



Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm

Wind Farm Development Area

Environmental Impact Assessment Report - Volume II

Chapter 2: Policy and Legislative Context

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Glossary of Terminology

Term	Definition
Applicant	Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm Limited, the legal entity submitting Section 36 Consent and Marine Licence applications for the Bellrock Wind Farm Development Area.
Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm (or the Bellrock Project)	<p>An offshore wind farm capable of exporting up to 1.8 GW of renewable energy to the National Electricity Transmission System.</p> <p>The Wind Farm Development Area is located 120 km east of Stonehaven, and will connect to the National Electricity Transmission System at the proposed SSEN Transmission Hurlie substation, west of Stonehaven in Aberdeenshire. The Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm comprises of the following Development Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wind Farm Development Area; ▪ Offshore Transmission Development Area; and ▪ Onshore Transmission Development Area.
Cable protection	Protective measure to minimise the effects of scour and hazards along the inter-array cables, and protecting these cables at infrastructure crossing points.
Commencement of construction	<p>Commencement of construction to install the Wind Farm Infrastructure as authorised by the Wind Farm Development Area Section 36 Consent and Marine Licence (excluding site preparation works), being the earlier of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intrusive pre-installation surveys; ▪ Placement on or installation in the seabed of anchors and associated scour protection, and mooring lines; ▪ Trench excavation for inter-array cables; or ▪ Trenching for, or laying of inter-array cables on or in the seabed.
Floating offshore unit	The combined wind turbine generator and floating substructure.
Site preparation works	<p>Preparatory activities undertaken within the Wind Farm Development Area prior to the commencement of construction of the Wind Farm Infrastructure, which may comprise (and which may require separate consents):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Geophysical surveys, geotechnical surveys, and non-archaeological/archaeological diver/ remotely operated vehicle surveys; ▪ Seabed preparation including sand wave levelling, slope levelling for gravity based anchors (if selected), boulder clearance, and pre-lay grapnel runs; ▪ Unexploded ordnance survey and/or clearance; ▪ Debris clearance; and <p>Out of service cable/pipeline removal.</p>
Floating substructure	A floating structure which provides buoyancy and, in conjunction with the station keeping system, supports a superstructure (e.g. wind turbine generator or offshore substation), and maintaining its position within the structure's excursion limit.

Term	Definition
Innovation and Targeted Oil & Gas	A Crown Estate Scotland leasing round for offshore wind projects, under which the Sinclair Offshore Wind Farm and the Scaraben Offshore Wind Farm were awarded Exclusivity Agreements for their respective Wind Farm Development Areas, under which early-stage development works are progressing.
Inter-array cables	Armoured cable containing electrical and fibre optic cores, which link the wind turbine generators to each other and to the subsea cable hubs and/or the offshore substations and include dynamic inter-array cable and static inter-array cable sections.
Development Area	For consenting purposes, the area for which separate consents and/or Marine Licences will be sought by the Applicant, comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wind Farm Development Area; ▪ Offshore Transmission Development Area; and ▪ Onshore Transmission Development Area.
Offshore Transmission Development Area	The boundary within which the Offshore Transmission Infrastructure will be constructed, operated and maintained, and decommissioned (and includes the whole of the Wind Farm Development Area).
Operational life	The expected operational life of the Wind Farm Infrastructure from the Commercial Operation Date to the first floating offshore unit being decommissioned.
Safety Zone	An area of water around or adjacent to a floating offshore unit which is to be constructed, extended, operated or decommissioned, from which certain or all classes of vessels are excluded and within which activities can be regulated for the purpose of securing safety of the floating offshore unit or vessel in that vicinity, and individuals on the floating offshore unit and vessel, in line with Section 95 of the Energy Act 2004.
ScotWind	A Crown Estate Scotland leasing round for offshore wind projects in which the process enabled developers to apply for seabed rights to plan and build wind farms in Scottish waters.
Scour protection	Protective material positioned around anchors to avoid sediment being eroded as a result of the flow of water.
Station keeping system	The system (including mooring lines and anchors) used to hold a floating offshore unit within its excursion limit and maintain the intended orientation of the floating offshore unit.
Wind Farm Development Area	The boundary within which the Wind Farm Infrastructure will be constructed, operated and maintained, and decommissioned.
Wind Farm Infrastructure	Infrastructure located within the Wind Farm Development Area including wind turbine generators; floating substructures, station keeping systems and associated scour protection; inter-array cables and associated cable protection; subsea cable hubs; and ancillary infrastructure including buoys (including activities associated with the Wind Farm Infrastructure construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning).

Term	Definition
Wind turbine generator	A wind turbine generator converts wind energy into electrical energy. The main components include rotor assembly (composed of three blades and a hub); nacelle (containing the generator, shaft and gearbox, power electronic converter and transformer); and a tower (containing lifting equipment and switchgear).

Glossary of Abbreviations

Term	Definition
BEIS	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
CCC	Climate Change Committee
CES	Crown Estate Scotland
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide
COP	Conference of Parties
DESNZ	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPS	European Protected Species
ESO	Electricity System Operator
EU	European Union
GW	Gigawatt
HM	Her/His Majesty's
HND	Holistic Network Design
HNDFUE	Holistic Network Design Follow up Exercise
HRA	Habitats regulations appraisal
INTOG	Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MCAA	Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009
MD-LOT	Marine Directorate – Licensing Operations team
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MPS	Marine Policy Statement
ncMPA	Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area
NESO	National Energy System Operator
nm	Nautical mile
NPF4	National Planning Framework 4
OfTDA	Offshore Transmission Development Area
OREI	Offshore renewable energy installation

Term	Definition
PAC	Pre-application consultation
PMF	Priority marine feature
SMP	Sectoral Marine Plan
SNMP	Scotland's National Marine Plan
UK	United Kingdom
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WFDA	Wind Farm Development Area
WTG	Wind turbine generator

2 Policy and Legislative Context

2.1 Introduction

1. Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm Limited (the Applicant) is proposing to develop the Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm (the Bellrock Project), comprised of the Bellrock Wind Farm Development Area (WFDA), the Bellrock Offshore Transmission Development Area (OfTDA) and the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area. The subject of this Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report is the Bellrock WFDA.
2. The Bellrock Wind Farm Infrastructure comprises wind turbine generators (WTGs); floating substructures (FSSs), station keeping systems (SKSs) and associated scour protection; inter-array cables (IACs) and associated cable protection; subsea cable hubs; and ancillary infrastructure including buoys. Further details on the Bellrock Wind Farm Infrastructure is provided in **Chapter 4: Project Description (Volume II)**.
3. This Chapter provides an overview of the policy and legislative context for the Bellrock WFDA as it applies to the EIA and consenting process. The Applicant has adopted a policy-led approach to EIA and consenting by providing an overview of the applicable legislative framework, identifying this within the strategic policy context for the Bellrock WFDA, and outlining the applicable policy framework to guide proportionate assessment in the Bellrock WFDA EIA Report.
4. This Chapter considers the policy and legislative context for the Bellrock WFDA, in relation to:
 - Scottish, United Kingdom (UK) and international obligations and policy relating to climate change and the role of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (**Section 2.3**);
 - Marine planning policy to set the context for marine development (**Section 2.4**);
 - Scottish consenting legislation, including the legal basis for the Section 36 (s.36) Consent and Marine Licence application(s) required to construct, operate and maintain and decommission the Bellrock WFDA, and supporting EIA (**Section 2.4** and **Section 2.6**); and
 - Other nature conservation legislation and consenting requirements relevant to the Bellrock WFDA (**Section 2.7** and **Section 2.8**).
5. Any Legislation referred to in this EIA Report is as subsequently amended and as currently in force as at the date of this EIA Report.
6. In line with the EIA Regulations, this EIA Report is based on the Bellrock WFDA Scoping Opinion (**Appendix 1.2: Bellrock WFDA Scoping Opinion (Volume IV)**). In addition to considering relevant legislation and policy, this Bellrock WFDA EIA Report has been informed by the 'Marine licensing and consenting: offshore renewable energy projects' guidance issued by the Marine Directorate (2025). Please refer to **Chapter 5: EIA Methodology (Volume II)** for further details on other guidance that informs this EIA. Chapter-specific policy and legislation is provided in the relevant technical chapters (**Chapters 6 to 19 (Volume II)**) within this Bellrock WFDA EIA Report.

2.2 Overview of Policy Context

7. The UK requires a range of energy generation infrastructure to ensure it has a secure and economical energy supply and can meet its binding commitments to address climate change and adopt renewable technologies as a significant proportion of its energy generation mix. Offshore wind, as a source of renewable energy, offers Scotland a wide range of benefits including reducing greenhouse gas emissions, supporting economic growth, and improving our energy security.
8. The emissions of greenhouse gases have been identified as a significant source of anthropogenic climate change (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; IPCC, 2018). The burning of fossil fuels such as coal and gas for electricity production has been established as a significant greenhouse gas emission source. Development of renewable energy for electricity production is presented as a solution to reducing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and the resulting anthropogenic climate change. To enable the development of renewable energy for electricity production, numerous climate change protocols and agreements and renewable energy policies and legislation have been implemented. These are discussed in **Section 2.3**, and include:
 - The Kyoto Protocol, 1997;
 - The Paris Agreement, 2015;
 - The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, amended by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 and the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2024; and
 - Climate Change Act 2008, amended by the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019.
9. The Scottish Government, along with many other governments across the world, declared a climate emergency in 2019, outlining the need for swift and decisive action to limit the warming of our planet by 1.5 degrees compared to 1990 levels. In Scotland, the net zero target is 2045 (the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 as amended by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 (which introduced net zero target and accelerated this to 2045). This ambitious 2045 target reflects the Scottish Government's acknowledgement of the climate change emergency.
10. Acknowledging the available wind resource and offshore wind development opportunity, the Scottish and UK Governments have committed to ensuring that offshore wind is a leading contributing source of renewable electricity to the National Electricity Transmission System. Under the National Energy System Operator's (NESO's) Clean Power 2030 Plan, "*offshore wind must be the bedrock of that [clean power] system, providing over half of Great Britain's generation*" (NESO, 2024). Significant growth in offshore wind (from 15 gigawatt (GW) in 2023 to 43-50 GW in 2030) alongside onshore wind, solar and battery storage is needed to displace gas for electricity production.
11. In October 2021, the UK Government published the Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (Her/His Majesty's, HM Government, 2021), which sets out its intended pathway for decarbonisation over the period until 2035, in the later years of the Sixth Carbon Budget period

(Climate Change Committee; CCC, 2020) and outlining progress towards achieving the UK Government's overarching target of Net Zero by 2050. The Net Zero Strategy sets a clear and credible range for emissions reduction in each sector of the economy, while prioritising clean growth and energy security. The Seventh Carbon Budget was published on 25 February 2025, outlining the pathway towards decarbonisation between 2038 and 2042 (CCC, 2025).

12. The UK is one of the few countries with emissions targets in line with the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement. The CCC's most recent progress report (CCC, 2024) confirmed that the UK achieved the Third Carbon Budget (2018 – 2022) and recorded an increase in the rate of emissions reductions, with emissions falling 5.4% from 2022 to 2023 (excluding aviation and shipping). The report also tracks progress and highlights risks to the delivery of the UK Net Zero Strategy (Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (DBEIS), 2021).
13. The Bellrock Project will contribute towards Scottish and UK renewable energy demands and targets, providing enough renewable electricity to power over 1.7 million homes¹ and avoid the production of over 4.5 million tonnes¹ of carbon dioxide each year which could otherwise have been produced from natural gas fuelled electricity generation. The continued development of offshore wind within Scotland, including the advancement of floating wind farms in deeper waters further offshore, is therefore critical to ensuring that Scotland and the UK can meet our binding energy and climate change targets.
14. **Sections 2.2.1 and 2.3** below, respectively set out the background to the Bellrock Project, as well as climate change and renewable energy policy relevant to the Bellrock WFDA.

2.2.1 ScotWind Leasing

15. The ScotWind Offshore Wind leasing round (hereafter referred to as 'ScotWind') managed by Crown Estate Scotland (CES) is a major milestone in Scotland's journey towards Net Zero. ScotWind's objective was to help Scotland achieve its net-zero emissions target by 2045, by granting property rights for the seabed in Scottish waters for new commercial scale offshore wind project development in a way that was fair and transparent. In doing so, ScotWind facilitates and encourages development of the low-carbon energy generation needed to meet the world-leading targets committed to in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.
16. CES announced 17 ScotWind projects in January 2022 and entered seabed option to lease agreements with these projects (including Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm Limited) in April 2022. In August 2022, the ScotWind clearing process led to a further three projects being offered option agreements and in November 2025 the ChampionWind offshore wind farm Option to Lease Agreement was relinquished. At the time of writing, 19 ScotWind projects hold option to lease agreements or lease agreements, with a total capacity of up to 29.3 GW and committing £25.6 billion expenditure in Scotland's supply chain, which will help create thousands of jobs and transform the Scottish economy (Offshore Wind Scotland, 2026).
17. CES will offer a full seabed lease to each ScotWind project once developers have secured the necessary consents, grid connection and finance. The ScotWind process is 'plan-led', therefore all

¹ Estimated values, for more details visit www.bellrockwind.co.uk

projects were located in areas defined within the Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (Scottish Government, 2020a), which was subject to plan-level Strategic Environmental Assessment (Scottish Government, 2019a), Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) (Scottish Government, 2019b) and socioeconomic assessment (Scottish Government, 2019c) throughout its preparation.

18. The Bellrock WFDA seabed lease is up to 60 years, while its operational life is up to 35 years. At the end of its operational life, any repowering will be subject to a further consenting process. Details on the site selection process for the Bellrock WFDA and the ScotWind leasing round are provided in **Chapter 3: Site Selection and Consideration of Alternatives (Volume II)**.

2.3 Climate Change and Renewable Energy Legislation and Policy

19. **Table 2.1** sets out the relevant legislation, policy, guidance and directives at Scottish, UK, European and international level relevant to the Bellrock WFDA with respect to climate change and energy needs.
20. A greenhouse gas assessment has been provided as part of this Bellrock WFDA EIA Report, setting out the contribution the Bellrock WFDA will make to the aims and targets set out in the policy documents below. See **Chapter 17: Greenhouse Gas Assessment (Volume II)** for more details on the approach to the greenhouse gas assessment.

Table 2.1: Summary of Relevant Legislation, Policy, Guidance and Directives for the Bellrock Wind Farm Development Area

Legislation, Policy, Guidance and Directives	Summary
Scotland	
Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (Scottish Government, 2020b)	<p>The Sectoral Marine Plan (SMP) for Offshore Wind Energy identified sustainable areas for the future development of commercial-scale offshore wind energy in Scotland, including a spatial strategy to inform the ScotWind seabed leasing process for the purposes of offshore wind energy. This built on the first Sectoral Marine Plan which was adopted in 2011, and the draft wind, wave, and tidal plan published in 2013, and was developed in accordance with the Scottish National Marine Plan (SNMP).</p> <p>The 2020 SMP is undergoing review to reflect the ScotWind and Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas (INTOG) leasing rounds, and is anticipated to be published in summer 2026.</p> <p>An updated draft Sectoral Marine Plan, consistent with the approach taken for the Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, undergone consultation between the end of May to August 2025, but has not yet been adopted.</p>
National Planning Framework 4 (Scottish Government, 2023a)	The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) sets out Scotland’s spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy. NPF4 presents Sustainable Places, Liveable Places and Productive Places to achieve national outcomes including benefits

Legislation, Policy, Guidance and Directives	Summary
	<p>to the environment, communities, and health. The NPF4 contains a notable focus on tackling both the climate and nature crises.</p> <p>There is a strong preference for developments which meet the Scottish Government’s aims for net zero emissions by 2045, and halting biodiversity loss by 2030, restoring and regenerating biodiversity by 2045.</p> <p>Projects which evidence low and zero-carbon design and expansion of renewable energy generation will therefore be encouraged, such as the Bellrock WFDA. Strategic renewable electricity generation and transmission infrastructure is highlighted as a key national strategic development, required to support the delivery of ‘sustainable places’.</p> <p>Renewable energy and transmission infrastructure (such as the Bellrock WFDA) is highlighted to improve energy security and reduce emissions, whilst providing employment and opportunities for local communities.</p>
<p>Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (Scottish Government, 2023b)</p>	<p>The Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan sets out policy positions and key ambitions for Scotland’s energy security, by developing more than 20 GW additional renewable electricity onshore and offshore by 2030. The Plan aims to build in flexibility to the system with the use of tools such as energy storage to adjust fluctuations associated to variations in levels of supply and demand.</p> <p>The Plan contains a route map of actions to deliver a net zero energy system to supply affordable, resilient, and clean energy to Scotland by 2045 and benefit employment. The Plan aims to transform and expand the energy generation sector in Scotland by working with the UK Government.</p>
<p>The Climate Change Plan, Third Report on Proposals and Policies (2018-2032) (Scottish Government, 2020a)</p>	<p>The Climate Change Plan sets out the path to a low carbon economy while helping to deliver sustainable economic growth. It sets out how Scotland can achieve a 75% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and net-zero by 2045.</p> <p>The Climate Change Plan presents proposals and policies to meet Scotland’s annual emissions targets to 2032, with decarbonisation related to pathways including the electricity system.</p> <p>A Draft Climate Change Plan 2026-2040 that was published in November 2025 setting out the policies and proposals the Scottish Government will take forward to enable our carbon budgets to be met between 2026 - 2040.</p>
<p>Update to the 2020 Offshore Wind Policy Statement: Scotland’s Offshore Wind Ambition (Scottish Government, 2026)</p>	<p>The Scottish Government is resetting its offshore wind policy ambition to up to 40 GW of new offshore wind capacity by 2040, in addition to the already operational or consented capacity (as of August 2025 when the consultation ended) this updated ambition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reaffirms our commitment to supporting the delivery of the existing project pipeline, including ScotWind and INTOG projects; ▪ Clarifies that no further offshore wind leasing rounds are planned in the near term; and ▪ Establishes a clear and realistic timescale – 2040 – rather than 2035-2040.
<p>Energy Strategy: Position Statement (Scottish Government, 2021a)</p>	<p>The Energy Strategy provides an overview of the key priorities of the Scottish Government for the short to medium-term in ensuring a green economic recovery from COVID-19.</p>

Legislation, Policy, Guidance and Directives	Summary
	The key principles set out in Scotland's Energy Strategy are a whole system view, an inclusive energy transition and a smarter local energy model, and the Scottish Government continues to abide by this.
<p>Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009</p> <p>Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019</p> <p>Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2024</p>	<p>The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 was implemented to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland by at least 80% by 2050.</p> <p>The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 accelerates Scotland's overall target in the 2009 Act to net zero by 2045.</p> <p>In November 2024, the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2024 modifies the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 to introduce limits on the amount of GHGs emitted in Scotland over a five-year period. This replaces the requirements for annual targets as outlined in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 with a system of targets based on carbon budgets. However, the overall target of net zero by 2045 will remain in place.</p>
Scottish Energy Strategy (Scottish Government, 2017)	<p>In 2017, the Scottish government published Scotland's Energy Strategy: The Future of Energy in Scotland which set a vision for how the energy system in Scotland would look in 2050. Since the publication, the Scottish Government has committed to achieving targets of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 and a 75% reduction by 2030.</p> <p>This involves supplying 50% of Scotland's energy requirements from renewable sources and increasing energy productivity by 30% across the Scottish economy by 2030.</p>
Electricity Generation Policy Statement (Scottish Government, 2013)	The Electricity Generation Policy Statement 2013 examines the way in which Scotland generates electricity. The Scottish Government's policy states that Scotland's generation mix should deliver a secure source of electricity supply at an affordable cost which can be largely decarbonised by 2030 and achieves the greatest possible economic benefit and competitive advantage for Scotland.
Offshore Wind Focus (Scottish Government, 2024a)	Strategic assessment of the market opportunities and next steps that will underpin the public sector's collective investment decisions in offshore wind, supporting delivery of Scotland's green industrial strategy.
United Kingdom	
Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025	<p>The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 streamlines pre-application statutory consultation requirements alongside other reforms designed to accelerate project delivery by removing barriers in the planning process.</p> <p>Additionally, the Bill will enable an extension of the Generator Commissioning Clause, which allows offshore generators to transmit electricity without an offshore transmission licence during the commissioning period, from 18 to 27 months. This intends to reduce the number of offshore wind farm projects requiring Government interventions to prevent them from shutting down due to non-compliance with the Act.</p>

Legislation, Policy, Guidance and Directives	Summary
<p>Holistic Network Design (HND) Pathway to 2030 (Electricity System Operator, ESO, 2022)</p> <p>HND and Holistic Network Design Follow up Exercise (HNDFUE) Impact Assessments Ossian and North Cluster 2 Outcome Summary (NESO, 2025)</p>	<p>In 2022, the ESO (now NESO) recommended a new electricity network design - Pathway to 2030 HND. The HND connects 23 GW of offshore wind power and helps deliver the UK Government’s target of 50 GW of offshore wind by 2030 by planning infrastructure to bring power to the grid cohesively, ensuring maximum benefit for consumers, local communities, and the environment.</p> <p>In April 2025, NESO confirmed in the HND and HNDFUE Impact Assessments Ossian and North Cluster 2 Outcome Summary that the Bellrock Project would connect into the proposed Hurlie substation in Aberdeenshire.</p>
<p>Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP) (DESNZ, 2024a)</p>	<p>The UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments jointly commissioned NESO to create a Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP) for the energy system, land and sea, across Great Britain.</p> <p>This first iteration of the SSEP focus on electricity generation and storage, including hydrogen assets.</p> <p>NESO will establish a governance structure, consult on a methodology for the SSEP, and develop several “pathway options” for the energy system. The SSEP outputs are expected to feed into the Centralised Strategic Network Plan.</p>
<p>Clean Power 2030: Advice on achieving clean power for Great Britain by 2030 (NESO, 2024) and Clean Power 2030 Action Plan (DESNZ, 2024b)</p>	<p>The Clean Power 2030 Plan presents the NESO’s advice to the Government on how to achieve clean power by 2030 and accelerate a coordinated grid rollout to meet the country’s electrification goals.</p> <p>In December 2024, DESNZ released the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan which accepted the advice from NESO on the energy infrastructure required to deliver Clean Power 2030 and sets out a list of actions to accelerate the path to 2030.</p> <p>The plan places offshore wind as the backbone of the clean power system, with central role in delivering 95% low carbon electricity by 2030. The plan’s measures collectively boost offshore wind by securing capacity targets, streamlining procurement, accelerating planning and grid access, and unlocking public-private funding, ensuring it serves as the cornerstone of the UK’s clean energy future.</p>
<p>Strategy and Policy Statement for Energy Policy in Great Britain (DESNZ, 2024c)</p>	<p>This statement provides guidance to the energy sector on the actions and decisions that are needed to deliver government’s policy goals, and places emphasis on where government expects a shift in the energy industry’s strategic direction.</p> <p>Through powers from the Energy Act 2023, the Government established a new, publicly owned National Energy System Operator (NESO) (referred to as the Independent System Operator and Planner or ISOP in legislation).</p> <p>NESO’s roles, responsibilities and statutory duties that will enable it to meet its statutory objectives which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enabling Clean Energy and Net Zero Infrastructure; ▪ Ensuring Energy Security and Protecting Consumers; and ▪ Ensuring the Energy System is Fit for the Future.

Legislation, Policy, Guidance and Directives	Summary
UK Climate Change Strategy 2021 - 2024 (HM Government, 2021)	The UK Climate Change Strategy will support UK exporters and suppliers through the transition to net zero by increasing support to clean growth and climate adaptation, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and understanding and mitigating climate-related financial risks. The Strategy highlights the importance of transforming the financial system to boost innovation and transition away from high carbon sectors.
UK's Modern Industry Strategy (UK Government, 2025)	In June 2025 the UK Government published its updated Industry Strategy which sets out a 10-year plan to <i>'increase business investment and grow the industries of the future in the UK'</i> , including renewables.
Energy White Paper: Powering our Net Zero Future (BEIS, 2020)	The Energy White Paper addresses the transformation of the energy system to promote clean, resilient economic growth and deliver net-zero emissions by 2050. The Energy White Paper puts in place a strategy for the wider energy system that transforms energy for a cleaner greener future, supports a green recovery and grows the economy, and creates a fair deal for consumers.
Climate Change Act 2008 and Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019	The Climate Change Act 2008 sets legally binding targets for the UK to reduce CO ₂ emissions by at least 80% by 2050, from 1990 levels. This was amended by the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 which introduced a target for at least 100% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050.
Great British Energy Act 2025 (HM Government, 2020)	Establishes the Great British Energy, a publicly owned energy company overseen by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero aiming at accelerating the development of clean, domestically produced energy in the United Kingdom and supporting the nation's net-zero commitments.
Energy Act 2023	<p>The Energy Act 2023 aims to transform the UK's energy system by strengthening energy security, supporting the delivery of net zero and ensuring household bills are affordable in the long-term. The Act will help the government deliver net zero by 2050 in a pragmatic, proportionate and realistic way.</p> <p>The Energy Act 2023 also established the legislative framework for creating and regulating the NESO through transferring ownership of the Electricity Systems Operator (ESO) to His Majesty's (HM) Government.</p> <p>In addition, the Energy Act 2023, through its Part 13 provisions, which are designed to empower the UK Government to customise habitats regulations assessments and deliver compensatory measures at a strategic level when offshore wind activities have an adverse effect on marine protected areas.</p>
Energy Act 2013	<p>The Energy Act 2013 aims to facilitate investment in electricity generation contributing towards the legally binding emissions reduction targets, to meet statutory 2030 decarbonisation targets.</p> <p>The Act also aimed to reform the electricity market. The reformed electricity market aims to deliver the low carbon energy and reliable supplies that the UK needs, while minimising costs to consumers.</p> <p>This Act introduced the Contracts for Difference funding mechanism and transition arrangement for investments under the Renewables Obligation scheme.</p>

Legislation, Policy, Guidance and Directives	Summary
Energy Act 2004	The Energy Act 2004 established a Renewable Energy Zone adjacent to the UK's territorial waters to enable The Crown Estate to create designated leasing areas for developers to bid for the development of renewable energy. The Act additionally implemented statutory decommissioning requirements for offshore renewable energy installations and associated transmission infrastructure (described further in Section 2.8.1) and a Safety Zone scheme (described further in Section 2.8.2).
European Union	
European Union (EU) (Withdrawal) Act 2018	Following the UK's exit from the EU, the UK Government committed to implement international environmental obligations in accordance with the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and to maintain environmental commitments and legislation already made (UK Government, 2018). On this basis, the existing EU renewable energy targets for the UK, including the EU Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC, will remain applicable
European Union Renewable Energy Directive (Revised), 2018	The Revised Renewable Energy Directive (2018/2001/EU) entered into force in 2018 set the target to achieve a minimum of 32% share of renewable energy consumption within the EU. Member States commit to the renewable energy consumption target as part of integrated national energy and climate plans, pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council.
International	
Paris Agreement (Conference of Parties; COP 21), 2015	<p>The Paris Agreement had an overarching goal to hold the increase in the global average temperature to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and binds all parties to prepare, communicate and maintain a Nationally Determined Contribution to this effect. From 2023 and every five years thereafter, a global stock-take will assess collective progress.</p> <p>The commitment to the Paris Agreement was reaffirmed at most recent COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan.</p>
Kyoto Protocol, 1997	<p>The Kyoto Protocol requires signatory countries to limit and reduce greenhouse gases in accordance with agreed individual targets. The Kyoto Protocol was formally adopted on 11th December 1997, first entering into force on 16th February 2005 (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; UNFCCC, 2025).</p> <p>The UK and Scottish Parliaments adopted the commitments outlined in the Kyoto Protocol through the Climate Change Act 2008 and Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.</p>
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1992	The UNFCCC aims to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system, and is the foundation for later landmark agreements, including the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement.

2.4 Marine Planning Policy

21. In Scotland, marine planning policy is used to inform decisions made under the relevant consenting legislation, e.g. for the purposes of obtaining a Marine Licence. A summary of marine planning policy relevant to the Bellrock WFDA is given in **Table 2.2**.

Table 2.2: Summary of Marine Planning Policy

Policy	Summary
Scotland's National Marine Plan, 2015	<p>SNMP was published in March 2015. The purpose of the SNMP is to set out strategic policies for the sustainable development of Scotland's marine resources out to 200 nautical miles (nm). It also provides a strategic framework for marine licensing decisions. The SNMP outlines objectives relating to offshore wind and marine renewable energy which intend to maximise the sustainable development of offshore wind by creating economic benefits through increasing a domestically competitive supply chain whilst contributing to decarbonisation targets.</p> <p>The SNMP was reviewed in 2021 (Marine Scotland, 2021), covering the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Findings set out in the Scottish Marine Assessment (2020); ▪ Existing data monitoring programmes; ▪ The global climate emergency; ▪ The COVID-19 pandemic; ▪ UK Exit from the EU; and ▪ Implications of wider Marine Scotland strategies including the Blue Economy Action Plan and the Future Fisheries Management Strategy. <p>The SNMP is currently being updated, transitioning to the Scottish National Marine Plan 2, with the aim of delivering a plan that considers the changes to the policy and legislative landscape, rapid developments in technology and the need to achieve a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as reflecting the improved understanding of the marine environment and the successful delivery of the Blue Economy Approach (Marine Scotland, 2022).</p> <p>Consultation on the Planning Position Statement for NMP2 ran from 5 November 2024 to 7 February 2025 and a consultation analysis report has been produced by the Scottish Government (2025).</p>
Regional Marine Plans	<p>A total of 11 Scottish Marine Regions have been created under the Scottish Marine Regions Order 2015 which cover sea areas extending out to 12 nm.</p> <p>Regional Marine Plans for each Marine Region will be developed by Marine Planning Partnerships to allow more local ownership and decision making. The nearest Scottish Marine Region to the Bellrock WFDA is the northeast Marine Region. No Regional Marine Plan is developed for the northeast Marine Region at the time of writing.</p>
A Blue Economy Vision for Scotland (Scottish Government, 2022a)	<p>Sets out the long-term ambition for Scotland's blue economy to 2045, to foster shared stewardship of the marine environment to support ecosystem health, improved livelihoods, economic prosperity, social inclusion and wellbeing. Key actions focus on:</p>

Policy	Summary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Restoring Scotland’s marine and coastal environments, and ensuring these are resilient to climate change and sustainably managed; ▪ The blue economy is managed to ensure fairer, healthier and happier communities with equal access to benefits from marine resources; and ▪ Innovative blue sectors are enabled are resource efficient, competitive and meeting net-zero and nature positive commitments.
UK Marine Policy Statement (HM Government, 2011)	<p>In March 2011, the UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) was published for the purposes of section 44 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA).</p> <p>The MPS was established to partially facilitate and support the formulation of Marine Plans in accordance with the marine objectives (HM Government, 2011), including to promote sustainable economic development; enable the UK’s move towards a low-carbon economy, to mitigate the causes of climate change and ocean acidification and adapt to their effects; ensure a sustainable marine environment which promotes healthy, functioning marine ecosystems and protects marine habitats, species and heritage assets; and contribute to the societal benefits of the marine area, including the sustainable use of marine resources to address local social and economic issues.</p>
Marine Strategy Framework Directive	<p>The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (Directive 2008/56/EC) was established to protect the marine environment by seeking to achieve Good Environmental Status in Europe’s seas by 2020. This Directive was transposed into UK law by the Marine Strategy Regulations 2010 and remains applicable after EU Exit, under the Marine Environment (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018. Every six years, Member States must review and update their marine strategy. The third cycle began in 2024, running until 2030.</p>

2.5 Consenting Legislation

22. The following consents and licences are required for the Bellrock WFDA, as outlined in **Chapter 1: Introduction (Volume II)**:

- s.36 Consent under the Electricity Act 1989 (**Section 2.5.1**); and
- Marine Licence(s) for infrastructure associated with marine renewable energy projects between 12 and 200 nm under the MCAA 2009 (**Section 2.5.2**).

23. Where additional licences are required for site preparation works, or during operation and maintenance or decommissioning, these will be sought from the relevant consenting authority at the appropriate time.

2.5.1 Electricity Act 1989

24. The Electricity Act 1989 created the legal framework for privatising the electricity industry. The Act allowed the establishment of new electricity companies, required to ‘develop and maintain an

efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity supply', and 'to facilitate competition in the supply and generation of electricity'. Under s.36, the Act establishes the consenting regime for the Construction and Operation (O&M) of generation stations.

25. For generating stations (such as the Bellrock WFDA), which are situated in Scottish offshore waters or the Scottish Renewable Energy Zone (waters between 12 nm and 200 nm) with a proposed installed capacity of 50 MW and above, consent is required from Scottish Ministers (facilitated by Marine Directorate - Licensing Operations Team (MD-LOT)) under s.36 of the Electricity Act 1989.
26. Schedule 9 requires the Scottish Ministers, in considering the application, to have regard to the desirability of various factors, and the extent to which the Bellrock WFDA includes reasonable mitigation to mitigate effects on these factors.
27. The s.36 Consent grants permission for the construction and operation of generating stations, which in the case of the Bellrock WFDA comprises the Wind Farm Infrastructure.

2.5.2 Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

28. A Marine Licence(s) is also required under the MCAA 2009. The MCAA 2009 sets out the requirements for Marine Licencing in Scottish waters between 12 nm and 200 nm, to be obtained prior to construction, alteration or improvement of any works, deposit of any substance or objects in or over the sea, or on or under the seabed, or to carry out activities such as dredging. As such, a Marine Licence will be sought for activities listed under Part 4 (Marine Licencing) of the MCAA 2009 where required to construct the infrastructure within the Bellrock WFDA. Separate Marine Licence(s) will be sought for WTG-related infrastructure and offshore substation-related infrastructure².
29. Section 58(1) of the 2009 Act will require MD-LOT (on behalf of Scottish Ministers) to determine the Marine Licence application in accordance with appropriate marine policy documents, unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise.
30. Section 69(1) also requires MD-LOT to have regard to the need to protect the environment, protect human health, and prevent interference with legitimate uses of the sea, and such other matters as MD-LOT consider relevant.
31. The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 does not apply as the Wind Farm Infrastructure is located beyond 12 nm.
32. In Scottish waters, Marine Licences are administered by MD-LOT, on behalf of Scottish Ministers.

² Offshore substations will be consented as part of the OfTDA and will be assessed as part of the Bellrock OfTDA EIA Report. The OfTDA is also considered within the Bellrock WFDA EIA's cumulative effects assessments.

2.6 Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations

33. The requirement to undertake EIA was originally established under the EIA Directive (2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU) (as transposed into domestic law) and earlier Directives (85/337/EEC as amended by 97/11/EC, 2003/35/EC and 2009/31/EC) continue to be applicable. As such, the EIA Directive remains relevant to the EIA process in Scotland and is relevant to any s.36 or Marine Licence applications in Scottish waters if a project is likely to have a significant effect on the environment due to its size, nature, or location.
34. The following legislation implementing the EIA Directive into Scots law relevant for the purposes of the Bellrock WFDA:
- The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, which applies in relation to s.36 Consent applications (**Section 2.6.1**); and
 - The Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007, which applies in relation to Marine Licence applications in the Scottish offshore region (12 nm to 200 nm) (**Section 2.6.2**).
35. A detailed description of the approach to EIA for the Bellrock WFDA is set out in **Chapter 5: EIA Methodology (Volume II)**.
36. In line with the EIA Regulations, a Scoping Report for the Bellrock WFDA (**Appendix 1.1: Bellrock WFDA Scoping Report (Volume IV)**) was submitted to MD-LOT with a Scoping Opinion received (**Appendix 1.2: Bellrock WFDA Scoping Opinion (Volume IV)**). This Bellrock WFDA EIA Report is based on this Scoping Opinion.

2.6.1 The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

37. Under the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, an EIA is required to support certain electricity generation projects which must apply for consent under s.36 of the Electricity Act 1989. These regulations set out the statutory process and minimum requirements for EIA.
38. Schedule 2 of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 sets out a list of development types for which an EIA may be required, including generating stations, which the Bellrock WFDA falls under. Where Schedule 2 developments are likely to have a significant effect on the environment due to factors such as its nature, size or location, an EIA Report is required to be prepared and submitted to support such applications. The Applicant acknowledges the potential for significant environmental effects, and has therefore prepared this Bellrock WFDA EIA Report in accordance with these regulations.

2.6.2 The Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007

39. Under Schedule A2 of the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007 (which applies in Scottish offshore waters beyond 12 nm to 200 nm), an EIA is required for wind farms (installations that harness wind power for energy production) if the project in question is likely, because of its size, nature or location to have significant effects on the environment. The Applicant acknowledges the potential for significant environmental effects and has therefore prepared this Bellrock WFDA EIA Report in accordance with these regulations.

2.7 Nature Conservation Legislation and Policy

2.7.1 Habitat Regulations Appraisal

40. In 1992, the EU Directive 92/43/EEC, known as the 'Habitats Directive', was adopted to enable EU member states to meet obligations set out under the Bern Convention. The purpose of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species listed in the Annexes (Annex I, II) at Favourable Conservation Status. Protection to meet Favourable Conservation Status is given through designation of European Sites (Special Areas of Conservation).
41. In addition, the EU Directive 2009/147/EC, known as the 'Birds Directive', was implemented to provide a framework for conservation and management of wild birds in the EU. Annex I of the Birds Directive provides a list of rare, vulnerable, and migratory species, which are protected through the designation of Special Protection Areas.
42. For the purposes of the Bellrock WFDA, the relevant legislation transposing these directives into Scots law are the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (which apply to s.36 consent applications) and the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (which apply to Marine Licences within the Scottish Offshore region, 12 nm to 200 nm).
43. Under the Habitats Regulations, the Scottish Ministers, as Competent Authority, must inform an Appropriate Assessment before granting consent for any plan or project that is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. The purpose of the Appropriate Assessment is to determine whether the proposal would adversely affect the integrity of a European Site, in view of that site's conservation objectives.
44. The Applicant has provided the **Bellrock WFDA Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (Volume VI)** alongside this Bellrock WFDA EIA Report and application documentation for the Bellrock WFDA to provide the information required by the Competent Authority, the Scottish Ministers, to inform an Appropriate Assessment as required under the Habitats Regulations.
45. As the Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA) has identified the potential for adverse effect on site integrity (AEoSI), the derogation provisions of the Habitats Regulations will be engaged should the Competent Authority reach the same conclusion. In support of the s.36 Consent and Marine Licence application, a **Bellrock WFDA Shadow Habitats Regulations Appraisal Derogation Case (Volume VI)** is therefore submitted alongside the RIAA.

2.7.2 Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area Assessment

46. Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas (ncMPA) in Scotland are designated under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 within 12 nm, and Marine Protected Areas (MPA) are designated under the MCAA in offshore waters between 12 nm and 200 nm. ncMPAs/MPAs are designated to protect biodiversity and heritage, with specific focus on protected features (species, habitats, large scale features or geomorphological features). Under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and the MCAA 2009, provisions are made for the relevant public authority (in this instance, MD-LOT on behalf of Scottish Ministers) to consider whether a licensable activity is capable of affecting (other than insignificantly) a protected feature in a ncMPA/MPA or any ecological or geomorphological process on which the conservation of any protected feature in a ncMPA/MPA is dependant.
47. In order to assess whether there is any significant risk of the licensable activity hindering the achievement of the conservation objectives of a given ncMPA/MPA, a ncMPA/MPA assessment should be completed.
48. A **Bellrock WFDA Report to Inform ncMPA Assessment (Volume VII)** is submitted alongside this Bellrock WFDA EIA Report, covering screened in impacts to the Southern Trench ncMPA³.

2.7.3 European Protected Species

49. Annex IV of the Habitats Directive sets out a list of animals and plants that are considered European Protected Species (EPS) and are protected under the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (applicable to projects outside 12 nm of the coast) in Scotland. Under the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, it is unlawful to:
- Deliberately capture, injure, or kill an EPS;
 - Deliberately disturb an EPS; and
 - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an EPS.
50. However, it may be lawful to carry out certain activities which are likely to cause disturbance or injury to EPS, if an EPS licence is sought. This process is detailed in **Chapter 5: EIA Methodology (Volume II)**.
51. As part of early project development, the Applicant provided EPS Risk Assessments to MD-LOT in relation to EPS licence applications to undertake geophysical surveys within the Bellrock WFDA. MD-LOT determined that no EPS licence was required for this purpose. The Applicant will apply for further EPS licences as appropriate should these be required in the future.

2.7.4 Basking Sharks

52. Basking sharks *Cetorhinus maximus* are a Priority Marine Feature (PMF) in Scotland's seas and are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and under Part 3 and

³ An ncMPA Screening Report was submitted as part of the Bellrock WFDA Scoping Report (see **Appendix 1.1: Bellrock WFDA Scoping Report (Volume IV)**). Impacts to minke whale in the Southern Trench ncMPA were screened in for further consideration.

Schedule 6 of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. Under these protections, it is prohibited to kill, injure or take by any method basking sharks and any other species listed in Schedule 5, or to disturb these species intentionally or recklessly.

53. For commercial survey activities (e.g. geophysical surveys), a licence to disturb basking sharks may be required. The Applicant will apply for a basking shark licence should this be required with MD-LOT, on behalf of the Scottish Ministers, as the relevant licensing authority.
54. Further information on basking sharks is provided in **Chapter 8: Fish and Shellfish Ecology (Volume II)**.

2.7.5 Priority Marine Features

55. As part of its approach to effective marine nature conservation as presented in the Marine Nature Conservation Strategy, the Scottish Government developed a list of the PMF in Scotland's Seas. Scotland's National Marine Plan provides policy for the protection for PMFs (General Policy 9).
56. Since 2014, 81 species and habitats present in the seas around Scotland have been identified as PMFs. The list, which was developed by Marine Scotland (now Marine Directorate), the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot), covers species and habitats that are a priority for conservation in Scotland, including intertidal and continental shelf habitats, deep sea habitats, mammals, fish, shellfish and other invertebrates. Please refer to **Chapter 7: Benthic Ecology; Chapter 8: Fish and Shellfish Ecology; and Chapter 9: Marine Mammals (Volume II)**.

2.7.6 Biodiversity Enhancement

57. Scottish Government Policy, including the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045 (Scottish Government, 2024b), SNMP and The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4 (Scottish Government, 2023a)), contain an emphasis on tackling the nature crises through developments making a contribution towards both halting biodiversity loss and supporting biodiversity and marine enhancement. The environmental assessments presented in **Chapters 6 - 19 (Volume II)** provide details of how specific embedded environmental measures are proposed to avoid or reduce environmental effects. The Applicant acknowledges the importance of contributing positively to biodiversity and supports the principle of including nature inclusive design and nature enhancement where feasible. During the detailed design of the Bellrock Wind Farm Infrastructure, consideration will be given to opportunities to apply Nature Inclusive Design to the Bellrock Project in order to contribute to biodiversity enhancement and nature positive outcomes, in line with available guidance at the time (see **Chapter 5: Project Description (Volume II)** for details).

2.8 Other Consenting Requirements

2.8.1 Decommissioning

58. Sections 105 to 114 of the Energy Act 2004 set out statutory requirements in relation to the decommissioning of Offshore Renewable Energy Installations (OREI) (such as the Bellrock WFDA) and associated electrical lines. The Scottish Ministers will require a costed decommissioning

programme for OREIs in Scottish waters to be submitted for approval. Scottish Ministers further have the power to determine specific approaches to decommissioning, including stipulating the form, timing and size of financial securities required.

59. The document ‘Decommissioning of Offshore Renewable Energy Installations in Scottish Waters or in the Scottish part of the Renewable Energy Zone under The Energy Act 2004: Guidance Notes for Industry (in Scotland)’ was published by Marine Scotland in July 2022 (Scottish Government, 2022b). This guidance document sets out the policy and legislative framework; decommissioning requirements in Scotland; requirements for Decommissioning Programmes; environmental and safety considerations; and financial considerations. Decommissioning Programmes are expected to contain information on decommissioning standards, financial security, residual liability and industrial cooperation and collaboration.
60. Section 5 of the Guidance Note states that “*an indication of the decommissioning proposals should be included as part of the statutory consenting or licensing process so that the feasibility of removing the infrastructure can be assessed as part of the application process*”. The decommissioning phase of the Bellrock WFDA is described in **Chapter 4: Project Description (Volume II)** and each technical chapter (**Chapters 6 - 19 (Volume II)**) assesses the decommissioning phase.
61. The Bellrock WFDA is wholly beyond 12 nm, therefore there is no provision for the Applicant to extinguish any rights of navigation within the Bellrock WFDA.
62. The decommissioning programme from the Bellrock WFDA will be secured by condition of the s.36 Consent and approved by Scottish Ministers prior to commencement of construction.

2.8.2 Safety Zone Applications

63. Section 95 and Schedule 16 of the Energy Act 2004 sets out that Safety Zones can be established for any phase of an offshore renewable energy project in designated areas, where it is deemed appropriate for safety reasons.
64. The Electricity (Offshore Generating Stations) (Safety Zones) (Applications Procedures and Control of Access) Regulations 2007 were introduced in August 2006 clarifying the process for applying for a Safety Zone and advertising such applications. The Applicant will follow these regulations and associated guidelines when applying for Safety Zones noting that the Marine Directorate are now responsible for Safety Zone applications for projects within Scottish Waters.
65. Safety Zones are intended to ensure the safety of individuals on the relevant Wind Farm Infrastructure and vessel(s) during construction, O&M, extension or decommissioning by prohibiting non-project vessels from navigating through a designated area for a specific period. Vessels are generally prohibited from entering an active Safety Zone unless for the purposes of saving life, property, or if in distress, with further exceptions detailed in the Electricity Regulations 2007.
66. While the total number and sequencing of Safety Zones to be established within the Bellrock WFDA has not yet been defined, anticipated details of Safety Zones are detailed in **Chapter 4: Project Description (Volume II)**.

2.8.3 Pre-application Consultation

67. The Marine Licensing (Pre-application Consultation (PAC)) (Scotland) Regulations 2013, commonly referred to as the PAC Regulations, apply to activities occurring within Scottish Territorial Waters (within 12 nm). There is no provision for PAC in the MCAA 2009, so these requirements are not applicable in respect of relevant applications in the Scottish Offshore Region (12 nm to 200 nm). Details on the approach to stakeholder engagement and public consultation carried out in relation to the Bellrock WFDA is given in **Chapter 5: EIA Methodology (Volume II)**.

68. The Scottish and UK Governments have recently consulted on reforms to the electricity infrastructure consenting regime in Scotland (Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, 2025). The consultation was launched in October 2024, with the Government response published in March 2025. The reforms include a proposal to introduce mandatory PAC requirements for s.36 Consent applications, to ensure early and meaningful engagement with stakeholders, including local communities. The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 allows Scottish Minister to make provision for these reforms. However, these do not apply to current s.36 Consent applications, such as the Bellrock WFDA. The voluntary PAC process undertaken by the Applicant generally aligns with the principles of proposed s.36 Consent consultation provisions. Further details on the Applicant's approach are provided in the **Appendix 5.2: Pre-application Consultation Report (Volume IV)**.

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