

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Overview

- 1.1.1 RWE Renewables UK Onshore Wind Ltd (**‘the Applicant’**) is submitting an application seeking consent under Section 36 (‘s.36’) of the Electricity Act 1989 (as amended) (**‘the Electricity Act’**) and a direction for deemed planning permission under Section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, to construct and operate the Creachan Wind Farm (**‘the Proposed Development’**), which would have an installed capacity in excess of 50 megawatts (MW), on land located approximately 13 kilometres (km) northwest of Alness and 3.5 km north of Loch Morie (**‘the Development Site’**).
- 1.1.2 The application is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) – this report – which presents the findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) carried out by AECOM on behalf of the Applicant. The purpose of the EIAR is to assess the environmental impact of the Proposed Development, pursuant to the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (**‘the EIA Regulations’**).
- 1.1.3 This chapter is supported by the following figures, which are provided at the end of the chapter:
- **Figure 1.1:** Location Plan
 - **Figure 1.2:** Proposed Development Layout

1.2 The Applicant

- 1.2.1 The Applicant is the leading power generator in the UK, with a diverse operational portfolio of onshore wind, offshore wind, solar, hydro, biomass and gas. The Applicant produces enough energy to power the equivalent of around 12 million UK homes.
- 1.2.2 Scotland is a key market for the Applicant, with over 700 MW of renewable electricity projects in operation or construction. The Applicant owns / operates around 470 MW of installed operational renewable capacity across 27 sites, including 15 hydropower, ten onshore wind, one offshore wind and one biomass Combined Heat and Power (CHP) projects. They plan to continue expanding their renewables portfolio in the country, with a further 231 MW across four onshore wind projects in construction, representing an important element of our wider ambitions across the UK.
- 1.2.3 The Applicant currently directly employs around 100 people in Scotland, either at the generation sites or at the Scottish offices, located in Perth and Inverness.

1.3 The Development Site

Development Site Overview

- 1.3.1 The Development Site, shown in **Figure 1.1**, is located within the Highland Council area, approximately 13 km northwest of Alness. The Development Site is approximately 2,558 hectares (ha) in size and includes an area of undeveloped land and an existing forestry

access track approximately 12 km long, which will be upgraded as part of the Proposed Development.

- 1.3.2 Further details of the Development Site are provided within **Chapter 4: Project Description**.

Planning History

- 1.3.3 The Development Site was previously part of the wider proposed Glenmorie Wind Farm site (Highland Council application no. 11/04134/S36), which was submitted in November 2011, prior to the introduction of the current Highland-wide Local Development Plan (2012), National Planning Framework 3 (2014), and the adoption of the 2017 EIA Regulations.
- 1.3.4 Glenmorie Wind Farm was originally proposed to consist of 43 turbines, subsequently reduced to 34 turbines, and for which consent was refused in August 2014.
- 1.3.5 Consideration of the evolution of the design of the Proposed Development, including in relation to the 2014 decision on the Glenmorie Wind Farm application, is provided in **Chapter 3: Evolution of Design**.

1.4 The Proposed Development

- 1.4.1 The Proposed Development would comprise up to 13 wind turbines - with ground to blade tip heights of up to 180 metres (m) and up to 200 m - a battery storage facility, and all associated ancillary infrastructure. Overall, the Proposed Development would provide a generating capacity in excess of 50 megawatts (MW).
- 1.4.2 The proposed turbines, battery energy storage facility and main ancillary infrastructure is located within an area referred to within this EIAR as Main Development Area (MDA). **Figure 1.2** provides the layout of the Proposed Development along with location and extent of the MDA. Further details of the Proposed Development are provided within **Chapter 4: Project Description**.

1.5 Legislative Context

- 1.5.1 As the Proposed Development will comprise an electricity generating plant with a gross electrical output in excess of 50 MW, consent to construct and operate will be required from the Scottish Ministers under s.36 of the Electricity Act. Therefore, a s.36 application has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Electricity Act and submitted to the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) of the Scottish Government.
- 1.5.2 Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been required for certain major developments in the United Kingdom (UK) since the implementation of the European Council Directive on Environmental Assessment (EC Directive 85/337/EEC) in 1985. Directive 85/337/EEC was subsequently amended by Directive 2014/52/EU ('the EIA Directive') which was then transposed into the EIA Regulations.
- 1.5.3 As a 'generating station' the Proposed Development constitutes a Schedule 2 development under Regulation 2(1) of the EIA Regulations. In light of the potential for likely significant effects, the Applicant has considered it appropriate that an EIA is carried out. As a result, an EIA Report (EIAR) has been prepared under the EIA Regulations and submitted to the Scottish Ministers to accompany the application for the Proposed Development. The

Proposed Development is therefore 'EIA Development' in accordance with Regulation 6 of the EIA Regulations.

1.6 Purpose of this Environmental Impact Assessment

1.6.1 The purpose of an EIA is to investigate the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the biological, physical and historical environment, as well as on members of the public and on current or planned future use of the environment. As such, the EIA of the Proposed Development provides a valuable opportunity to integrate environmental considerations in the design process, thus reducing potential environmental effects through design refinement.

1.7 Structure of this Report

1.7.1 The EIAR is structured across four volumes as follows:

- Volume 1: Non-technical Summary
- Volume 2: Main Report & Figures
- Volume 3: Visualisations
- Volume 4: Appendices
- Volume 5: Confidential Appendices

1.7.2 The structure of Volume 2 of the EIAR is set out further in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1 EIAR Volume 2 Structure

Chapter	Topic
Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Approach to EIA
Chapter 3	Evolution of Design
Chapter 4	Project Description
Chapter 5	Summary of Consultation
Chapter 6	Landscape and Visual Assessment
Chapter 7	Cultural Heritage
Chapter 8	Ecology
Chapter 9	Ornithology
Chapter 10	Noise and Vibration
Chapter 11	Traffic, Transport and Access
Chapter 12	Aviation Safeguarding
Chapter 13	Geology, Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Peat
Chapter 14	Inter-related Effects

Chapter	Topic
Chapter 15	Schedule of Mitigation and Residual Effects

- 1.7.3 Chapters 6 to 13 of Volume 2 of the EIAR set out the topic-specific environmental assessments. These chapters have been structured with the following sections:
1. **Introduction** – This section provides an overview to the topic.
 2. **Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance** – This section provides an overview of legislation, planning policy and guidance relevant to the topic-specific elements of the Proposed Development.
 3. **Consultation** – This section provides an overview of consultation carried out to date with key stakeholders and resulting actions taken.
 4. **Approach and Methodology** – This section provides the methodologies proposed for the assessment of the environmental effects of the Proposed Development.
 5. **Baseline Conditions** – This section provides an overview of the existing baseline conditions for the Development Site, identifies key environmental receptors and considers the future baseline.
 6. **Embedded Mitigation** – This section provides a summary of mitigation measures which are embedded into the design of the Proposed Development to reduce its environmental effects across construction, operation and decommissioning. The embedded mitigation measures also include control measures taken as standard relevant industry good practice and are taken into account when assessing likely significant effects.
 7. **Potential Significant Effects** – This section identifies the likely significant effects which may arise during the construction, operation or decommissioning of the Proposed Development. The conclusions of this assessment consider the implementation of embedded mitigation measures.
 8. **Additional Mitigation Measures** – This section identifies additional measures which would be proposed to mitigate the likely significant effects.
 9. **Residual Effects** – This section identifies the residual effects which would remain following the introduction of additional mitigation measures.
 10. **Cumulative Effects** – This section identifies any likely significant cumulative residual effects on environmental receptors by other developments alongside the Proposed Development.
 11. **Summary and Conclusions** – This section provides the summary and the conclusions of the assessment.

1.8 Other Application Documents

- 1.8.1 In addition to this EIAR, there are several other supporting documents which have been submitted to the ECU as part of the application. These are summarised through **Table 1.2**.

Table 1.2 Other Supporting Documentation

Document	Description
Planning Statement	Provides an explanation of the principles behind (and justification for) the Proposed Development and how it responds to with the national, regional and local planning policies.
Design Statement	Explains the design principles and concepts that have been applied to particular aspects of the Proposed Development; including the amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance of the Proposed Development.
Pre-application Consultation Report	Summarises the methods of pre-application consultation activities that have been undertaken by the Applicant and the outcomes following this.
Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism Report	Effects on socio-economics, recreation and tourism are not considered to be significant in EIA terms. A Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism Report has been provided as a standalone report in support of the application. The report sets out the impact of the Proposed Development on tourism and the economy and the benefits for the local community.

1.9 Availability of the EIAR

- 1.9.1 Electronic versions of the EIA and other application documents will be available via:
- The Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit's website: www.energyconsents.scot ;
 - The Highland Council (THC) planning portal: www.highland.gov.uk; and
 - The Applicant's website for Creachan Wind Farm (EIAR only available to download): <https://www.rwe.com/creachan>.
- 1.9.2 Hard copies of the EIAR will be made available for viewing at the following locations:
- Ardross Community Centre, Ardross, IV17 0XW (by appointment only);
 - Kyle of Sutherland Hub, South Bonar Industrial Estate, Bonar Bridge, IV24 3AQ;
 - Alness Library, Averon Leisure Centre & Library, High Street, Alness, IV17 0QB.
- 1.9.3 This EIAR is available in other formats if required. For details, including costs, contact: creachan@rwe.com

1.10 Representations

- 1.10.1 Any representations on the application may be submitted via www.energyconsents.scot, using the relevant Project Name and/or ECU reference number (ECU Reference ECU00005211). Please note that you must be in possession of a working email address to submit a representation virtually.
- 1.10.2 If you would prefer to submit your representation by post, please send to the Scottish Government, Energy Consents Unit, 4th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU, identifying the proposal and specifying the grounds for representation. Written representations should be dated, clearly stating the name (in block capitals) and full postal address of those making representations.
- 1.10.3 Representations should be dated and should clearly state the name (in block capitals) and full return email and postal address of those making representation. All representations should be received not later than the date falling 30 days from the date of the last published notice, although Ministers may consider representations received after this date. Any subsequent additional information which is submitted by the Applicant will be subject to further public notice in this manner, and representations to such information will be accepted as per this notice.