

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

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1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA Report) has been prepared and submitted by ASH design + assessment Limited (ASH) on behalf of the Applicant, Viking Energy Wind Farm LLP (VEWF).
- 1.1.2 The Applicant is proposing to realign the B9075 Sandwater Road on Mainland, Shetland (referred to hereafter as “the Proposed Development”) between the Burn of Weisdale and its junction with the A970 at Sand Water. The realignment is required to facilitate construction access, including abnormal loads, for the consented Viking Wind Farm¹ (and proposed Section 36C variation²). The location of the Proposed Development is shown on Figure 1.1.
- 1.1.3 The Applicant is submitting an application for planning permission to construct and operate the Proposed Development to Shetland Islands Council (SIC) under The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended. This EIA Report is submitted in support of the planning application and presents information on the nature of the Proposed Development, the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development, and measures proposed to protect the environment during construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

1.2 Site Location

- 1.2.1 The Proposed Development would be located approximately 15km north-west of Lerwick on Mainland Shetland, as shown on Figure 1.1.
- 1.2.2 The existing single carriageway B9075 road runs generally east to west between the A970 (which runs generally north to south down the mainland) and the A971 (which follows the western coastline of the mainland). The stretch of B9075 requiring realignment is located between the junction with the A970 at Sandwater, westwards to the junction with the C class road to Upper Kergord.
- 1.2.3 The area is rural and relatively remote, with occasional properties at Sand Water (Sandwater House), Upper Kergord and Setter. Parcels of land adjacent to the existing B9075 are used for open sheep grazing.
- 1.2.4 The site is centred on OS grid reference 440994, 1155032.

¹ Consented in 2012 for 103 turbines with a maximum tip height of 145m (ECU Case Reference EC00005244)

² Proposed Section 36C Application to vary the maximum tip height from 145m to 155m (including increase in rotor diameter) (ECU Case Reference ECU00000723)

1.3 Background and Project Need

- 1.3.1 In May 2009 a section 36 application under the Electricity Act 1989 and accompanying Environmental Statement (ES) was submitted by VEFW to build a 150 turbine wind farm (Viking Wind Farm) on Mainland, Shetland. An addendum to the ES was submitted in 2010 for a revised proposal of 127 turbines. Consent for Viking Wind Farm was approved by Scottish Ministers on 4th April 2012 for a 103 turbine scheme (ECU Case Reference ECU 00005244). A subsequent proposed variation to the relevant section 36 consent is currently being considered by Scottish Ministers (ECU Case Reference ECU00000723).
- 1.3.2 Construction access to the Viking Wind Farm site will be taken from a number of locations, including the B9075 (Sandwater Road). To facilitate the construction of the wind farm, it was considered that upgrade or realignment of the B9075 would be required.
- 1.3.3 In May 2016, a planning application with accompanying ES, was made to SIC which comprised the widening and upgrade of approximately 730 metres (m) of the existing B9075 and the realignment of approximately 1,530m, giving a total length of approximately 2.26km from the junction with the A970 to the junction with the C class road to Upper Kergord. For the purposes of this EIA Report, this application is referred to as the '2016 Application', and the accompanying ES referred to as the '2016 ES'.
- 1.3.4 The 2016 Application was subsequently withdrawn in 2017 due to a decision made by VEFW to review the proposed upgrade and realignment options.
- 1.3.5 It is now proposed that the full 2.26km of the B9075 road will require realignment to facilitate construction of the wind farm. This would allow full separation between the wind farm construction traffic (which would use the new road alignment) and general public traffic (which would continue to use the existing B9075) during construction of the wind farm to ensure road user safety. Once the wind farm is operational, it is proposed that the realigned B9075 will be available for use by all traffic.
- 1.3.6 A Recreational Management Plan will be prepared in discussion with SIC that will set out the principles for promoting access in the area, including retaining access to Sand Water Loch, and access to the wind farm. The plan will also allow for potential reinstatement of the existing road (in part), if this is considered to be desirable. It is anticipated that the Recreational Management Plan will be covered by a Condition of Consent thereby ensuring that SIC have an input into the design and are content with what is developed.

1.4 Consent Requirements

- 1.4.1 Consent for construction of the Proposed Development is being sought by way of an application to SIC under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended.
- 1.4.2 A Construction Site Licence would be required from the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) under the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011. The Applicant would progress the application for this licence. Upon receiving the Construction Site Licence from SEPA, this would be transferred to the Principal Contractor who would be responsible for discharging conditions prior to commencing works on site.

1.5 Environmental Impact Assessment

- 1.5.1 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is the process of identifying and assessing the likely significant environmental effects of a proposed development, thus enabling such effects to be fully understood and taken into account during the design evolution of the project. The EIA process is also used to develop mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or offset any adverse effects where possible.
- 1.5.2 The results of the EIA also ensure that decision makers (such as the Local Planning Authority, statutory and non-statutory consultees) as well as the local community and other interested parties, are aware of the likely significant environmental effects that could arise from a development so that these matters can be considered before a decision is taken on whether or not a development should be approved.
- 1.5.3 In July 2018, VEFW submitted a request for a Screening Opinion to SIC under The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (hereinafter referred to as the EIA Regulations) to determine whether an EIA would be required for the Proposed Development. SIC responded on the 20th September 2018 with their formal Screening Opinion (see Appendix 1.1) and confirmed that the Proposed Development should be classed as EIA Development, requiring the planning application to be accompanied by an EIA Report.
- 1.5.4 A Scoping Briefing Note for the Proposed Development was submitted to SIC on 22nd October 2018 followed by a telecom meeting on 31st October 2018 to agree the proposed scope of the EIA Report. A copy of this briefing note is included as Appendix 6.1 and the minutes of the meeting attended by VEFW, SIC, SNH and SEPA are provided in Appendix 6.2.
- 1.5.5 This EIA Report has been produced with reference to the Good Practice Guidance published by the Scottish Government's Energy Consents & Deployment Unit in January 2013, together with its Guidance on the EIA Regulations. Consideration is also given to advice contained in Planning Circular 1/2013 (Environmental Impact Assessment) (and amended in 2017 to take account of the 2017 EIA Regulations) where relevant. Further information on the approach taken in this EIA is included in Chapter 2: EIA Process.

1.6 The Project Team

- 1.6.1 In undertaking this environmental assessment and preparation of the EIA Report, the following specialist consultants have been appointed by the Applicant:
- EIA Co-ordination – ASH;
 - Landscape Character and Visual Amenity – ASH;
 - Ornithology – MBEC;
 - Terrestrial Ecology (Habitats and Mammals) – MBEC;
 - Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Geology – SLR Consulting;
 - Cultural Heritage – Headland Archaeology; and
 - Engineering – Tony Gee.

- 1.6.2 Other inputs relating to the construction and future maintenance of the Proposed Development have been provided by the Applicant and Tony Gee.

1.7 Notifications

- 1.7.1 Notice will be served to Shetland Islands Council of the application for consent under The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended.

- 1.7.2 The full EIA Report and supporting Figures and Technical Appendices can be viewed at the following locations:

Viking Energy The Gutters' Hut North Ness Business Park Lerwick Shetland ZE1 0LZ	Shetland Islands Council 8 North Ness Business Park Lerwick Shetland ZE1 0LZ	Shetland Library Lower Hillhead Lerwick Shetland ZE1 0EL
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- 1.7.3 The EIA Report is also available for viewing on the application website: www.vikingenergy.co.uk/.

- 1.7.4 Any comments on the application for consent should be forwarded to the address below:

Development Management Shetland Islands Council Development Services 8 North Ness Business Park Lerwick Shetland ZE1 0LZ	Or by email to: development.management@shetland.gov
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- 1.7.5 Written or emailed representations should be dated, clearly stating the name of the project and the full return email and postal address of those making representations.

- 1.7.6 All representations should be received not later than the date falling 30 days from the date of the last published notice, although representations received after this date may be considered. 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.

- 1.7.7 The EIA Report is available in other formats if required. For details, including costs, contact:

Viking Energy Wind Farm
The Gutters' Hut
North Ness Business Park
Lerwick
Shetland
ZE1 0LZ