

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Site Description

- 1.1.1 Bluebell Wind Farm Limited, the joint venture between Infinergy Limited and Loch Luichart Estate, (hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant'), is proposing a wind energy development, Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development'), north-west of Dingwall in The Highland Council ('THC') area. This Environmental Impact Assessment Report (hereafter referred to as the 'EIA Report') has been prepared in support of an application submitted to The Highland Council seeking consent to construct and operate the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.2 The Applicant received a planning permission for Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II, a 5-turbine scheme, together with associated infrastructure, on 1st July 2020 from THC (hereafter referred to as the 'Consented Development' (THC Ref: 19/01284/FUL).
- 1.1.3 The Applicant submitted the application for the Consented Development in April 2019, supported by an EIA Report (Infinergy, 2019), for a 9-turbine scheme. Following feedback from statutory consultees, the Applicant subsequently submitted Supplementary Information (hereafter known as 'SI' (Infinergy, 2019) in November 2019 to amend to scheme. The changes included reducing the number of turbines from 9 to 5 (by removing turbines T2, T3, T9 & T10), along with associated access tracks and infrastructure and micro-siting turbine T4 to avoid deep peat.
- 1.1.4 The location of the turbines for the Proposed Development, and related infrastructure including access tracks, borrow pits, sub-station etc, will remain in the same locations as for the Consented Development; i.e. there are no changes. The only changes when comparing the two schemes are as follows:
- the Proposed Development is based on a Nordex N133/4.8MW turbine;
 - an increase in turbine tip height of 16.9m for the Proposed Development;
 - an increase in turbine hub height for the Proposed Development;
 - an increase in crane hardstanding to 1850m².
- 1.1.5 In addition, the Applicant has requested a planning permission allowing an operational lifetime of 40 years, compared to the 25 years which was granted for the Consented Development.
- 1.1.6 The Proposed Development site boundary lies approximately 18 km north-west of Dingwall and immediately due south of the A835. It comprises upland moorland located between Meall Mhic Iomhair to the south-west and Sidhearn nan Cearc to the east, and is south of Loch Glascarnoch. The elevation of the site ranges from 260 m to 500 m above ordnance datum (AOD). The site occupies an area of 5.9km² and the central grid reference for the site is 232984 (eastings) 868776 (northings). The site location and site boundary are shown on **Figure 1.1**.
- 1.1.7 The Proposed Development comprises upland habitats, comprising blanket bog, heathland and pockets of plantation woodland. Various waterbodies are present on site including Allt na Beinne Leithe Bige, which runs west to east through the site with a number of minor tributaries feeding into them. Allt Giubhais Mor runs

north to south through the site, eventually feeding into Loch Glascarnoch. A single lochan, Loch Na Salach, is located in the South of the site.

1.1.8 The Proposed Development will be sited immediately north of the operational Lochluichart Wind Farm and Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension (hereafter referred to as 'the Operational Schemes'), and west of the operational Corriemoillie Wind Farm (hereafter referred to as 'Corriemoillie').

1.1.1 The Proposed Development comprises 5 wind turbines up to a maximum tip height of up to 149.9 m when vertical (up to 83.4 m hub height, 133 m rotor diameter), each turbine with an installed power capacity of up to 4.8 Mega Watts (MW). A number of ancillary development components are also proposed, including one temporary construction compound, two proposed borrow pits, permanent hard standings adjacent to the wind turbines for construction, access tracks, underground cables between turbines, an onsite substation, control building, battery storage facility and maintenance building with welfare facilities. The proposed site layout is shown in **Figure 3.1**.

1.1.2 The total installed capacity of the Proposed Development would therefore be up to approximately 24 MW. Based on a current typical capacity factor of 26.2%, the annual indicative total power output for the site would be around 55,083 MW hours per annum (MWh/p.a.), indicating the Proposed Development would generate enough electricity to power approximately 13,599 (Scottish Government source) average UK households (based on average annual electricity consumption per household of 4,064 kWh) and would displace around 24,778 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually (based on 'All Fossil Fuels' being displaced), and 991,120 tonnes over the proposed 40 year lifetime of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would contribute towards international and national targets for the generation of renewable energy and reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (further information is provided on this matter in **Chapter 5: Climate Change**).

1.1.3 The electricity produced at the site will be exported to the national grid. The grid connection will be progressed by the transmission licence holder (further information on this matter can be found in **Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development**).

1.2 Purpose of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report

1.2.1 The Applicant has undertaken an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the Proposed Development in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. The EIA process is reported in this EIA Report, which identifies the methodologies used to assess the environmental effects predicted to result from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development. Where appropriate, it also sets out mitigation measures designed to prevent, reduce and, if at all possible, offset potential significant adverse environmental impacts. An assessment of residual effects, those expected to remain following implementation of mitigation measures, is also presented.

1.2.2 The main findings and conclusions of this EIA Report are summarised in a Non-Technical Summary (NTS), as required by the EIA Regulations.

1.3 Structure of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report

- 1.3.1 The Environmental Impact Assessment Report ('EIA Report') is split into three volumes, with the NTS, Planning Statement and Pre-Application Consultation Report forming separate documents. **Volume 1** of this EIA Report contains written statements informing each area of assessment considered throughout the EIA process.
- 1.3.2 **Volume 2** contains the figures that inform the EIA Report.
- 1.3.3 **Volume 3** contains the figures that inform the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment.
- 1.3.4 **Volume 4** contains supporting information and appendices for each of these technical chapters, and additional studies that have been prepared to inform the relevant assessments as reported in the EIA Report

1.4 Assessment Team

- 1.4.1 The assessment was undertaken by the following technical consultancies:
- Infinergy Limited – Project Managed, Introduction, EIA Process, Description of Proposed Development, Telecoms & Aviation, Shadow Flicker and Safety & Infrastructure.
 - Arcus – Climate Change, Socio Economic, Traffic & Transport, Noise and Hydrology & Hydrogeology.
 - Savills – Planning Policy.
 - Optimised Environments –Landscape and Visual assessment.
 - Headland Archaeology – Cultural Heritage assessment.
 - Avian Ecology – Ornithology & Ecology assessment.

1.5 Availability of the Environmental Statement

- 1.5.1 In accordance with current Covid-19 guidance, the EIA Report and the supporting documentation are available online, please visit the dedicated website at www.lxxwindfarm.co.uk under 'Downloads'. A copy of the NTS and a CD containing the full EIA Report are available free of charge (while stocks last), by contacting Infinergy Limited at info@lxxwindfarm.co.uk or in writing to **Freeport Infinergy Limited** (no stamp or further address detail necessary). If required, a hard copy of the entire EIA Report can be provided at a cost of £750 plus VAT.

1.6 Representations to the Applicant

- 1.6.1 Any representations to the application should be made directly to the Highland Council.

References

DECC (2009). The UK Renewable Energy Strategy. Accessed 19/02/21. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228866/7686.pdf.

The Scottish Government (2017). Energy in Scotland 2017. Accessed 19/02/21. <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00529523.pdf>

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. Accessed 12/05/2021.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2017/102/contents/made>

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