Chapter 4: Approach to EIA

West Springfield Solar EIA Report

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Basis of Report

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Supporting Figures (EIA Report Volume 3)

Acronyms and Abbreviations

BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage System

4.0 Approach to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This chapter of the EIA Report sets out the approach taken to the EIA process for the Proposed Development.

4.1.2 The EIA process assists the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) in its determination of the Section 36 application by identifying potential significant environmental effects and any necessary mitigation measures. The EIA has been completed in conjunction with consultation with statutory and non-statutory consultees, interested parties and the general public.

4.1.3 The structure of the EIA Report follows the requirements of the EIA Regulations and relevant good practice guidance. The EIA Report comprises a Non-Technical Summary (NTS), the main EIA Report text (this document), accompanying figures and appendices.

4.1.4 This chapter is structured as follows:

- overview of the relevant legislation, policy and guidance;
- an outline of the EIA process utilised;
- the scope of the assessment completed;
- details of the assessment of potential effects;
- the consultation undertaken; and
- assumptions, likely limitations and uncertainty.

4.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidelines

4.2.1 A number of legislative and best practice documents have informed the EIA process. The Proposed Development falls under Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations as it would be *"a generating station*". The criteria for considering whether a Schedule 2 development requires the preparation of an EIA are set out in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations. Regulation 4 of the EIA Regulations details the EIA process while Regulations 4, 5 and Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations provide details of the information to be included within the EIA Report.

4.2.2 In addition to the above, the regulations and best practice guidance of core relevance to the EIA process and which have been taken into account in undertaking this assessment are as follows:

- The Electricity Act 1989;
- Planning Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment regulations (Scottish Government, 2017);
- Planning Advice Note 1/2013: Environmental Impact Assessment (Scottish Government, 2013);
- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (Scottish Government, 2023); and

- Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook Version 5 (Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) (now NatureScot), 2018).

4.2.3 Overall, NPF4 confirms strong national policy support for solar PV developments in response to the declared Climate Emergency and the drive to attain net zero emissions.

4.2.4 Additional topic-specific legislation, policy and guidance documents are noted within the technical assessment chapters of this EIA Report **(Chapters 5 to 7)**, and within the supporting Technical Appendices.

4.3 Legal Framework for the EIA

Overall EIA Process

4.3.1 Guidance on EIA states that in order for the EIA process to be as effective as possible it should be used as an iterative process throughout the design stage, rather than a single assessment performed once the design is finalised. When used as an iterative process, the findings of the EIA can be incorporated within the design of the proposal to provide an optimum design with regard to the Applicant's requirements and the environment.

4.3.2 The findings of the EIA are presented in this EIA Report, which has been prepared in accordance with the EIA Regulations. The general approach which has been followed in undertaking the EIA is presented in this chapter and an overview of the methodology adopted for each technical study is provided within the respective technical chapters (**Chapters 5 to 7).**

Screening and Pre-Application Advice

4.3.3 Screening is the process by which it is determined whether or not an EIA should be conducted for a Proposed Development.

4.3.4 As set out in Paragraph 4.2.1, the Proposed Development falls within Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations. Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations sets out the criteria that should be considered in determining whether a Schedule 2 development is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence require a formal EIA.

4.3.5 A Pre-Application Advice Request was submitted to Fife Council in July 2022 (by RPS as agents on behalf of Elgin Energy[1]), A detailed response was received from Fife Council in October 2022 (refer to **Chapter 1: Introduction**). Upon acquisition of the Proposed Development in December 2024, it was concluded by the Applicant (with reference to the Pre-Application Advice from Fife Council[2]), that given the nature, location and characteristics of the Proposed Development, an EIA would potentially be required. A voluntary EIA supporting a Section 36 application to Scottish Ministers has therefore been completed in respect of potentially significant environmental effects for Landscape and Visual, Ecology and Biodiversity, and Cultural Heritage and Archaeology. This voluntary EIA Report is

[1] The Proposed Development was initially progressed by Elgin Energy, with RPS as acting agents on feasibility and constraints studies. BLC/TRIO Power Limited later acquired the Proposed Development from Elgin Energy in December 2024.

[2] Pre-Application Advice Response from Fife Council to RPS on behalf of Elgin Energy (October 2024)

accompanied by supporting Technical Appendices for all disciplines not anticipated to have significant environmental effects.

4.3.6 In light of detailed Pre-Application Advice and careful consideration of the estimated project timescales, the Applicant did not submit a request for an EIA Screening Opinion. The application timescales have been primarily driven by Ofgem's ongoing National Grid reform (April 2025).

Scoping

4.3.7 The EIA Scoping process is designed to identify the potentially significant environmental issues which should be considered when assessing the potential effects of the Proposed Development, and those effects that are not likely to be significant (which can be 'scoped out'). An EIA Scoping Opinion may be obtained from the consenting authority, which sets out the matters that should be considered through the EIA.

4.3.8 The Applicant opted not to undertake a formal scoping process. Instead, relevant technical disciplines have been voluntarily 'scoped-in' to the EIA to ensure a robust and comprehensive evaluation of potential significant environmental effects, aligning with best practices and regulatory expectations while streamlining the assessment process. Technical topics for which significant environmental effects are not predicted (based on site visits, surveys, assessments and consultation including the Pre-Application Advice received from Fife Council) have been scoped-out of the EIA and are reported in technical reports presented as Appendices to the EIA Report.

4.3.9 The Gatecheck 1 process has not been undertaken since neither EIA Screening nor Scoping has been undertaken. The feedback from Fife Council's Pre-Application Advice Response has been fully incorporated into the project design process, and technical disciplines have liaised directly with statutory and non-statutory consultees as necessary. A full summary of consultation and design iterations is provided in this EIA Report (**Chapter 2: Site Description and Design Iterations**) and in the accompanying **Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report.**

4.4 The EIA Process

4.4.1 EIA is the systematic process of compiling, assessing, presenting and mitigating all the significant environmental effects of a proposed development. The assessment is designed to inform the decision-making process by way of setting out the likely environmental profile of a project. Identification of potentially significant adverse environmental effects then feeds into the design of the Proposed Development and the incorporation of appropriate mitigation measures into both the design of the scheme and the way in which it is constructed.

4.4.2 The main steps in the EIA assessment process for the Proposed Development have been:

- baseline surveys to provide information on the existing environmental character of the Site and the surrounding area.
- consideration of the possible interactions between the Proposed Development and the existing and predicted future site conditions. These interactions or effects are assessed using criteria based on accepted guidance and best practice.

- prediction of the environmental effects, including direct, indirect, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, beneficial and adverse effects, by assessing the design of the Proposed Development.
- identification of any necessary changes to the Proposed Development and mitigation measures designed to avoid, reduce or offset adverse effects and enhance beneficial effects.
- assessment of the significance of any residual effects after mitigation, in relation to the sensitivity of the feature affected and the magnitude of the impact predicted, in line with the methodology identified below.
- identification of any uncertainties inherent in the methods used, the predictions made, and the conclusions drawn during the course of the assessment process.
- reporting of the results of the EIA in this EIA Report.

Assessment of Effects

4.4.3 Throughout the assessment, a distinction has been made between the term ‘impact’ and ‘effect’. The EIA Regulations refer to the requirement to report the significance of ‘effects’. An impact has been defined as the physical change of the characteristics of the receiving environment as a result of the Proposed Development (e.g. glint and glare from panels), whereas an effect refers to the significance of this impact (e.g. a significant residual glare effect on residential properties). These terms have been adopted throughout this EIA Report to present a consistent approach to the assessment and evaluation of effects and their significance.

4.4.4 The exception to this is the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) which classifies the level of physical and perceptual change to the receiving environment as the "magnitude of change" in line with the recommendations of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment third edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute & IEMA, 2013). However, this terminology should be considered interchangeable with "magnitude of impact".

4.4.5 Within this EIA Report, the assessment of effects for each environmental topic takes the environmental impacts of the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development into account; and how the environmental baseline is expected to evolve in the absence of the Proposed Development (the do-nothing scenario).

4.4.6 In order to determine whether or not the potential effects of the Proposed Development are likely to be ‘significant’, a number of criteria are used. These significance criteria vary between topics but generally include:

- international, national and local designations or standards;
- relationship with planning policy;
- sensitivity of the receiving environment;
- magnitude of impact;
- reversibility and duration of the effect; and
- inter-relationship between effects.

4.4.7 Effects that are considered to be significant are identified within the EIA Report. The significance of the resultant effect is informed by professional judgement as to the importance

or sensitivity of the affected receptor(s) and the nature and magnitude of the predicted changes. For example, a high magnitude of impact on a low sensitivity receptor will have an effect of lesser significance than the same impact on a high sensitivity receptor.

4.4.8 **Table 4-1** below is used as a guide to demonstrate the relationship between the sensitivity of the identified receptor and the anticipated magnitude of an impact. Professional judgement is, however, important in verifying the suitability of this guiding 'formula' to the assessment of the significance of each individual effect. Therefore, the table below may be adapted as necessary for different technical assessments.

Table 4.1: Significance of Effect

		Sensitivity of Receptor/Receiving Environment to Change			
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Impact	High	Major	Moderate/Major	Minor/Moderate	Negligible
	Medium	Moderate/ Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
	Low	Minor/Moderate	Minor	Negligible/Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

4.4.9 The following terms are used in the EIA Report, unless otherwise stated, to determine the level of effects predicted to occur:

- major beneficial or adverse effect – where the Proposed Development would result in a large improvement (or deterioration) to the existing environment;
- moderate beneficial or adverse effect – where the Proposed Development would result in a medium improvement (or deterioration) to the existing environment;
- minor beneficial or adverse effect – where the Proposed Development would result in a small improvement (or deterioration) to the existing environment; and
- negligible – where the Proposed Development would result in no discernible improvement (or deterioration) to the existing environment.

4.4.10 Using professional judgement and with reference to relevant guidance, the majority of the assessments within this EIA Report consider effects of moderate or greater significance to be 'significant', with those of minor significance or less to be non-significant. Any deviations from this are clearly stated within the individual technical chapters.

4.4.11 Using professional judgement and with reference to relevant guidance, the majority of the assessments within this EIA Report consider effects of moderate or greater significance to be 'significant', with those of minor significance or less to be non-significant. Any deviations from this are clearly stated within the individual technical chapters.

4.4.12 Summary tables are provided at the end of each technical chapter of the EIA Report and within **Chapter 8** that outline:

- the predicted effects associated with each environmental issue;
- the appropriate mitigation measures required to address these effects; and
- the subsequent overall residual effects.

4.4.13 Distinction has also been made between direct and indirect, short and long term, permanent and temporary effects.

Cumulative Effects

4.4.14 Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations sets out the matters that require to be incorporated within EIA Report. Part 5(e) of Schedule 4 states that EIA Reports should include an assessment of *"the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved projects, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources".*

4.4.15 Cumulative effects are those which result from incremental changes caused by past, present or reasonably foreseeable future actions resulting from the introduction of the Proposed Development. These cumulative effects cover the combined effect of individual impacts from the Proposed Development and combined impacts of other nearby solar and BESS developments. Consideration of relevant cumulative solar and BESS development is detailed within **Chapter 3: Proposed Development Description.**

4.4.16 Within this EIA Report, cumulative effects for each technical discipline are covered as required on a chapter-by-chapter basis with a summary of overall effects included in Chapters 5,6 and 7**.**

4.5 Scope of the EIA

Spatial Scope

4.5.1 The spatial scope of the EIA, i.e., the geographical coverage of the assessment undertaken, has taken account of a number of factors, in particular:

- the extent of the Proposed Development, as defined by the Section 36 application boundary (refer to **Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1: Introduction**);
- the nature of the baseline environment, sensitive receptors and the likely impacts that could arise; and
- the distance over which predicted effects are likely to remain significant and in particular, the existence of pathways which could result in the transfer of effects to a wider geographical area than the extent of the proposed physical works.

4.5.2 The relevant spatial scope for each technical assessment is set out in each corresponding chapter (**Chapters 5-7**) and in the supporting Technical Appendices.

Temporal Scope

4.5.3 Baseline environmental surveys were undertaken between 2024 and early 2025.

4.5.4 For the purposes of the EIA, construction is assumed to commence in early 2028 and is expected to last for 9-12 months.

4.5.5 The proposed operational life for the Proposed Development is 40 years, after which time it is assumed that it will be decommissioned

4.5.6 It is anticipated that the levels of effect during decommissioning would be similar but of a lesser level than those during construction. Decommissioning would be undertaken in line with best

practice processes and methods at that time and will be managed through an agreed Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan.

4.6 EIA Report

4.6.1 Regulations 4 and 5 and Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations specify the information for inclusion in EIA Reports. **Table 4-2** details where the information has been provided within the EIA Report.

Table 4.2: Information Included in the EIA Report

Regulation / Schedule	Required Information	Where Provided within this EIA Report
Regulation 4	(2) The environmental impact assessment must identify, describe and assess in an appropriate manner, in light of the circumstances relating to the proposed development, the direct and indirect significant effects of the proposed development (including, where the proposed development will have operational effects, such operational effects) on the factors specified in paragraph (3) and the interaction between those factors.	The EIA Report includes an assessment of the direct and indirect effects of the Proposed Development during construction and operation (refer to **Chapters 5 to 7**).
	3) The factors are— (a) population and human health; (b) biodiversity, and in particular species and habitats protected under Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora(1) and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conservation of wild birds(2); (c) land, soil, water, air and climate; and (d) material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape	The receptors potentially affected by the Proposed Development are detailed within each of the technical chapters and supporting technical appendices. Effects on population and human health are assessed in relation to visual impacts, traffic, noise and glint and glare. Biodiversity is covered in the ecology and biodiversity chapter. Impacts to water are covered in the hydrology and flood risk assessments. Material assets are addressed through the assessment of landscape and visual in **Chapter 5**, cultural heritage effects in **Chapter 7** and in the supporting technical appendices.
	(4) The effects to be identified, described and assessed under paragraph (2) include the expected effects deriving from the vulnerability of the development to risks, so far as relevant to the development, of major accidents and disasters	The predicted significant effects of the Proposed Development are reported after relevant mitigation measures have been applied to an identified impact, in each of the technical chapters.

Regulation / Schedule	Required Information	Where Provided within this EIA Report
Regulation 5	(2) An EIA report is a report prepared in accordance with this regulation by the developer which includes (at least)— (a) a description of the development comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the development; (b) a description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment; (c) a description of the features of the development and any measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment; (d) a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment; (e) a non-technical summary of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (d); and (f) any other information specified in schedule 4 relevant to the specific characteristics of the development and to the environmental features likely to be affected.	**Chapter 3** contains a description of the Proposed Development. **Chapters 5 to 7** contain a description of the likely significant effects and the measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent, reduce or offset significant adverse effects. **Chapter 2** contains a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the Applicant. A Non-Technical Summary has been included with the application.
	3) Where a scoping opinion (or scoping direction) is issued, the EIA report must be based on that scoping opinion (or scoping direction, as the case may be), and include the information that may reasonably be required for reaching a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the development on the environment, taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment.	N/A
	(5) In order to ensure the completeness and quality of the EIA report— (a) the developer/applicant must ensure that the EIA report is prepared by competent experts; and (b) the EIA report must be accompanied by a statement from the developer/applicant outlining the relevant expertise or qualifications of such experts.	**Chapter 1** contains details of the expertise and qualifications of the competent experts.
Schedule 4	1. A description of the development, including in particular (a) a description of the location of the development;	The Proposed Development is described in **Chapter 3**, including consideration of anticipated construction methods and the

Regulation / Schedule	Required Information	Where Provided within this EIA Report
	(b) a description of the physical characteristics of the whole development, including, where relevant, requisite demolition works, and the land-use requirements during the construction and operational phases; (c) a description of the main characteristics of the operational phase of the development (in particular any production process), for instance, energy demand and energy used, nature and quantity of the materials and natural resources (including water, land, soil and biodiversity) used; (d) an estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions (such as water, air, soil and subsoil pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation and quantities and types of waste produced during the construction and operation phases	operation of the Proposed Development. The land use requirements during construction and operational phases are also described in **Chapter 3**. Expected residues and emissions are addressed, where relevant, in the appropriate technical chapters and supporting technical appendices.
	2. A description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects.	**Chapter 2** describes the design iteration process and details how the Proposed Development Site was chosen, and the environmental constraints taken into consideration in determining the final layout which is the subject of the Application.
	3. A description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (baseline scenario) and an outline of the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the development as far as natural changes from the baseline scenario can be assessed with reasonable effort on the basis of the availability of environmental information and scientific knowledge	A description of the existing environment and how it is expected to evolve in the absence of the Proposed Development is provided within each technical chapter.
	4. A description of the factors specified in regulation 4(3) likely to be significantly affected by the development: population, human health, biodiversity (for example fauna and flora), land (for example land take), soil (for example organic matter, erosion, compaction, sealing), water (for example hydromorphological changes, quantity and quality), air, climate (for example greenhouse gas emissions, impacts relevant to adaptation), material assets, cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological aspects, and landscape	The receptors potentially affected by the Proposed Development are detailed within each of the technical chapters. Effects on population and human health are assessed in relation to visual impacts, traffic, noise and glint and glare. Biodiversity is covered in the Ecology and Biodiversity chapter. Land take is described in **Chapter 3.**

Regulation / Schedule	Required Information	Where Provided within this EIA Report
		Impacts on water are covered in the hydrology and flood risk assessments. Consideration of the Proposed Development's contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is set out in **Chapter 1**. Material assets are addressed through the assessment of cultural heritage effects in **Chapter 7** and other chapters as appropriate. Landscape effects are assessed as reported in **Chapter 5**.
	5. A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment resulting from, inter alia: (a) the construction and existence of the development, including, where relevant, demolition works; (b) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity, considering as far as possible the sustainable availability of these resources; (c) the emission of pollutants, noise, vibration, light, heat and radiation, the creation of nuisances, and the disposal and recovery of waste; (d) the risks to human health, cultural heritage or the environment (for example due to accidents or disasters); (e) the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved projects, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources; (f) the impact of the project on climate (for example the nature and magnitude of greenhouse gas emissions) and the vulnerability of the project to climate change; (g) the technologies and the substances used. The description of the likely significant effects on the factors specified in regulation 4(3) should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, transboundary, short-term, medium-term and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development. This description should take into account the environmental protection objectives established at	The predicted significant effects of the Proposed Development are reported after relevant mitigation measures have been applied to an identified effect, in each of the technical chapters. Effects have been predicted in relation to both the construction / decommissioning and operational phases of the Proposed Development, including the nature of these effects and their duration. The overall approach and methods used in the assessment of environmental impacts are discussed within this chapter. Prediction methods are discussed in detail within each relevant technical chapter.

Regulation / Schedule	Required Information	Where Provided within this EIA Report
	Union or Member State level which are relevant to the project, including in particular those established under Council Directive 92/43/EEC3 and Directive 2009/147/EC	
	6. A description of the forecasting methods or evidence, used to identify and assess the significant effects on the environment, including details of difficulties (for example technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge) encountered compiling the required information and the main uncertainties involved	An overview of the methodology of the assessment is provided within this chapter while the individual technical chapters provide details of each technical assessment (**Chapter 5 to 7**).
	7. A description of the measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified significant adverse effects on the environment and, where appropriate, of any proposed monitoring arrangements (for example the preparation of a post-project analysis). That description should explain the extent, to which significant adverse effects on the environment are avoided, prevented, reduced or offset, and should cover both the construction and operational phases.	Specific mitigation measures and, where appropriate, monitoring arrangements are reported in each relevant technical section and in the schedule of committed mitigation measures presented in **Chapter 8**.
	8. A description of the expected significant adverse effects of the development on the environment deriving from the vulnerability of the development to risks of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned. Relevant information available and obtained through risk assessments pursuant to EU legislation such as Directive 2012/18/EU(3) of the European Parliament and of the Council or Council Directive 2009/71/Euratom(4) or UK environmental assessments may be used for this purpose provided that the requirements of this Directive are met. Where appropriate, this description should include measures envisaged to prevent or mitigate the significant adverse effects of such events on the environment and details of the preparedness for and proposed response to such emergencies.	The predicted significant effects of the Proposed Development are reported after relevant mitigation measures have been applied to an identified impact, in each of the technical chapters.
	9. A non-technical summary of the information provided under paragraphs 1 to 8	A Non-Technical Summary is presented as a stand-alone document.
	10. A reference list detailing the sources used for the descriptions and assessments included in the EIA report.	References are provided at the end of each chapter.

4.7 Consultation

4.7.1 Consultation is a key component of the EIA process. Consultation with statutory and non-statutory consultees has been undertaken by the Applicant since the feasibility stages of the Proposed Development.

4.7.2 The Applicant and their EIA team have engaged through both formal consultation and informally through meetings, calls and emails. Details of the consultation undertaken can be found within each technical chapter.

Public Consultation

4.7.3 A stand-alone Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report has been prepared which gives details of the correspondence, online public consultation and other discussions which have taken place with the communities closest to the Proposed Development Site. The report also details findings of that work and illustrates the ways in which community engagement has helped identify potential issues arising from the emerging development proposal, and where appropriate, shape the final proposal which is now the subject of this application.

4.7.4 The Applicant is grateful to residents and local representatives for their input into the pre-application community engagement process.

4.8 Consideration of Alternatives

4.8.1 EIA legislation requires the consideration of alternatives and an indication of the reasons for selecting the site advanced, except were limited by constraints of commercial confidentiality.

4.8.2 The Proposed Development site has been demonstrated to be a viable and a productive site for a solar development with associated BESS.

4.8.3 The Applicant considered a number of alternative layouts and different panel iterations for the Proposed Development, to arrive at the design for which consent is sought. A full description of the site identification and design iteration process is given in **Chapter 2.**

4.9 Assumptions, Limitations and Uncertainty

4.9.1 The EIA process is designed to enable informed decision-making based on the best available information about the environmental implications of a proposed development. However, there will always be some uncertainty inherent in the scale and nature of the predicted environmental effects as a result of the level of detailed information available at the time of assessment, data reliability or uncertainty, the potential for minor alterations to the Proposed Development following completion of the EIA Report and/or the limitations of the prediction processes.

4.9.2 A number of assumptions were made during the EIA process and are detailed below:

- the principal land uses adjacent to the site remain unchanged during the course of the Proposed Development's lifetime;
- current applications for solar and BESS development projects are included within the assessment of cumulative effects for each technical aspect, as relevant; and

- information provided by third parties (including publicly available information and databases) is correct at time of submission.

4.9.3 Specific assumptions have also been made with regards to the individual technical disciplines, which are detailed within each chapter.

4.9.4 The main limitation to EIA is that while baseline conditions are assumed to be accurate at the time of surveying, due to the dynamic nature of the environment, these conditions may change during site preparation, construction and operation.

4.9.5 There is also the potential for a degree of necessary flexibility as certain aspects of the Proposed Development may be subject to change until a detailed design has been finalised. The maximum design envelope has been considered to ensure a robust assessment and any design flexibility will not exceed these parameters. This flexibility is relevant to:

- panel height;
- foundation and infrastructure design; and
- micro-siting of the panels and associated infrastructure, including the BESS, which may change due to investigation findings or implementation of mitigation measures.

4.9.6 Any limitations to the EIA are summarised in each technical chapter, where relevant, together with the means proposed to mitigate these.

4.9.7 Information on the construction of the Proposed Development has been developed by the project team based on professional judgement and outline design works, on the most likely methods of construction, plant, access routes and working areas etc. for the purposes of the EIA. The final choice of optimum construction methods will rest with the Contractor and may differ from those used in this assessment, with any such uncertainty stated in the EIA Report. Any changes to these methods will remain within the maximum design envelope.

4.10 References

Scottish Government (2020) Scottish Climate Change Plan Update. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-climate-change-plan-update-2018-2032-securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero/ .

Scottish Government (2023) Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/draft-energy-strategy-and-just-transition-plan/ .