# Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm

# Onshore Transmission Development Area

## Scoping Report - Volume 2

## Habitats Regulations Appraisal Screening Report

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# Executive Summary

Through the ScotWind leasing round managed by Crown Estate Scotland, Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm Limited (the **Applicant**) was successfully awarded an option to develop an area of seabed in the central North Sea, off the coast of Aberdeenshire, Scotland, to develop the Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm (the **Bellrock Project**).

The Bellrock Project is a proposed floating offshore wind farm, which will generate and transmit renewable electricity, exporting up to 1.8 gigawatts[1] to the National Electricity Transmission System via Scottish and Southern Energy Networks Transmission's Hurlie substation in Aberdeenshire, Scotland.

The Bellrock Project comprises the following three Development Areas for which separate consents and/or licence applications will be (or have been) sought by the Applicant:

- The Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area (OnTDA) within which the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure will be constructed, operated and maintained, and decommissioned. The Bellrock OnTDA extends landward of Mean Low Water Springs to the Hurlie substation and partially overlaps with the Bellrock Offshore Transmission Development Area (OfTDA) (from Mean Low Water Springs to Mean High Water Springs);
- The Bellrock Wind Farm Development Area (WFDA) within which the Bellrock Wind Farm Infrastructure will be constructed, operated and maintained, and decommissioned. The Bellrock WFDA is located 120 km east of Stonehaven (116 km southeast of Peterhead), Aberdeenshire; and
- The Bellrock OfTDA within which the Bellrock Offshore Transmission Infrastructure will be constructed, operated and maintained, and decommissioned. The Bellrock OfTDA overlaps with the whole of the WFDA and partially overlaps with the Bellrock OnTDA. The Bellrock OfTDA extends seaward of Mean High Water Springs.

The Bellrock OnTDA Scoping Boundary is shown in **Figure 3.1 (Appendix A: Figures (Volume 2)**). The Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure includes:

- **Landfall:** located at Cowie, Aberdeenshire, where between two and six ducts are installed using trenchless techniques, allowing the offshore export cables to be brought ashore and connected to the onshore export cables within the transition joint bay;
- **Onshore export cables:** up to six underground High Voltage Alternating Current or High Voltage Direct Current onshore cable circuits, each up to 18 km in length, installed between the landfall and the onshore substation;

[1] Project capacities quoted within this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report** are approximate. The final capacity will be confirmed within the Bellrock OnTDA RIAA.

- **Onshore substation:** electrical equipment (such as converters, transformers, switchgear, and protection and control systems) enabling renewable electricity from the Bellrock Wind Farm received via onshore export cables to be exported to the National Electricity Transmission System, and ancillary infrastructure; and
- **Hurlie substation connection works:** infrastructure between the Bellrock onshore substation to (and within) the Hurlie substation, including works within the Hurlie substation to connect the Onshore Transmission Infrastructure to the National Electricity Transmission System.

This Bellrock OnTDA Habitats Regulations Appraisal Screening Report accompanies the **Bellrock OnTDA Scoping Report (Volume 1)** and presents Phase 1 ('Screening') of the HRA process. It informs Aberdeenshire Council's determination of whether the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure could have a likely significant effect on a European Site, alone or in-combination, and whether appropriate assessment is required.

Relevant Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites were identified using their location, potential zones of influence and the characteristics of their qualifying features. A source-pathway-receptor approach was then used to assess the potential for effects to occur during construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning.

Where likely significant effects cannot be excluded, the relevant site and qualifying feature are screened in for further assessment in a Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA). Conclusions will be reviewed as the design and evidence base develop.

The assessment considered three Special Areas of Conservation and three Special Protection Area/Ramsar sites:

| European Site | Screening Conclusion | Basis of Conclusion |
|---|---|---|
| Garron Point Special Area of Conservation | **Screened in** | Potential indirect effects on narrow-mouthed whorl snail cannot be excluded. Further assessment is required in the RIAA. |
| Red Moss of Netherley Special Area of Conservation | **Screened out** | No relevant air quality, disturbance or hydrological pathway has been identified. |
| River Dee Special Area of Conservation | **Partly screened in** | Freshwater pearl mussel and Atlantic salmon are screened out. Potential effects on ex-situ habitats used by otter require further assessment in the RIAA. |
| Fowlsheugh Special Protection Area | **Screened out** | No connectivity with the qualifying bird features has been identified. |
| Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site | **Screened out** | No viable impact pathway or meaningful functional connectivity has been identified for the relevant qualifying bird features. |
| Loch of Skene Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site | **Screened out** | Records indicate very limited use of the Screening Boundary by greylag goose, and effects on key foraging areas are not anticipated. |

The in-combination assessment identified no additional sites, qualifying features or impact pathways; the same screening conclusions therefore apply.

A RIAA will therefore assess potential indirect effects on the narrow-mouthed whorl snail feature of Garron Point SAC and the otter feature of River Dee SAC. Aberdeenshire Council will make the final determination as competent authority.

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## Glossary of Terminology

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| Applicant | Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm Limited, the legal entity submitting the application for Planning Permission in Principle (PPP) for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area. |
| Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm<br>(or the Bellrock Project) | An offshore wind farm capable of exporting up to 1.8 gigawatt (GW) of renewable energy to the National Electricity Transmission System.<br>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:<br>▪ Wind Farm Development Area;<br>▪ Offshore Transmission Development Area; and<br>▪ Onshore Transmission Development Area. |
| Commencement of construction | Commencement of construction to install the Onshore Transmission Infrastructure as authorised by the Onshore Transmission Development Area Planning Permission in Principle (excluding site preparation works), comprising a material operation under the Section 27 (4) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1990 and which may be:<br>▪ Any work of construction in the course of the erection of a building;<br>▪ The digging of a trench which is to contain the foundations, or part of the foundations, of a building;<br>▪ Any operation in the course of laying out or constructing a road or part of a road; and<br>▪ Any change in the use of any land which constitutes material development. |
| Construction works | Works to install the Onshore Transmission Infrastructure as authorised by the Onshore Transmission Development Area PPP, such as:<br>▪ Installation of the landfall (landward of Mean Low Water Springs);<br>▪ Creation of new roads or part of a road;<br>▪ Creation of temporary construction compounds;<br>▪ Creation of onshore substation platform;<br>▪ Installation of onshore substation electrical equipment and construction of buildings;<br>▪ Tie-in works to the Hurlie substation;<br>▪ Installation of onshore export cables, including open cut trenching and/or a trenchless technique;<br>▪ Land reinstatement and establishment of landscaping and/or habitat enhancement areas;<br>▪ Testing and commissioning; and<br>▪ Post-construction surveys. |
| Decommissioning | The process of removing, dismantling, or otherwise making safe of the Onshore Transmission Infrastructure at the end of its operational life, together with any appropriate reinstatement of land, in accordance with the relevant regulatory requirements and an approved decommissioning strategy. |

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| Development Area | For consenting purposes, the area for which separate consents and/or Marine Licences will be sought by the Applicant, comprising:<br>▪ The Wind Farm Development Area;<br>▪ The Offshore Transmission Development Area; and<br>▪ The Onshore Transmission Development Area. |
| High Voltage Alternating Current | An electrical power transmission system that uses alternating current (AC) at high voltages to transmit electricity efficiently over long distances. High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) infrastructure includes HVAC export cables and an onshore substation to collect, transform and transmit electricity to the National Electricity Transmission System. |
| High Voltage Direct Current | An electrical power transmission system that uses direct current (DC) at high voltages to transmit electricity efficiently over long distances. High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) infrastructure includes HVDC export cables, and a converter station to convert electricity between direct current and alternating current (AC) and to collect, transform and transmit electricity for transmission to the National Electricity Transmission System. |
| Horizontal directional drill | A trenchless technique to bring the offshore export cables ashore at landfall. |
| Hurlie substation | SSEN Transmission's substation, which will receive renewable electricity from the Bellrock Project's onshore substation and allow supply of renewable electricity to the National Electricity Transmission System. |
| Hurlie substation connection works | Works to connect the Bellrock onshore substation to the National electricity Transmission System at the Hurlie Substation, including the laying of 400 kV onshore export cables from the Bellrock onshore substation to (and within) the Hurlie substation, and connection to the Hurlie substation equipment. |
| Joint bay | Underground structure constructed at intervals along the onshore export cable route to join sections of onshore export cables. |
| Landfall | The area in which the offshore export cables come ashore and transition between the offshore export cables and the onshore export cables. For the purpose of the Onshore Transmission Development Area, the landfall includes the area landward of Mean Low Water Springs. |
| Link box | Underground chamber accessed by manhole, or an above ground cabinet located close to the onshore export cables, housing low voltage electrical earthing links and allowing periodic access for testing of the onshore export cables. A fence may be installed around the access manhole or link box for protection. |
| National Electricity Transmission System | The high-voltage electricity power transmission network serving Great Britain which receives electricity from generators (such as offshore wind farms) and transmits that electricity to anywhere on the National Electricity Transmission System to satisfy demand. |
| Onshore export cable corridor | The planning application boundary within which the onshore export cables route will be located. |

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| Onshore export cable route | The area within the onshore export cable corridor where construction and commissioning of the onshore export cables will be undertaken, and which may include (but not limited to) the onshore export cables and trench(es); link boxes and associated fencing; temporary haul road; spoil, material and equipment laydown and/or storage; drainage infrastructure; wheel washing facilities; lighting, fencing and security; and environmental mitigation area(s). |
| Onshore export cable | Electrical and fibre optic cables between the transition joint bay(s) at landfall to the onshore substation and onward to the Hurlie substation which may be laid directly within cable ducts or protective troughs. |
| Onshore substation | Onshore substation which will be fenced and house electrical equipment (such as transformers, reactive compensation equipment, harmonic filters, switchgear, and protection and control systems), thereby enabling renewable electricity from the wind farm to be received via the onshore export cables and exported to the National Electricity Transmission System. |
| Onshore Transmission Development Area | The boundary within which the Onshore Transmission Infrastructure will be constructed, operated and maintained, and decommissioned (and partially overlaps with the Offshore Transmission Development Area at the landfall). |
| Onshore Transmission Infrastructure | Infrastructure located within the Onshore Transmission Development Area including transition joint bay(s); onshore export cables; onshore substation; temporary construction compounds; temporary working areas; environmental mitigation areas; drainage/irrigation infrastructure; access works; and any other associated infrastructure (including activities associated with the Onshore Transmission Infrastructure construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning). |
| Operational life | The expected operational life of the Onshore Transmission Infrastructure from the Commercial Operation Date to the first component of the Onshore Transmission Infrastructure being decommissioned. |
| Operation and Maintenance | Day-to-day supervision and monitoring of the Onshore Transmission Infrastructure. Preventative and corrective maintenance tasks to ensure the assets remain in good working order and prevent failures over the operational lifetime. |
| Preferred Landfall Area of Search | The Preferred Landfall Area of Search is the area of search adopted to identify potential landfall location(s). |
| Preferred Onshore Substation Area of Search | The Preferred Area of Search adopted to identify potential onshore substation locations. |
| Project Design Envelope | Includes all relevant technical, spatial and temporal elements of the Onshore Transmission Infrastructure, and the proposed methodology to be employed for construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning. |
| Scoping Boundary | The area considered at the scoping stage within which the relevant Development Area and its associated infrastructure is expected to be developed. |
| 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. |
| Screening Boundary | The area considered at the screening stage of the Habitats Regulations Appraisal process, within which potential impacts on European Sites may occur. |

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| Site preparation works | Preparatory activities undertaken within the Onshore Transmission Development Area prior to the commencement of construction of the Onshore Transmission Infrastructure, which may comprise (and which may require separate consents):<br>▪ Pre-construction geophysical, geotechnical and archaeological surveys;<br>▪ Pre-construction environmental/ecological surveys and mitigation;<br>▪ Site clearance and preparation, including vegetation removal;<br>▪ Ground investigation and remedial work with respect to contaminated land;<br>▪ Erection of temporary fencing;<br>▪ Creation of temporary hardstanding where required to facilitate construction;<br>▪ Creation of temporary means of access; and<br>▪ Temporary display of site notices, signage or advertisements. |
| Temporary construction compound | Area within the Onshore Transmission Development Area used temporarily to support the construction and commissioning, which may include (but not limited to) trenchless crossing work areas, office, welfare and workshop facilities; vehicle parking; spoil, material and equipment laydown and/or storage; drainage infrastructure; wheel washing facilities; and lighting, fencing and security. Includes primary, temporary and trenchless crossing compounds. |
| Transition joint bay | An underground structure at the landfall accessed by manhole or other means which accommodates the jointing of the offshore export cables and the onshore export cables. A fence may be installed around the access manhole for protection. |
| Trenchless technique | A subsurface construction method, such as horizontal directional drilling, used to install ducts and offshore export cables with no surface excavation between the entry and exit points. |

## Glossary of Abbreviations

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| AEoSI | Adverse effect on Site integrity |
| EIA | Environmental Impact Assessment |
| EIA Report | Environmental Impact Assessment Report |
| EU | European Union |
| HDD | Horizontal directional drilling |
| HRA | Habitats Regulations Appraisal |
| IROPI | Imperative reasons of overriding public interest |
| km | Kilometres |
| LSE | Likely significant effect |
| MD-LOT | Marine Directorate - Licensing Operations Team |
| MHWS | Mean High Water Springs |
| MLWS | Mean Low Water Springs |
| O&M | Operation and maintenance |
| OfTDA | Offshore Transmission Development Area |
| OnSS | Onshore substation |
| OnTDA | Onshore Transmission Development Area |
| PDE | Project Design Envelope |
| RIAA | Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment |
| SAC | Special Area of Conservation |
| SPA | Special Protection Area |
| SSSI | Site of Special Scientific Interest |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| WFDA | Wind Farm Development Area |
| ZoI | Zone of Influence |

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 The Bellrock Project Overview

1. In January 2022, as part of the ScotWind leasing round managed by Crown Estate Scotland, Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm Limited (the Applicant) was successfully awarded an option to develop an area of seabed in the central North Sea, off the coast of Aberdeenshire, Scotland, to develop the 1.8 gigawatts (GW) Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm (the Bellrock Project).

2. The Bellrock Project is a proposed floating offshore wind farm, which will generate and transmit renewable electricity, exporting up to 1.8 GW to the National Electricity Transmission System via Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission's proposed Hurlie substation in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. The Bellrock Project comprises the three Development Areas for which separate consents and/or licences will be (or have been) sought by the Applicant (see **Section 1.2**).

3. Following the Bellrock Wind Farm Development Area (WFDA) Scoping Opinion (Marine Directorate - Licensing Operations Team (MD-LOT), 2024), which included advice on Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) Screening, issued by MD-LOT in August 2024, the Applicant progressed the Bellrock WFDA through to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and HRA. A Section 36 Consent Application and Marine Licence Application for the Bellrock Wind Farm Infrastructure was submitted to MD-LOT in April 2026 (Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm Limited, 2026a). The Application was accompanied by a Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA) and Shadow Derogation Case, which provided information to support the competent authority's HRA of the Bellrock Wind Farm Infrastructure. A **Bellrock Offshore Transmission Development Area (OfTDA) HRA Screening Report** was also submitted to MD-LOT on 14 August 2026 (Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm, 2026b), with a screening opinion yet to be provided at the time of writing.

4. This **Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area (OnTDA) HRA Screening Report** accompanies the **Bellrock OnTDA Scoping Report (Volume 1)**, which requests a formal Scoping Opinion from Aberdeenshire Council, as the relevant planning authority, in relation to the Bellrock OnTDA and associated Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure. This **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report** details Phase 1 (Stages 1 to 3) of the HRA Process (see **Section 2.2** for further detail) and identifies the European Sites and qualifying features requiring further consideration through HRA. The Applicant seeks comment and feedback from relevant consultees on whether they agree with the HRA screening conclusions presented in this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**.

# 1.2 Development Areas

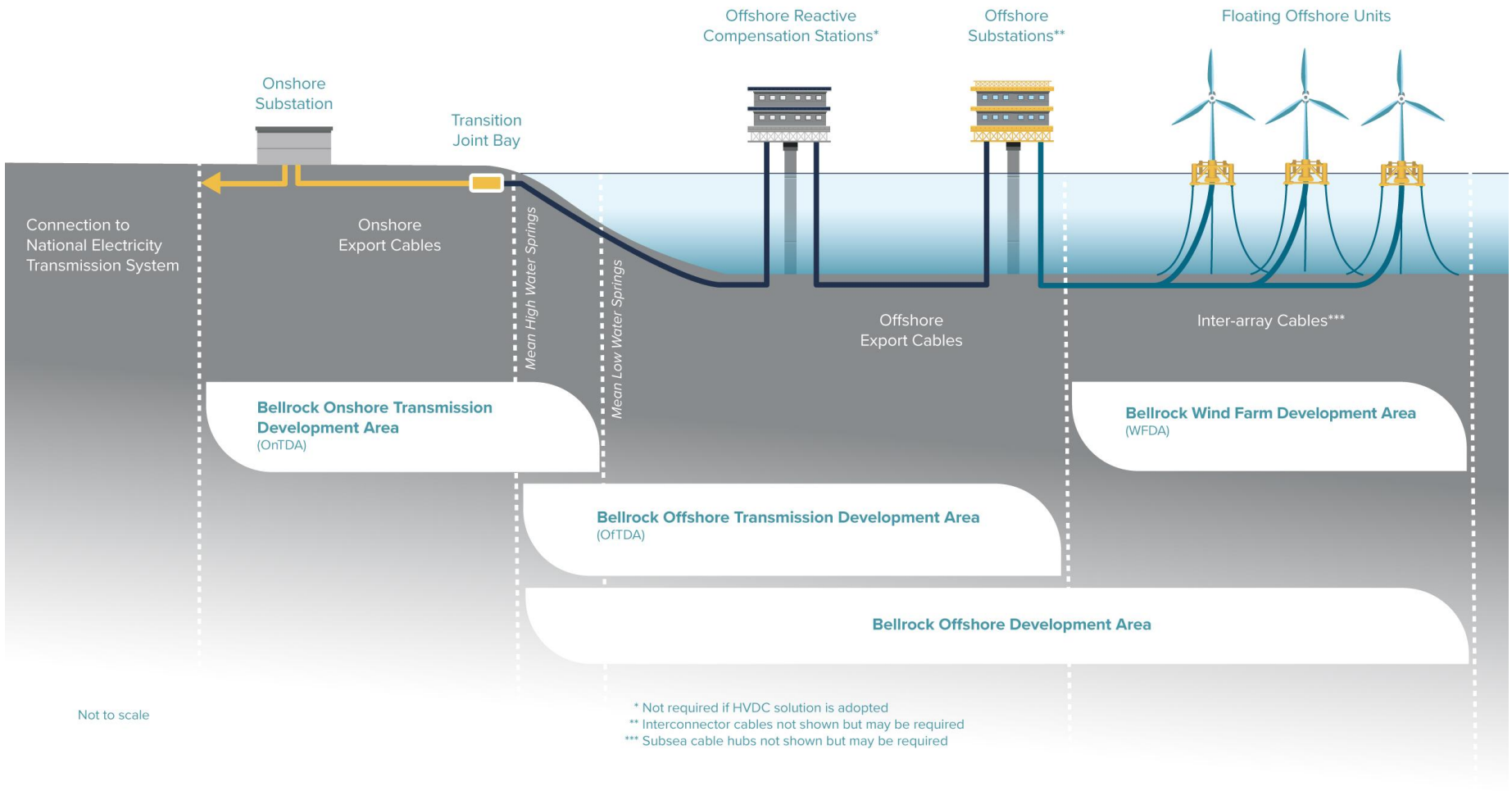
5. The Bellrock Project comprises the Bellrock OfTDA, the Bellrock WFDA, and the Bellrock OnTDA as discussed in **Section 1.1**.

6. The three Development Areas are shown schematically in **Plate 1.1,** while **Table 1.1** presents the three Development Areas and key infrastructure associated with each Development.

**Table 1.1: Development Areas and Associated Infrastructure Definitions**

| Development Area | Definition | Associated Infrastructure | Definition |
|---|---|---|---|
| OnTDA | The boundary within which the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure will be constructed, operated and maintained, and decommissioned.<br>The Bellrock OnTDA extends landward of Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS) to the Hurlie substation (located approximately 5 kilometre (km) west of Stonehaven) and partially overlaps with the Bellrock OfTDA (from MLWS to Mean High-Water Springs (MHWS)). | Onshore Transmission Infrastructure | Infrastructure located within the Bellrock OnTDA including transition joint bay(s); onshore export cables; onshore substation (OnSS); temporary construction compounds; temporary working areas; environmental mitigation areas; drainage/irrigation infrastructure; access works; and any other associated infrastructure (including activities associated with the Onshore Transmission Infrastructure construction, operation and maintenance (O&M), and decommissioning). |
| OfTDA | The boundary within which the Bellrock Offshore Transmission Infrastructure will be constructed, operated and maintained, and decommissioned.<br>The Bellrock OfTDA overlaps with the whole of the Bellrock WFDA and partially overlaps with the Bellrock OnTDA. The Bellrock OfTDA extends seaward of MHWS. | Offshore Transmission Infrastructure | Infrastructure located within the Bellrock OfTDA including fixed bottom offshore substation(s), fixed bottom offshore reactive compensation station(s) (and associated scour protection; interconnector cable(s) and associated cable protection; landfall (seaward of MWHS), and offshore export cables and associated cable protection (including activities associated with the Offshore Transmission Infrastructure construction, O&M, and decommissioning). |
| WFDA | The boundary within which the Bellrock Wind Farm Infrastructure will be constructed, operated and maintained, and decommissioned.<br>The Bellrock WFDA is located 120 km east of Stonehaven (116 km southeast of Peterhead), Aberdeenshire. | Wind Farm Infrastructure | Infrastructure located within the Bellrock WFDA 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, O&M, and decommissioning). |

**Plate 1.1: Overview of the Bellrock Project Development Areas**



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## 1.3 Habitats Regulations Appraisal Overview

7. The requirements of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive) and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive) have been transposed into domestic law through a number of regulations (the Habitats Regulations), with those relevant to the Bellrock OnTDA being the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994. The Habitats Regulations continue to provide the statutory basis for HRA following the United Kingdom's (UK) exit from the European Union (EU).

8. Under the Habitats Regulations, Aberdeenshire Council, as the competent authority, must undertake an appropriate assessment before granting consent for any plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. In practice, HRA is applied as a staged process to determine whether an appropriate assessment is required. The HRA screening stage is undertaken to determine whether likely significant effects (LSE) on European Sites can be excluded. Where LSE cannot be excluded, an appropriate assessment is required.

9. For the purposes of HRA, European Sites comprise:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), including candidate SACs; and
- Special Protection Areas (SPA), including potential SPAs.

10. As fully detailed in **Section 2.1.2**, Ramsar sites are not, as a matter of law, afforded the same level of protection as European Sites under the Habitats Regulations. However, Scottish Government policy (Scottish Government, 2025) requires that they are afforded the same level of protection as European Sites in development decisions.

11. Further detail on the legislative and policy framework for HRA is provided in **Section 2**.

## 1.4 Purpose of this Habitats Regulations Appraisal Screening Report

12. This **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report** presents the Phase 1 (Stage 1 to 3) HRA screening assessment (see **Section 2.2.1** for further detail) for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure under the Habitats Regulations. The purpose of this screening assessment is to identify the European Sites and qualifying features which could be affected by the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure, and to determine whether the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, could result in LSE on those European Sites.

13. The screening assessment presented in this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report** has been undertaken to inform the competent authority's determination as to whether appropriate assessment is required for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure under the Habitats

Regulations. Where LSE cannot be excluded based on objective information, the relevant European Sites and qualifying features are identified for further consideration through appropriate assessment. This **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**, therefore, also identifies the proposed scope of any subsequent appropriate assessment, where required.

14. This **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report** has been prepared alongside the **Bellrock OnTDA Scoping Report (Volume 1)** and is based on the current understanding of the baseline environment and the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure. The screening assessment is informed by the Project Description presented in the **Bellrock OnTDA Scoping Report (Volume 1)**, which is summarised in **Section 3** of this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**, together with the best available site-specific information currently available for each receptor group.

15. The screening assessment presented in this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report** reflects the current stage of project development. Any changes arising from further site-specific surveys, environmental assessment, consultation, and/or refinement of the Project Design Envelope (PDE) will be considered in subsequent HRA documentation, including any RIAA, where required (see **Section 3.2** for information on the future refinement of the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary).

## 1.5 Structure of this Habitats Regulations Appraisal Screening Report

16. This **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report** is structured as follows:

- **Section 1: Introduction** – introduces the Bellrock Project and the Bellrock OnTDA, together with an overview of the HRA process, the purpose and structure of this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**;
- **Section 2: Habitats Regulations Appraisal** – describes the legislative and policy context relevant to HRA, the stages of the HRA process, and the screening methodology applied in this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**;
- **Section 3: Overview of the Bellrock OnTDA and Onshore Transmission Infrastructure** – provides an overview of the Bellrock OnTDA and the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure, including key project timelines and activities;
- **Section 4: Consultation** – summarises consultation undertaken to date relevant to HRA considerations for the Bellrock OnTDA; and
- **Section 5: Habitats Regulations Appraisal Screening Assessment** – presents the Stage 3 HRA screening assessment for relevant European Sites and qualifying features. Screening is structured by receptor group and includes:
  - **Section 5.1: Onshore Ecology**; and
  - **Section 5.2: Onshore Ornithology**.

# 2 Habitats Regulations Appraisal

## 2.1 Legislative Context

### 2.1.1 The Habitats Directive, Birds Directive, and Habitats Regulations

17. The Habitats Directive was influenced by the Bern Convention and provides a binding EU framework to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species listed in Annex I and Annex II of the Habitats Directive at favourable conservation status. Protection to maintain or restore favourable conservation status is delivered through a combination of site designation and management measures, including the designation of SACs.

18. In parallel, the Birds Directive provides a framework for the conservation and management of wild birds in Europe. Annex I of the Birds Directive lists species requiring special conservation measures, for which member states shall designate SPAs. At the same time, the Birds Directive mandates that regularly occurring migratory species not listed in Annex I also receive similar habitat protection (including via the designation of SPAs, where appropriate), especially in relation to breeding, moulting, wintering areas, and staging posts.

19. In Scotland, the requirements of the Habitats and Birds Directives are transposed into domestic law through legislation collectively referred to as the Habitats Regulations. For the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure, the relevant Regulations are the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994.

20. Under the Habitats Regulations, a HRA is required where a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, having regard to the site's conservation objectives.

#### 2.1.1.1 National Site Network

21. The network of nature conservation sites assessed through the HRA process was originally established under the Habitats Directive. European Sites within EU Member States were collectively referred to as the Natura 2000 network, with each individual site known as a Natura 2000 site. However, following the UK's departure from the EU, UK European Sites no longer form part of the Natura 2000 network, instead they collectively constitute the UK National Site Network. The UK National Site Network comprises European Sites that existed in the UK on 31 December 2020 as well as any new sites designated under the Habitats Regulations via the post EU exit amended domestic process.

22. The UK National Site Network management objectives were established in the EU Exit Regulations and are referred to as the network objectives. The objectives in relation to the UK National Site Network are to:

- Maintain at, or where appropriate restore to, a favourable conservation status in their natural range (so far as it lies in the UK's territory, and so far, as is proportionate):
  - The habitat types listed in Annex I to the Habitats Directive; and

  - The species listed in Annex II to the Habitats Directive whose natural range includes any part of the UK's territory.
- Contribute to ensuring the survival and reproduction in their area of distribution of:
  - Species of birds listed in Annex I to the Birds Directive which naturally occur in the UK's territory; and
  - Regularly occurring migratory species of birds not listed in that Annex which naturally occur in the UK's territory.

### 2.1.2 The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention)

23. The Ramsar Convention was adopted in 1971 to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands globally; the UK ratified the Convention in 1976. The Convention's principal mechanisms include:

- The designation of wetlands of international importance as Ramsar sites;
- The promotion of the wise use of all wetlands in the territory of each country; and
- International cooperation with other countries to further the wise use of wetlands and their resources.

24. Ramsar sites are designated using a suite of nine internationally agreed criteria, which relate to the ecological, biological, and hydrological importance of wetlands.

25. Ramsar sites are not currently subject to the statutory assessment provisions of the Habitats Regulations. However, Scottish Government policy requires Ramsar sites to be afforded protection equivalent to that of European Sites in development decisions (Scottish Government, 2025). Accordingly, the notified natural features of Ramsar sites are considered alongside the qualifying features of European Sites within this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**.

## 2.2 The Habitats Regulations Appraisal Process

### 2.2.1 Overview

26. The HRA is a structured and precautionary process used by competent authorities in Scotland to assess whether a plan or project could adversely affect the integrity of a European site, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. The HRA process is applied sequentially, progressing from initial screening through to appropriate assessment, where required, and, if necessary, consideration of derogation measures.

27. This **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report** presents the HRA screening assessment for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure and has been prepared in accordance with relevant

NatureScot guidance (NatureScot, 2026), which sets out a nine stage HRA process. These nine stages can be grouped into three distinct phases:

- **Phase 1: Screening (Stages 1 to 3)** - identifying the plan or project, determining which European Sites and qualifying features may be affected, and assessing whether LSE on those sites can be excluded, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. Phase 1 of the HRA process is addressed through this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**;
- **Phase 2: Appropriate Assessment (Stages 4 and 5)** - where LSE cannot be excluded, assessing the effects of the plan or project on the integrity of the relevant European Sites in view of their conservation objectives, and determining whether adverse effects on site integrity (AEoSI) can be excluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt. Where required, Phase 2 of the HRA process will be addressed through a RIAA for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure; and
- **Phase 3: Derogation (Stages 6 to 9)** - where AEoSI cannot be excluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt, considering alternative solutions, whether there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), potential impacts on priority features, and the requirement for compensatory measures. If required, this phase will be addressed through the development of a derogation case for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure.

28. The nine stages are summarised in **Section 2.2.2** to **Section 2.2.4**.

## 2.2.2 Phase 1

### 2.2.2.1 Stage 1: What is the Plan or Project?

29. Sufficient information must be provided to the competent authority to enable it to undertake the HRA. This stage is considered in this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**, and a description of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure is provided in **Section 3**.

### 2.2.2.2 Stage 2: Is the Plan or Project Directly Connected with or Necessary to Site Management for Nature Conservation?

30. This test is to identify and remove from further assessment those proposals which are clearly necessary to, or of value to, or inevitable as part of, management of the site for its qualifying features. All qualifying features should be considered.

31. The Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure is not directly connected with or necessary to site management for nature conservation of a European site. Therefore, consideration of the subsequent steps is required.

### 2.2.2.3 Stage 3: Is the Plan or Project (Either Alone or In Combination with Other Plans or Projects) Likely to Have a Significant Effect on a European Site?

32. This is essentially the screening stage to determine whether appropriate assessment is required. European Sites are screened for LSE (alone and in-combination with other plans and projects). It is important to consider any connectivity between the proposal and each of the qualifying features, e.g. are the processes or pathways by which the proposal may influence the site's qualifying feature

directly or indirectly? If there is doubt or a lot of detail is required, LSE should be concluded, and Stage 4 should be undertaken.

33. Upon determination that there is no potential for LSE to occur for qualifying features of a European site, that European Site is 'screened out'.

34. Under the Habitats Regulations, a HRA must be carried out on all plans and projects that have LSE on European Sites.

35. This stage is considered in this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**.

## 2.2.3 Phase 2

### 2.2.3.1 Stage 4: Undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the Implications for the Site in View of its Conservation Objectives

36. Where a plan or project is considered to have an LSE on the qualifying features of a European site an appropriate assessment is required. The appropriate assessment determines whether the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure alone or in-combination with other plans and projects has the potential to adversely affect the integrity of the European site in view of its individual conservation objectives.

37. If required, a RIAA for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure will be prepared to support the competent authority in carrying out the appropriate assessment with advice from NatureScot. The competent authority will form its own conclusions based on the RIAA. In this instance, the Competent Authority is the local planning authority, Aberdeenshire Council.

### 2.2.3.2 Stage 5: Can it be Ascertained that the Proposal will Not Adversely Affect the Integrity of the Site?

38. For a plan or project to be consented, the appropriate assessment must ascertain that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of a European Site. Conclusions must be based on there being no reasonable scientific doubt as to the absence of adverse effects. The integrity of the site only applies to the qualifying features and is directly linked to the conservation objectives for the site.

39. Stages 6 to 9 are only considered in circumstances where it cannot be ascertained, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of a European site.

40. If required, the RIAA for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure will provide information and a professional determination as to whether the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, will result in AEoSI. The final determination of AEoSI will be made by the competent authority.

## 2.2.4 Phase 3

### 2.2.4.1 Stage 6: Are there Alternative Solutions?

41. Stage 6 examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the plan or project that would avoid AEoSI on European Sites, should avoidance or mitigation measures, considered as part of the appropriate assessment be unable to prevent AEoSI. If it cannot be ascertained beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of a European Site, it can only proceed if there are no alternative solutions and there are IROPI (see Stages 8 and 9). This requirement is set out in Regulation 49 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994. Guidance (NatureScot, 2026) suggests alternative solutions could include alternative locations or routes, different scales or designs of development, alternative processes, or other different, practicable approaches which would have a lesser impact.

42. If required, an assessment of alternative solutions will be undertaken as part of the derogation case for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure.

### 2.2.4.2 Stage 7: Would a Priority Habitat or Species be Adversely Affected?

43. Priority habitats that are qualifying features of SACs in Scotland are identified by NatureScot (NatureScot, 2024a). These habitats are given a greater level of protection under Regulation 49 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994. Consideration needs to be given as to whether priority habitats in Scotland (or other relevant parts of the UK) would be adversely affected. There are no priority species (as defined in the Habitats Directive) in Scotland's SACs and the Birds Directive does not refer to 'priority' species. Therefore, this stage is only relevant to the HRA process where SACs with habitat qualifying features are under consideration.

44. If required, the potential for priority species and/or habitats to be affected will be considered as part of the derogation case for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure.

### 2.2.4.3 Stages 8 and 9: Are there Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest?

45. If no priority habitats are affected, but site integrity cannot be assured and no alternative solutions exist, the plan or project may only proceed for IROPI, with consultation required from Aberdeenshire Council.

46. Where priority habitats would be affected, progression is only possible under specific IROPI reasons, limited to serious human health or safety issues, or benefits or primary importance to the environment.

47. Where a plan or project proceeds under IROPI, Aberdeenshire Council have a duty to secure any compensatory measures necessary to maintain the overall coherence of the UK National Site Network, as set out in Regulation 53 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994.

48. If deemed necessary, without prejudice to the potential findings of the RIAA or the conclusions of the competent authority's appropriate assessment, the Applicant will progress the development of information to support HRA derogation during the pre-submission phase, in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

# 2.3 Habitats Regulations Appraisal Screening Methodology

## 2.3.1 Approach to Identification of European Sites and Qualifying Features

49. To support the identification of the European Sites and qualifying features to be considered within the screening assessment for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure, an initial pre-screening exercise has been undertaken. This approach is considered appropriate given the nature and scale of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure and the wide-ranging nature of many of the qualifying features of European Sites that may be affected.

50. The criteria applied to identify European Sites and qualifying features for inclusion in the screening assessment are set out in **Table 2.1**. These criteria take account of the location of European Sites, the anticipated Zone of Influence (ZoI) of potential impacts, and the ecological characteristics and distribution of qualifying features.

51. Criterion 1 identifies European Sites that directly overlap with the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary. These European Sites are screened in for consideration of LSE.

52. Criterion 2 identifies European Sites, not already screened in using Criterion 1, where the range or distribution of one or more qualifying feature overlaps with the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary. These European Sites are screened in for consideration of LSE.

53. Criterion 3 identifies European Sites, not already screened in by Criteria 1 or 2, where the predicted ZoI of potential impacts associated with the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure overlaps with a European site and/or its qualifying features. For ornithology receptors, consideration is also given to factors that inform the probable extent to which the different qualifying features will occur within the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary. These European Sites are screened in for consideration of LSE.

54. This initial pre-screening exercise identifies the European Sites which can be excluded from further consideration in this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**, as there is no potential for LSE due to lack of overlap as defined by the criteria set out in **Table 2.1**. European Sites identified as having a potential for LSE due to a potential overlap as defined by the criteria outlined in **Table 2.1** will be taken forward for assessment of LSE in **Section 5**.

**Table 2.1: Criteria for Initial Identification of European Sites**

| Criterion | Definition for Identification of Relevant European Sites |
|---|---|
| 1 | The Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary overlaps with one or more European or Ramsar site(s). |
| 2 | European or Ramsar sites with mobile qualifying features (e.g. Annex I habitat features, Annex II species and Annex I bird species) whose range (e.g. foraging, migratory, overwintering, breeding or natural habitat range) overlaps with the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary. |

| Criterion | Definition for Identification of Relevant European Sites |
|---|---|
| 3 | European or Ramsar sites and/or qualifying features located within the potential ZoI of impacts associated with the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure (e.g. habitat loss, disturbance). |

### 2.3.2 Approach to Screening Assessment

55. The screening assessment is undertaken to determine whether LSE on European Sites and their qualifying features can be excluded. The screening assessment is underpinned by the source-pathway-receptor conceptual model, which provides a structured framework for identifying whether project-related impacts have the potential to affect European Sites and qualifying features. In this context:

- The source is the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure activity giving rise to a potential impact, for example the onshore export cable installation;
- The pathway is the mechanism by which the impact is transmitted through the environment to the receptor, for example dust generation from onshore export cable installation created through construction earthworks; and
- The receptor is the qualifying feature of a European Site that may be affected, for example sensitive Annex I habitats within the depositional range of dust-generating activities.

56. The screening assessment considers whether a complete source-pathway-receptor linkage exists between the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure and the qualifying feature of a European Site. Where no such linkage can be established, or where sufficient separation, attenuation, or other factors mean that effects are expected to be negligible, LSE can be excluded, and the relevant European site and qualifying feature are screened out of further assessment.

57. Where a source-pathway-receptor linkage is identified, the assessment considers whether project-related impacts could give rise to effects on European Sites and qualifying features such that LSE cannot be excluded, where this is the case, the relevant European Site and qualifying features are taken forward for further consideration in subsequent stages of the HRA process (please see **Section 2.2.1** for further detail).

58. A precautionary approach is applied throughout the screening process. Where insufficient information is available to exclude LSE for a European Site or qualifying feature, it is screened in for further assessment. Where further information becomes available through ongoing design development/refinement, survey data, or consultation the screening conclusions presented in this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report** will be reviewed and updated, as required. Where this results in changes to the European Sites or qualifying features screened in for further assessment, the Applicant will engage with Aberdeenshire Council and NatureScot to agree the scope of the subsequent RIAA for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure.

# 3 Overview of the Bellrock OnTDA and Onshore Transmission Infrastructure

## 3.1 Project Design Envelope Approach

59. At the current stage of project development, the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure remains subject to ongoing design refinement. Accordingly, this screening assessment has been undertaken using a parameter-based PDE approach, based on the current PDE presented in **Chapter 3: Project Description** of the **Bellrock OnTDA Scoping Report (Volume 1)** and summarised in **Section 3** in this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**.

60. At present, the PDE is intentionally broad to capture the range of potential design parameters, technologies, construction methods, and installation scenarios that may be taken forward as the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure develops. The screening assessment, therefore, considers the realistic worst-case scenario currently available to determine whether LSE on European Sites and qualifying features can be excluded.

61. As project design progresses, the PDE will continue to be refined through ongoing engineering work, environmental assessment, consultation, and site-specific survey information. The PDE applied within the EIA and any subsequent RIAA for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure is, therefore, expected to represent a more refined project design than that considered at the EIA scoping and HRA screening stages.

62. The PDE approach allows for further detailed design development post-consent, provided that the final design remains within the parameters assessed through EIA and HRA. This ensures that post-consent design refinement does not invalidate the conclusions of the environmental assessment undertaken for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure.

## 3.2 Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary

63. The Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary considered within this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report** is shown in **Figure 3.1 (Appendix A: Figures (Volume 2)).**

64. The Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary comprises the footprint of the Bellrock OnTDA at the time of this assessment. The Bellrock OnTDA is the area required to construct and operate the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure and associated activities. This includes transition bay(s); onshore export cables; an OnSS; temporary construction compounds; temporary working areas; environmental mitigation areas; drainage/irrigation infrastructure; access works; and any other associated infrastructure, all of which are located within the area of the Bellrock OnTDA. The

Bellrock OnTDA extends landward of MLWS, and, therefore, also overlaps with the Bellrock OfTDA which extends seaward of MHWS.

65. The site selection process for the Bellrock OnTDA is ongoing at the time of writing and is taking account of engineering and environmental considerations and constraints. The Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary has been defined for the purpose of this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report** to include a preferred landfall Area of Search at Cowie (north of Stonehaven) and preferred OnSS Area of Search for an OnSS in proximity to the Hurlie substation, onshore cable corridor options that are still under consideration between landfall and the OnSS, and Hurlie substation connection works. The Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary will be refined on completion of the site selection process to form the boundary of the Bellrock OnTDA. The Bellrock OnTDA RIAA will be based on the refined Bellrock OnTDA.

66. Accordingly, where project refinement results in changes that could alter connectivity with European Sites and qualifying features or the potential for LSE, the screening conclusions presented in this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report** will be reviewed and updated, as required. Where this results in changes to the European Sites or qualifying features screened in for further assessment, the Applicant will engage with Aberdeenshire Council and NatureScot to agree the scope of the subsequent RIAA for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure.

## 3.3 Onshore Transmission Infrastructure

67. The Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure comprises:

- **Landfall**: located at Cowie, Aberdeenshire, where between two and six ducts are installed using trenchless techniques, allowing the offshore export cables to be brought ashore and connected to onshore export cables within the transition joint bay;
- **Onshore export cables**: up to six underground High Voltage Alternating Current or High Voltage Direct Current onshore cable circuits, each up to 18 km in length, installed between landfall and the OnSS;
- **OnSS**: electrical equipment (such as converters, transformers, switchgear, and protection and control systems) enabling renewable electricity from the Bellrock Wind Farm Development Area received via the onshore export cables to be exported to the National Electricity Transmission System; and
- **Hurlie substation connection works**: infrastructure between the Bellrock OnSS to (and within) the Hurlie substation to connect the Onshore Transmission Infrastructure to the National Electricity Transmission System.

68. In addition, associated works are required to facilitate construction and O&M of the Onshore Transmission Infrastructure, including: access, signage, haul roads, spoil storage, material storage, fencing, borrow pits (if any), earthworks, welfare, security, landscape mitigation, ecological mitigation, biodiversity enhancement, operational lighting and drainage.

69. A more detailed description of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure is provided in Section 3.4, Chapter 3: Project Description of the **Bellrock OnTDA Scoping Report (Volume 1)**.

# 3.4 Project Timeline and Activities

## 3.4.1 Site Preparation Works

70. Site preparation works are any preparatory works undertaken within the Bellrock OnTDA prior to the commencement of construction, and may comprise:

- Pre-construction geophysical, geotechnical and archaeological surveys;
- Pre-construction environmental/ecological surveys and mitigation;
- Site clearance and preparation, including vegetation removal;
- Ground investigation and remedial work with respect to contaminated land;
- Erection of temporary fencing;
- Creation of temporary hardstanding where required to facilitate construction;
- Creation of temporary means of access; and
- Temporary display of site notices, signage or advertisements.

71. Site preparation may be undertaken for up to one year prior to the commencement of construction. Once construction begins, these activities may continue but would subsequently form part of the construction phase rather than site preparation works.

## 3.4.2 Construction Works

72. The Bellrock Project has an anticipated construction start date of 2029 for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure, with construction anticipated to be completed and the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure being operational by 2033. A breakdown of the Bellrock Project's anticipated construction programme is provided below:

- Landfall – construction is expected to take up to 27 months;
- Onshore export cable corridor – construction is expected to take up to 27 months;
- OnSS – construction is expected to take up to 42 months; and
- Hurlie substation connection works – construction is expected to take up to 27 months.

73. Construction will be followed by a subsequent period of testing, snagging and commissioning prior to operation.

74. Overall construction for the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure, including site preparation works, excluding testing, snagging and commissioning, is expected to take up to 48 months.

75. The Bellrock OnTDA EIA Report will contain further detail regarding the expected working duration for certain aspects of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure, for example the duration of onshore export cable installation in any one area, or the duration of trenchless crossing works in any one area.

76. A more detailed description of the construction works is provided in Section 3 of Chapter 3: Project Description of the **Bellrock OnTDA Scoping Report (Volume 1)**.

### 3.4.3 Operation and Maintenance

77. The Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure is expected to have an operational lifespan of up to 40 years, in line with the operational lifespan of the Bellrock Offshore Transmission Infrastructure.

### 3.4.4 Decommissioning

78. No timescale for decommissioning is available at this stage in the Bellrock Project's development.

# 4 Consultation

79. Whilst consultation was undertaken primarily to inform the **Bellrock OnTDA Scoping Report (Volume 1)**, information relevant to the proposed HRA approach, including the HRA screening methodology and initial identification of European Sites was also presented to consultees. The consultation process additionally informed the scope and design of baseline surveys and facilitated agreement on the proposed survey methodologies. Feedback received through this process has informed the preparation of this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**.

80. A summary of the consultation undertaken relevant to HRA considerations, together with consultation on proposed survey approaches and methodologies, is presented in **Table 4.1**.

**Table 4.1: Summary of Consultation Relevant to HRA and this Screening Assessment**

| Consultee | Date/Document | Consultation Response | How Comment has been Addressed |
|---|---|---|---|
| NatureScot | 2 April 2026<br>Meeting Minutes | *"[NatureScot] advised they would no longer be commenting on survey methodologies, and developers are advised to follow NatureScot's standing advice. However, [NatureScot] has had a check of the survey methodology, and nothing appears to conflict with the NatureScot standing advice. [NatureScot] noted that NatureScot would instead only comment on effects upon designated sites.*<br><br>*[NatureScot] noted that they would expect to see HRA Screening in relation to the Garron Point SAC. [NatureScot] confirmed that the interest feature (Narrow-mouthed whorl snail Vertigo angustior) is not recorded adjacent to the Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm Project landfall area. [The Applicant] noted that the Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm is located outwith the Garron Point SAC [740m away at the closest point].*<br><br>*"[NatureScot] noted that the typical impact area for pink-footed geese/greylag geese is 15-20km [NB: Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm OnTDA is located approximately 29km from the Montrose Basin SPA, 19km from Loch Skene SPA and 19km from Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA, at its closest point]. Geese may be present on agricultural land over winter. On other projects, geese management plans have been agreed, to stop work or not start work if geese are present and temperatures are low. NatureScot] confirmed this is unlikely to be necessary for the Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm."* | Noted. Points on Garron Point SAC are addressed in **Section 5.1: Onshore Ecology** of this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report** and points on migratory geese in **Section 5.2: Onshore Ornithology** of this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**. |

| Consultee | Date/Document | Consultation Response | How Comment has been Addressed |
|---|---|---|---|
| NatureScot | 19 August 2026<br>Pre-application Advice letter | *"NatureScot has requested from the applicant information on the proposed depth of drilling below the surface of Garron Point Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the distance out from MHWS the bore will exit the seabed. To date the applicant has not provided any information on this depth or distance but has advised that, apart from dust, the proposal would not affect the land surface of SSSI.*<br>*Therefore, an assessment of the effect of dust on the SSSI's protected features may need to be carried out.*<br>*Other than this assessment, and provided it can, indeed, be confirmed that surface rock outcrop within the SSSI would not be disrupted/covered/removed, an assessment of the proposal on the SSSI's geological features is not required.*<br>*Similarly, if it can be confirmed that sea cliff and cliff slope habitat within the development area will not be directly affected, an assessment is not required of the proposal on the habitat and invertebrate features within and adjacent to the SSSI."* | Consideration of dust effects upon Garron Point SAC are provided in **Section 5.1: Onshore Ecology** of **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report.** Details on the PDE in terms of depth and location, as far as they are currently known, are provided in **Section 5.1: Onshore Ecology** of this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report.** |
| Aberdeenshire Council | 19 August 2026<br>Pre-application Advice letter | *"We would also highlight for consideration Red Moss of Netherly SSSI and SAC, Fowlsheugh SPA [for consideration during the EIA/HRA]."* | Noted. Red Moss of Netherly SAC is considered in **Section 5.1: Onshore Ecology** of this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report** t and Fowlsheugh SPA is considered in **Section 5.2: Onshore Ornithology** of this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**. |

# 5 Habitats Regulations Appraisal Screening Assessment

## 5.1 Onshore Ecology

### 5.1.1 Sites Designated for Annex I Habitat Features and Annex II Species

#### 5.1.1.1 Initial Identification of Sites and Potential Connectivity

81. Direct or indirect effects on SAC/Ramsar sites which support Habitats Directive Annex I habitats or Annex II species as a qualifying feature have been considered in this HRA screening of the Bellrock OnTDA. Potential effects may arise from the permanent or temporary physical presence or activities relating to the construction, operation or decommissioning of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure.

82. It is considered that the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure could give rise to an LSE on European Sites within the following areas:

- A component of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure directly overlaps a site whose qualifying features include an Annex I habitat or Annex II species; and/or
- The distance between the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure and the Annex I habitat or Annex II species is within the range for which there could be an interaction (i.e. within a ZoI resulting from the construction, O&M or decommissioning of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure).

83. Where sites are designated for European otter *Lutra lutra*, a buffer of 30 km around the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary has been applied for identifying designated sites for consideration within this screening assessment, to cover the species' typical maximum home range (approximately 32 km for males and 20 km for females) (NatureScot, 2024b).

84. Where sites are designated for Annex II fish species and are potentially functionally connected to the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary via groundwater/surface water systems, the extent of the catchment(s) within which the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary is located has been used.

85. For all other sites, an initial precautionary 10 km buffer around the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary has been applied to identify designated sites that may be subject to potential effects.

86. All buffers for the onshore ecology elements of the HRA screening are shown in **Figure 5.1 (Appendix A: Figures (Volume 2)).** The rationale for using these buffers is set out below in **Table 5.1.**

**Table 5.1: Habitats and Species Initial Screening Buffer Zone Justification**

| Effect | Relevant Buffer Zone | Rationale |
|---|---|---|
| Effects arising from air quality emissions. | 10 km | Institute of Air Quality Management guidance (Holman et al., 2020) states a buffer of 5 km, 10 km or 15 km should be used for European Sites, for point source emissions. Previous Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH, 2017) guidance identifies screening distance buffers of 2-15 km for types of development that most commonly give rise to potentially significant air pollution impacts on protected areas (i.e. intensive livestock units and various types of industrial scale combustion plants). A precautionary buffer of 10 km has been used when considering air quality emission effects on designated sites as a whole.<br><br>The Institute of Air Quality Management (2024) recommends that an air quality assessment is normally required where there is "*an 'ecological receptor' within 50 m of the boundary of the site; and/or 50 m of the route(s) used by construction vehicles on the public highway, up to 250 m from the site entrance(s)*". As potential air quality effects from the Bellrock OnTDA do not include new point source emissions and may instead result from localised increases in nitrous oxides, particulate matter and dust only; the realistic potential ZoI on individual ecological receptors is only up to 500 m. |
| Effects arising from noise disturbance. | 1 km | In the absence of national guidance on a noise disturbance screening buffer for Annex II species, a precautionary ZoI buffer of 1 km has been adopted as the maximum distance within which changes in the noise environment would have the potential to occur.<br><br>Noise effects on Annex I habitats are not considered further within this assessment. |
| Effects arising from visual and lighting disturbance. | 2 km | In the absence of national guidance for visual and lighting disturbance screening buffers for Annex I habitats and Annex II species, a precautionary ZoI buffer of 2 km has been applied, representing the maximum distance within which changes in the visual/lighting environment would have the potential to occur. |
| Effects arising from changes to water resources which have functional connectivity. | Within Kincardine and Angus Coastal water catchment (i.e. same main river and coastal catchment). | Hydrological connectivity encompasses a range of potential effects, including those associated with changes to upstream watercourses and effects arising from changes to groundwater resources. Consequently, the ZoI for water-resource related effects is determined by hydrological connectivity within the same main river and coastal catchment. |

| Effect | Relevant Buffer Zone | Rationale |
|---|---|---|
| Effects on ex-situ habitats which support mobile Annex II species features. | Varies depending on receptor. | As the Annex II species associated with European Sites differ in their spatial range and habitat use, no single screening buffer is considered appropriate for identifying sites with the potential to interact with ex-situ habitats that may support qualifying features of European Sites.<br>The typical home ranges for otters are approximately 32 km for males and 20 km for females (NatureScot, 2024b). As such, a 30 km buffer has been applied for designated sites with otters being a qualifying feature.<br>Annex II fish species home ranges are dependent on groundwater/surface water systems. Therefore, the ZoI for effects relating to water resources are dependent on hydrological connectivity within the same main river and coastal catchment.<br>A precautionary buffer of 10 km has been applied for all other Annex II species features. |

### 5.1.1.2 Sites Taken Forward for Determination of Likely Significant Effect

87. Based on the buffers outlined above, three sites have been considered within this HRA screening. These sites are also shown in **Figure 5.2 (Appendix A: Figures (Volume 2))** and summarised in **Table 5.2**.

**Table 5.2: Habitat and Species Sites Considered within HRA Screening**

| Site Code | Designation Name | Habitat and Species Qualifying Features | Distance from Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary |
|---|---|---|---|
| UK0030356 | Garron Point SAC | ▪ 1014 Narrow-mouthed whorl snail *Vertigo angustior.* | 0.03 km east |
| UK0030315 | Red Moss of Netherley SAC | ▪ 7110 Active raised bogs; and<br>▪ 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration | 3.03 km north |
| UK0030251 | River Dee SAC | ▪ 1029 Freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera;*<br>▪ 1106 Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar;* and<br>▪ 1355 Otter. | 3.50 km northwest |

### 5.1.1.3 Potential Pathways of Effects

#### *5.1.1.3.1 Potential Construction Stage Effects*

88. Within the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary, construction activities such as: site clearance and preparation, including vegetation clearance and topsoil stripping; construction of OnSS and ancillary infrastructure; excavation of cable trenches; use of trenchless techniques (e.g. HDD) at

landfall and where significant obstacles (e.g. watercourses) prevent trenched crossings; construction of temporary infrastructure to facilitate construction such as temporary construction compounds, temporary construction access and haul roads; and increased presence of plant, vehicle movements and personnel on site, could potentially give rise to the following effects:

- Direct permanent loss of Annex I habitats;
- Direct temporary damage/disruption of Annex I habitats;
- Indirect effects on Annex I habitats and Annex II species from air quality emissions;
- Indirect disturbance of Annex II species from noise;
- Indirect disturbance of Annex II species from visual/lighting;
- Indirect effects on Annex I habitats and Annex II species arising from changes in supporting surface or groundwater resources; and
- Direct and indirect effects on ex-situ habitats which support Annex II species of European Sites.

#### *5.1.1.3.2 Potential Operation and Maintenance Stage Effects*

89. Potential effects during the O&M stage of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure may arise from operational lighting and noise, planned maintenance activities and unplanned maintenance (i.e. reactive, emergency remedial works). Potential pathways of effect arising from these O&M elements/activities may include:

- Indirect disturbance of Annex II species from operational noise;
- Indirect disturbance of Annex II species from operational visual/lighting; and
- Direct and indirect impacts on effects on ex-situ habitats which support Annex II species of European Sites.

#### *5.1.1.3.3 Potential Decommissioning Stage Effects*

90. As the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure has an operational lifespan of up to 40 years, the detail and scope of the decommissioning works will be determined by the relevant legislation and guidance at the time of decommissioning and will be agreed with the relevant regulatory body.

91. Decommissioning activities are expected to result in similar impacts to those associated with construction, although of a smaller magnitude as such activities are likely to be more targeted.

## 5.1.2 Determination of Likely Significant Effect for Annex I Habitat Features and Annex II Species

### 5.1.2.1 Potential Effects Considered in Screening

#### *5.1.2.1.1 Construction*

##### *5.1.2.1.1.1 Potential Impacts Screened In During Construction*

92. Construction of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure could potentially result in indirect air quality effects arising from dust generation, vehicle movements and the use of construction plant equipment. These effects would be limited to the construction phase, primarily associated with earthworks generating dust, increased traffic and plant activity resulting in emissions of nitrogen dioxide ($NO_2$) and particulate emissions. Indirect effects on Annex I habitats and Annex II species from air quality emissions are, therefore, screened in for further consideration within this assessment.

93. Construction activities will also result in increased noise, vibration, lighting, and increased human presence – all of which could potentially, indirectly disturb qualifying features when in close proximity. Therefore, indirect disturbance of Annex II species from noise, or visual/lighting are screened in for further consideration within this assessment.

94. Even though habitat loss will not be experienced within the boundaries of any designated sites, the works could result in temporary, ex-situ loss of habitats which support Annex II species and Annex I habitat features. As such, direct and indirect effects on ex-situ habitats which support Annex II species of European Sites are screened in for further consideration within this assessment.

95. Watercourses will be avoided where practicable through the design process, route refinement and use of trenchless crossing techniques (e.g. HDD). However, the potential need for trenched crossings, where trenchless techniques are not feasible, cannot be ruled out at this stage. Therefore, indirect effects on Annex I habitats and Annex II species arising from changes in supporting surface or groundwater resources has been screened in for further consideration within this assessment.

96. Due to the high mobility of select Annex II species (e.g. otter and Atlantic salmon), there is the potential that individuals associated with a European Site may be present within supporting connected ex-situ habitats within the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary. Therefore, direct and indirect effects on ex-situ habitats which support Annex II species of European Sites have been screened in for further consideration within this assessment.

##### *5.1.2.1.1.2 Potential Impacts Screened Out During Construction*

97. The only permanent loss of terrestrial habitats anticipated for the Bellrock Project are those associated with footprint of the permanent infrastructure at the OnSS (100,000 – 135,000 $m^2$) . The potential location for the OnSS lies outwith the boundaries of any of the designated sites considered within this HRA. As such, LSE can be excluded and direct permanent loss of Annex I habitats has been screened out from further consideration within this assessment.

98. Construction activities within the Bellrock OnTDA would also result in direct but temporary habitat damage/disruption within working areas, access routes, temporary compounds and the onshore

export cable route. As all of the designated sites considered within this screening assessment are outside of the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary (i.e. where direct but temporary habitat damage/disruption may occur), LSE can be excluded and direct temporary damage/disruption of Annex I habitats have been screened out from further consideration within this assessment.

#### *5.1.2.1.2 Operation and Maintenance*

##### *5.1.2.1.2.1 Potential Impacts Screened In During Operation and Maintenance*

99. Planned maintenance at the OnSS and routine access to/maintenance of link boxes along the onshore export cable corridor and Hurlie substation connection works would be required during O&M. All works associated with such planned maintenance would be localised and temporary in nature. Remedial works may be required in the unlikely event of a cable failure. Any remedial works or reactive repairs would have the potential to result in impacts similar to those associated with construction activities, however, these would occur on a much smaller scale and would therefore be temporary and localised. As such, direct and indirect impacts on effects on ex-situ habitats which support Annex II species of European Sites are screened in for further consideration within this assessment during the O&M stage.

##### *5.1.2.1.2.2 Potential Impacts Screened Out During Operation and Maintenance*

100. The only potential pathway for habitat loss associated with the O&M stage would be in localised and temporary areas associated with planned maintenance, remedial works or reactive repairs. As no European Sites are located within the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary, habitats within European Sites would not fall within such localised and temporary work areas. Therefore, LSE can be excluded and direct permanent losses of Annex I habitats and direct temporary damage/disruption of Annex I habitats can both be screened out from further consideration within this assessment during the O&M stage.

101. The O&M stage does not require any earthworks (when dust is generated) or increase in vehicle/plant movements (which increase $NO_2$/particulate emissions) other than those in localised and temporary areas associated with planned maintenance, remedial works or reactive repairs. As such, LSE can be excluded and indirect effects on Annex I habitats and Annex II species from air quality emissions have been screened out from further consideration within this assessment during the O&M stage.

102. During the O&M stage, there is a low risk that OnSS operational noise and lighting could result in disturbance of adjacent habitats and species. It is expected that both operational lighting and noise would be controlled, and lighting would be designed in a sensitive manner in line with relevant best practice guidance (ensuring it is both low-level and directional). Permanent operational security lighting is likely to be motion activated or activated remotely and only used where required, reducing unnecessary illumination. Therefore, LSE can be excluded and effects during the O&M phase of the Bellrock Offshore Transmission Infrastructure have been screened out from further consideration within this assessment during the O&M stage.

103. No works are anticipated on watercourses or drainage systems during the O&M stage other than those associated with planned maintenance, remedial works or reactive repairs. Due to the localised and temporary nature of these works, LSE can be excluded and indirect effects on Annex I habitats and Annex II species arising from changes in supporting surface or groundwater

resources are screened out from further consideration within this assessment during the O&M stage.

#### 5.1.2.1.3 Decommissioning

104. Decommissioning activities are expected to result in similar impacts to those associated with construction, although of a smaller magnitude as such activities are likely to be more targeted. The same effects are screened into (**Section 5.1.2.1.1**) and out of the assessment (**Section 5.1.2.1.2**) for the construction stage are, therefore, similarly screened in/out for decommissioning.

#### 5.1.2.1.4 Summary of Potential Effects Considered in Screening

105. **Table 5.3** presents a summary of those effects identified in **Sections 5.1.2.1.1** to **5.1.2.1.3** above which are considered further in this HRA Screening.

**Table 5.3: Summary of Potential Effects on Habitats Directive Annex I Habitats and Annex II Species Considered in HRA Screening***

| Potential Effect | Construction | O&M | Decommissioning |
|---|---|---|---|
| Direct permanent loss of Annex I habitats. | X | X | X |
| Direct temporary damage/disruption of Annex I habitats. | X | X | X |
| Indirect effects on Annex I habitats and Annex II species from air quality emissions. | ✓ | X | ✓ |
| Indirect disturbance of Annex II species from noise. | ✓ | X | ✓ |
| Indirect disturbance of Annex II species from visual/lighting. | ✓ | X | ✓ |
| Indirect effects on Annex I habitats and Annex II species arising from changes in supporting surface or groundwater resources. | ✓ | X | ✓ |
| Direct and indirect effects on ex-situ habitats which support Annex II species of European Sites. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Note:<br>*Considered Further (✓) and Screened Out from Further Consideration at this Stage (X) | | | |

### 5.1.2.2 Screening for Likely Significant Effects

106. The screening for LSE considers each qualifying Annex I habitat feature and Annex II species of the designated sites identified in **Table 5.2**, and provides rationale to the screening in/out of further consideration at the preceding stages of the HRA process.

107. The screening assessment for LSE on Annex I habitat features and Annex II species associated with the Garron Point SAC, Red Moss of Netherley SAC and the River Dee SAC is set out in **Table 5.4** below.

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**Table 5.4: Screening of Annex I Habitat Features and Annex II Species**

| Site Code | Designation Name | Habitat and Species Qualifying Features | Distance from Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary | Screened In/ Screened Out? | Rationale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UK0030356 | Garron Point SAC | Narrow-mouthed whorl snail | 0.03 km east | In | Direct effects will not occur, as the Garron Point SAC is located entirely outwith the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary. During consultation with NatureScot, it was also confirmed that narrow-mouthed whorl snail are not recorded adjacent to the proposed landfall location.<br><br>Indirect effects cannot be screened out at this stage, as the Garron Point SAC is within the potential ZoI for air quality emissions, disturbance from noise and/or lighting, changes to surface/groundwater resources and effects to ex situ habitats. Therefore, indirect effects on Garron Point SAC are **screened in** for consideration in the RIAA to be submitted with the Bellrock Project's Planning Permission in Principle Application. The RIAA will consider potential AEoSI on Garron Point SAC using the latest design information for the Bellrock Onshore transmission infrastructure available following ongoing design refinement. |
| UK0030315 | Red Moss of Netherley SAC | Active raised bogs<br><br>Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration | 3.03 km north | Out | The Red Moss of Netherley SAC is located entirely outside the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary, therefore, direct effects will not occur.<br><br>The Red Moss of Netherley SAC is outwith the ZoI for potential effects arising from air quality emissions and disturbance from noise and/or lighting. Therefore, these indirect effects can be **screened out**.<br><br>A small area of the Red Moss of Netherley SAC is within the ZoI for effects from changes in supporting surface or groundwater resources. Both Annex I habitats of the Red Moss of Netherley SAC are sensitive to changes in their hydrological conditions, however, permanent drainage will only be located within the OnSS which is not hydrologically connected to the SAC and is located a minimum of 6.83 km away from the SAC. Installation of the onshore export cable corridor and Hurlie substation connection works will avoid watercourses, where practicable, through the use of trenchless techniques (e.g. HDD), meaning changes in surface or groundwater resources are unlikely to occur as a result of the construction phase of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure. As such, the Bellrock OnTDA is unlikely to result in LSE from changes in supporting surface or groundwater resources. |

| Site Code | Designation Name | Habitat and Species Qualifying Features | Distance from Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary | Screened In/ Screened Out? | Rationale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UK0030251 | River Dee SAC | Freshwater pearl mussel<br>Atlantic salmon<br>Otter | 3.50 km northwest | In | The River Dee SAC is located entirely outside the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary, therefore, direct effects will not occur.<br>The River Dee SAC is outwith the ZoI for potential effects arising from air quality emissions and disturbance from noise and/or lighting. Therefore, these indirect effects can be **screened out**.<br>The River Dee SAC is not within the same catchment as the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary, and is, therefore, not hydrologically connected to the Bellrock OnTDA.<br>Atlantic salmon populations within the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary are associated with Carron Water and Cowie Water. These are separate sub-populations to the salmon associated with the River Dee SAC, as salmon generally show fidelity to their natal rivers during migration. Therefore, direct and indirect effects on ex-situ habitats which support Atlantic salmon can be **screened out**. Freshwater pearl mussel dispersal is reliant on salmonid migrations, therefore, the lack of hydrological connectivity and anticipated LSE on Atlantic salmon means direct and indirect effects on ex-situ habitats which support freshwater pearl mussel can also be **screened out**.<br>Direct and indirect effects on ex-situ habitats which support otter cannot be screened out during construction and decommissioning at this stage. Otters are highly mobile species and frequently use smaller burns and ditches (many of which are present within the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary) as key foraging habitats. Any potential direct and indirect effects on such ex-situ watercourses during construction or decommissioning may result in LSE due to changes in foraging resource for otters associated with the SAC. |

### 5.1.3 In-combination Assessment

108. The Habitats Regulations require that an assessment of the LSE of a project on European Sites is considered both alone and in-combination with other plans or projects. The scope of 'others plans and projects' includes but is not limited to infrastructure developments (such as utilities (including energy generation and transmission and water storage, abstraction, processing and infrastructure) and transport), housing developments, industrial and light industrial developments, extraction developments and waste management facilities. Other projects which are currently either in the process of being consented or which have received consent have been considered for inclusion within the in-combination assessment.

109. It is anticipated that any in-combination effects would be localised, however, as a precautionary measure, a 10 km buffer will be applied to identify plans and projects for consideration within the in-combination HRA. The projects identified for potential in-combination assessment with the Bellrock OnTDA will be agreed during consultations with relevant stakeholders.

110. Existing activities, such as agricultural practices, water abstraction and existing background traffic are considered to be a component of the baseline environment and are, therefore, not considered within the in-combination assessment.

111. For the purposes of this HRA screening, the conclusions discussed below in relation to Annex I Habitat Features and Annex II Species apply to both the 'project alone' and the in-combination effects with other plans and projects.

### 5.1.4 Summary of Screening of Sites for Annex I Habitat Features and Annex II Species

112. **Table 5.5** presents the conclusions in relation to the determination of LSE on the European Sites identified in **Table 5.2,** as a result of the construction, O&M and decommissioning of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure.

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**Table 5.5: LSE Matrix for Designated Sites Where Annex I Habitat Features and Annex II Species are Screened into the RIAA for Further Assessment**

| Site and Qualifying Feature of Site | Direct Permanent Loss of Annex I Habitats | | | Direct Temporary Damage/Disruption of Annex I Habitats | | | Indirect Effects on Annex I Habitats and Annex II Species from Air Quality Emissions | | | Indirect Disturbance of Annex II Species from Noise | | | Indirect Disturbance of Annex II Species from Visual/Lighting | | | Indirect Effects on Annex I Habitats and Annex II Species Arising from Changes in Supporting Surface or Groundwater Resources | | | Direct and Indirect Effects on Ex-situ Habitats which Support Annex II Species of European Sites | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | C | O&M | D | C | O&M | D | C | O&M | D | C | O&M | D | C | O&M | D | C | O&M | D | C | O&M | D |
| **Garron Point SAC** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Narrow-mouthed whorl snail | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | ✓ | N/A | ✓ | ✓ | N/A | ✓ | ✓ | N/A | ✓ | ✓ | N/A | ✓ | X | X | X |
| **Red Moss of Netherley SAC** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Active raised bogs | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | X | X | X |
| Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | X | X | X |
| **River Dee SAC** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Freshwater pearl mussel | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | X | X | X |
| Atlantic salmon | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | X | X | X |
| Otter | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | X | N/A | X | ✓ | X | ✓ |

Notes:

C = Construction, O&M = Operation and Maintenance, D = Decommissioning; ✓ = Potential for LSE, X = No Potential for LSE. Where there is no colour or mark, no pathway for significant effect is identified.

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# 5.2 Onshore Ornithology

113. The onshore ornithology screening assessment aims to identify any potential LSEs on the qualifying features of designated European Sites associated with the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure.

114. Potential effects on offshore and intertidal ornithological receptors are assessed separately within the **Bellrock OfTDA HRA Screening Report**.

## 5.2.1 Designated Sites

### 5.2.1.1 Initial Identification of Sites and Potential Connectivity

115. Based on the location of the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary and habitats present within its footprint, a 20 km buffer of the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary was considered as the potential ZoI for identifying sites to be taken forward for determination of LSE. The screening distance was selected on a precautionary basis, following NatureScot guidance and taking account of the maximum recorded foraging range of wintering geese of 15-20 km (SNH, 2016).

116. It is considered that the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure could have an LSE on European Sites within the following areas:

- Any European Sites overlapping the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary; and
- Any European Sites within the ZoI where qualifying habitats, functionally linked land, or the range of qualifying mobile species (including foraging, migratory, overwintering, breeding, or natural habitat ranges) may overlap with, or be affected by the activities proposed within, the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary.

### 5.2.1.2 Sites Taken Forward for Determination of Likely Significant Effect

117. The initial screening process has identified three SPA sites, and two Ramsar sites within the ZoI and, therefore, identified as having connectivity to the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary **(Figure 5.3 Appendix A: Figures (Volume 2))**. Summary of identified sites is presented in **Table 5.6**.

118. Ramsar sites are not currently subject to the statutory assessment provisions of the Habitats Regulations. However, Scottish Government policy requires Ramsar sites to be afforded protection equivalent to that of European Sites in development decisions (Scottish Government, 2025). Accordingly, the notified natural features of Ramsar sites are considered alongside the qualifying features of European Sites within this **Bellrock OnTDA HRA Screening Report**.

119. Where Ramsar sites overlap with SPAs and support the same qualifying ornithological interests, a separate LSE assessment for the Ramsar designation is not required, as these interests are already considered through the SPA assessment. The qualifying features outlined in **Table 5.6** apply for both the SPA and Ramsar site, unless otherwise stated.

**Table 5.6: Summary of Designated Sites of Ornithological Importance within the Onshore Ornithology Screening Area**

| Site | Distance from the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary | Qualifying Ornithological Features |
|---|---|---|
| Fowlsheugh SPA | 3.28 km northwest | Breeding populations:<br>▪ Common guillemot *Uria aalge;*<br>▪ Black-legged kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla;*<br>▪ Razorbill *Alca torda;*<br>▪ Northern fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis;*<br>▪ Herring gull *Larus argentatus*; and<br>▪ Breeding seabird assemblages. |
| Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA and Ramsar Site | 17.81 km southwest | Breeding populations:<br>▪ Sandwich tern *Sterna sandvicensis*;<br>▪ Common tern *Sterna Hirundo*; and<br>▪ Little tern *Sterna albifrons*.<br>Non-breeding populations:<br>▪ Pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus;*<br>▪ Eider *Somateria mollissima*;<br>▪ Redshank *Tringa tetanus;*<br>▪ Lapwing *Vanellus Vanellus*; and<br>▪ Waterfowl assemblage[1]. |
| Loch of Skene SPA and Ramsar Site | 17.38 km south | Non-breeding populations of:<br>▪ Greylag goose *Anser anser*;<br>▪ Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*; and<br>▪ Goosander *Mergus merganser*. |
| Note:<br>[1] Waterfowl assemblage is a feature of the Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA only. | | |

### 5.2.1.3 Potential Pathways of Effects

120. Bird species are highly mobile, therefore, both the potential ZoI for pressures on the species of concern, and their documented ranges, are relevant to this screening exercise. The qualifying features of the European Sites listed in **Table 5.6** and their degree of interaction with the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure can be categorised based on their phenology, feeding, habitat use and migratory pathways:

- Breeding seabirds in the breeding season that occur onshore (tern species);
- Breeding seabirds in the non-breeding season that occur in inland waters (no qualifying features identified in this category);

- Non-breeding seabirds occurring in inland waters (no qualifying features identified in this category); and
- Non-breeding waterfowl species and waders (e.g. pink-footed goose, greylag goose, eider).

121. Non-breeding waterfowl species that are qualifying species of SPA and Ramsar sites that were taken forward to determine potential LSE have some potential to interact with the Bellrock OnTDA. Potential connectivity for these species will be determined based on documented foraging ranges (Woodward et al., 2019, SNH, 2016) presented in **Table 5.7**.

**Table 5.7: Foraging Ranges of Relevant Waterfowl Species Used for Onshore LSE Screening**

| Species | Reference for Foraging Range | Foraging Range Used to Determine Potential LSE |
|---|---|---|
| Eider | Woodward et al. (2019) | 21.5 km |
| Goldeneye | N/A* | Within SPA/Ramsar Site boundary |
| Goosander | N/A* | Within SPA/Ramsar Site boundary |
| Greylag goose | SNH (2016) | 15-20 km |
| Lapwing | N/A* | Within SPA/Ramsar Site boundary |
| Pink-footed goose | SNH (2016) | 15-20 km |
| Redshank | N/A* | Within SPA/Ramsar Site boundary |
| Note:<br>* Foraging range not available and is assumed to cover the area of the designated site. | | |

## 5.2.2 Determination of Likely Significant Effect

### 5.2.2.1 Identification of Potential Pathways Considered During Screening

122. Potential effects on terrestrial ornithological receptors have been identified for the construction, O&M, and decommissioning phases of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure. The following sections assess the relevant impact pathways and the potential effects arising during each project phase.

#### *5.2.2.1.1 Construction*

##### *5.2.2.1.1.1 Temporary or Permanent Loss of Habitat*

123. The construction activities (including site preparation, means of access, drainage, cable laying and construction of the OnSS as specified in **Section 3.1**) associated with the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure may result in the temporary loss of suitable habitat for nesting, roosting and foraging birds. These habitats may directly be affected through physical habitat loss or indirectly through disturbance arising from construction activities. Therefore, this effect is

screened in for both breeding terns and non-breeding bird features (geese and eider) for further consideration within this assessment. Potential effects on all remaining breeding seabird species (fulmar, kittiwake, herring gull, guillemot and razorbill) are screened out due to the absence of a viable impact pathway. Fulmar, kittiwake, guillemot and razorbill are generally present on land only within their breeding colonies, while herring gull is associated with coastal and intertidal habitats. As the terrestrial habitats within the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary do not provide suitable habitat for these species, their use of the area is considered unlikely.

#### *5.2.2.1.1.2 Accidental Damage or Destruction of Nests and/or Eggs*

124. Direct harm (mortality/injury/destruction) to/of breeding birds and their nests within the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary through construction activities such as habitat clearance and site preparation, excavation and trenching, HDD and construction of the OnSS. Due to the lack of spatial overlap between the SPAs and the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary, there is no potential for LSE, as no viable impact pathway exists. Therefore, accidental damage to or destruction of nests and/or eggs is screened out from further consideration within this assessment.

#### *5.2.2.1.1.3 Temporary or Permanent Disturbance/Displacement*

125. Noise and visual disturbance to birds as a result of construction activities associated with the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure may occur. There is potential for increased levels of disturbance caused by the presence and movements of construction vehicles, equipment and/or personnel. This disturbance can result in impacts on any nesting, roosting and foraging birds that may be present both within and adjacent to the construction works. Disturbance may result in increased energy expenditure to find alternative sites and consequently in reduced survival rates of birds, therefore, the effect is **screened in** for both breeding terns and non-breeding bird features (geese and eider) for further consideration within this assessment. Potential effects on remaining breeding seabird species are **screened out** from further consideration within this assessment due to the absence of a viable impact pathway. Fulmar, kittiwake, guillemot and razorbill are generally present on land only within their breeding colonies, while herring gull is associated with coastal and intertidal habitats. As the terrestrial habitats within the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary do not provide suitable habitat for these species, their use of the area is considered unlikely.

### *5.2.2.1.2 Operation and Maintenance*

#### *5.2.2.1.2.1 Temporary Loss of Habitat*

126. No impact pathway has been identified between the habitat loss associated with the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure (specifically OnSS) and the qualifying features of the European Sites screened in in this assessment. The affected habitats do not support any qualifying features of the screened sites, and the OnSS is not functionally linked to these sites. Consequently, O&M activities at the OnSS do not have the potential to affect the conservation objectives or site integrity of the screened European Sites.

127. Given the above, the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure is not expected to result in operational impacts on designated sites or their qualifying feature species. Accordingly, there is no potential for LSE on European Sites or Ramsar sites during the O&M phase of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure. Potential operational effects are therefore **screened out** from further consideration within this assessment.

#### 5.2.2.1.3 Decommissioning

128. As the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure has an operational lifespan of up to 40 years, the detail and scope of the decommissioning works will be determined by the relevant legislation and guidance at the time of decommissioning and will be agreed with the relevant regulatory body.

129. Decommissioning activities are expected to result in similar impacts to those associated with construction, although of a smaller magnitude as such activities are likely to be more targeted. The same effects that are screened in or out of this assessment for the construction stage apply for the decommissioning stage.

#### 5.2.2.1.4 Summary of Potential Effects Considered in Screening

130. **Table 5.8** presents a summary of those effects identified in **Sections 5.2.2.1.1** to **5.2.2.1.3** above which are considered further in this HRA Screening.

**Table 5.8: Summary of Potential Effects on Qualifying Features of Sites Designated under the Bird Directive Considered in HRA Screening***

| Potential effect | Construction | O&M | Decommissioning |
|---|---|---|---|
| Temporary or permanent loss of habitat (breeding terns and non-breeding bird features (geese and eider)) | X | X | X |
| Temporary or permanent loss of habitat (fulmar, kittiwake, herring gull, guillemot and razorbill) | ✓ | X | ✓ |
| Accidental damage or destruction of nests and/or eggs (all species) | X | X | X |
| Temporary or permanent disturbance/displacement (fulmar, kittiwake, herring gull, guillemot and razorbill) | X | X | X |
| Temporary or permanent disturbance/displacement (breeding terns and non-breeding bird features (geese and eider)) | ✓ | X | ✓ |
| Note:<br>*Considered Further (✓) and Screened Out from Further Consideration at this Stage (X) | | | |

### 5.2.2.2 Screening for Likely Significant Effects

131. **Table 5.10** presents conclusions of screening for LSE of the Bellrock OnTDA. Three SPAs and two Ramsar sites are presented along with their qualifying features and relevant impacts.

132. Only qualifying features for which breeding and/or non-breeding season connectivity to the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary has been identified are included in the table. Qualifying features for which no connectivity exists have been excluded from further consideration, as there is no source–pathway–receptor linkage and, therefore, no mechanism by which the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure could result in a LSE.

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**Table 5.9: Summary Table of Screening for LSE on Identified Designated Sites**

| Site Name and Designation | Qualifying Feature | Relevant Impacts | Rationale |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fowlsheugh SPA | No connectivity to the qualifying features of the SPA. | N/A | Breeding seabirds which are the only qualifying features of the SPA will **not be affected** by activities related to the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure. Breeding seabird features (with exception of Sandwich and common tern) are assessed in the **Bellrock OfTDA HRA Screening Report** (Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm Limited, 2026b). |
| Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA and Ramsar Site | Non-breeding pink-footed goose | Temporary or permanent loss of habitat | Although the SPA is located approximately 18 km (**Table 5.7**) from the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary, which is still within the potential foraging range of the species, the key foraging areas used by pink-footed geese (i.e. those in the vicinity of Loch of Skene, Loch of Strathbeg, Montrose Basin) are not expected to be affected by the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure. No birds were recorded during the wintering birds survey 2025/2026 (Intertidal Wintering Bird Survey Technical Report 2025/26 **(Appendix D (Volume 1))**), and only single individuals are recorded between 2021 and 2023 in the Northeast Scotland Biological Records Centre dataset. It is highly unlikely that any habitat loss resulting from the Bellrock OnTDA activities would occur within areas used by the species for foraging. Consequently, LSE on the wintering population of pink-footed goose is not anticipated, and temporary or permanent loss of habitat of non-breeding pink-footed goose has been **screened out** from further consideration within this assessment. |
| | | Temporary or permanent disturbance/ displacement | Only a small number of pink-footed geese (no birds were recorded during the wintering birds survey 2025/2026, and only single individuals were recorded between 2021 and 2023 in Northeast Scotland Biological Records Centre dataset) have been recorded over the past five years. Given the considerable distance between the SPA and the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary (**Table 5.7**), together with the very low numbers recorded in the vicinity of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure, any disturbance or displacement effects arising from Bellrock OnTDA activities are considered highly unlikely. Consequently, LSE on the wintering population of pink-footed goose are not anticipated, and temporary or permanent disturbance/displacement of non-breeding pink-footed goose has been **screened out** from further consideration within this assessment. |
| | Non-breeding waterfowl assemblage | Temporary or permanent loss of habitat | Due to the considerable distance between the SPA and the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary (**Table 5.7**), pink-footed goose is the only qualifying species of the waterfowl assemblage that requires further consideration. However, given this separation distance and the very limited records of the species within the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary, no habitat loss effects are anticipated. The conclusion for the waterfowl assemblage, therefore remains unchanged, and no LSE are predicted, and temporary or permanent loss of habitat of the non-breeding waterfowl assemblage has been **screened out** from further consideration within this assessment. |

| Site Name and Designation | Qualifying Feature | Relevant Impacts | Rationale |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Temporary or permanent disturbance/ displacement | Due to the considerable distance between the SPA and the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary (**Table 5.7**), pink-footed goose is the only qualifying species of the waterfowl assemblage that requires further consideration. However, given this separation distance and the very limited records of the species within the ornithology search area, no disturbance or displacement effects are anticipated. The conclusion for the waterfowl assemblage, therefore, remains unchanged, and no LSE are predicted, and temporary or permanent disturbance/displacement of non-breeding waterfowl assemblage has been **screened out** from further consideration within this assessment. |
| | Breeding Sandwich tern and Common tern | Temporary or permanent loss of habitat | The approximately 18 km distance (**Table 5.7**) between the SPA and the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary is sufficient to exclude significant effects on breeding tern populations. The substantial spatial separation between the tern nesting colonies and key foraging areas, and the areas affected by construction and decommissioning activities means that breeding habitat loss is highly unlikely. Consequently, no LSE on the breeding populations of qualifying tern species are anticipated, and temporary or permanent loss of habitat of the breeding qualifying tern species has been **screened out** from further consideration within this assessment. |
| | | Temporary or permanent disturbance/ displacement | The approximately 18 km distance (**Table 5.7**) between the SPA and the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary is sufficient to exclude significant effects on breeding tern populations. The substantial spatial separation between the tern nesting colonies and key foraging areas, and the areas affected by construction and decommissioning activities means that disturbance and displacement effects are highly unlikely. Consequently, no LSE on the breeding populations of qualifying tern species are anticipated, and temporary or permanent disturbance/displacement of breeding qualifying tern species has been **screened out** from further consideration within this assessment. |
| | Non-breeding eider | Temporary or permanent loss of habitat | Although the SPA is located approximately 18 km (**Table 5.7**) from the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary (which is still within the foraging range of the species), land-based activities related to the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure will not result in loss of habitats important to non-breeding eiders (i.e. intertidal and estuarine zone, lochs), therefore, no LSE are anticipated, and temporary or permanent loss of habitat of non-breeding eider has been **screened out** from further consideration within this assessment. |
| | | Temporary or permanent disturbance/ displacement | Although the SPA is located approximately 18 km (**Table 5.7**) from the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary (which is still within the foraging range of the species), land-based activities related to the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure will not result in disturbance or displacement of non-breeding eiders since favoured habitats are not present, therefore, no LSE are anticipated, and temporary or permanent disturbance/displacement of non-breeding eider has been **screened out** from further consideration within this assessment. |

| Site Name and Designation | Qualifying Feature | Relevant Impacts | Rationale |
|---|---|---|---|
| Loch of Skene SPA and Ramsar Site | Non-breeding greylag goose | Temporary or permanent loss of habitat | Although the SPA is located approximately 17.5 km (**Table 5.7**) from the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary, which is still withing the foraging range of the species, the key foraging areas used by greylag geese are not expected to be affected by the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure. Only a small number of greylag goose (single individuals) have been recorded within the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary in the Northeast Scotland Biological Records Centre dataset over the past five years. It is highly unlikely that any habitat loss resulting from Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure activities would occur within areas used by the species for foraging. Consequently, LSE on the wintering population of greylag goose are not anticipated, and temporary or permanent loss of habitat of non-breeding greylag goose has been **screened out** from further consideration within this assessment. |
| | | Temporary or permanent disturbance/ displacement | Only a small number of greylag goose (single individuals) have been recorded within the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary in the Northeast Scotland Biological Records Centre dataset over the past five years. Given the considerable distance between the SPA and the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary (**Table 5.7**), together with the very low numbers recorded in the vicinity of the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure, any disturbance or displacement effects arising from Bellrock OnTDA activities are considered highly unlikely. Consequently, LSE on the wintering population of greylag goose are not anticipated, and temporary or permanent disturbance/displacement of non-breeding greylag goose has been **screened out** from further consideration within this assessment. |

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### 5.2.3 In-combination Assessment

133. The potential for LSE arising from the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure in-combination with other relevant plans and projects has been considered, as detailed in **Section 2.2.2.3**.

134. The in-combination screening assessment has not identified any additional European Sites or qualifying features beyond those identified through the project-alone screening assessment.

135. Although LSE were excluded for all impact pathways in the project-alone assessment, these pathways have also been considered as part of the in-combination screening assessment. The identified impacts are either temporary and highly localised in nature, relate to receptors that are unlikely to be functionally linked to the SPA populations, or are subject to standard industry good practice and embedded mitigation measures that are expected to be implemented consistently across relevant plans and projects. Consequently, the consideration of other plans and projects does not identify any additional impact pathways through which LSE could arise, either alone or in combination.

### 5.2.4 Summary of Screening for Onshore Ornithological Features

136. **Table 5.10** presents conclusions of the LSE screening assessment of the Bellrock OnTDA. Three SPAs and two Ramsar sites are presented along with their qualifying features and relevant impacts.

137. Only qualifying features for which breeding and/or non-breeding season connectivity to the Bellrock OnTDA Screening Boundary has been identified are included in the table. Qualifying features for which no connectivity exists have been excluded from further consideration, as there is no source–pathway–receptor linkage and, therefore, no mechanism by which the Bellrock Onshore Transmission Infrastructure could result in a LSE.

**Table 5.10: Summary Table of LSEs on Identified Designated Sites, Confirming those Screened In For (✓) or Screened Out Of (X) Further Assessment in the RIAA**

| Site Name and Designation | Qualifying Feature | Relevant Impacts | Screening Conclusions | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Construction | O&M | Decommissioning |
| Fowlsheugh SPA | No connectivity to the qualifying features of the SPA. | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA and Ramsar Site | Non-breeding pink-footed goose | Temporary or permanent loss of habitat | X | X | X |
| | | Temporary or permanent disturbance/displacement | X | N/A | X |
| | Non-breeding waterfowl assemblage | Temporary or permanent loss of habitat | X | X | X |
| | | Temporary or permanent disturbance/displacement | X | N/A | X |
| | Breeding Sandwich tern and Common tern | Temporary or permanent loss of habitat | X | X | X |
| | | Temporary or permanent disturbance/displacement | X | N/A | X |
| | Non-breeding eider | Temporary or permanent loss of habitat | X | X | X |
| | | Temporary or permanent disturbance/displacement | X | N/A | X |
| Loch of Skene SPA and Ramsar Site | Non-breeding greylag goose | Temporary or permanent loss of habitat | X | X | X |
| | | Temporary or permanent disturbance/displacement | X | N/A | X |

Notes:

✓ = Potential for LSE.

X = No Potential for LSE.

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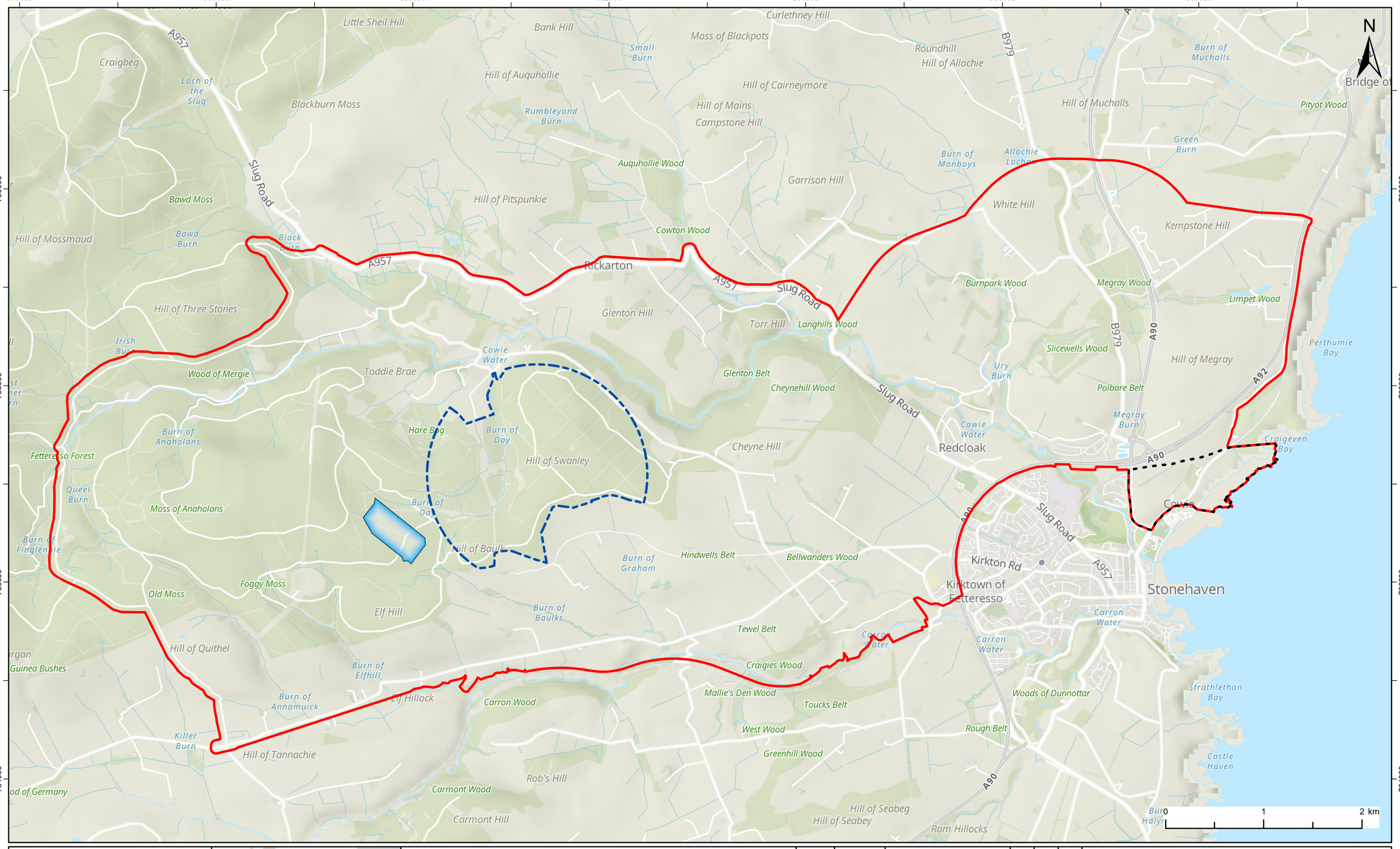
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# Appendix A: Figures

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Legend:

- Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area Screening Boundary
- Preferred Onshore Substation Area of Search
- Preferred Landfall Area of Search
- Hurlie Substation Platform

| REV | DATE | STATUS | DRW | CHK | APR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 21/10/2026 | Final | DL | FML | BMcG |

Coordinate System: British National Grid

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Scale @ A3

1:35,000

Figure Title:

**Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area Screening Boundary**

Project: Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area (OnTDA)

Report: Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area HRA Screening Report

Drawing No.: RHDV_BEL_CST_FGR_0004

**Figure 3.1**

340000 360000 380000 400000 420000 440000

820000 800000 780000 760000

Inverurie
Alford
Kintore
Aberdeen International Airport
Blackburn
Westhill
Aberdeen
Ballater
Banchory
Portlethen
Stonehaven
Inverbervie
Laurencekirk
Brechin
Montrose
Kirriemuir
Forfar

N

0 10 20 km

Haskoning
Enhancing Society Together
Bellrock




Legend:
- Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area Screening Boundary
- Preferred Onshore Substation Area of Search
- Preferred Landfall Area of Search
- OnTDA Screening 10 km Buffer
- OnTDA Screening 30 km Buffer

| REV | DATE | STATUS | DRW | CHK | APR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 21/10/2026 | Final | DL | FML | BMcG |

Coordinate System: British National Grid

Source: Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2026. Contains data from OS Zoomstack, © Haskoning UK Ltd, 2026. Screening Boundary shp File: PC3637-RHD-ON-ZZ-M2-GS-0315, Rev 1.

Scale @ A3
1:300,000

Figure Title:
**Onshore Ecology HRA Screening Study Area**

Project: Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area (OnTDA)

Report: Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area HRA Screening Report

Drawing No.: RHDV_BEL_CST_FGR_0008

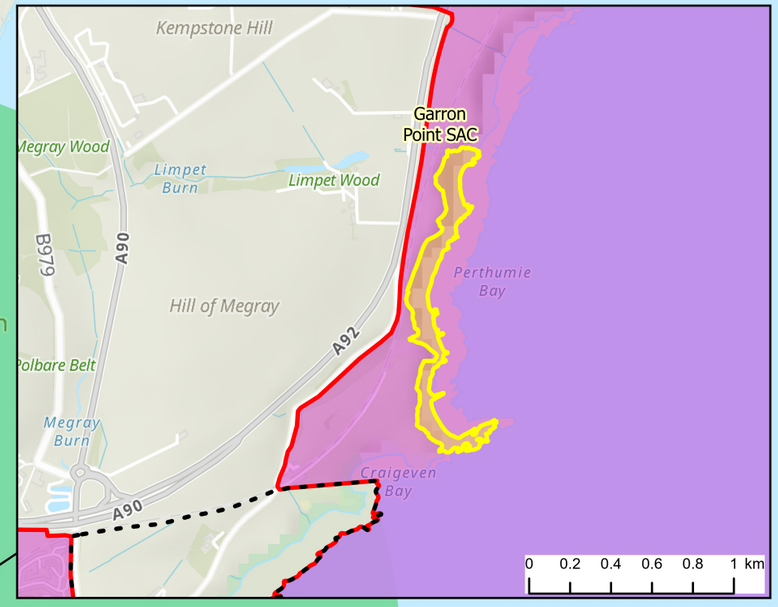
**Figure 5.1**

340000 360000 380000 400000 420000 440000

820000 800000 780000 760000

River Spey SAC
Ladder Hills SAC
Hill of Towanreef SAC
Green Hill of Strathdon SAC
Morven and Mullachdubh SAC
Muir of Dinnet SAC
The Maim SAC
Dinnet Oakwood SAC
Glen Tanar SAC
Ballochbuie SAC
Coyles of Muick SAC
River South Esk SAC
Caenlochan SAC
River Dee SAC
Red Moss of Netherley SAC
Garron Point SAC
River South Esk SAC
River Tay SAC

Inverurie
Alford
Kintore
Blackburn
Aberdeen International Airport
Westhill
Aberdeen
Portlethen
Stonehaven
Inverbervie
Laurencekirk
Brechin
Montrose
Kirriemuir
Forfar




N

0 10 20 km




Legend:
- Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area Screening Boundary
- Preferred Onshore Substation Area of Search
- Preferred Landfall Area of Search
- OnTDA Screening 10 km Buffer
- OnTDA Screening 30 km Buffer
- Special Areas of Conservation

| REV | DATE | STATUS | DRW | CHK | APR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 21/10/2026 | Final | DL | FML | BMcG |

Coordinate System: British National Grid

Source: Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2026. Contains data from OS Zoomstack, © Haskoning UK Ltd, 2026. © NatureScot, 2026. Screening Boundary shp File: PC3637-RHD-ON-ZZ-M2-GS-0315, Rev 1.

Scale @ A3
1:300,000

Figure Title:
**Onshore Ecology HRA Screening - Sites Designated for Annex I Habitat Features and Annex II Species**

Project: Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area (OnTDA)

Report: Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area HRA Screening Report

Drawing No.: RHDV_BEL_CST_FGR_0009

**Figure 5.2**

350000 360000 370000 380000 390000 400000 410000 420000

810000 800000 790000 780000 770000

Loch of Skene Ramsar

Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA

Muir of Dinnet Ramsar

Glen Tanar SPA

Cairngorms Massif SPA

Fowlsheugh SPA

Westhill

Aberdeen

Banchory

Portlethen

Stonehaven

Inverbervie

Laurencekirk

A90

A92

N

0 5 10 km

Haskoning
Enhancing Society Together

Bellrock

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh

Legend:

- Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area Screening Boundary
- Preferred Onshore Substation Area of Search
- Preferred Landfall Area of Search
- Zone of Influence

**Designations**

- Special Protection Areas (SPA)
- Ramsar Sites

| REV | DATE | STATUS | DRW | CHK | APR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 21/10/2026 | Final | DL | FML | BMcG |

Coordinate System: British National Grid

Source:
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Scale @ A3
1:200,000

Figure Title:
**Onshore Ornithology HRA Screening – Sites taken forward to Screening for LSE**

Project:
Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area (OnTDA)

Report:
Bellrock Onshore Transmission Development Area HRA Screening Report

Drawing No.: RHDV_BEL_CST_FGR_0251

**Figure 5.3**

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