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## INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Balmeanach Wind Farm Limited (the Applicant) proposes to install and operate up to 10 wind turbines with associated infrastructure (the Balmeanach Wind Farm hereafter referred to as the Proposed Development) on land approximately 3km to the south of Edinbane, approximately 8km to the east of Dunvegan and approximately 7km to the north of Struan on the Isle of Skye (the site) (**Figure 1.1**)<sup>1</sup>. The site application boundary is shown on **Figure 1.2**.
- 1.2 The Proposed Development would be located within The Highland Council area (mostly within the Struan Community Council area and partly within Skeabost & District Community Council and Dunvegan Community Council areas) centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 133900, 846750<sup>2</sup>. The Proposed Development is being developed by Wind2 Ltd (Wind2) on behalf of EDP Renewables (EDPR).
- 1.3 The Proposed Development is being progressed with a shared ownership opportunity for communities on the Isle of Skye, in-line with Scottish Government Community Benefit and Shared Ownership principles, outlined in the Scottish Government's Onshore Wind Policy Statement 2022 and Scottish Government Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments (2019). For the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the height of the proposed turbines has been assessed as 149.9m to blade tip in an upright position.
- 1.4 The Proposed Development would have a generating capacity of approximately 45 megawatts (MW). Since the generating capacity of the Proposed Development would exceed 20MW, but be no greater than 50MW, an application for planning permission will be submitted in respect of the Proposed Development, which is a major development for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009..
- 1.5 The Proposed Development would produce an average of approximately 167,140 Mega Watt hours (MWh) of electricity annually (which corresponds to a capacity factor of 42.4%). This equates to the power consumed by approximately 47,600 average UK households<sup>3</sup>, which would be well above the energy requirements of the 13,143 homes on the Isle of Skye<sup>4</sup>.
- 1.6 Grid connection is dependent on the transmission network reinforcement, which is being progressed by Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks, and the connection point will be the new Edinbane Grid Supply Point (GSP), to the south east of the site, which is proposed to be delivered as part of the grid reinforcement. Significant upgrades to the electricity grid from Fort Augustus to the Isle of Skye (known as the Skye Reinforcement Project, Energy Consents Unit Application Ref: ECU00003395) are expected to be completed by the end of 2025, allowing the Proposed Development to be connected to the grid in 2026/2027. The grid connection would require consent

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<sup>1</sup> Measurements taken from main development area including turbine array

<sup>2</sup> Centre point of proposed turbine array

<sup>3</sup> Calculated using the most recent statistics from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,509kWh (RenewableUK, December 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Taken from estimated 2017 data, source: Skye and Lochalsh Population and demography, Paper 1 of a population needs assessment for Skye and Lochalsh NHS Highland April 2019.

under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989, which is the subject of a separate consenting process to this planning application.

- 1.7 SLR Consulting (SLR) has been appointed to undertake an EIA, to determine and evaluate the potential effects of the Proposed Development. The results are presented in this EIA Report.

## PURPOSE OF THE EIA REPORT

- 1.8 This EIA Report has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations).
- 1.9 The Proposed Development meets the criteria set out in Schedule 2, 3(j) of the EIA Regulations as an “*Installation for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (wind farm)*” which will involve the installation of more than 2 turbines, the heights of which will exceed 15 metres. The Proposed Development therefore requires to be screened as to whether or not it constitutes EIA development as envisaged by Regulation 6 of the EIA Regulations.
- 1.10 It was acknowledged at an early stage in the consideration of the Proposed Development that given the nature, location and characteristics of the intended Proposed Development that an EIA would be required. It was therefore not considered necessary to seek an EIA screening opinion from the Highland Council (THC) and this EIA Report is submitted voluntarily, making the Proposed Development an EIA development in terms of Regulation 6(2)(c) of the EIA Regulations.
- 1.11 Regulation 3 of the EIA Regulations prohibits a planning authority or the Scottish Ministers from granting planning permission for EIA development unless an EIA has been carried out in respect of the development and they have taken the environmental information into account.
- 1.12 This EIA Report presents the findings of the EIA process by describing the Proposed Development, the current conditions at the site, consideration of reasonable alternatives, design evolution, predicted future change in absence of the project and the likely impacts which may result from the Proposed Development. Where appropriate, mitigation and enhancement measures are proposed and any residual impacts are reported including where positive effects on biodiversity can be achieved in line with National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4).
- 1.13 This EIA Report is presented for the consideration of THC in the determination of an application for planning permission under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) for the Proposed Development. It has been prepared to inform THC, statutory consultees and the public about the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development on the environment.

## THE APPLICANT

- 1.14 The Applicant is Balmeanach Wind Farm Limited, a subsidiary of EDPR. Balmeanach Wind Farm is being developed by Wind2 on behalf of EDPR.
- 1.15 Wind2 is a specialist onshore wind farm developer founded in 2016. The company has staff based in the Highlands, Perth, Edinburgh, as well as Wales and in various locations throughout England, with significant expertise in renewable energy and a track record of successfully developing onshore wind farms throughout the UK. Wind2 is working on the development of a number of

renewable energy projects and is committed to investing in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Wind2 was the developer for the adjacent consented Ben Sca Wind Farm.

- 1.16 Further information on Wind2 can be found on its corporate website at <https://wind2.co.uk>.
- 1.17 EDPR is a global leader in the renewable energy sector and the world's fourth-largest renewable energy producer. EDPR is currently present in the UK and internationally in another 28 markets. EDPR has personnel based in Edinburgh and through its joint venture with ENGIE (Ocean Winds), recently completed construction on the 950MW Moray East Offshore Wind Farm, which has the capability of supplying 40% of Scotland's electricity demand.
- 1.18 Further information on EDPR can be found on its corporate website at <https://www.edpr.com/en>.

## EIA PROJECT TEAM AND COMPETENCY

- 1.19 The EIA team is led by SLR. SLR is one of the UK's fastest growing multi-disciplinary environmental consultancies. Within the energy sector, SLR provides a wide range of planning, environmental and technical services relating to the design and development of wind farms and other renewable energy projects. The company becomes involved in all aspects of facility development, from initial concept design, through planning and permitting to the detailed design, construction management and closure stages.
- 1.20 SLR is a registered Environmental Impact Assessor, Member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and holder of the IEMA EIA Quality Mark. The company has significant experience in the preparation of planning applications and undertaking EIA for a wide variety of projects, including renewable energy, minerals, waste and infrastructure developments.
- 1.21 Further information on SLR Consulting Limited can be found on its corporate website at <https://www.slrconsulting.com>.
- 1.22 For this project, SLR is responsible for the following technical disciplines:
- EIA and Planning;
  - Landscape;
  - Ecology and Ornithology;
  - Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Peat;
  - Cultural Heritage;
  - Site Access, Traffic and Transport;
  - Socio-economics and Land Use;
  - Other Considerations (e.g. telecommunications); and
  - Geographic Information Systems (GIS).
- 1.23 SLR's environmental specialists, with support from subconsultants as required, have the skills and relevant competency, expertise and qualifications to undertake EIA for the Proposed Development. **Table 1-1** demonstrates the relevant competency for each technical discipline covered in this EIA Report.

**Table 1-1: EIA Team Competency**

Discipline	Specialist Assessor	Qualifications	Years of Experience
EIA and Planning	SLR - Fiona Scott - Michael Fenny	BSc (Hons) CEnv MEnvSc MA(Hons), MSc, MRTPI	15+ 15+
Landscape and Visual	SLR - Simon Myers	MLPM (Hons), AMLI	20+
Ecology	SLR - Duncan Watson - Sara Toule - Kirstie Hazelwood	BSc (Hons) MSc CEnv MCIEEM BSc (Hons), MRes, ACIEEM BMus (Hons), MSc, PhD, ACIEEM	20+ 13 8
Ornithology	SLR - Mike Austin - Pawel Gullet	MCIEEM M.Sc. Eng	30+ 15+
Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Peat	SLR - Gordon Robb - Katy Rainford - Alan Huntridge - Ruari Watson	BSc (Hons), MSc, MBA, FCIWEM, BSc (Hons) FGS MCIWEM BSc (Hons) MSc BSc (Hons)	25+ 5 15+ 10+
Cultural Heritage and Archaeology	SLR - Chris Morley - Beth Gray	BA (Hons), MPhil, MCIfA MA (Hons), ACIfA	15+ 7
Noise	Bow Acoustics - Richard Carter	CEng, BEng (Hons), MIOA	15+
Traffic and Transport	SLR - Joanna Read Pell Frishmann - Gordon Buchan	BSc MSc BEng (Hons), MSc, FCIHT, MCILT	20+ 25+
Socio-Economics and Land Use	SLR - Anne Dugdale - Katie Shoosmith	BSc, MA, FIQ, MRTPI MTCP, MRTPI	30+ 7
Carbon Emissions	SLR - Ruari Watson	BSc (Hons)	10+
Forestry	Crosscut Forestry - Cameron Ross	Forestry Diploma	30+
Aviation	Straten CSL - John Van Hoogstraten	BSc MSc	30+
GIS	SLR - Anne Altringham - Miles Wilcox	BSc, MSc BA (Hons)	11 3

## STRUCTURE OF THE EIA REPORT

1.24 The EIA Report is presented in four volumes as follows:

- Volume 1: Non-Technical Summary (NTS);

The NTS provides a non-technical overview of the EIA Report and is intended for review by the general public. It includes a description of the Proposed Development and a summary of the predicted environmental effects.

- Volume 2: Written Statement;

The Written Statement is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1: Introduction;
- Chapter 2: Site Description and Design Evolution;
- Chapter 3: Description of the Development;
- Chapter 4: Policy Context;
- Chapter 5: Environmental Impact Assessment;
- Chapter 6: Scoping and Consultation;
- Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual;
- Chapter 8: Ecology;
- Chapter 9: Ornithology;
- Chapter 10: Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Soils;
- Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage and Archaeology;
- Chapter 12: Site Access, Traffic and Transport;
- Chapter 13: Noise;
- Chapter 14: Socio-economics and Land Use;
- Chapter 15: Other Considerations; and
- Chapter 16: Schedule of Commitments.

- Volume 3: EIA Report Figures;

The EIA Report Figures are separated out into six volumes as follows:

- Volume 3a: Figures to support Chapters 1-7 of the EIA;
- Volume 3b: Proposed Development Visualisations – Viewpoints 1 – 10 (NatureScot);
- Volume 3c: Proposed Development Visualisations – Viewpoints 11 – 20 (NatureScot);
- Volume 3d: Proposed Development Visualisations – Viewpoints 1 – 10 (THC);
- Volume 3e: Proposed Development Visualisations – Viewpoints 11 – 20 (THC);
- Volume 3f: Figures to support Chapters 8-16 of the EIA.

- Volume 4a-b: EIA Report Technical Appendices;

The technical appendices that are referred to in each Chapter of the EIA Report are compiled

separately in Volume 4a-b. They are numbered sequentially corresponding to the Chapter number in which they are principally referred to.

## PUBLICITY OF THE EIA REPORT

- 1.25 The EIA Report will be publicised in accordance with Part 5 of the 2017 Regulations.
- 1.26 A notice will be published as follows:
- on the project website: [www.balmeanachwindfarm.co.uk](http://www.balmeanachwindfarm.co.uk);
  - in the Edinburgh Gazette; and
  - in the West Highland Free Press.
- 1.27 In addition to the statutory requirements for publicising the EIA Report, the Applicant has advised the following local Community Councils and Community Groups of the EIA Report being available:
- Dunvegan Community Council;
  - Dunvegan Community Trust;
  - Edinbane Community Company;
  - Glendale Community Council;
  - Skeabost & District Community Council;
  - Struan Community Council;
  - Struan Community Development Group; and
  - Struan Community Trust.
- 1.28 A hard copy of the EIA Report can be viewed at The Highland Council Offices, Tigh na Sgire, Park Lane, Portree, IV51 9ER during their opening hours.
- 1.29 A copy of the EIA Report volumes will be made available for download from the project website at: [www.balmeanachwindfarm.co.uk](http://www.balmeanachwindfarm.co.uk).
- 1.30 Paper copies of the NTS are available free of charge from:
- [info@wind2.co.uk](mailto:info@wind2.co.uk)
- 07570 948886
- Wind2 Limited,  
2 Walker Street,  
Edinburgh,  
EH3 7LB
- 1.31 Paper copies of the EIA Report may be purchased by arrangement from the above address for £2,000 per copy, or free per disk/USB memory stick copy. The price of the paper copy reflects the cost of producing all of the Landscape and Visual photographs at the recommended size. As such, a CD/USB memory stick version is recommended.

## REFERENCES

NHS Highland (2019). Skye and Lochalsh Population and demography, Paper 1 of a population needs assessment for Skye and Lochalsh April 2019. Available at:

<https://nhshighland.publichealth.scot.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/SkyeAndLochalsh-PopulationAndDemography.pdf> [Accessed on 02 March 2023].

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<https://www.renewableuk.com/page/UKWEExplained> [Accessed on 02 March 2023].