### Key Issues –
The EIA considered the potential positive or negative impacts of the proposed development on the local environment, as well as potential social, economic and public health aspects. The Environmental Statement represented the culmination of four years’ of consultation, surveys and assessment; informing the location, design and future operation of the offshore wind farm and its connection to the grid.

Due to the small scale of the project (relative to other offshore windfarms off the east coast of Scotland), one of the key issues was ensuring the EIA was appropriate to the size of the development, yet provided the regulators with sufficient information to be able to consent the project and understand the potential cumulative and in-combination impacts from all the offshore windfarms in the region.

One key area where this represented a specific challenge was seabirds. It was therefore necessary to work closely with the regulators and their advisors in the development of the impact assessment methodology to ensure sufficient data were provided. In particular, the cumulative assessment posed a challenge in so far as balancing a small development against what is commonly expected in such assessments for other offshore wind farms.

### Purpose of the project
The Hywind Scotland Pilot Park Project will be located in the Buchan Deep off Peterhead. The pilot park will cover around 4 square kilometres, at a water depth of 95-120 m and will harness wind resources to provide renewable energy to the mainland. It is expected that the Hywind Scotland development could power around 20,000 houses. Energy generation from the world’s largest floating offshore wind development is expected to start in late 2017. Consent was achieved in November 2015.

### Description of the project
The pilot park consists of 5 floating wind turbine generator units with a total capacity of 30 MW and associated infrastructure and a 35 km export cable. Unlike conventional turbines, Hywind turbines will be attached to the seabed by a three-point mooring spread and anchoring system. The turbines will be connected by an inter-array of cables and an export cable will transport electricity from the pilot park to shore at Peterhead.
Lessons learnt

The project level impact assessment identified a number of potential impacts to birds but determined that these would not be significant in an EIA context:

- Disturbance and displacement for most birds: negligible impact at all times of the year due to low numbers present
- Disturbance and displacement for razorbill: elevated during the breeding season as a result of more birds on site, but still a minor impact
- Mortality due to collision with turbine rotors: given the low number of birds, even for razorbill, the mortality was assessed as negligible compared to natural background mortality rates and hence not significant.

Despite the lack of significant impact at the project level and the scale of the project, cumulative impact with regard to capacity for bird populations to sustain additional collisions was a major concern for stakeholders. This was in some respects a result of being 'last in the queue' for consent on the east coast of Scotland, behind the Moray Firth and Firth of Forth projects – much of the available capacity for bird populations to tolerate additional potential impact had already been assigned to earlier developments.

Lessons learnt contd. –

As consultation progressed, it became evident that very specific data would need to be submitted to permit the regulator to compare the project more closely with the cumulative assessments conducted for other east coast developments. The specific manner in which this was to be done during the determination period had not been developed by consenting authorities earlier in the EIA and a significant amount of additional work, including modelling, had to be undertaken by the project.

Given the size of the project – it comprises only 5 out of 677 wind turbines currently consented or proposed off eastern Scotland – and the ultimate conclusion of the CIA that significant impacts were not at all likely, future EIA for similar small projects should consider whether or not the potential to materially add to the combined impacts from other wind farms is sufficient to justify the extra work. Is it likely that the same conclusion will be reached from a qualitative CIA?

Contact details

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