Planner issued on 8 February 2023** refers to the application of Policy 3 where specific supporting guidance / parameters for assessment are not yet available to aid assessments. It confirms that there is no single accepted methodology for calculating and/or measuring biodiversity enhancement and reiterates that research has been commissioned to explore options for developing a biodiversity metric or other tool for use in Scotland.

4.7.9 The Scottish Government published '**Planning Guidance: Biodiversity**' (Biodiversity Guidance) in December 2025 Paragraph 1.1 states that it:

"*Sets out the Scottish Minister's expectations for implementing NPF4 policies which support the cross cutting NPF4 outcome 'improving biodiversity*."

4.7.10 Page 17 of the Biodiversity Guidance makes specific reference to determining planning applications and, with regard to the policy context, Paragraph 4.1 makes it clear that NPF4 must be read and applied as a whole. Specific reference to NPF4 Policy 3 (Biodiversity) Part 3 b) is made and at Section 4.6 key points in the guidance include the following:

- It is set out that NPF4 does not specify or require a particular assessment approach or methodology to be used, although the policy makes clear that best practice assessment methods should be utilised; and
- Assessments can be qualitative or quantitative (for example through use of a metric).

4.7.11 The Biodiversity Guidance also makes reference to off-site delivery of enhancement proposals and states at Paragraph 4.19 that:

"*Where the relevant policy tests cannot be met on site, off-site provision may be considered alongside on site. In these circumstances, off-site delivery should be as close as possible to the development site, with consideration being given firstly to the immediate landscape context and existing ecological value of the site*."

4.7.12 NatureScot advised in October 2025[25] that a consultation on a working draft metric and associated guidance is planned for mid-2026 and expect a Scottish metric to be fully available to use in 2027.

4.7.13 NatureScot have also published a Research Report[26] which was a review of habitat classifications for their potential use in a Scottish planning biodiversity metric in early 2026. This report reviews and makes recommendations for systems of vegetation classification to be used to provide data for a Scottish planning biodiversity metric ("the Scottish metric").

The application of Policy 3

4.7.14 Notwithstanding the lack of metric at the present time, in terms of environmental benefit, it can be concluded that there will be permanent biodiversity enhancement delivered through the Applicant's proposed compensation and enhancements to the natural habitat, offered as part of the Proposed Development.

4.7.15 As referenced previously, an outline BEMP is provided which sets out measures to achieve significant biodiversity enhancement at the Site. The BEMP contained in **Technical Appendix 6.7** of the EIA Report.

4.7.16 The enhancement proposals would result in the site, from a biodiversity perspective, being in a "*demonstrably better state*" than without intervention, consistent with the provisions of Policy 3.

4.7.17 It is also important to keep in mind that the greatest threat to biodiversity is climate change. The principal and essential benefit of the Proposed Development is a significant contribution of renewable energy generation, to facilitate the earliest possible decarbonisation of the energy system and the achievement of net zero no later than 2045. A fundamental purpose of net zero is to protect biodiversity and the earlier it can be achieved, the greater the benefits will be to biodiversity.

[25] NatureScot (October 2025) Scottish Biodiversity Metric Update https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyuMmd1nNb4

[26] NatureScot (2026) NatureScot Research Report 1391 - A review of habitat classifications for their potential use in a Scottish planning biodiversity metric Available at: https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report-1391-review-habitat-classifications-their-potential-use-scottish-planning#summary

4.8 NPF4 Policy 4: Natural Places

Policy 4 and Principles

4.8.1 The policy has an intent to protect, restore and enhance natural assets making best use of nature-based solutions. Policy outcomes are stated as being natural places which are protected and restored, and natural assets which are managed in a sustainable way that maintains and grows their essential benefits and services.

Application of Policy 4

4.8.2 **Policy 4, Paragraph a)** of the policy states that development proposals which by virtue of type, location or scale will have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment will not be supported. There would be no unacceptable impacts arising from the Proposed Development.

4.8.3 **Policy 4 paragraph b)** refers to development proposals which are likely to have a significant effect on a European designated site and sets out in such circumstances the requirement for Appropriate Assessment.

4.8.4 European sites have been considered and assessed as appropriate, as noted under Policy 11.

4.8.5 **Policy 4**, **Paragraph c)** deals with national landscape designations and has a similar approach in relation to the former SPP in terms of how a proposal that affects a National Park, or a NSA should be addressed.

4.8.6 The Site is not subject to any national landscape designations and such designations are distant from the Site.

4.8.7 **Policy 4**, **Paragraph d)** deals with local landscape designations. Policy 4, Paragraph d) is as follows:

"*Development proposals that affect a site designated as …a local landscape area in the LDP will only be supported where:*

- *i Development will not have significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area or the qualities for which it has been identified; or*
- *ii Any significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of at least local importance*".

4.8.8 The policy set out in the second limb of NPF4 Policy 4, Paragraph d) provides that development proposals that affect a site designated as a local landscape area will only be supported where any significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of at least local importance. It must be noted that:

- this policy provision reflects the wider NPF4 policy that adverse effects (including adverse landscape and visual effects outside of a National Park or NSA) must be balanced against the benefits of a proposed development;
- the second limb is independent of the first ("or") and is to be applied where a decision-maker concludes that a proposed development will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of a local designation;
- NPF4, Policy 4, Paragraph d) includes a balancing mechanism ("*clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits*") and sets out the threshold to be used ("*of at least local importance*").

4.8.9 As explained above under NPF4 Policy 11, the LVIA concludes that the Proposed Development would have some significant effects on special qualities but would not have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the SLA within which the Site is located.

4.8.10 **Paragraph e)** addresses the precautionary principle which is not engaged in this case.

4.8.11 **Paragraph f)** sets out that "*development proposals that are likely to have an adverse effect on species protected by legislation will only be supported where the proposal meets the relevant statutory tests. If there is reasonable evidence to suggest that a protected species is present on a site or may be affected by a proposed development, steps must be taken to establish its presence. The level of protection required by legislation must be factored into the planning and design of development, and potential impacts must be fully considered prior to the determination of any application*".

4.8.12 Protected species have been discussed above under Policy 11. No significant adverse effects are predicted for protected species.

4.8.13 **Paragraph g)** of the policy deals with Wild Land Areas ('WLA') and states that:

"*Development proposals in areas identified as wild land in the Nature Scot Wild Land Areas map will only be supported where the proposal:*

i. will support meeting renewable energy targets; or

ii. is for small scale development directly linked to a rural business or croft, or is required to support a fragile community in a rural area.

All such proposals must be accompanied by a wild land impact assessment which sets out how design, siting, or other mitigation measures have been and will be used to minimise significant impacts on the qualities of the wild land, as well as any management and monitoring arrangements where appropriate. Buffer zones around wild land will not be applied, and effects of development outwith wild land areas will not be a significant consideration."

4.8.14 The LVIA explains that the Proposed Development would not significantly affect WLAs.

Conclusions on Policy 4

4.8.15 Designated sites relating to the nature conservation have been assessed above under Policy 11 and no significant effects are predicted.

4.8.16 The effects in relation to national and local landscape designations and Wild Land have been addressed above. The Proposed Development would not have a significant impact on the integrity of a local landscape designation nor would it significantly affect Wild Land.

4.8.17 Furthermore, studies to identify potentially impacted protected species (including birds) were undertaken and detailed assessment of relevant species was also undertaken as necessary, as set out in the EIA Report.

4.8.18 Given the above position, it is considered that the Proposed Development is in accordance with Policy 4.

4.9 NPF4 Policy 5: Soils

Policy 5 and Principles

4.9.1 The policy intent for Policy 5 is to protect carbon rich soils, restore peatlands and minimise disturbance to soils from development. This is very similar to the policy position that was in the former SPP; however, a key difference, as set out in **paragraph c(ii),** is that renewable energy proposals are one of the types of development expressly envisaged to be acceptable in principle on peatlands, reflecting the net benefits in carbon emissions reduction and peatland restoration potential which can be gained.

4.9.2 **Paragraph a)** states that "*development proposals will only be supported if they are designed and constructed:*

- *in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy by first avoiding and then minimising the amount of disturbance to soils on undeveloped land; and*
- *in a manner that protects soil from damage, including from compaction and erosion, and that minimises soil sealing*."

4.9.3 Paragraph c) states *"Development proposals on peatland, carbon rich soils and priority peatland habitat will only be supported for:*

i. Essential infrastructure and there is a specific locational need and no other suitable site;

ii. The generation of energy from renewable sources that optimises the contribution of the area to greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets;

iii. Small-scale development directly linked to a rural business, farm or croft;

iv. Supporting a fragile community in a rural or island area; or

v. Restoration of peatland habitats."

4.9.4 **Paragraph d)** states: "Where development on peatland, carbon rich soils or priority peatland habitat is proposed, a detailed site-specific assessment will be required to identify:

i. the baseline depth, habitat condition, quality and stability of carbon rich soils;
ii. the likely effects of the development on peatland, including on soil disturbance; and
iii. the likely net effects of the development on climate emissions and loss of carbon.

This assessment should inform careful project design and ensure, in accordance with relevant guidance and the mitigation hierarchy, that adverse impacts are first avoided and then minimised through best practice. A Peat Management Plan will be required to demonstrate that this approach has been followed, alongside other appropriate plans required for restoring and/or enhancing the site into a functioning peatland system capable of achieving carbon sequestration."

The application of Policy 5

4.9.5 **Chapter 8 Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Geology** of the EIA Report assesses the potential impacts of the Proposed Development hydrological interests, geology and peat.

4.9.6 The assessment considers effects on water quality (including both surface water and groundwater bodies), flood risk, water resources (private and public water supplies), Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems ('GWDTE') and the potential for effects on geology and soils including mining and contamination risk, carbon rich soils and deep peat, including potential for peat landslide effects.

4.9.7 The hydrological assessment identified the presence of several watercourses within the Site and along the application boundary. The identified watercourses are all located within the River Clyde catchment.

4.9.8 Consultation with Scottish Water and SEPA mapping shows that the Site is not located within any drinking water catchments nor are there any water abstraction sources.

4.9.9 The findings of the Stage 1 site-wide low-density peat probing, along with Stage 2 targeted high-density probing and coring surveys found that the majority of the Site is either absent of peat or, where organic soils are present, they are relatively shallow (less than or equal to 0.5 m in depth for 83% of samples). The maximum peat depth recorded during the Stage 2 surveys (within the Site), was 3.7 m and the average (mean) was 0.36 m.

4.9.10 Most of the infrastructure of the Proposed Development has been located in areas where the peat depth is expected to be absent or 0.5 m or less. This includes all of the turbines and

their associated hardstanding areas, with the exception of turbines T6 and T10, where the peat depth is expected to be up to 0.51 m and 0.53 m respectively.

4.9.11 The peat depth beneath the proposed substation and BESS compound, and the borrow pits and borrow pit search areas are located in areas with peat depths of 0.5 m or less.

4.9.12 There are areas of deeper peat within the Site that interface with sections of the proposed permanent access tracks, specifically the area west of T16 where it has not been possible to completely avoid deep peat. Floating track has been proposed in this area to minimise disturbance and excavation of peat in this section.

4.9.13 The Proposed Development has been sited outwith areas of mining instability or associated contamination where practicable through the design process. Mitigation has been applied to areas of the Site where historical mining and contamination risks are present.

4.9.14 Based on the design of the Proposed Development (including the siting of the Proposed Development at a suitable buffer from watercourses, minimising the number of proposed watercourse crossings and locating development away from deeper peat locations where practicable), the implementation of best practice measures during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of development and the implementation of mitigation measures, no significant effects to the water environment or to geology and peat resources are predicted.

4.9.15 Policy 5 is supportive of development proposals on peatland, carbon rich soils and priority peatland habitat in certain circumstances including development for the generation of energy from renewable sources that optimises the contribution of the area to greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets. The Proposed Development falls into this category. The appropriate assessment and information has been provided as required by Policy 5 (d) within the EIA Report.

4.9.16 The Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with Policy 5.

4.10 NPF4 Policy 7: Historic Assets and Places

Policy 7 and Principles

4.10.1 The intent of the policy is to protect and enhance the historic environment, assets and places and to enable positive change. Key parts of the policy include the following:

- **Paragraph a)** states that "*development proposals with a potentially significant impact on historic assets or places will be accompanied by an assessment which is based on an understanding of the cultural significance of the historic asset and/or place. The assessment should identify the likely visual or physical impact of any proposals for change, including cumulative effects and provide a sound basis for managing the impact of change. Proposals should also be informed by national policy and guidance on managing change in the historic environment, and information held within Historic Environment Records*."
- **Paragraph c)** states that "…*development proposals affecting the setting of a Listed building should preserve its character, and its special architectural or historic interest*".
- **Paragraph d)** states that "*development proposals in or affecting Conservation Areas will only be supported where the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and its setting is preserved or enhanced. …*".
- **Paragraph h)** states that "*development proposals affecting Scheduled Monuments will only be supported where:*

  i) direct impact on the Scheduled Monument are avoided;
  ii) significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the setting of the Scheduled Monument are avoided; or

iii) exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify the impact on a Scheduled Monument and its setting and impact on the monument or its setting have been minimised.

- **Paragraph i)** states that "*development proposals affecting nationally important Gardens and Designed Landscapes will be supported where they protect, preserve or enhance their cultural significance, character and integrity and where proposals will not significantly impact on important views to, from and within the site or its setting*".
- **Paragraph o)** states that "*non designated historic environment assets, places and their setting should be protected and preserved in situ wherever feasible. Where there is potential for non-designated buried archaeological remains to exist below a site, developers will provide an evaluation of the archaeological resource at an early stage so that planning authorities can assess impact. Historic buildings may also have archaeological significance which is not understood and may require assessment.*".

The application of Policy 7

4.10.2 **Chapter 5 Cultural Heritage** of the EIA Report addresses the presence of cultural heritage assets which may be affected by the Proposed Development. The assessment considers the archaeological and cultural heritage value of the Site and assesses the potential for significant effects on archaeological features and heritage assets, both within the Site and in the surrounding area resulting from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

4.10.3 A summary of the effects of the Proposed Development in relation to cultural heritage interests has been set out above in the context of NPF4 Policy 11.

4.10.4 As explained, the baseline assessment for the EIA has established that there is one designated asset, Waterhead, platform settlement 900 m N of (SM4714) within the Site boundary. This asset has been avoided through design and there would be no direct construction impact on it.

4.10.5 It is explained in the assessment that there are a further 92 non-designated heritage assets that lie within the Site. These assets have mostly been avoided by the design of the renewable energy park layout and, where appropriate, mitigation has been proposed that would address direct effects upon these and upon any previously unrecorded cultural heritage assets that may be encountered. Taking account of the current land-use and historic landscape character of the Site and its surroundings, it is concluded in the assessment that the potential for further archaeological discoveries within the Site is assessed as being low to moderate.

4.10.6 The assessment has considered the effect of the Proposed Development on the settings of heritage assets within the Site and in the wider landscape. One impact has been identified as being significant in EIA terms: an effect of moderate significance on the setting of Leadhills Conservation Area (CA393) ('CA'). While there would be an impact of moderate significance on this asset, it is assessed that the Proposed Development would adequately preserve its context and siting as a former mining village set within a remote and upland landscape.

4.10.7 In relation to the CA, it comprises the whole of the village of Leadhills which extends to approximately 1.5km north to south and approximately 600m east to west. As set out in the assessment, the key characteristics of the CA setting is its connection with the surrounding lead mining remains, including the Scheduled Monument lead mine and associated remains (Leadhills SM5817) and the views to and from these remains.

4.10.8 It is explained in the assessment that the zone of theoretical visibility shows that the introduction of the Proposed Development would result in turbines being visible to varying degrees from within the CA with the greatest visibility being views to the north west. It adds that the development would form part of the wider landscape however the key views of importance to the setting of the CA, those reciprocal views being the village of Leadhills and the surrounding remains of the lead mines would be retained. It makes it clear that the ability

to understand, appreciate and experience the CA as a former mining village located in a remote upland landscape would be retained, albeit with the proposed turbines visible to the north east and north west at varying degrees in views out from the village and in views towards the village on the approach from the south.

4.10.9 The assessment states that overall, as a result of change to its wider surroundings, the Proposed Development would have an impact of medium magnitude on the setting of the Leadhills CA. In the context of the NPF4 Policy 7(d) test, it is considered that the Proposed Development would preserve the architectural and historic character of the area, the existing density, built form and layout and would adequately preserve the context and siting of the CA as it would remain readily appreciable that this is a former mining village set within a remote upland landscape. Overall, it is assessed that this would result in an effect that is of moderate adverse significance and significant in EIA terms.

4.10.10 The potential for cumulative construction, operational and decommissioning effects on cultural heritage has also been considered.

4.10.11 The Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with Policy 7.

4.11 NPF4 Policy 22: Flood Risk and Water Management

4.11.1 The intent of Policy 22 is to strengthen resilience to flood risk by promoting avoidance as a first principle and reducing the vulnerability of existing and future development to flooding. **Paragraph c)** is the most relevant part of the policy for the Proposed Development, which states that development proposals should not increase the risk of surface water flooding to others, or itself be at risk. In addition, all rain and surface water should be managed through Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems ('SUDs').

Application of Policy 22

4.11.2 As set out above, effects on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk are considered in **Chapter 8 Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Geology** of the EIA Report.

4.11.3 The assessment concludes that there would be no significant impacts arising in relation to these matters subject to appropriate mitigation measures which are proposed. The Proposed Development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy 22.

4.12 Conclusions on NPF4 Appraisal

4.12.1 Policy 11 is the lead policy in the context of NPF4 for energy developments. The Proposed Development is considered to be acceptable in relation to all of Policy 11's environmental and technical topic criteria and in relation to all other relevant NPF4 policies.

4.12.2 A key point within Policy 11 (Energy) is that any identified impacts must be weighed against a Proposed Development's specific contribution to meeting targets – which attracts significant positive weight in this case.

4.12.3 Significant weight is also afforded in relation to Policy 1 (Tackling the climate and nature crises). This policy direction fundamentally alters the planning balance compared to the position that was set out in NPF3 and SPP.

4.12.4 The term "tackling" the respective crises in Policy 1 is also important – this means that decision makers should ensure an urgent and positive response to these issues and take positive action.

4.12.5 A number of significant adverse effects have been predicted in relation to landscape and visual matters however these are considered to be largely localised in nature and appropriate design mitigation has been applied from the outset of the Proposed Development such that those effects which remain are considered acceptable including the effects in relation to the setting of the Leadhills CA.

4.12.6 Overall, the Proposed Development is considered to be one that would make a valuable contribution to the NPF4 Spatial Strategy and would help deliver a 'sustainable place'. Overall, it is considered that Proposed Development would accord with relevant policies of NPF4, and with NPF4 when read as a whole.

5. Appraisal against the Local Development Plan

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The other element of the statutory Development Plan covering the Site comprises the SLC LDP 2 adopted in April 2021. The Plan contains two Volumes: Volume one which sets out the main policies, and these are supported by more detailed polices in Volume two.

5.1.2 There is no Supplementary Guidance ('SG') associated with LDP2. In place of SGs, volume two of LDP 2 contains detailed policies which provide guidance on a range of topics in support of the main policies in Volume 1.

5.1.3 The SLC LDP was prepared and adopted prior to NPF4 coming into force and reflects the provisions of the former SPP, now superseded. Where incompatibilities exist between the LDP and NPF4, or where the LDP is silent, the policies of NPF4 prevail.

5.1.4 Relevant policies from the SLC LDP are referenced below. This Chapter does not present a detailed assessment of the Proposed Development as that has been covered above in Chapter 4 against the policy provisions of NPF4. An appraisal of relevant policies and consideration of areas of conflict or contradictions with NPF4 is provided.

5.2 LDP Policies

5.2.1 Relevant LDP Volume 1 policies are referenced in **Table 5.1** below.

Table 5.1: Relevant SLC LDP Volume 1 Policies

Policy	Policy Summary	Comment re NPF4
Policy 1: Spatial Strategy	The spatial strategy seeks to encourage sustainable economic growth and regeneration and move towards a low carbon economy, protect the natural and historic environment and mitigate against the impacts of climate change. To do this the Council will inter alia protect and enhance the natural and historic environment and support renewable energy developments in appropriate locations.	No conflict with NPF4.
Policy 2: Climate Change	New development must seek to minimise and mitigate against the effects of climate change. The policy contains various considerations including the need for sustainable locations, avoiding flood risk, ensuring no unacceptable effects on the environment and avoiding or minimising disturbance of carbon rich soils and, where appropriate, include provision for restoration of damaged peatlands.	No conflict with NPF4
Policy 14: Natural & Historic Environment	All development proposals will be assessed in terms of their impact on the natural and historic environment, including biodiversity, geodiversity, landscape and townscape. The policy sets out that the Council will seek to protect natural and historic designations from adverse impacts.	No conflict with NPF4

Policy	Policy Summary	Comment re NPF4
Policy 15: Travel & Transport	New development proposals must consider and mitigate the resulting impacts from traffic growth, particularly development related traffic, and have regard to the need to reduce the effects of greenhouse gas emissions.	No conflict with NPF4
Policy 16: Water Environment & Flooding	Any development proposals which will have a significant adverse impact on the water environment will not be permitted. Sites where flood risk may be an issue shall be the subject of a local flood risk management assessment.	No conflict with NPF4
Policy 18: Renewable Energy	*See below*	*See below.*

5.2.2 Within Volume 1, **Policy 18 'Renewable Energy'** is as follows:

"Applications for renewable energy infrastructure developments will be supported, subject to an assessment against the principles set out in the SPP, in particular the considerations set out at paragraph 169.

The Spatial Framework for Wind Energy set out in Table 7.2 and shown on Figure 7.1 applies to applications for wind energy developments of 15m or greater in height, including extensions and repowering proposals.

All renewable energy proposals shall be assessed against the relevant criteria and requirements set out in the Assessment Checklist for Renewable Energy Proposals contained in Volume 2.

Development proposals must also accord with other relevant policies and proposals in the development plan. Refer to Appendix 1 for relevant Volume 2 policies and additional guidance."

5.2.3 Policy 18 is considered to be incompatible with NPF4 Policy 11 and should therefore not be afforded weight. Policy 18 states that developments will be supported subject to an assessment against the principles set out in SPP and, in particular, the various considerations set out at paragraph 169 of SPP. The policy also cross refers to a Spatial Framework for wind energy development. SPP (and its Spatial Framework approach) has been replaced by NPF4 and is no longer a relevant consideration in decision making.

5.2.4 Appendix 1 of Volume 1 of LDP2 lists relevant policies in LDP Volume 2 stemming from Policy 18 as Policies SDCC6 'Renewable Heat', RE2 'Biomass' and RE1 'Renewable Energy'. It is only Policy RE1 that is of relevance to the consideration of the application.

5.2.5 Policy 18 therefore defers the development management policy provisions to Policy RE1 and its associated 'checklist' and to related non statutory guidance. This is considered below under LDP2 Volume 2 policies.

Additional Planning Guidance

5.2.6 In terms of 'additional guidance', Appendix 1 of Volume 1 of the LDP lists this as follows:

- SLC Supporting Planning Guidance 'Renewable Energy';
- Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Energy (2016) and its Addendum (2017);

- Tall Wind Turbines Landscape Capacity, Siting and Design Guidance (2019);
- South Lanarkshire Landscape Character Assessment (2010); and
- South Lanarkshire Validating Local Landscape Designations (2010).

5.2.7 These documents have been taken account of in the design and development and subsequent assessment as part of the EIA for the Proposed Development, where relevant.

Other relevant LDP2 Policies

5.2.8 LDP2 Volume 2 contains additional policies and detailed criteria against which development proposals are to be considered. These are summarised in **Table 5.2** below.

Table 5.2: Relevant SLC LDP Volume 2 Policies

Policy	Policy Summary	Comment re NPF4
DM1 - New Development Design	New development will be required to ensure there is no conflict with adjacent land uses and no adverse impact on existing or proposed properties in terms of noise or disturbance.	No conflict with NPF4
Policy SDCC2 - Flood Risk	The Council will seek to prevent increases in the level of flood risk and refuse development where it would be at risk from flooding.	No conflict with NPF4
Policy NHE2 – Archaeological Sites and Monuments	Seeks to preserve scheduled and non-scheduled monuments in situ and in an appropriate setting. Developments which have an adverse effect on scheduled monuments or the integrity of their setting will not be permitted unless there are exceptional circumstances.	Some conflict with NPF4, which in Policy 7 refers to "*significant adverse effects on the integrity of the setting of a Scheduled Monument*" whereas the LDP Policy only refers to "*an adverse effect*".
Policy NHE3 – Listed Buildings	Development affecting a Listed Building or its setting shall, as a first principle, seek to preserve the building and its setting, and any features of special architectural interest which it has.	No conflict with NPF4
Policy NHE4 – Gardens and Designed Landscapes	Development affecting sites listed in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes shall protect, preserve and, where appropriate, enhance such places and shall not significantly impact adversely upon their character, upon important views to, from and within them, or upon the site or setting of component features which contribute to their value.	No conflict with NPF4
Policy NHE6 – Conservation Areas	Development and demolition within a Conservation Area or affecting its setting shall preserve or enhance its character and be consistent with any relevant Conservation Area appraisal or management plan that may have been prepared for the area.	No conflict with NPF4
Policy NHE7 – Natura 2000 Sites	All development which would have a likely significant effect on Natura 2000 sites will be subject of an appropriate assessment. The requirements of the policy apply to all proposed or designated Natura sites which	No conflict with NPF4

Policy	Policy Summary	Comment re NPF4
	could be affected by the proposals, including those which are located out with the boundary of South Lanarkshire Council.	
Policy NHE8 – National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Seeks to protect SSSI/National Nature Reserves. Development which affects either designation will be expected to demonstrate that the overall integrity will not be compromised or any significant adverse effect on the qualities of the area are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance.	No conflict with NPF4
Policy NHE9 – Protected Species	Development that would impact on a European Protected Species will be resisted unless there is demonstratable evidence that the development is required, there is no satisfactory alternative, or the development would not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species.	No conflict with NPF4
Policy NHE11 – Peatland and Carbon Rich Soils	The Council shall seek to protect peatland and carbon rich soils from adverse impacts resulting from development. Where peat and other carbon rich soils are present, applicants should assess the likely effects of development on carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions. Where peatland is drained or otherwise disturbed, there is likely to be a release of CO_2 to the atmosphere. Developments should aim to minimise this release.	Some minor conflict with NPF4: no allowance in the LDP Policy for renewable energy development on peatland or carbon rich soils. NPF4 Policy 5 c) ii) allows for development proposals on peatland, carbon rich soils and priority peatland habitat to be supported in relation to inter alia, "*the generation of energy from renewable sources*…"
Policy NHE12 – Water Environment and Biodiversity	Development proposals should protect and where possible enhance the water environment in accordance with the Water Framework Directive. Development proposals which will have a significant adverse impact on the water environment will not be permitted. Consideration will be given to water levels, flows, quality, features, flood risk and biodiversity within the water environment.	Some conflict with NPF4 Policy 11 which requires projects to demonstrate through project design and mitigation how impacts on the water environment are addressed and which contains a balancing provision enabling benefits to be taken into account.
Policy NHE13 – Forestry and Woodland	Development proposals should seek to manage, protect and enhance existing ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW), other woodlands, hedgerows and individual trees. In all cases involving the proposed removal of existing woodland, the acceptability of woodland removal and the requirement for compensatory planting will be assessed against the criteria set out in the Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal.	No conflict with NPF4
Policy NHE16 – Landscape	Sets out criteria for the assessment of development proposals within Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) and seeks to protect and enhance the wider landscapes	Some conflict with NPF4 in relation to the treatment of SLAs. NPF4 includes a measure allowing development to be supported

Policy	Policy Summary	Comment re NPF4
	of SLC through the maintenance and enhancement of landscape character.	where significant adverse effects are predicted on the integrity of an SLA if these impacts are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of at least local importance.
Policy NHE18 – Walking, Cycling and Riding Routes	Walking, cycling, riding routes core water routes and water access/egress points will be safeguarded. Development proposals adjacent to or on the line of any route will require to take account of the route in the design and layout.	No conflict with NPF4
Policy NHE20 – Biodiversity	Development should demonstrate that they have no significant adverse impact on biodiversity. Where proposals are likely to lead to significant loss of biodiversity, they will only be supported if adequate mitigation and offsetting measures can be agreed with the council. Developments should consider opportunities to contribute positively to biodiversity conservation and enhancement.	No conflict with NPF4
Policy RE1 - Renewable Energy	*See below*	

5.2.9 From a review of the LDP2 policies, they are largely compatible with the policy provisions of NPF4, with the exception of the following:

> Policy NHE2 'Archaeological Sites and Monuments' is considered to be incompatible with NPF4 policy 7 (Historic assets and places). The Policy states that "*Developments which have an adverse effect on Scheduled Monuments or the integrity of their setting shall not be permitted unless there are exceptional circumstances*". NPF4 Policy 7 states that developments will only be supported where they avoid "*significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the setting of a scheduled monument*", it is not simply whether or not they have an adverse effect on a Monument, which is referenced in the first part of the LDP policy. NPF4 Policy 4 goes on to state that development can also be supported where "*exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify the impact on a scheduled monument and its setting and impacts on the monument or its setting have been minimised*".

> LDP2 Policy NHE11 'Peatland and Carbon Rich Soils' states that the Council will seek to protect peatland and carbon rich soils from adverse impacts resulting from development. NPF4 Policy 5 (Soils) changed the national policy position in relation to peatland, with renewable energy developments supported on peatland. NPF4 Policy 5 states that development proposals on peatland, carbon rich soils and priority peatland habitat, will only be supported for various types of development, including "*essential infrastructure*" and also in relation to "*the generation of energy from renewable sources that optimises the contribution of the area to greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets*". In the case of the Proposed Development, it is essential infrastructure and also generates energy from renewable sources. The LDP2 Policy makes no such provision for these uses located within peatland and carbon rich soils.

- Policy NHE16 'Landscape' relates to SLAs and states development will only be permitted if it can be accommodated "*without having an unacceptable significant adverse effect on the landscape character, scenic interest and special qualities and features for which the area has been designated*". The LDP2 policy provisions are therefore significantly different from the provisions of NPF4 Policy 4 (Natural places), which allows for development to be supported, even if it has significant adverse effects on the integrity of a local landscape designation, if the benefits that would arise from it are of at least local importance.

5.2.10 Policy RE1 'Renewable Energy' (in Volume 2) relates to the assessment of proposals for renewable energy developments and is as follows:

"Applications for renewable energy development will only be acceptable if they accord with the relevant requirements and guidance set out in:

- *Volume 2 Appendix 1 Assessment Checklist for Renewable Energy Proposals;*
- *Supporting Planning Guidance on Renewable Energy;*
- *Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Energy (2016) (as amended by the Tall Wind Turbines Guidance 2019);*
- *Other relevant policies in LDP2."*

5.2.11 Appendix 1 of Volume 2 contains a 'renewable energy assessment checklist'. This is intended to supplement Policy 18 in LDP2 which as noted sets out general policy relating to renewable energy.

5.2.12 The checklist in turn makes cross references to The LDP2 'Supporting Planning Guidance' ('SPG') entitled 'Renewable Energy'. As noted, this is non-statutory guidance and does not form part of the Development Plan. Chapter 5 of the SPG contains development management considerations *"to be used in the assessment of all scales and types of renewable energy proposals"* (page 3).

5.2.13 It is also considered that Policy RE1 is not compatible with NPF4 and in particular, NPF4 Policy 11 (Energy). Policy RE1 cross refers to, as noted, a renewable energy assessment checklist. The checklist, however, cross-refers in a number of places to the policy provisions of LDP2 and as explained above, a number of these are incompatible with the applicable policies of NPF4. The checklist also contains a number of specific development management provisions which are not contained within NPF4 Policy 11.

5.2.14 A further very important point is that the LDP2 policy for renewable energy does not require decision makers to place significant weight on the contribution of a proposal for renewable energy generation to targets, when considering the impacts of a development – in contrast to NPF4 Policy 11.

5.2.15 For these reasons, Policy RE1 of LDP2 should only be afforded very limited weight and the same approach should also be taken to those topic policies identified above, which would be incompatible with the policy provisions of NPF4.

The SLC Landscape Capacity Study

5.2.16 The 'checklist' within Appendix 1 of Volume 2 of the LDP sets out that wind energy proposals will be assessed against the guidance for specific landscape character types contained in Table 6.1 of the Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Energy (February 2016) as amended by the Tall Wind Turbines: Landscape Capacity, Siting and Design Guidance (2019).

5.2.17 The Onshore Wind Policy Statement makes reference to Landscape Sensitivity Studies and makes it clear that these should not be used in isolation to determine matters of acceptability but can be a useful tool in assessing specific sensitivities within an area. It should be noted that the term is now landscape sensitivity, in comparison with SPP paragraph 162 which encouraged Landscape Capacity Studies. This reflects NatureScot's 2022 guidance[27] which states that *"sensitivity assessments can help to steer development towards better locations and inform a proposal's LVIA. They should never be used in isolation to determine the acceptability of a development type in landscape terms. They do not replace the need for individual LVIAs and/or Environmental Assessments for individual proposals."*

5.2.18 The design approach for the Proposed Development has taken into account the guidance in these studies as referenced in the LVIA. Further details are provided in **Chapter 3: Design Evolution** and the **Design Statement** which is submitted as a supporting document to the application.

5.3 Emerging LDP

5.3.1 Preparation of the council's next Local Development plan the area - South Lanarkshire Local Development Plan ('LDP3') – is progressing. The first stage of LDP 3 focuses on the preparation of an Evidence Report. This was consulted on between April and July 2025. A Report was presented to the South Lanarkshire Full Council meeting on the 10th of December 2025 seeking formal approval to submit the Evidence Report to Scottish Ministers for consideration through the statutory Gate Check process. This approval was granted.

5.3.2 The Gate Check will involve a Reporter from the Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals ('DPEA') reviewing the evidence and deciding if it is sufficient to start preparation of the proposed LDP 3. Once the Evidence Report has received clearance from the Scottish Government, work will start on the proposed plan itself, which will include a Call for Ideas in 2026.

5.3.3 Current timescales for adoption of LDP 3 is in mid-2028. As such the LDP3 is considered to have no weight in decision making at this stage.

5.4 Conclusions on the LDP

5.4.1 The environmental and topic considerations within the LDP policies are encompassed within the broad remit of NPF4 Policy 11 Part e). Each of the relevant development management considerations have been addressed above (Chapter 4) in the context of NPF4 Policy 11 and are not repeated.

5.4.2 Given the policy appraisal undertaken, it is considered that the Proposed Development would be in accordance with relevant policies of the LDP (those which are compatible with NPF4).

5.4.3 It is considered that the effects arising from the Proposed Development would be acceptable in terms of the relevant policy topics of the LDP. These policy provisions are considered to be broadly encompassed by those of NPF4 and given the appraisal set out above in Chapter 4, there would be no conflict with their terms.

[27] NatureScot (2022) Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance Available at: https://www.nature.scot/doc/landscape-sensitivity-assessment-guidance-methodology

6. Conclusions

6.1 The Climate Crisis & Renewable Energy Policy Framework

6.1.1 The urgent need for onshore wind energy generation has been set out: a large increase in the deployment of this renewable energy technology is supported through a number of policy documents and by Scottish Government commitments – most recently expressed in the OWPS and in NPF4.

6.1.2 Onshore wind energy generation was already viewed and described as "vital" to the attainment of targets in 2017. This imperative has only increased since a 'climate emergency' was declared by the Scottish First Minister in April 2019, in line with the recommendations made by the CCC (2019) 'net zero' publication[28]. Furthermore, the drive to attain net zero emissions is now legally binding at the UK and Scottish Government levels by way of amendments to the 2008 Act, and in Scotland through the provisions of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019.

6.1.3 Achieving net zero is a legal requirement which will require new generation capacity up to and beyond 2045 for Scotland and to 2050 for the UK. Deployment of more onshore wind energy is described as being "*mission critical for meeting our climate targets*" in the OWPS. Whilst 2030 is a key target date, projects that may connect post 2030 should not be afforded less weight in terms of emission reduction and renewable generation benefits.

6.1.4 The important benefits of the Proposed Development have been set out in the context of the current climate emergency and would help address the issue of tackling climate change, meeting very challenging net zero targets, and would contribute to improving security of supply.

6.2 The Planning Balance

6.2.1 In NPF4 there is a clear recognition that climate change must become a primary guiding principle for all plans and decisions. Significant weight is to be given to the climate emergency and the contribution of individual developments to tackling climate change.

6.2.2 The revised OWPS was published in December 2022. NPF4 came into force on 13 February 2023. Both are up to date statements of Scottish Government policy, directly applicable to determination of this Section 36 application. Both should be afforded very considerable weight in decision-making alongside other important factors including energy and climate change policy and legislation, the global climate crisis and energy security considerations.

6.2.3 NPF4 and the OWPS are unambiguous as regards the policy imperative to combat climate change, the crucial role of further onshore wind energy generation in doing so, and the scale and urgency of onshore wind energy deployment required. As described in this Planning Statement:

> The global climate emergency and the nature crisis are the foundations for the NPF4 Spatial Strategy as a whole. The twin global climate and nature crises are "*at the heart of our vision for a future Scotland*" so that "*the decisions we make today will be in the long-term interest of our country*"[29]. The policy position, and the priority afforded to combatting the climate emergency, is different to that which was set out in the former NPF3 and SPP;

[28] CCC, Net Zero, The UK's contribution to stopping global warming (May, 2019).
[29] NPF4, page 2.

- NPF4 Policy 1 (Tackling the climate and nature crises) directs decision-makers to give significant weight to the global climate emergency in all decisions. This is a radical departure from the usual approach to policy and weight and clearly denotes a step change in planning policy response to climate change. The matter of weight is no longer left entirely to the discretion of the decision maker; and
- Both NPF4 and the OWPS are clear that further onshore wind energy development, of scale and utilising modern, larger turbines, has a crucial role in combatting climate change, transitioning to a net zero Scotland and ensuring security of energy supply. NPF4 Policy 11 (Energy) strongly supports proposals for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions energy technologies, including onshore wind farms.

6.2.4 It is important to fully recognise both the scale and urgency of the challenge set out in these documents, and the required response from decision-makers. NPF4 is clear that significant progress must be made by 2030 requiring, as set out in the OWPS, that "*we must now go further and faster than before. We expect the next decade to see a substantial increase in demand for electricity to support net zero delivery across all sectors, including heat, transport and industrial processes*"[30].

6.2.5 Publication of the OWPS for the first time, set an onshore wind energy generation target: a Scottish Government ambition for a **minimum** of 20 GW of installed onshore wind energy capacity by 2030. As noted, good progress has been made to reach this but there is still more to do. This is also embedded in the Scottish Government's consultative draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, together with the commitment to "***place the climate and nature at the centre of our planning system***"[31] (original emphasis) in line with the NPF4.

6.2.6 By any measure, the identified need for delivery of this additional capacity is a massive challenge requiring an urgent and positive response not just by 2030 but beyond to enable net zero to be attained and then sustained

6.2.7 As the Statement of Need in NPF4 for Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure explains[32] "*A large and rapid increase in electricity generation from renewable sources will be essential for Scotland to meet its net zero emissions targets*."

6.2.8 The Statement of Need relates to the attainment of Government renewable energy generation and emission reduction targets. Moreover, it relates to the importance of developing electricity supplies which are not dependent on volatile international markets and are located within the UK's national boundaries. The urgency for an electricity system which is self-reliant and not reliant on fossil fuels is now enormous, in order to protect consumers from high and volatile energy prices.

6.2.9 Other policy support for development of wind farms is found in NPF4 and the OWPS:

- In addition to the cross-cutting NPF4 Policy 1 (Tackling the climate and nature crises), NPF Policy 11 (Energy) directs that in considering the identified impacts of an onshore wind proposal significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets;.
- The OWPS expressly recognises that meeting the ambition of a minimum installed capacity of 20 GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030 will require taller and more efficient turbines and that "*this will change the landscape" (our emphasis added).*
- NPF4 Policy 11 confirms that significant landscape and visual impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. NPF4, which forms part of the Development Plan, is clear that where such impacts are localised and / or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable. Notably, policy recognises that

[30] OWPS 2022, paragraph 1.1.2.
[31] Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, page 55.
[32] NPF4, page 103.

significant landscape and visual effects are inevitable and generally acceptable. As explained above, the extent of significant landscape and visual effects that would arise from the Proposed Development are considered to be largely localised for a development of this scale in this type of landscape.

- NPF4 Policy 11 provides in principle support for wind farm development in all locations with the exception of National Parks and NSAs. The Proposed Development is not within a National Park or National Scenic Area.
- NPF4, Policy 4, Part d) specifically relates to a proposed development that may adversely affect the integrity of a local landscape designation. It provides that development will be supported where significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of at least local importance. As discussed, there would be no adverse impacts on the integrity of any SLA.
- In terms of cultural heritage matters, NPF4 Policy 7 (Historic assets and places) makes it clear that development affecting Scheduled Monuments will be supported if significant effects on the integrity of the setting of a monument are avoided. One impact has been identified as being significant in EIA terms: an effect of moderate significance on the setting of Leadhills Conservation Area (CA393). While there would be an impact of moderate significance on this asset, it is assessed that the Proposed Development would adequately preserve its context and siting as a former mining village set within a remote and upland landscape.
- In relation to biodiversity matters, NPF4 Policy 3 (Biodiversity) requires that for national and EIA development, significant biodiversity enhancements be provided. The Applicant has proposed such measures as set out in the proposed BEMP.
- In relation to NPF4 Policy 5 (Soils) the policy framework supports development proposals on peatland and carbon rich soil where they relate to the generation of energy from renewable sources. Such development requires to be subject to a site-specific assessment which has been undertaken in this case for the Proposed Development. As explained, the siting and design approach has sought to minimise adverse impacts on peatland and carbon rich soils.

6.2.10 The Applicant has gone to considerable lengths to ensure a satisfactory layout, design and composition for the Proposed Development. In short, appropriate design mitigation has been applied. Potentially significant adverse landscape and visual effects resulting from the Proposed Development have been minimised through an iterative design process and a well-considered proposal has been established, which is considered to have acceptable effects.

6.2.11 The landscape and visual impacts would be largely localised and it is clear from NPF4 Policy 11 that such impacts are to be considered generally acceptable. The term localised has been examined in a number of recent wind farm decisions, as have been identified.

6.2.12 NPF4 and the OWPS require that the decision-maker must identify and weigh the adverse effects of a proposed development. However, increased weight is to be given to the benefits of a development in the planning balance owing to the seriousness and importance of energy policy related considerations and the contribution of the Proposed Development to meeting climate change targets.

6.2.13 It is considered that this approach is very clearly reflected and articulated in NPF4 and the OWPS (subject to Scottish Government policy now expressly stating that significant weight will be given to the global climate and nature crises and a proposed development's contribution towards meeting targets). Moreover, Section 3.6 of the OWPS states that the criteria for assessing proposals (in NPF4) have been updated "*including **stronger weight** being afforded to the contribution of the development to the climate emergency*" (our emphasis added).

6.2.14 In considering the increased policy support for renewable development at the national level which has been introduced by NPF4, a series of Section 36 decisions[33] issued not long after NPF4 came into force, give a clear direction as to the way Reporters and the Scottish Ministers have approached the policy position in NPF4. The position remains that there is strong support for renewables and in particular onshore wind development and that the seriousness of climate change, its potential effects and the need to cut carbon dioxide emissions, remain a priority of the Scottish Ministers.

6.2.15 In the very recent Earlsburn Extension Section 36 Decision[34] (December 2025) at Paragraph 81 the Scottish Ministers state:

6.2.16 *"The OWPS reaffirms the deployment of onshore wind is mission critical for meeting Scotland's energy targets".*

6.2.17 In this case, the Proposed Development is National Development and essential infrastructure which will help to deliver the National Spatial Strategy set out in NPF4. The Proposed Development would make a valuable contribution to help Scotland, and the UK attain net zero, security of supply and related socio-economic objectives. Significant weight should be given to this contribution when weighing the need for the Proposed Development and its limited effects within the planning balance.

6.2.18 The effects of the Proposed Development, including how relevant effects listed in NPF4 Policy 11 Paragraph (e) have been addressed, are detailed in the supporting information to the application. In terms of Policy 11, in considering the identified impacts of the Proposed Development, significant weight must be placed on its nationally important contribution to renewable energy generation and greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

6.3 Overall Conclusion

6.3.1 The policy set out in NPF4 and the OWPS and in other policy documents referred to requires a rebalancing of the consenting of onshore wind developments in response to the challenges of tackling the climate and nature crises. Having regard to the weight to be ascribed to the nationally important benefits of the Proposed Development, it is considered that the benefits that would result clearly outweigh its adverse effects.

6.3.2 The up-to-date policy set out in NPF4 the OWPS and the draft Energy Strategy provide strong and increased support for the grant of Section 36 consent for the Proposed Development.

6.3.3 The conclusion is that the Proposed Development would be in accordance with all relevant policies of the Development Plan - comprising NPF4, the LDP and with the Development Plan when read as a whole insofar as that is a relevant matter in a Section 36 application.

[33] In this regard see Sanquhar II (para 4.5 of Supplementary Inquiry Report), Clashindarroch II (paras 2.45, 2.51 and 2.90 of Supplementary Inquiry Report) and Shepherd's Rig (paras 3.4 and 3.14 of Supplementary Inquiry Report).

[34] Scottish Ministers (2025) Earlsburn Extension Wind Farm ECU Reference: ECU00004510.

David Bell Planning Ltd
26 Alva Street
Edinburgh
EH2 4PY

dbplanning.co.uk

© David Bell Planning Ltd Copyright 2026