



# **Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm**

## **Wind Farm Development Area**

**Environmental Impact Assessment Report Volume IV**

**Appendix 16.3: Socioeconomics Consultation Correspondence**

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**Subject: Consultation for the Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm - Wind Farm Development Area Environmental Impact Assessment – Methodology for the Socioeconomics, Tourism and Recreation Assessment**

Dear ██████████

We are writing to consult with you on the proposed approach and methodology for undertaking the socioeconomics, tourism and recreation assessment for the Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm, Wind Farm Development Area (WFDA) Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

This consultation will supplement the WFDA's Scoping Request that was submitted to MD-LOT on 10 April 2024, which Aberdeenshire Council were invited to comment on by MD-LOT. The Scoping Report included the Project's proposed approach to the socioeconomics, tourism and recreation assessment. At the time of scoping, the Project's grid connection solution was a coordinated connection to an offshore substation, therefore had no onshore components. However, in April 2025, the National Energy System Operator (NESO) changed the grid connection solution to a radial solution, connecting into the proposed Hurlie substation. Consequently, the Project will now develop onshore infrastructure including a landfall, onshore export cables and an onshore substation.

Whilst a Scoping Request will be submitted to Aberdeenshire Council for the Onshore Transmission Development Area (OnTDA) in due course, the assessment of the WFDA is underway to facilitate a WFDA consent application around March 2026.

Given that the socioeconomics, tourism and recreation assessment will be undertaken as 'whole project' assessments (including the OnTDA), we would like to invite Aberdeenshire Council to comment on the assessment methodology. In doing so, the methodology adopted for the WFDA EIA Report will also be adopted for the OnTDA EIA Report. We appreciate that any views presented by Aberdeenshire Council relating to the OnTDA will be without prejudice and will be formalised in a formal Scoping Opinion for the OnTDA which will be sought in due course.

Background to the Project is detailed below, and an outline of the proposed approach is provided in Appendix 1.

## Background to the Project

The Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm is a proposed floating offshore wind farm, to be located 120 km east of Stonehaven and will have an installed capacity of up to 1.8 GW. The Bellrock Project is being delivered by Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm Limited (the Applicant). For consenting purposes, the Bellrock Project comprises the following three Development Areas, for which separate consents and/or licences will be sought by the Applicant:

- The Bellrock WFDA, for the installation and operation of the floating Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs), associated station keeping systems, and inter-array cables, which form the offshore generating station;
- The Bellrock Offshore Transmission Development Area (OfTDA), for the installation and operation of the offshore substations, interconnector cables and offshore export cables required to transmit electricity to landfall (to Mean High Water Springs (MHWS)); and
- The Bellrock OnTDA, for the installation and operation of transition bay(s), onshore export cables and onshore substation required to transmit electricity from landfall (from Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS)) to the National Grid Electricity Transmission System at the Hurlie substation, Aberdeenshire.

An EIA is currently being undertaken to support a consent application for the offshore infrastructure which is included in the Bellrock WFDA. A Scoping Report – Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm – SCOP-0043 (Applicant Doc Ref: BFR\_BEL\_CST\_REP\_0003) was submitted to MD-LOT on 10 April 2024, and the Government's subsequent Scoping Opinion – Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm was issued on 8 August 2024. At the time of writing the Bellrock WFDA Scoping Report, the working assumption for the Bellrock Project was a connection to a coordinated Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (SSEN Transmission) offshore substation. NESO determined in April 2025 that the Bellrock Project would instead connect to the Hurlie substation in Aberdeenshire. Consequently, the Bellrock WFDA Scoping Report did not include reference to OnTDA aspects within the methodology sections for undertaking the 'whole project' assessments.

## Consultation

To inform the socioeconomics, tourism and recreation assessment, we welcome your feedback on the proposed approach (in Appendix 1) in support of the Bellrock WFDA EIA (and subsequently the OfTDA and OnTDA), with regards to the following questions:

1. Do you agree with the proposed assessment methodology and approach for socioeconomics, tourism and recreation?

We would be grateful if you could provide a response by 31 July 2025.



## Appendix 1: Assessment Methodology

The socioeconomics, tourism and recreation assessments across the Bellrock WFDA, OfTDA and OnTDA EIAs will follow the same economic impact methodology and approach. In addition, a whole-project economic impact assessment will be submitted alongside each EIA, presenting the combined economic impacts of the Bellrock WFDA, OfTDA and OnTDA as a single, integrated development.

As the Bellrock WFDA consent application and supporting EIA will be submitted to the Scottish Government before the Bellrock OnTDA Scoping Report is submitted to Aberdeenshire Council, we would like to confirm the following:

- The socioeconomics methodology used in the Bellrock WFDA EIA will also be applied in the Bellrock OfTDA and Bellrock OnTDA EIAs.
- A combined whole-project economic impact assessment will accompany each EIA submission.
- The economic impact methodology will be consistent across all assessments.
- All assessments will follow a precautionary, worst-case scenario approach, in line with standard EIA requirements.

The socioeconomics, tourism and recreation assessments are being undertaken by BiGGAR Economics and the proposed approach aligns with that taken for other offshore wind projects which BiGGAR Economics have discussed with Aberdeenshire Council previously, including Caledonia, Buchan, and Muir Mhòr. It will be informed by national and regional policy, including the UK Offshore Wind Sector Deal and the Scottish Government's Offshore Wind Policy Statement.

The economic impacts will be assessed across all project phases – construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning – using an input-output economic impact methodology. This includes direct, indirect (supply chain), and induced (worker spending) effects. The economic impact assessment will consider the lowest, realistic levels of expenditure associated with Bellrock OWF that might be expected to take place in Scotland and in the UK. This will be informed by the Supply Chain Development Statement (SCDS) submitted to Crown Estate Scotland as part of the ScotWind leasing process. The SCDS sets out commitments and ambitions for Scottish and UK content in the supply chain.

As with other recent projects, tourism and social impacts will be assessed based on potential secondary effects identified through other technical assessments (e.g. landscape and visual, traffic and transport). The tourism and recreation assessment will be undertaken for each development area separately within the Bellrock WFDA EIA, the Bellrock OfTDA EIA and the Bellrock OnTDA EIA, and will also consider cumulative impacts with other plans and projects.

We are aware of recent guidance from Aberdeenshire Council and Scottish Renewables regarding community wealth building and the maximisation of local socioeconomic benefits. While these are important planning considerations, they are not intended to inform EIAs, which must apply a worst-case approach. These broader objectives will instead be addressed as part of the planning application for the Bellrock OnTDA.

END