MONA OFFSHORE WIND PROJECT

Applicant's Closing Submission

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F01

Image of an offshore wind farm

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Glossary

Term	Meaning
Applicant	Mona Offshore Wind Limited.
Appropriate Assessment	A step-wise procedure undertaken in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, to determine the implications of a plan or project on a European site in view of the site's conservation objectives, where the plan or project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in-combination with other plans or projects.
Bodelwyddan National Grid Substation	This is the Point of Interconnection (POI) selected by the National Grid for the Mona Offshore Wind Project.
Competent Authority	Regulation 6(1) defines competent authorities as "any Minister, government department, public or statutory undertaker, public body of any description or person holding a public office".
Development Consent Order (DCO)	An order made under the Planning Act 2008 granting development consent for one or more Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).
Environmental Statement	The document presenting the results of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process for the Mona Offshore Wind Project.
Evidence Plan Process	The Evidence Plan process is a mechanism to agree upfront what information the Applicant needs to supply to the Planning Inspectorate as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) applications for the Mona Offshore Wind Project.
Expert Working Group (EWG)	Expert working groups set up with relevant stakeholders as part of the Evidence Plan process.
Inter-array cables	Cables which connect the wind turbines to each other and to the offshore substation platforms. Inter-array cables will carry the electrical current produced by the wind turbines to the offshore substation platforms.
Interconnector cables	Cables that may be required to interconnect the Offshore Substation Platforms in order to provide redundancy in the case of cable failure elsewhere.
Intertidal access areas	The area from Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) to Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS) which will be used for access to the beach and construction related activities.
Intertidal area	The area between MHWS and MLWS.
Landfall	The area in which the offshore export cables make contact with land and the transitional area where the offshore cabling connects to the onshore cabling.
Local Authority	A body empowered by law to exercise various statutory functions for a particular area of the United Kingdom. This includes County Councils, District Councils and County Borough Councils.
Local Highway Authority	A body responsible for the public highways in a particular area of England and Wales, as defined in the Highways Act 1980.
Marine licence	The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 requires a marine licence to be obtained for licensable marine activities. Section 149A of the Planning Act 2008 allows an applicant for a DCO to apply for a 'deemed' marine licence as part of the DCO process. In addition, licensable

Term	Meaning
	activities within 12nm of the Welsh coast require a separate marine licence from Natural Resource Wales (NRW).
Maximum Design Scenario (MDS)	The scenario within the design envelope with the potential to result in the greatest impact on a particular topic receptor, and therefore the one that should be assessed for that topic receptor.
Mona 400kV Grid Connection Cable Corridor	The corridor from the Mona onshore substation to the National Grid substation at Bodelwyddan.
Mona Array Area	The area within which the wind turbines, foundations, inter-array cables, interconnector cables, offshore export cables and offshore substation platforms (OSPs) forming part of the Mona Offshore Wind Project will be located.
Mona Array Scoping Boundary	The Preferred Bidding Area that the Applicant was awarded by The Crown Estate as part of Offshore Wind Leasing Round 4.
Mona Offshore Cable Corridor	The corridor located between the Mona Array Area and the landfall up to MHWS, in which the offshore export cables will be located.
Mona Offshore Cable Corridor and Access Areas	The corridor located between the Mona Array Area and the landfall up to MHWS, in which the offshore export cables will be located and in which the intertidal access areas are located.
Mona Offshore Transmission Infrastructure Scoping Search Area	The area that was presented in the Mona Scoping Report as the area encompassing and located between the Mona Potential Array Area and the landfall up to MHWS, in which the offshore export cables will be located.
Mona Offshore Wind Project	The Mona Offshore Wind Project is comprised of both the generation assets, offshore and onshore transmission assets, and associated activities.
Mona Offshore Wind Project Boundary	The area containing all aspects of the Mona Offshore Wind Project, both offshore and onshore.
Mona Offshore Wind Project PEIR	The Mona Offshore Wind Project Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) that was submitted to The Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) and NRW for the Mona Offshore Wind Project.
Mona Offshore Wind Project Scoping Report	The Mona Scoping Report that was submitted to The Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) and NRW for the Mona Offshore Wind Project.
Mona Onshore Cable Corridor	The corridor between MHWS at the landfall and the Mona onshore substation, in which the onshore export cables will be located.
Mona Onshore Development Area	The area in which the landfall, onshore cable corridor, onshore substation, mitigation areas, temporary construction facilities (such as access roads and construction compounds), and the connection to National Grid substation will be located
Mona Onshore Transmission Infrastructure Scoping Search Area	The area that was presented in the Mona Scoping Report as the area located between MHWS at the landfall and the onshore National Grid substation, in which the onshore export cables, onshore substation and other associated onshore transmission infrastructure will be located.
Mona PEIR Offshore Cable Corridor	The corridor presented at PEIR that was consulted on during statutory consultation and has subsequently been refined for the application for Development Consent. It is located between the Mona Array Area and the landfall up to MHWS, in which the offshore export cables and the offshore booster substation will be located.

Term	Meaning
Mona PEIR Offshore Wind Project Boundary	The area presented at PEIR containing all aspects of the Mona Offshore Wind Project, both offshore and onshore. This area was the boundary consulted on during statutory consultation and subsequently refined for the application for Development Consent.
Mona Potential Array Area	The area that was presented in the Mona Scoping Report and in the PEIR as the area within which the wind turbines, foundations, meteorological mast, inter-array cables, interconnector cables, offshore export cables and OSPs forming part of the Mona Offshore Wind Project were likely to be located. This area was the boundary consulted on during statutory consultation and subsequently refined for the application for Development Consent.
Mona Proposed Onshore Development Area	The area presented at PEIR in which the landfall, onshore cable corridor, onshore substation, mitigation areas, temporary construction facilities (such as access roads and construction compounds), and the connection to National Grid infrastructure will be located. This area was the boundary consulted on during statutory consultation and subsequently refined for the application for Development Consent.
Mona Scoping Report	The Mona Scoping Report that was submitted to The Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) and NRW for the Mona Offshore Wind Project.
National Policy Statement (NPS)	The current national policy statements published by the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero in 2024.
Non-statutory consultee	Organisations that an applicant may choose to consult in relation to a project who are not designated in law but are likely to have an interest in the project.
Offshore Substation Platform (OSP)	The offshore substation platforms located within the Mona Array Area will transform the electricity generated by the wind turbines to a higher voltage allowing the power to be efficiently transmitted to shore.
Offshore Wind Leasing Round 4	The Crown Estate auction process which allocated developers preferred bidder status on areas of the seabed within Welsh and English waters and ends when the Agreements for Lease (AfLs) are signed.
Pre-construction site investigation surveys	Pre-construction geophysical and/or geotechnical surveys undertaken offshore and, or onshore to inform, amongst other things, the final design of the Mona Offshore Wind Project.
Point of Interconnection	The point of connection at which a project is connected to the grid. For the Mona Offshore Wind Project, this is the Bodelwyddan National Grid Substation.
Relevant Local Planning Authority	The Relevant Local Planning Authority is the Local Authority in respect of an area within which a project is situated, as set out in Section 173 of the Planning Act 2008. Relevant Local Planning Authorities may have responsibility for discharging requirements and some functions pursuant to the DCO, once made.
the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	The decision maker with regards to the application for development consent for the Mona Offshore Wind Project.
Statutory consultee	Organisations that are required to be consulted by an applicant pursuant to the Planning Act 2008 in relation to an application for development consent. Not all consultees will be statutory consultees (see non-statutory consultee definition).
Wind turbines	The wind turbine generators, including the tower, nacelle and rotor.

Term	Meaning
The Planning Inspectorate	The agency responsible for operating the planning process for NSIPs.

Acronyms

Acronym	Description
AfL	Agreement for Lease
BEIS	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
BNG	Biodiversity net gain
DCO	Development Consent Order
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EnBW	Energie Baden-Württemberg AG
EWG	Expert Working Group
HVAC	High Voltage Alternating Current
IEF	Important Ecological Feature
IEMA	Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment
ISAA	Information to support the Appropriate Assessment
MDS	Maximum Design Scenario
MHWS	Mean High Water Springs
MLWS	Mean Low Water Springs
NBB	Net Benefits for Biodiversity
NRW	Natural Resources Wales
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
NTS	Non-Technical Summary
OSP	Offshore Substation Platform
PDE	Project Design Envelope
PEI	Preliminary Environmental Information
PEIR	Preliminary Environmental Information Report
POI	Point of Interconnection
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SoCC	Statement of Community Consultation
SPA	Special Protection Area
TCE	The Crown Estate
WTW	Wildlife Trust Wales
TWT	The Wildlife Trusts

Units

Unit	Description
GW	Gigawatt
km	Kilometres
km^2	Kilometres squared
kV	Kilovolt
MW	Megawatt
nm	Nautical miles

1 Introduction

1.1.1.1 This document sets out the Applicant's (Mona Offshore Wind Limited) final position on the principal issues identified by the Examining Authority (ExA) in its Rule 6 letter (PD-005) of 7 June 2024. It does not seek to introduce new material nor raise any new issues. It also does not duplicate the extensive submissions and material provided by the Applicant in response to the ExA's questions, and to the submissions and responses provided by other Interested Parties (IPs) to the Examination.

1.1.1.2 As evidenced below, all key issues raised by the ExA and IPs have been addressed by the Applicant and, where possible, resolved. Where it has not been possible to formally resolve matters before the close of the Examination, the Applicant will continue to seek agreement with the relevant parties and will update the Secretary of State (SoS) as soon as possible prior to the determination of the Mona Offshore Wind Project application.

1.1.1.3 The Applicant considers that having full regard to the relevant extant policies and matters set out below, the positive benefits of the Mona Offshore Wind Project outweigh any adverse impacts and consent should be granted in the form sought by the Applicant.

1.2 Change Request

1.2.1.1 The Applicant submitted a Change Request to the application on 1 November 2024. The Change Request comprised a series of changes which focussed on a temporary access for onshore site preparation works to the west of the onshore substation platform, and widening of the access bellmouth and temporary access from Glascoed Road associated with access to the onshore substation during construction (see Mona Change Request Report (CR1-051).

1.2.1.2 Consultation was undertaken over 15 days from 19 November 2024 to 3 December 2024 in line with the Examining Authority's Procedural Decision (PD-016). The Change Request consultation received responses from a number of parties (see Change Request Consultation Feedback Response (CR1-043, CR1-044)). Comments on the Change Request primarily related to the temporary access for onshore site preparation works to the west of the onshore substation platform (changes 1a and 1b) and principally related to traffic related impacts in respect of the use of that access (now labelled access AC-T1 as per the Street Works and Access to Works Plan (REP6-013)).

1.2.1.3 In response to the consultation responses, in particular from Denbighshire County Council in their role as the relevant local highway authority, the Applicant updated the outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (REP6-060) (oCTMP) to include maximum number and dimension of vehicles to be used for onshore site preparation works at access AC-T1 and a maximum duration for use of access AC-T1. Following updates to the oCTMP, Denbighshire County Council removed any objection to the inclusion of access AC-T1 within the Change Request. The ExA then confirmed that the Change Request was accepted into the Examination within its Procedural Decision (PD-020) and now forms part of the Application. Relevant updates to documentation to incorporate changes relevant to the Change Request were made to documents at Deadline 6 and 7.

1.3 Planning Policy

1.3.1.1 The Planning Statement (J2 F02) sets out in detail the background to and the context of the Mona Offshore Wind Project, as well as the legal and policy framework it must be assessed against. The following sections provide a summary of how the Mona Offshore Wind Project complies with that legal and policy framework.

1.4 Section 104 of the Planning Act 2008

1.4.1.1 Section 104 of the Planning Act 2008 sets out that in determining a DCO application, the Secretary of State must take into account any relevant National Policy Statement (NPS), any appropriate Marine Policy Statement, any local impact report, any matters prescribed in relation to the development and any matters the Secretary of State considers important and relevant.

1.4.1.2 Section 104(3) of the Planning Act 2008 further makes it clear that the fundamental test to be applied in the decision-making process is whether, on balance, the Mona Offshore Wind Project is in accordance with the relevant NPSs.

1.4.1.3 As set out below and in the Planning Statement (J2 F02) (as supplemented by the National Policy Statement Tracker (APP-187) and the Planning Statement Update (PDA-036)) the Mona Offshore Wind Project accords with requirements of section 104.

1.5 Mona Offshore Wind Project Need

1.5.1.1 Part 3 of NPS EN-1 (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2024a) outlines the urgent need for all types of energy infrastructure in order to achieve energy security and dramatically reduce GHG emissions (see paragraphs 3.1.1 and 3.3.63 of NPS EN-1). NPS EN-1 confirms that the Mona Offshore Wind Project should be considered on the basis that the Government has demonstrated that there is a need for renewable energy infrastructure, that the scale of the need is significantly in excess of what is currently being promoted and that the need for renewable energy is urgent (paragraphs 3.1.1, 3.2.6 and 3.5.58 of NPS EN-1).

1.5.1.2 Accordingly, substantial weight must be given to the contribution which the Mona Offshore Wind Project would make towards satisfying this urgent need (paragraph 3.2.7 of NPS EN-1).

1.5.1.3 This need is further confirmed in wider international and national governmental obligations and objectives relating to low carbon electricity generation, climate change and the economy including the CoP 28 Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge (November 2023), CoP Glasgow Climate Pact 2021, the UK Climate Change Act 2008, the UK Government Energy Security Statement (April 2022), the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the Welsh Net Zero Plan (2021) and Energy Generation in Wales 2021.

1.5.1.4 In addition, the Government has recently reconfirmed the urgent need for offshore wind projects like the Mona Offshore Wind Project when setting out its ambition to deliver clean power by 2030 as set out in the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan: A new era of clean electricity (December 2024). The action plan highlights that ‘successful delivery will require rapid deployment of new clean

energy capacity across the whole of the UK' including delivery of 43-50 GW of offshore wind. The action plan also acknowledges that delivery of clean power by 2030 requires rapid delivery of the pipeline of existing infrastructure projects already at an advanced stage of planning and development, such as the Mona Offshore Wind Project.

1.5.1.5 Overall, as set out at paragraph 1.6.2.14 of the Planning Statement (J2 F02), the Mona Offshore Wind Project:

- Contributes towards the types of energy infrastructure confirmed as needed in NPS EN-1 and EN-3 in order for the UK to decarbonise its economy and achieve energy security and Net Zero
- Contributes substantially towards the recognised urgent need in the UK for new low carbon energy infrastructure 'to be brought forward as soon as possible' (NPS EN-1 paragraph 3.3.58)
- Makes a contribution towards the UK's part in meeting the revised recently agreed COP 28 Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge to triple the world's installed renewable energy generation capacity by 2030
- Contributes towards the British Energy Security Strategy's recently revised target of 50 GW of offshore wind by 2030 set out in the UK Government's 2022 Energy Security Statement
- Assists in meeting the UK Government's revised target in the Climate Change Act of 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions for the year 2050 (i.e. to be 100% lower than the 1990 levels) in order to meet its obligations under international climate change agreements
- Similarly, assisting in meeting the Environment (Wales) Act aim to reduce emissions by 100% by 2050 Assists in meeting future increases in electricity demand as significant sectors of energy demand switch from being powered by fossil fuels to using electricity.

1.5.1.6 Furthermore, delivery of the Mona Offshore Wind Project will make a significant contribution to the delivery of clean power by 2030 in accordance with the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan.

1.5.1.7 As summarised above and set out in detail in the Planning Statement (J2 F02), the need for the Mona Offshore Wind Project and offshore wind in general is clearly supported by the NPSs and other identified material planning policy matters.

1.6 Policy Compliance

1.6.1.1 The Planning Statement (J2 F02) as supplemented by the National Policy Statement Tracker (APP-187), the Planning Statement Update (PDA-036), the Welsh National Marine Plan Signposting (APP-188), the Applicant's responses to EXQ1 (REP3-059) and ExQ2 (REP5-080) including Q1.0.4 1.0.5, Q2.5.15 and Annex 1 (Q2.5.1 – Welsh Policy) to the Applicant's Response to ExQ2) and REP5-062) together with section 2 of these closing submissions below sets out a detailed assessment of the Mona Offshore Wind Project against relevant National Policy Statements, Welsh Government and local planning authority policy considerations, and marine policy considerations.

1.6.1.2 The Mona Offshore Wind Project's compliance with relevant planning policy, primarily the National Policy Statements (NPSs) EN-1, EN-3, and EN-5, but also

relevant Welsh national policy within the Welsh National Marine Plan, Future Wales and Planning Policy Wales 12, as well as relevant local policy within the Denbighshire County Council Local Development Plan 2013 and the Conwy County Borough Council Local Development Plan 2013, has been demonstrated throughout section 1.5 of the Planning Statement (J2 F02) (as supplemented by the National Policy Statement Tracker (APP-187), the Planning Statement Update (PDA-036), the Welsh National Marine Plan Signposting (APP-188), the Applicant's responses to EXQ1 (REP3-059) and EXQ2 (REP5-080) including Q1.0.4 1.0.5, Q2.5.15 and Annex 1 (Q2.5.1 – Welsh Policy) to the Applicant's Response to EXQ2) and REP5-062) and section 2 of these closing submissions, in relation to each specific topic assessed in the Environmental Statement and the Examining Authority's Principal Issues. Further detail on the Project's compliance with the NPSs and other relevant policy is set out in the individual chapters of the Environmental Statement and Section 2 below. The National Policy Statement Tracker (APP-187), in particular, confirms in detail how the Mona Offshore Wind Project accords with NPS EN-1 and EN-3, and EN-5. These assessments demonstrate that the Mona Offshore Wind Project accords with all the relevant policies.

1.6.1.3 The assessment in section 1.5 of the Planning Statement (J2 F02) together with Section 2 below demonstrate that where there are predicted impacts from the Mona Offshore Wind Project, appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures are proposed.

1.6.1.4 In making decisions, NPS EN-1 paragraph 4.1.3 confirms that the decision maker should start with a presumption in favour of granting consent to applications for energy projects unless more specific polices set out in relevant NPSs clearly indicate that consent should be refused or the adverse impacts will outweigh the benefits, with paragraph 4.1.5 setting out that when weighing its adverse impacts against its benefits, the decision maker should take into account benefits including contribution to meeting the need for energy infrastructure, job creation and environmental enhancements; all of which the Mona Offshore Wind Project provides.

1.6.1.5 The decision maker should weigh these benefits against potential adverse effect, whilst taking into account any measures to avoid, reduce, mitigate or compensate for any adverse impacts.

1.6.1.6 Paragraphs 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 of NPS EN-1 also confirm that the Government "… has concluded that there is a critical national priority (CNP) for the provision of nationally significant low carbon infrastructure" which includes offshore wind. Paragraph 4.2.7 of NPS EN-1 further concludes that this CNP policy should be applied during decision making following 'the normal consideration of the need case, the impacts of the project, and the application of the mitigation hierarchy'. It is relevant 'specifically in reference to any residual impacts that have been identified.'

1.6.1.7 Section 1.6.3 of the Planning Statement (J2 F02) confirms how the Mona Offshore Wind Project will make an important contribution to meeting the urgent need for energy infrastructure. In particular, when operational the Mona Offshore Wind Project will generate over 350 MW of renewable energy thereby making a substantial contribution to the delivery of the 43-50 GW of renewable energy that the UK Government is aiming to be provided by offshore wind by 2030.

1.6.1.8 Section 1.6.3 of the Planning Statement (J2 F02) also summarises the wider benefits of the Mona Offshore Wind Project including making a significant

contribution towards the much-needed transition to low carbon economies together with a range of beneficial economic and social impacts such as increased employment opportunities for local residents, businesses, accommodation and tourism. It is estimated the Project's activities within the UK could support 9,380 jobs and £675 million in GVA.

1.6.1.9 Also, in terms of environmental and biodiversity measures, the Applicant has identified several opportunities to improve onshore and offshore biodiversity benefit which it intends to procure and implement. Table J2.1.1 in the NPS Tracker (Document Reference J2.1) sets out how the Mona Offshore Wind Project would contribute to the targets set in the Environment Act 2021.

1.6.1.10 The Environmental Statement together with submissions made during Examination and summarised in section 2 below set out how the mitigation hierarchy has been met. As confirmed at sections 1.5 and 1.6.4 of the Planning Statement (J2 F02) and in section 2 below, under the majority of onshore and offshore topics assessed in the Environmental Statement, there would be no significant effects from the Mona Offshore Wind Project, or where potential effects have been identified, the Environmental Statement confirms that these can be appropriately mitigated such that they are not significant. To the extent that there are any residual effects, these are significantly outweighed by the benefits of the scheme and therefore the CNP policy applies to the delivery of the Mona offshore wind project.

1.6.1.11 Overall, the Applicant submits that the Secretary of State can conclude that the proposed Mona Offshore Wind Project:

- accords with the requirements of section 104 of the Planning Act 2008
- contributes to meeting renewable energy targets and providing energy security
- assists in reducing carbon emissions
- brings significant benefits that would outweigh any adverse impacts
- complies with national and local planning and marine policy
- Should be delivered as a critical national priority.

1.6.1.12 The Applicant further submits therefore that, under the terms of S104 Planning Act 2008, consent for the Mona Offshore Wind Project should be granted.

2 Examining Authority's Principal Issues

2.1 Air Quality and Human Health

2.1.1 Effects of the Proposed Development on human health during construction and operation

Air Quality

2.1.1.1 ES Volume 3, Chapter 10: Air Quality [F3.10 F02] presents the Applicant's assessment of the potential effects on air quality as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project. The assessment focuses on potential dust and air quality impacts from traffic generated by vehicles associated with the Project during the construction and decommissioning phases of the Project,

2.1.1.2 The assessment was undertaken in accordance with relevant guidance including the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) guidance (IAQM, 2016). Following the implementation of the dust control measures set out in the Outline Dust Management Plan [J26.2 F03] the dust impact risk from the construction of the Mona Offshore Wind Project is predicted to be negligible.

2.1.1.3 No issues were raised by the Examining Authority on the air quality assessment or its conclusions. NRW raised queries in their Relevant Representation [RR-011] regarding potential impacts on ecological receptors from NOx (NO2) emissions from construction vehicles associated with the Project. The Applicant responded [PDA-008] to confirm that the assessment had considered all relevant ecological receptors within the air quality study area and that there would be no effects on sections of ancient woodland nearest to the A55. NRW confirmed [REP1-056] their concerns had been addressed and this issue has been resolved. This is reflected in the NRW SoCG (S_D1_13 F03).

Human Health

2.1.1.4 ES Volume 4, Chapter 4: Human health assessment [F4.4 F02] presents the Applicant's assessment on the potential effects of the Mona Offshore Wind Project on human health. The assessment focused on aspects of the environment that influence population health (e.g. changes to the social, economic and biophysical environment) and drew upon the conclusions from assessments undertaken by the Applicant within the Environmental Statement. The assessment was undertaken in accordance with guidance from IEMA, Institute of Public Health and the World Health Organisation. The assessment concluded that overall, there would be no significant adverse effects on human health, however, significant public health benefits in relation to energy security are expected.

2.1.1.5 No concerns were raised by the Examining Authority with regard to the methodology or conclusions of the assessment. In their Relevant Representation [RR-009], CCBC raised a concern that potential impacts of heat radiation on animal health should be assessed. This issue was reiterated in the Local Impact Report [REP1-049]. The Applicant responded in PDA-008 and REP2-092 to confirm that potential impacts of heat radiation on human receptors was scoped out of the human health assessment with the agreement of the Planning Inspectorate [APP-194]. On this basis, the Applicant considered there was no requirement to consider animal health. CCBC confirmed that its

concerns relating to potential impacts of heat radiation to be resolved [REP3-078].

2.1.2 Appropriateness of proposed mitigation measures and monitoring

Air Quality

2.1.2.1 Measures to manage dust impacts from the construction activities of the Mona Offshore Wind Project were identified in accordance with the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) guidance (IAQM, 2016). The measures are set out in the Outline Dust Management Plan [REP6-038] which forms part of the Outline Code of Construction Practice (CoCP). The CoCP is secured in Requirement 9 of the draft DCO [C1 F08] and a final CoCP (including a final Dust Management Plan) will be agreed with the relevant planning authority prior to construction. CCBC raised a comment in their Relevant Representation [RR-009] that dust mitigation measures were required. The Applicant's response [PDA-008] provided a signpost to the Outline Dust Management Plan [REP6-038]. CCBC and DCC have agreed with the air quality mitigation measures in their respective SoCGs (S_D3_23 F04, S_D3_22 F04). NRW confirmed in their Relevant Representation [RR-011] that they were satisfied with the proposed mitigation measures and the approach to agree the final CoCP with the relevant planning authority. This is reflected in the NRW SoCG (S_D1_13 F03). Concerns were raised by Interested Parties regarding dust and fumes during construction in written submissions. The Applicant has responded to these concerns to clarify the mitigation approach through the CoCP, including the Dust Management Plan and considers the issues resolved.

Human Health

2.1.2.2 Measures to mitigate impacts to human health are set out in the Outline CoCP and its associated management plans. The implementation of the measures in the CoCP is secured in Requirement 9 of the draft DCO [C1 F08]. NRW and the Councils have agreed in their respective SoCG that the measures within the Outline CoCP and associated management plans are appropriate. Final versions of these outline plans will be submitted to the relevant planning authorities, and approved following consultation with NRW before works can commence. In addition, Draft DCO Requirements 14 (construction hours), 16 (control of operational artificial light emissions) and 17 (control of noise during operational stage) afford further control potential construction and operational impacts.

2.2 Construction

2.2.1 Pre-construction and construction programme

2.2.1.1 As set out in Table 3.37 of the Project Description (F1.3 F02), the onshore works are expected to take place over a period of up to 3 years. Within that period, the onshore cable route construction and the onshore substation construction works are anticipated to take place over a 33-month period.

2.2.1.2 The Applicant is seeking the ability to carry out certain works prior to the point which works are official "commenced" (as described in the Draft DCO) allowing

for those works to take place without the need to formally discharged the requirements and conditions of the Draft DCO.

2.2.1.3 In respect of the onshore works, additional periods for onshore site preparation works (prior to commencement of construction) have been factored into the anticipated timescales for development. At the request of the ExA the indicative construction programme was updated to include periods for onshore site preparation works (REP1-012, and F1.3 F02) and the Project Description updated at Deadline 7 to include this information.

2.2.1.4 Following discussions during the Examination regarding the onshore site preparation works, the Applicant clarified that those works would be undertaken in accordance with the relevant outline plans and those plans were updated to indicate which elements would specifically apply to those works, for example as included within the Outline Code of Construction Practice (REP6-034, see section 1.5 which sets out the measures that will be implemented during the onshore site preparation works and how each outline management plan that accompanies the CoCP relates to the onshore site preparation works). This was to provide comfort to the relevant local planning authorities that in the absence of discharge of requirements, those works would be undertaken in line with best practice construction measures. This approach to onshore site preparation works follow strong precedent set by other DCOs and has also been agreed with CCBC and DCC as evidenced within the respective SoCGs (S_D3_23 F04, S_D3_22 F04).

2.2.1.5 Information regarding the likely sequencing of the onshore works has been provided in the Staging of Onshore Works document (REP1-014), with the final sequence of stages to be agreed with the relevant local authority under Requirement 4. The agreed stages of works (under Requirement 4) will then guide the process of discharging relevant requirements of the Draft DCO with relevant information being submitted for approval to the relevant local authority prior to the commencement of that stage (in accordance with the requirements in Schedule 2 of the Draft DCO). This approach to staging of the works has been agreed with CCBC and DCC as evidenced within the respective SoCGs (S_D3_23 F04, S_D3_22 F04) and as stated in those SoCGs.

2.2.1.6 Regarding the offshore construction programme, at the request of the ExA the indicative construction programme was updated to include for unexploded ordnance (UXO) survey and clearance activities (REP1-012, and F1.3 F02) and the Project Description updated at Deadline 7 to include this information. The ability to undertake certain pre-commencement works in the offshore environment has been included the deemed marine licence (Schedule 14, Draft DCO) and a similar approach is anticipated for the standalone marine licence. There are no outstanding comments from Natural Resources Wales marine licensing team (the Licensing Authority) with regard to the drafting of the deemed marine licence in this regard.

2.2.2 Wind turbine layout in the array

2.2.2.1 As set out in the Project Description (F1.3 F02), the layout of the wind turbines will be developed to best utilise both the available wind resource and suitability of seabed conditions, while seeking to minimise potential environmental effects and impacts on other marine users (such as fisheries and shipping and navigation).

2.2.2.2 In order to inform the EIA, the Applicant has identified indicative layout scenarios which are presented in the relevant topic-specific chapters of the Environmental Statement. However, the final layout of the wind turbines will be determined following pre-construction site investigation surveys and final detained design. Details of the final wind turbine layout will then be submitted to Licensing Authority in the form of a design plan prior to commencement of the authorised scheme (see Paragraph 18(1), Schedule 14, Draft DCO) for which Trinity House and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) are named consultees.

2.2.2.3 In particular the design plan will accord with layout principles which are included in Table 3.7 of the Project Description (F1.3 F02). These include for principles relating to minimum spacing between surface-piercing infrastructure (wind turbines and offshore substation platforms), orientation of wind turbine rows, search and rescue (SAR) requirements and allowances for micrositing and installation tolerance.

2.2.2.4 During Issue Specific Hearing 1 of the examination, the ExA questioned whether the minimum spacing of 1,400 m between surface-piercing infrastructure included for the application of micrositing and, or installation tolerance. The Applicant clarified that it did not and that the distance between two adjacent structures could be reduced to 1,150 m where the maximum allowance for micrositing of 100 m and installation tolerance of 25 m was required. However, the Applicant explained that as micrositing is applied after the final wind farm layout is approved through the design plan, the likelihood of micrositing being required at two adjacent locations is very low. The MCA expressed concern over the impact that micrositing and installation tolerance allowances could have on SAR in its written representation (REP1-068) noting that 50 m was the standard. In response to this, the Applicant reduced the allowance for micrositing from 100 to 50 m and installation tolerance from 25 to 5 m (55 m in total) and updated the Draft DCO at Deadline 4 to secure the commitment. MCA confirmed satisfaction with the updated commitment during Issue Specific Hearing 4 ‘Offshore Matters’ which is reflected in the final Statements of Common Ground with the MCA (S_D1_16 F03).

2.2.2.5 See further submissions regarding the scallop mitigation zone at section 2.5 (Commercial Fisheries) which is also a relevant consideration for turbine layout.

2.2.3 Export cable laying

2.2.3.1 As detailed in the Project Description (APP-050), the offshore export cables are used for the transmission of electricity from the Offshore Substation Platforms (OSP) to the landfall and onwards to connect to the onshore National Grid substation. Up to four offshore export cables with a voltage of up to 275 kV will be required for the Mona Offshore Wind Project. The offshore export cable installation methodology, as well as the burial depth and any requirement for protection measures, will be defined by a detailed Cable Burial Risk Assessment (CBRA) during detailed design (as secured through the offshore construction method statement – see paragraph 18(1)(d), Schedule 14 Draft DCO and the Marine Licence Principles Document (J9 F06)).

2.2.3.2 The offshore export cables will be buried to a target depth of 1 m with a maximum burial depth of 3 m and a minimum burial depth of 0.5 m. The CBRA will be undertaken post-consent and will inform cable burial depth which will be dependent on ground conditions as well as external risks. The installation techniques being considered include pre-lay plough, plough, trenching, and

jetting and will be confirmed during detailed design post consent. The offshore export cables will require protection where the cable crosses obstacles such as exposed bedrock, pre-existing cables or pipelines that mean the cable cannot be buried. Cable protection methods being considered include rock protection, concrete mattresses, fronded mattresses and rock bags and again will be confirmed during detailed design.

2.2.3.3 The Applicant has made the commitment, that no more than a 5% reduction in water depth (referenced to Chart Datum) will occur at any point along cable routes without prior written approval from the Licensing Authority in consultation with the MCA and Trinity House. This commitment is secured under Part 1, Condition 18(1)(d)(bb) of Schedule 14 of the Draft DCO (C1 F08). This commitment is expected to be secured within the standalone marine licence for the transmission assets on which NRW will be a named consultee (see Response to Rule 17 Letter 8Jan25 (S_D7_28)).

2.2.4 Temporary construction compounds

2.2.4.1 A number of Temporary Construction Compounds (TCCs) associated with the landfall, onshore cable corridor and onshore substation are required. The TCCs will provide secure storage locations for heavy duty plant, local site management offices, welfare and local first aid points, and will also provide space for storage of materials and equipment as well as staff parking.

2.2.4.2 To clarify the location of these TCCs in relation to the works descriptions in Schedule 1 of the Draft DCO, the Applicant added new defined terms and updated the work descriptions as relevant to make this connection clear. This is to inform the discharge of requirements during the pre-commencement phase and to ensure that what is being applied for reflects what was assessed in the Environmental Statement (See Response to Hearing Action Points due at Deadline 2 (REP2-083)).

2.2.4.3 During the Examination, matters were raised in respect of the temporary laydown area on Pensarn Beach car park (Plot 01-003). In particular what the position was in respect of those plots being public open space and also how the use of that land would be controlled by the Draft DCO. The Applicant confirmed that the use of that open space land would meet the tests of the Planning Act 2008 (see Response to Conwy County Borough Council and Denbighshire County Council ExQ1 (REP4-058, row REP3-078.7)). The Applicant further clarified that details of the installation of the temporary fencing on Plot 01-003 will be secured through the final Landfall Construction Method Statement, which will be agreed with the relevant planning authority (Conwy County Borough Council) prior to commencement of these works. This approach has been agreed with CCBC as evidenced within the SoCG (S_D3_23 F04). The Secretary of State is therefore within the scope of their powers should they wish to grant rights in respect of Plot 01-003

2.2.4.4 Details of the TCCs will form part of the information to be submitted to the relevant local authorities through the discharge of the relevant requirements in the Draft DCO, including the Code of Construction Practice and will therefore be suitably controlled through that process. No other issues relating to temporary construction compounds and the management measures that will control them have been raised during the examination.

2.2.5 Haul roads, laydowns and trenching

2.2.5.1 As detailed in the Project Description (F1.3 F02), the primary method of installing the onshore cables will be through open-cut trenching. The locations of open-cut or trenchless technique crossing locations at points along the onshore cable corridor are illustrated in the Onshore Crossing Schedule (F5.4.3 F04) which is secured by requirement 6(4) of the Draft DCO. Those locations that retain optionality to either open-cut or use trenchless techniques will be determined at the design stage of the project.

2.2.5.2 The Applicant confirmed that detailed plan and section drawings will be developed for the trenchless crossings for the landfall and beneath Gwrych Castle Wood (Gwrych Hill). The Applicant has undertaken preliminary intrusive ground investigation (onshore boreholes) in order to confirm the suitability of ground conditions and is confident regarding the use of trenchless techniques at these locations.

2.2.5.3 During Issue Specific Hearing 1 the Applicant provided additional detail regarding the haul road (REP1-009). The Applicant also provided detail regarding storage and laydown areas that may be required in various locations within the onshore cable corridor. These have not been identified at this stage as their location will be determined by the detailed design.

2.2.5.4 Harriet Mary Parry, Robert Wynne Parry, Griffith Wynne Parry and Elizabeth Wynne Wade submitted representations regarding the width of the haul road and associated two-access along it (including the width of the cable trenches) in relation to justifying the proposed land take for the Onshore Cable Corridor. The Applicant maintains the position in REP3-040 that a 74 m (up to 100m where required) wide Onshore Cable Corridor is required to accommodate all elements of the onshore cable construction (excluding trenchless technique crossings) and justifies the two-way access and the width of the haul road to be used for the purposes of construction.

2.2.5.5 Details of the haul roads will form part of the information to be submitted to the relevant local authorities through the discharge of the relevant requirements in the Draft DCO, including the Code of Construction Practice and will therefore be suitably controlled through that process. No other matters relating to haul roads, laydowns and trenching have been raised during the examination.

2.2.6 Onshore substation

2.2.6.1 The site selection process for the onshore substation has been robust and comprehensive as evidenced by the decisions made by the Applicant in response to consultee comments and feedback, detailed technical, commercial and environmental studies (REP5-071). Throughout the site selection process, refinements were made in an effort to take account of landowner and other stakeholder concerns and environmental constraints whilst providing a viable technical solution for the project by identifying an optimal site for an onshore substation.

2.2.6.2 The onshore substation footprint, height and associated compound were substantially reduced in extent from the larger search areas identified at PEIR, through refining the onshore substation location and committing to GIS technology. The onshore substation is also sited to reduce the overall visual effect and provide the greatest opportunity for screening possible. Strategic

landscaping areas were identified to allow for additional tree planting and visual screening, in addition to that provided by the existing woodland around the site.

2.2.6.3 The Applicant also undertook an internal review of the onshore substation site selection and consideration of alternatives following reduction of the onshore substation footprint after statutory consultation on the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (REP5-071). This concluded that no alternative locations could be identified within the area of search; and that all onshore substation options that were discounted were discounted due to engineering or siting considerations that were not addressed by a reduced footprint.

2.2.6.4 Issues relating construction noise and vibration associated with the onshore substation are discussed in Section 2.16. Landscape and Good Design in relation to the onshore substation are discussed in Section 2.13.

2.2.6.5 Details of the onshore substation will form part of the information to be submitted to the relevant local authorities through the discharge of the relevant requirements in the Draft DCO, including under Requirement 5 and will therefore be suitably controlled through that process.

2.2.7 Onshore cable route and installation

2.2.7.1 The optimum route for an onshore grid connection is generally considered to be the shortest route, in this case from landfall to the Bodelwyddan National Grid Substation. The final cable route presented for the Mona project is considered to effectively achieve this optimisation, within the environmental, technical and other constraints that have been identified.

2.2.7.2 Decisions made by the Applicant in response to consultee comments and feedback, detailed technical, commercial and environmental studies, have directly informed the final route alignment and selection of the trenchless technique locations, as identified in the Onshore Crossing Schedule (F.5.4.3 F04). The final route for the onshore cable route can be seen in detail within the Works Plans – Onshore (REP6-006).

2.2.7.3 Two affected parties (Messrs. Parry and G Lloyd Evans & Sons) submitted objections to the route of the onshore cable corridor. Over approximately 15 km of the onshore cable route, only two landowners have raised such concerns. The Applicant has provided detailed explanations as to why the selected route is the most suitable and it should be noted that no alternative routes have been proposed that would meet the site selection criteria as outlined in AS-016 and APP-082 and perform better. See Section 2.6 for matters relating to Compulsory Acquisition.

2.2.7.4 Details of the onshore cable route and installation will form part of the information to be submitted to the relevant local authorities through the discharge of the relevant requirements in the Draft DCO, including the Code of Construction Practice and will therefore be suitably controlled through that process. No other matters relating to haul roads, laydowns and trenching have been raised during the Examination.

2.2.8 Core construction working hours, daily mobilisation hours, and works that could take place outside these hours

2.2.8.1 The Applicant has proposed a set of construction working hours that draw on appropriate precedents from other offshore development projects.

2.2.8.2 In certain cases, such as concrete pouring and finishing, electrical circuit pulling and jointing and testing, trenchless installation techniques, extended working hours will be needed in order to complete the work diligently and safely. The principal of these extended working hours has been assessed within the EIA. Further, the Draft DCO (Requirement 14) restricts the occasions when extended working hours are permitted.

2.2.8.3 This includes a mobilisation period during which mobilisation activities (as defined in requirement 14(7)) can take place. This is required up to one hour before and after the core working hours to allow construction activities to begin at 07:00, and end at 19:00; thereby maximising the potential working time available for an efficient construction programme. These mobilisation activities were refined over the course of the examination. In order to protect the amenity of local residents a construction noise limit will be applied to mobilisation activities. The noise limits are set out in the Outline Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan (REP6-040) and will apply to all noise sensitive receptors. The final Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan will be submitted to the relevant local planning authority pursuant to Requirement 9 of the Draft DCO. The proposed construction working hours, including mobilisation period and associated mobilisation activities, are not agreed with CCBC and DCC as evidenced within the respective SoCGs (S_D3_23 F04, S_D3_22 F04).

2.2.9 Adequacy of the Outline Code of Construction Practice, outline construction method statements and management plans

2.2.9.1 In accordance with standard practice management and monitoring, arrangements for construction will primarily be managed through the CoCP and corresponding 9 plans detailed in the Appendices of the CoCP, which are secured by Requirement 9 of the Draft DCO. The CoCP will be submitted for discharge prior to the commencement of each stage of the onshore works with all appendices relevant to those works:

- Code of Construction Practice;
- Spillage and Emergency Response Plan;
- Dust Management Plan;
- Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan;
- Construction Traffic Management Plan;
- Communications Plan;
- Construction Fencing Plan;
- Construction Surface Water and Drainage Management Plan;
- Flood Management Plan;
- Public Rights of Way Management Strategy;
- Soil Management Plan;
- Site Waste Management Plan;
- Artificial Light Emissions Plan;
- Biosecurity Protocol;

- Discovery Strategy for Contaminated Land;
- Arboriculture Method Statement;
- Onshore Construction Method Statement; and
- Landfall Construction Method Statement.

2.2.9.2 Outline plans were provided as part of the Application in order that these could be discussed during the Examination and, if necessary, updated. Additional management arrangements for construction are also secured through DCO Requirements 4 (stages of authorised development), 10 (highway accesses), 11 (onshore archaeology), 12 (landscape and ecology management plan), 13 (European protected species onshore), and 14 (construction hours).

2.2.9.3 This approach to arrangements for construction within the CoCP and associated Requirements within the DCO has been agreed with CCBC and DCC, as evidenced within the respective SoCGs (S_D3_23 F04, S_D3_22 F04).

2.3 Civil and Military Aviation and Defence Interests

2.3.1.1 Volume 4: Chapter 1: Aviation and radar (F4.1 F02) presents the Applicant's assessment of potential effects on civil and military aviation and defence interests associated with the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the Mona Offshore Wind Project.

2.3.2 The effects on safety and operations of civil and military aviation, including mitigation for potential effects on the Blackpool Airport Minimum Sector Altitude (MSA)

2.3.2.1 Section 1.9.2 of Volume 4: Chapter 1: Aviation and radar (F4.1 F02) identifies the potential for the Mona Offshore Wind Project to create a physical obstacle to aircraft operations leading to a significant moderate adverse effect on Blackpool Airport's instrument flight procedures.

2.3.2.2 The proposed mitigation for this effect is through an increase to the current Minimum Sector Altitude (MSA) which would reduce the residual impact to minor adverse, which is not significant in EIA terms. However, before full details of mitigation can be confirmed and agreed between the parties, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has requested that Blackpool Airport undertake a 5-year review of safeguarding requirements which includes consideration of the effects of the Mona Offshore Wind Project. Blackpool Airport have confirmed that the CAA approval process is not yet complete and will not be provided until after the end of the Examination.

2.3.2.3 The Applicant has progressed a SoCG with Blackpool Airport, updated and re-submitted at Deadline 7 (S_D1_21 F03). The Applicant has agreed a DCO requirement (requirement 25 of the draft DCO as updated at Deadline 7 (C1 F08)) with Blackpool Airport in order to ensure necessary mitigation is provided (for both the MSA increase and for any identified effects on VHF radar and direction-finding communications) and maintained for the lifetime of the Mona project.

2.3.3 The effects on safety and operations of civil and military aviation, including mitigation for potential effects on Blackpool Airport Very High Frequency (VHF) communications

2.3.3.1 As a result of recent issues between Glasgow Prestwick Airport and onshore wind farms, the CAA has issued a notice to UK licenced aerodromes in relation to the potential of interference to Very High Frequency communications. CAA guidance on this subject is contained within Civil Aviation Publication (CAP) 670: Air Traffic Serves Safety Requirements, which sets out a two-step process: the first step being undertaken is to determine through theoretical, mathematical modelling, the conceptual effect of the project against the MDS. The mathematical modelling assumes that the Wind Turbine Generators (WTG) would be always facing the VHF radio antenna to create a safety-conservative, worst-case scenario (despite this not being physically probable). The Applicant undertook this first step in the process and presented the analysis conclusions to Blackpool Airport on 25 November 2024. The second step is for Blackpool Airport to assess the potential for operational impact and hence sensitivity to the Mona Offshore Wind Project. Blackpool Airport now needs to undertake its own assessment as the second step (as per the guidance provided in CAP 670), but it will not be able to complete this until after the end of Examination. The Applicant does not consider interference with VHF communications will be an issue as a result of the project progressing, as there is no evidence of any such historic impact occurring from any offshore wind farm across the UK. The Applicant considers the circumstances at Glasgow Prestwick Airport in respect of onshore wind farms are location specific and not comparable to the Mona Offshore Wind Project and Blackpool Airport. Nevertheless, the Applicant recognises that Blackpool Airport must undertake its own assessment.

2.3.3.2 The Applicant has agreed a DCO requirement (requirement 25 of the draft DCO as updated at Deadline 7 (C1 F08)) with Blackpool Airport in order to ensure necessary mitigation is provided (for both the MSA increase and for any identified effects on VHF radar and direction finding communications) and maintained for the lifetime of the Mona project.

2.3.3.3 The Applicant has progressed a SoCG with Blackpool Airport, which has been updated and re-submitted at Deadline 7 (S_D1_21 F03) with all matters recorded as agreed.

2.3.4 The effects on radar, including Primary Surveillance Radar (PSR) systems at Lowther Hill, St Annes and Great Dun Fell

2.3.4.1 Section 1.9.3 of Volume 4: Chapter 1: Aviation and radar (APP-075) identifies the potential for the Mona Offshore Wind Project wind turbines to cause interference on civil PSR systems leading to a significant moderate adverse effect on PSR systems operated by NATS at Lowther Hill, St Annes and Great Dun Fell. The assessment identifies that implementation of mitigation would reduce the impact to minor adverse, which is not significant in EIA terms.

2.3.4.2 Engagement between NATS and the Applicant commenced in 2021. The Applicant has responded to relevant representations (PDA-008, paragraph RR-005.1) and a SoCG between the parties is being progressed, most recently updated at Deadline 7 (S_D1_19 F03).

2.3.4.3 The Applicant has received details of preferred mitigation solutions from NATS to reduce the residual impact to Lowther Hill, Great Dun Fell and St Anne's Primary Surveillance Systems (PSR); such that there is no longer a significant effect. The parties are engaging on a commercial agreement and DCO requirement to secure the mitigation. The Applicant proposed a requirement for inclusion in the draft DCO (dDCO) in the updated SoCG at Deadline 3 (REP3-029) for consideration by NATS.

2.3.4.4 The Applicant is still engaging with NATS on the commercial agreement (the Mitigation Services Contract (MSC)) and although it hopes to complete this prior to the end of examination, negotiations are ongoing. This matter therefore remains an ongoing point of discussion in the updated SoCG submitted at Deadline 7 (S_D1_19 F03). The Applicant included a requirement in the DCO at Deadline 5 in case the MSC is not completed prior to the end of examination. NATS have agreed to the drafting of the requirement in the latest SoCG (S_D1_19 F03) where this matter is recorded as 'agreed'.

2.3.5 The effects on radar, including PSR systems at Ronaldsway Isle of Man Airport, and appropriate mitigation

2.3.5.1 Similar to the PSRs operated by NATS above, a significant moderate adverse effect is predicted on PSR systems operated by the Ronaldsway Isle of Man Airport (see Section 1.9.3 of Volume 4: Chapter 1: Aviation and radar (F4.1 F02)). The assessment identified that implementation of mitigation would reduce the impact to minor adverse, which is not significant in EIA terms.

2.3.5.2 The Applicant has responded to relevant representations (PDA-008, paragraph RR-018.13) and is progressing a SoCG with the Territorial Sea Committee within the Isle of Man (IoM) Government, most recently updated at Deadline 7 (S_D1_11 F04). The Applicant met with IoM Ronaldsway Airport on 10 and 24 October 2024 to discuss the results of its surveillance strategy, an initial report on which was issued to the Applicant on 11 October 2024. A progress update on the Applicant's engagement with Ronaldsway Airport was provided at Deadline 6 in paragraph 13 of the Hearing Summary Onshore and Offshore Environmental Matters (ISH6) (REP6-083).

2.3.5.3 In light of the technical detail of the surveillance strategy and associated commercial matters not being completed until after the end of the examination, The Applicant has agreed the drafting of a mitigation requirement with IoM Ronaldsway Airport, which is included as requirement 26 "Air traffic services at Isle of Man Airport" in the draft DCO (C1 F08).

2.3.5.4 The Applicant has progressed a SoCG with the Territorial Sea Committee, which has been updated with all matters agreed for aviation and radar and re-submitted at Deadline 7 (S_D11_ F04).

2.3.6 The effects on radar including PSR systems at Liverpool John Lennon Airport, and appropriate mitigation

2.3.6.1 Similar to the PSRs operated by NATS and Ronaldsway Airport above, a significant moderate adverse effect is predicted on PSR systems operated by the Liverpool John Lennon Airport (see Section 1.9.3 of Volume 4: Chapter 1: Aviation and radar (F4.1 F02)). The assessment identified that implementation of mitigation would reduce the impact to minor adverse, which is not significant in EIA terms.

2.3.6.2 Despite numerous attempts to engage with Liverpool John Lennon Airport (LJLA) on the predicted potential moderate impact on primary surveillance radar (PSR) following submission of the DCO application and through the Examination (as set out in Table 2.4 of the Applicant's Response to Examining Authority's Written Questions (REP5-080)), LJLA did not re-engage until 28 November 2024. Following this, the Applicant met with the airport on 5 and 17 December 2024. The Mona Offshore Wind Project could affect the airport PSR at LJLA based on the maximum design scenario and given that part of the Mona Array Area is within the area that LJLA provides an Air Traffic Service (ATS). LJLA have a 'windfarm resilient' radar and have been through the process of adapting it to mitigate for Burbo Bank offshore wind farm. LJLA is engaging with its radar supplier, Raytheon, to establish whether the Mona Array could affect its PSR and ATS provision.

2.3.6.3 However, the Raytheon assessment will not be completed before the end of the Mona Examination. Therefore, the Applicant has agreed the drafting of a mitigation requirement with LJLA, which is included as requirement 24 "Air traffic services at Liverpool John Lennon Airport" in the draft DCO (C1 F08) if LJLA's radar supplier Raytheon establish that mitigation would be necessary. It is notable that the mitigation requirements are nonetheless well understood and comprise software updates to the radar, limited flight trials and an update to the existing safety cases to the CAA. The Applicant confirms that it intends to negotiate a commercial side agreement 'without prejudice' for LJLA but that will not be resolved prior to the end of examination, which is why the Applicant submitted a DCO requirement (C1 F08).

2.3.7 Potential effects on the operation and capability of military radar systems including at Warton Aerodrome and RAF Valley

2.3.7.1 The Applicant has responded to relevant representations (PDA-008, paragraph RR-013.4) and written representations (REP2-078, paragraph REP1-054.2) from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO). The Applicant is progressing a SoCG with the DIO, most recently updated at Deadline 7 (S_D2_9 F03). The Applicant has provided an update on engagement with DIO and British Aerospace (BAE) Systems Warton at Deadline 6 in paragraph 15 of the Hearing Summary Onshore and Offshore Environmental Matters (ISH6) (REP6-083).

2.3.7.2 The Applicant accepts the potential for significant effects on the PSR at Warton Aerodrome operated by BAE Systems. However, the Applicant notes that the objection by DIO was only raised following application submission in June 2024 just prior to the start of the Examination. Since then, The Applicant has engaged directly with BAE Systems on the nature of the mitigation required to reduce the residual impact such that there is a no longer a significant effect. BAE Systems are in the process of implementing a new PSR at Warton Aerodrome which was initially expected to be online by the end of 2024 subject to site acceptance and flight trials. BAE Systems initially indicated that mitigation is likely to include as a minimum; optimisation of the radar for the project, flight trials and a safety case to the Civil Aviation Authority, however, due to the details of the radar being confined within a non-disclosure agreement (NDA), BAE Systems did not expect to be in a position to provide further information until mid-October 2024. However, due to certain conditions relating to commissioning of the new PSR radar not being met, BAE Systems have not been able to remove the NDA and

therefore the BAE Systems and the Applicant have not been able to engage on mitigation requirements.

2.3.7.3 Once details are available, the mitigation will be agreed with BAE Systems and provided to the DIO. However, as this will be after the end of the Examination, the Applicant has included requirement 23 “Warton Aerodrome Primary Surveillance Radar” in the draft DCO (C1 F08) to secure mitigation of effects. However, as recorded in the SoCG submitted at Deadline 7 (S_D2_9 F03), DIO have stated that they cannot agree to the wording of a requirement at this time and that their objection must remain in place until such time as technical and operational assessment have been completed on a mitigation proposal submitted to the DIO by the Applicant and that those assessments have confirmed that the mitigation is viable. However, until the NDA is lifted, the Applicant cannot engage with BAE Systems on the potential mitigation options, though the Applicant is confident that such mitigation options exist such as radar optimisation. The Applicant, the DIO and BAE Systems will continue to engage on this matter, which will also be progressed through the bpEnBW Morgan Offshore Wind Project: Generation Assets DCO application.

2.3.7.4 The DIO have confirmed that they are satisfied with the wording of Requirement 3 ‘aviation safety’ of the draft DCO (C1 F08), and this has also been recorded in the final SoCG submitted at Deadline 7 (S_D2_9 F03).

2.3.8 Aviation and defence effects, taking into account other operational and planned offshore wind farms in the Irish Sea

2.3.8.1 The Applicant believes that aviation and defence effects from other operational and planned projects will have already required mitigation from each individual project, and therefore no radar cumulative effect will be apparent.

2.3.9 Effects of the Proposed Development on Civil and Military Aviation and Defence Interests during construction, operation and decommissioning

2.3.9.1 The need for mitigation measures in respect of a number of civil and military aviation interests will ultimately be determined post-consent, once both the ongoing studies are completed and following any further consideration once the detailed design is known. The Applicant has included requirements within the draft DCO (C1 F08) that suitably secure that mitigation where it is required. With the implementation of that mitigation there will be no residual significant adverse effects on Civil and Military Aviation and Defence Interests arising from the Project during the construction, operations and maintenance or decommissioning phases.

2.4 Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

2.4.1 The effects of construction and operation of the Proposed Development on climate change

2.4.1.1 ES Volume 4: Chapter 2: Climate Change [F4.2 F02] presents the Applicant's assessment of emissions associated with the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the Mona Offshore Wind Project.

2.4.1.2 The assessment follows the IEMA's guidance in relation to the assessment of GHG emissions ('Assessing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Evaluating their Significance' (IEMA, 2022) and climate risk and resilience ('Climate Change Resilience & Adaptation' (IEMA, 2020)). GHG emissions from all phases of the Mona Offshore Wind Project (including the construction-phase emissions) were evaluated when determining the significance of effects. This 'full life cycle' approach is in line with national policy and recognises the climate change effect of GHG emissions.

2.4.1.3 The Applicant also submitted a technical note [S_Ex_1] in relation to the net effects of the Mona Offshore Wind Project on GHG emissions (see section 2.4.2 below for further details). This technical note results in no change to the assessment (presented in [F4.2 F02]), which is robust and in accordance with leading guidance.

2.4.1.4 Potential impacts on climate change, as a result GHG emissions associated with the Mona Offshore Wind Project were identified. During the construction phase, GHG impacts (primarily from the extraction of raw materials, manufacturing and the transportation of materials) were calculated to be approximately 2,024,311 tCO2e, causing a minor adverse effect. During the operations and maintenance phase, emissions would arise from activities associated with the maintenance of the Project. However, the Project would also generate renewable energy that would contribute to a reduction in the fossil fuels being used as a proportion of the UK's energy mix. When considering the avoided emissions, in addition to operations and maintenance emissions, the operational impact results in the order of approximately 2,296,671 tCO2e savings by 2064. This would result in a significant beneficial effect. When the construction phase is considered together with the operations and maintenance phase, the Mona Offshore Wind Project would be in a position of net avoided emissions from the 11th year of operation (carbon payback period). Over the lifetime of the Mona Offshore Wind Project, it would result in 129,466 tCO2e of avoided emissions.

2.4.2 The assessment of and the overall change in greenhouse gas emissions that may arise from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development

2.4.2.1 When considering the emissions across the whole lifetime of the Mona Offshore Wind Project (129,466 tCO2e of avoided emissions), in addition to the contribution toward the UK achieving its net zero goals and policy, and the high sensitivity of the climate as a receptor, the Mona Offshore Wind Project would have a beneficial net effect which would be significant in EIA terms.

2.4.2.2 The Mona Offshore Wind Project is in line with the NPS EN-3's principle of supporting new renewable and low carbon energy developments, in addition to their associated infrastructure, in order to contribute to reductions in GHG

emissions. In addition, the 1.5 GW capacity from the Mona Offshore Wind Project would contribute towards the UK Government's commitment for 50 GW capacity from offshore wind by 2030.

2.4.2.3 By facilitating the expansion of renewable energy supply, the Mona Offshore Wind Project would assist the UK Government target of achieving a fully decarbonised power system by 2035, and both the UK and Welsh Government's aim to become net zero by 2050.

2.4.2.4 Concerns were raised by Orsted Interested Parties (IPs) in their Wake Impact Report [REP5-120] and during the Issue Specific Hearing (ISH) 6: Onshore and Offshore Environmental Matters and the DCO. The Applicant provided initial feedback on the Wake Impact Report during the ISH6 (see ISH6 Hearing Summary [REP6-083]) and has submitted a technical note [S_Ex_1]. The technical note provides a calculation of the net effect of the Mona Offshore Wind Project on GHG emissions taking into account the potential wake effects from the Project on existing operation offshore wind farms. Net GHG emissions are calculated for three scenarios which area;

a. Business as usual: operational Ørsted IPs projects only, with no wake effects
b. Presence and operation of Mona Offshore Wind Project in line with the Maximum Design Scenario (MDS)
c. Presence and operation of Mona Offshore Wind Project with example mitigation for potential wake effects.

2.4.2.5 The technical note results in no change to the conclusions in the GHG assessment (presented in [F4.2 F02]).

2.4.3 The effectiveness of measures to mitigate the construction emissions

2.4.3.1 Measures adopted as part of the Mona Offshore Wind Project (e.g. application of anti-corrosion protective coatings and integrated scour protection to offshore equipment) have been presented in the Environmental Statement. These are considered to be industry standard design measures to ensure resilience of the Mona Offshore Wind Project.

2.4.3.2 In addition, the Applicant has provided a Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy (REP4-041) which sets out its approach to minimising emissions in line with the requirements of National Policy Statement (NPS) EN-1. It also sets out how whole life carbon emissions will be managed and reduced to ensure that best practice is followed. The note concluded that the greatest benefit to national GHG emissions reduction, and UK renewable energy production, is achieved through the presence of the Mona Offshore Wind Project (without mitigation), despite any potential losses experienced by the Ørsted IPs OWFs.

2.4.3.3 No concerns have been raised by the Examining Authority on the proposed measures to mitigate construction emissions.

2.5 Commercial Fisheries

2.5.1 Fishing activities and adequacy of mitigation measures and approach to monitoring.

2.5.1.1 Commercial fishing activities within the Commercial Fisheries Study Area are presented in Volume 2, Chapter 6: Commercial fisheries (APP-058). A more detailed description is also provided in Volume 6, Annex 6.1: Commercial Fisheries Technical Report (APP-097).

2.5.1.2 A wide range of information was used to characterise this activity as accurately as possible. This included collation and analysis of official data as well as detailed engagement and consultation with key commercial fisheries stakeholders active within the Commercial Fisheries Study Area. The high level of information provided by commercial fisheries stakeholders through this engagement process has facilitated a robust and accurate characterisation of commercial fishing activities in the Commercial Fisheries Study Area.

2.5.1.3 This characterisation exercise identified that a key commercial fisheries receptor group active in the Commercial Fisheries Study Area were scallop vessels operating out of Scottish West Coast ports. This group of vessels target queen scallops across a number of grounds within the Irish Sea region, including within specific parts of the Mona Array Area. Therefore, this fleet of vessels was defined as a specific receptor group within the impact assessment (alongside other receptor groups). This receptor group was predominantly represented by vessels operating out of Kirkcudbright on behalf of West Coast Sea Products Ltd.

2.5.1.4 In March 2022, a specific questionnaire was issued to commercial fisheries stakeholders. This was intended to obtain further feedback from fisheries stakeholders on their activity within the Mona Array Area. The information provided was then used in the characterisation exercise referred to above and also to develop initial ideas on potential array layouts that would seek to minimise impacts on existing fishing activity.

2.5.1.5 An initial assessment of potential impacts on commercial fisheries receptor groups was undertaken and presented in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), Volume 2, chapter 11: Commercial fisheries (published in April 2023). The PEIR assessment concluded a moderate adverse impact on the West Coast Scallop receptor group via 'Loss or Reduced Access to Fishing Grounds' during the operational phase (significant in EIA terms). Volume 2, Chapter 6: Commercial fisheries (APP-058) presents an updated assessment which takes into account a series of new mitigation measures which were developed based on further feedback from commercial fisheries stakeholders received via the statutory consultation on the PEIR undertaken in April/May 2023. Key mitigation measures include a Scallop Mitigation Zone (SMZ) – an area within the Array that would have no wind turbines or offshore substations located within it, North to South alignment of wind turbine rows, minimisation of cable protection, where possible, and minimum spacing between the wind turbines of 1,400 m (excluding allowance for micrositing).

2.5.1.6 Due to the development of the SMZ, combined with other measures, Volume 2, Chapter 6: Commercial fisheries (APP-058) concludes a minor adverse impact on the West Coast Scallop receptor group via 'Loss or Reduced Access to

Fishing Grounds' during the operational phase (not significant in EIA terms). A similar conclusion was reached with respect to cumulative impacts.

2.5.1.7 Key commercial fisheries mitigation measures are presented in the Outline Fisheries Liaison and Co-Existence Plan (FLCP) (J13 F03) which has been developed to date via ongoing engagement with key fisheries stakeholders. Post-consent, a final version of this Plan will need to be prepared by the Applicant and submitted to the licencing authority for review and approval, prior to marine works commencing.

2.5.1.8 The Applicant considers that the current mitigation measures set out within the Outline FLCP (J13 F03) are robust, implementable and will reduce impacts to an acceptable level in EIA terms. However, it is noted that there has been discussion between the Applicant and Interested Parties about the true efficacy of the proposed mitigation, in particular the SMZ (the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, Scottish White Fish Producers Association and West Coast Sea Products (REP1-075, REP1-076 and REP1-081)). This specifically relates to the requirement by the Applicant to include subsea cables within parts of the SMZ.

2.5.1.9 Whilst commitments have been made to bury these cables and minimise the use of cable protection as far as possible, commercial fisheries stakeholders have raised concerns on two particular aspects, based on their experience of scallop fishing in other operational wind farms: (1) initial cable burial may not be achieved due to ground conditions, resulting in a need for the use of external cable protection within the SMZ; and/or (2) even if initial burial is achieved, parts of these cables may become exposed over the lifetime of the project. In both these scenarios, commercial fisheries stakeholders claim fishing access will be restricted, thus reducing the efficacy of the SMZ.

2.5.1.10 In response to these concerns, the Applicant further amended wording in the Outline FLCP (J13 F03) related to cable burial at Deadline 3 in order to provide further reassurance that cable burial depths will take account of local seabed conditions, and that cable burial monitoring will suitably consider potential seabed change. The Applicant highlights that further submissions on this matter from key stakeholders have not been made, specifically that no responses were submitted to the Examining Authority's written questions 2 (ExQ2) Q2.5.6 on this matter. Therefore, the Applicant considers that the updates made to the Outline FLCP (J13 F03) have sufficiently addressed these concerns.

2.5.1.11 Even though no significant impacts (in EIA terms) have been predicted via the assessment, in recognition of concerns raised by commercial fisheries stakeholders about access to existing fishing grounds, the Applicant has committed to undertaking monitoring of fishing activity within the Mona Array Area in order to identify any changes to fishing activity within and around the Mona Array Area. Where any changes are identified, these will be discussed with commercial fisheries stakeholders. More specifically, annual reviews of Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data, I-VMS data (when available) and landings data will be undertaken for the first five years of the operations and maintenance phase. The results of annual reviews will be discussed with stakeholders through a commercial fisheries working group that is proposed to be established post-consent. This commitment is secured within the Outline FLCP (J13 F03).

2.5.1.12 Written representations from Commercial fisheries stakeholders (Scottish Fishermen's Federation, Scottish White Fish Producers Association and West Coast Sea Products (REP1-075, REP1-076 and REP1-081)) expressed

concerns regarding the potential for indirect effects on the queen scallop fishery resulting from changes to queen scallop densities. Additionally, the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture, Isle of Man Government, raised the need for a scallop monitoring programme through engagement on the SoCG with the Territorial Seas Committee (S_D1_11 F04) and requested that the monitoring should cover both king and queen scallop.

2.5.1.13 The Applicant notes that the potential for impacts on commercially important fish and shellfish resources has been assessed in section 6.10.5 of Volume 2, Chapter 6: Commercial fisheries (APP-058) and concluded that there will be no significant adverse effects (see further detail regarding ecological assessment in section 2.17 below). Nevertheless, the Applicant has committed to monitoring of scallop in and around the Mona Array Area on a voluntary and precautionary basis, and further detail on Scallop monitoring is presented in the Offshore In-Principle Monitoring Plan (J15 F03), the Outline FLCP (J13 F03) and in the Mitigation and monitoring schedule (J10 F08). As a result of the commitments to undertake scallop monitoring and other updates to the Outline FLCP (J13 F03), all outstanding matters related to commercial fisheries in the SoCG with the Territorial Seas Committee (S_D1_11 F04) are now resolved.

2.5.1.14 Submissions have been made by Bodorgan Marine Limited (BML) that state their view that in the design of its mitigation of commercial fisheries, the Applicant has failed to comply with key policy requirements in National Policy Statements (NPS) EN-1 and EN-2, the Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP) and has misunderstood the meaning of ‘co-existence’ and ‘co-location’; More specifically, BML claim that the Applicant has not given due consideration to the potential for co-location of aquaculture activities within the Mona Array Area, thus making the application non-compliant with a number of stated policy objectives.

2.5.1.15 The Applicant disagrees with this interpretation of the policies referenced by BML. The issue of “co-location” is intrinsically linked to that of “co-existence” (in fact, co-location is defined as a “sub-set” of co-existence within the WNMP) and the Applicant has developed the project to maximise the potential for co-existence with existing sea users, i.e. existing commercial fishing vessels (as witnessed by the key mitigation and design measures described above).

2.5.1.16 Even though this disagreement exists, the Applicant would be open to continued discussions with BML post-consent (should consent be granted), to learn more of their proposals and their strategy for engaging with key organisations such as The Crown Estate (TCE), NRW and existing commercial fisheries stakeholders who are active in this region.

2.5.1.17 As set out above, from the earliest stages of the development of the Mona Offshore Wind Project the Applicant has sought to engage with commercial fisheries groups to understand their activities in the area, and achieve successful co-existence. The Applicant has developed an industry-leading set of proposals intended to avoid long term disruption to the industry and that have mitigated potential impacts. The Secretary of State can and should conclude that the Applicant has minimised the potential impact on commercial fisheries interests and that any potential residual impacts will be limited.

2.6 Compulsory Acquisition and/ or Temporary Possession

2.6.1 The need for and the amount of land, rights and powers proposed to be subject to Compulsory Acquisition and/or Temporary Possession

2.6.1.1 The DCO seeks powers to compulsorily acquire land and rights (both temporary and permanent) that are required to carry out or to facilitate to the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the Mona Offshore Wind Project.

2.6.1.2 The Applicant has taken the cautious approach of seeking powers of CA (or the right to use) in respect of all plots of land required for the Mona Offshore Wind Project. This approach is supported by the relevant policy (DCLG) (Department for Communities and Local Government) Guidance related to the procedures for the CA of land 2013 paragraph 25) and needs to be maintained to ensure that it has the right to acquire the interests it needs in the whole of the order land in the event that an unidentified owner later asserts an interest in land which the Applicant believes it owns or has rights.

2.6.1.3 The relevant tests in s122 of the PA2008 are met as all the order land is either required for the Mona Offshore Wind project or is required to facilitate or is incidental to the Mona Offshore Wind Project. As explained at CAH1, necessary does not mean that the land is indispensable, but that it is necessary in the circumstances of the case. In other words, it is needed to deliver the scheme proposed. All the order land is needed to deliver the Mona Offshore Wind Project as proposed.

2.6.1.4 The Applicant is seeking TP over the majority of the Order Land to undertake the construction of the authorised development. Post-construction permanent rights/ restrictions would then be secured over the as built area of the cables. This has avoided the need to acquire land or rights over all the Order land which would have affected far greater areas than will be affected using the TP approach.

2.6.1.5 CA powers are only sought over plots at the Onshore Substation site where the nature of the development works and associated infrastructure and permanent landscaping and ecological mitigation and enhancement works involve a permanent change of land use and require the Applicant to have control of the land. Where possible, the Applicant has sought rights only, to allow the continued farming of the land.

2.6.1.6 The Applicant has followed a staged site selection and design iteration process from inception to the point of submission of the application for development consent to identify the most suitable locations and configuration when looking at site selection and alternatives. As detailed above in paragraphs 2.2.6 and 2.2.7, there were objections raised during examination by interested parties in relation to the onshore cable corridor and onshore substation. The Applicant has submitted robust evidence and justification of the Order Limits during the examination phase in both written and oral submissions to rebut the challenges made to land rights sought and the consideration of alternatives.

2.6.1.7

2.6.2 Effects on those impacted by Compulsory Acquisition and/or Temporary Possession

2.6.2.1 The Applicant and its agents have worked extensively with the land interests to seek to reach voluntary agreements and, as confirmed at CAH2, the Applicant and their appointed agent, will continue to do so, as it is the Applicant's preference and in the interest of all parties to reach agreement wherever possible. The Applicant understands the position of the landowner affected by the onshore substation site, the Executors of the Late Sir David Watkin Williams Wynn BT (the Cefn Estate), as presented by their agent and has noted their concerns in relation to a number of matters. The amount of land subject to freehold acquisition has been questioned with particular reference to the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP) and the need case for freehold acquisition of land within the Development Consent Order. Further concerns have been expressed in relation to the impact to the occupier of the land (Mr. AEM Owen and A Owen) and their farming business during construction and following completion of the works.

2.6.2.2 Extensive written and oral submissions on these matters have been submitted to the Examining Authority throughout the course of the Examination demonstrating the land is needed for the Onshore Substation and related works, including landscape and ecological mitigation. In the past few months, the engagement with the Cefn Estate has continued and substantive negotiations are now in progress. The Applicant will continue to engage with the representatives of the Cefn Estate in the hope to reach a voluntary agreement for the acquisition of land and rights required to deliver the project.

2.6.2.3 The Applicant understands the position of G Lloyd Evans & Sons as presented at CAH2 and through their agent and the NFU around the concerns to their dairy enterprise due to the land required for the installation of the onshore export cables. The Applicant will endeavour to continue to discuss accommodation works with Messrs Evans and their representative with the aim of reducing, where possible, the overall land take and financial impact to the business.

2.6.2.4 The Applicant understands the position of Elizabeth Wynne Wade, Griffith Wynne Parry, Harriet Mary Parry and Robert Wynne Parry as presented by their agent and has noted their concerns in relation to the cable routing and permanent rights sought for the cables and their protection. The Applicant understands that the principal driver for these objections is the impact of the rights sought on the development potential of the land holding. However, to date, no evidence of a planning consent or application, local plan allocation or application for candidate site status has been presented either directly to the Applicant or to the Examining Authority.

2.6.2.5 The Applicant continues to negotiate with the land interests affected by the Mona Offshore Wind Project in order to reach voluntary agreements wherever possible and a final update as regards the status of those negotiations is in the Land Rights Tracker submitted at Deadline 7. Specific responses have been made at Deadline 7 to the submissions of Stuart Neil, G Lloyd Evans & Sons, the Executors of the Late Sir David Watkin Williams-Wynn BT, Griff Parry on behalf of his clients Elizabeth Wynne Wade, Griffith Wynne Parry, Harriet Mary Parry, Robert Wynne Parry, and Eifion Bibby on behalf of his clients Jennings Building Civils and Engineering Limited, Mr. EW Roberts, and Mr AEM Owen & A Owen. The Applicant intends to continue negotiations with land interests after the

Examination with a view to signing option agreements with as many land interests as possible.

2.6.2.6 The Applicant has engaged with and responded to those landowners who have formally objected to powers being sought over their land through the Examination and outside that process. The Applicant submits that the objections raised do not undermine the Applicant's case made in the Statement of Reasons and by way of its specific responses in written and oral submissions.

2.6.3 Crown Land

2.6.3.1 The Applicant is in ongoing active discussions with The Crown Estate (TCE) in relation to the extent of ownership and rights held and the consent under Section 135 of the Planning Act 2008. The Applicant is hopeful that such consent will be forthcoming and will provide confirmation to the Examining Authority once it is in place.

2.6.4 Special Category Land

2.6.4.1 Special Category Land is identified on the Applicant's Special Category Land Plans (B7, F04). Special Category land has been identified at the beach foreshore with both temporary access and permanent rights being sought.

2.6.4.2 The Applicant considers that while there will be some temporary disruption to the use of Special Category land during construction, once the cables have been installed there will be no ongoing impact and the acquisition of the rights sought will not render the open space less advantageous than it is at present to its owner or the public.

2.6.4.3 The granting of rights or access over these areas would not interfere with the current use or interfere with any other party's rights as there is no proposal to extinguish any other party's right to use the beach. Therefore, no conflict is envisaged and when burdened with the order right, the land will be no less advantageous than it was before to the persons in whom it is vested, or other persons, if any, entitled to rights and the public, thereby engaging the exemption under s132(3) of the PA 2008.

2.6.5 The requirement for the powers sought and the need to establish a compelling case in the public interest

2.6.5.1 The Applicant considers that there is clearly a compelling case in the public interest for the CA powers needed for the Mona Offshore Wind Project to be granted. In accordance with paragraph 13 of the CA Guidance, the public benefits that would be delivered by the Mona Offshore Wind Project outweigh any private loss suffered by those whose land is to be acquired. It is also considered that there is clear evidence set out in the Statement of Reasons (D3, F04) that the public benefits of the Mona Offshore Wind Project will outweigh the private loss.

2.6.6 The position and/or effects of Statutory Undertakers and Protective Provisions and whether the tests of s127(2),(3),(5) and (6) and s138(4) of the PA2008 are satisfied

2.6.6.1 The Applicant is not intending to extinguish any rights or remove any apparatus belonging to any statutory undertakers (SUs). However, the Applicant needs to reserve the right to do so through the DCO in the event that there are interests that have not been identified so far thorough diligent inquiry. The exercise of such powers will be carried out in accordance with the protective provisions included in the DCO which set out constraints with a view to safeguarding the relevant statutory undertaker's interests. The Applicant therefore considers that the test set out in s138 of the PA2008 is satisfied.

2.6.7 The adequacy and security of funding for compensation

2.6.7.1 The Applicant's Funding Statement accords with Regulation 5(2)(h) of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedures) Regulations 2009 (the APFP Regulations) as it explains how the authorisation of CA is proposed to be funded.

2.6.7.2 Article [33] of the dDCO ensures that appropriate security, approved by the SoS, will be in place before any CA powers that could give rise to compensation are exercised.

2.6.8 Whether the proposals meet the requirements of PA2008 in all other respects

2.6.8.1 The Applicant considers that the Mona Offshore Wind Project meets all relevant CA requirements of the PA2008.

2.7 Draft Development Consent Order (dDCO)

2.7.1 The appropriateness of the Applicant's dDCO

2.7.1.1 The Draft DCO provides for all the necessary rights and powers for the delivery of the Project, including within the deemed marine licence (dML - Schedule 14) as explained in the Applicant's Explanatory Memorandum (REP5-008). In addition, the Draft DCO provides for suitable controls on those rights and powers within the Requirements (Schedule 2) and dML Conditions (Schedule 14, Part 2). The form of the Order has had regard to comparable precedent orders including other offshore wind farm DCOs and other recently consented DCOs (including as directed by the Examining Authority).

2.7.1.2 Throughout the pre-application phase and during the Examination, the Applicant has considered comments made by interested parties and the Examining Authority and made updates to the Draft DCO. In respect of changes made through the Examination, the full set can be seen in the All changes DCO (track changes) (S_D7_3) and as further detailed in the Schedule of Changes in Revision F08 of the draft Development Consent Order (S_PD_6 F06).

2.7.1.3 Where the Applicant has considered comments but has not been in a position to make the requested changes to the Draft DCO, the Applicant has set these out in the Schedule of outstanding DCO drafting points (S_D7_4).

2.7.2 Articles and Requirements within the dDCO

2.7.2.1 The Articles and Requirements of the DCO follow precedent, save for where otherwise stated in the Explanatory Memorandum (REP5-008) and where agreed specifically with stakeholders. There remains a small number of outstanding drafting points between the Applicant and Interested Parties with regards to the Articles and Requirement of the Draft DCO (see Schedule of outstanding DCO drafting points (S_D7_4)). Of those, the points are largely in connection with points of principle rather than detailed drafting and demonstrates the Applicant's efforts in narrowing the issues as much as possible. In respect of onshore matters, the relevant local authorities have agreed all drafting save for two outstanding points. Regarding offshore matters, Article 7 is the only remaining outstanding issue with the Natural Resources Wales Marine Licensing Team.

2.7.3 Protective Provisions

2.7.3.1 Schedule 10 contains the protective provisions which statutory undertakers can rely on.

2.7.3.2 The Applicant also confirms that the protective provisions included at Part 3, Part 4, Part 6 and Part 8 of the draft DCO (C1 F08) are agreed.

There are 3 statutory undertakers with whom Protective Provisions have not yet been agreed. These statutory undertakers are 1. The relevant statutory undertakers are 1. Wales and West Utilities, 2. National Grid Electricity Transmission Plc and 3. Awel y Môr. The Applicant acknowledges that the Mona Offshore Wind Project would impact upon each of these statutory undertakers but considers that these impacts would not be sufficiently significant to constitute 'serious detriment' within the meaning of section 127 of the Planning Act 2008 and furthermore, that both section 127 and section 138 of the Planning Act 2008 is satisfied given the inclusion of the Protective Provisions within Schedule 10 of the draft DCO. The Applicant will nonetheless continue to engage with these statutory undertakers in the post-Examination phase and provide an update on progress at the appropriate time. The Applicant refers to its Final Position Statement on Statutory Undertakers and Crown Land (S_D7_31) where further details are set out.

2.7.3.3 No additional representations have been made by other statutory undertakers with regards to this application and any other statutory undertakers will be able to rely on Part 1 and Part 2 of Schedule 10 for protection.

2.7.4 Deemed Marine Licence (generation assets) including interaction with the marine licence for transmission assets.

2.7.4.1 As set out in the Marine Licence Principles Document (J9 F06), the Applicant has included a deemed marine licence in respect of the generation assets for the Project and is seeking a separate consent for the transmission assets of the Project from Natural Resources Wales (NRW). For the avoidance of doubt, the Applicant does not have control over the drafting of the standalone (NRW) marine licence which is entirely within NRW's Marine Licensing Team's (the Licensing Authority) discretion, however the Applicant has set out principles to

assist in the drafting of the separate marine licence in order to align with the DCO and dML (J9 F06). The Applicant has been engaged with the Licensing Authority on the drafting of the deemed marine licence at Schedule 14 of the Draft DCO. There remains a small number of outstanding drafting points between the Applicant and the Licensing Authority (see Schedule of outstanding DCO drafting points (S_D7_4)). This is limited to the imposition of timescales on the Licensing Authority to respond to applications for the discharge of requirements. All other matters are agreed.

2.8 Flood Risk and Water Environment

2.8.1 Compliance with the Water Framework Directive (WFD)

2.8.1.1 The Applicant undertook a Water Framework Directive (WFD) assessment within Volume 7, Annex 2.4: Water Framework Directive surface water and groundwater assessment (APP-120) for the onshore elements of the Project. Volume 6, Annex 2.2: Water Framework Directive Coastal Waters Assessment (APP-088) also assessed the potential impact of the Project on WFD transitional and coastal receptors out to 1 nm. Both assessments concluded that the Mona Offshore Wind Project is compliant with the requirements of the WFD, and would not lead to any risk to the objectives for the relevant water bodies nor compromise the protected area objectives.

2.8.1.2 Queries were raised by NRW in their written representations (RR-011), and by CCBC and DCC in the Local Impact Report (REP1-049), regarding the baseline fluvial geomorphology conditions along the Onshore Cable Corridor, as well as the Applicant's assessments of impacts on the physical form and natural sediment processes of rivers from the installation of the onshore export cable and haul road crossings.

2.8.1.3 The Applicant responded to these concerns by preparing a Geomorphology Clarification Note (REP4-040) to provide a description of the baseline geomorphology conditions of watercourses crossed by the Onshore Cable Corridor based on information within the Environmental Statement and supplemented with additional observations from a site visit. The Applicant also arranged a meeting with NRW and representatives of CCBC and DCC on 9 October 2024 to discuss the geomorphology baseline and watercourse crossing methodologies. In response, NRW has confirmed through their written submission at Deadline 5 (REP5-098) that they are satisfied with the content of this note and that they agree with the conclusions of the WFD assessments, as reflected in the NRW Onshore and Offshore Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) (S_D1_13 F03, S_D1_13 F03). The SoCGs with CCBC and DCC (S_D3_23 F04, S_D3_22 F04) were similarly subsequently amended to reflect that all matters are agreed in respect of WFD compliance.

2.8.1.4 As a result, all issues pertaining to compliance with the WFD have been addressed prior to the close of the Examination. The Examining Authority can therefore have confidence that the Project is compliant with the objectives of the WFD and will not result in the deterioration in status of any relevant WFD waterbodies.

2.8.2 Surface watercourses and crossings

2.8.2.1 The method that will be used to cross each surface watercourse along the Onshore Cable Corridor is set out in the Onshore Crossing Schedule (F.5.4.3 F04). In addition to the watercourse crossings, the installation of the onshore export cable may also require the temporary crossings where the haul road intersects with ditches and small watercourses. The design of the watercourse crossings at each location will be in accordance with the principles set out in the Outline Onshore Construction Method Statement (J26.15 F04) which includes a commitment to follow the approach set out in the National Culverts Study (NRW, 2022). The Outline Onshore Construction Method Statement (J26.15 F04) forms part of the Outline Code of Construction Practice (J26 F05), which is secured in Schedule 2, Requirement 9 of the Draft Development Consent Order (DCO) (C1 F08).

2.8.2.2 Detailed method statements for the watercourse crossings will be provided in the Onshore Construction Method Statement and will be agreed with the relevant planning authority (DCC and/or CCBC) following consultation with NRW before works can commence. This approach to mitigation has been agreed with NRW, CCBC and DCC as evidenced within the respective SoCGs (S_D1_13 F03, S_D3_23 F04, S_D3_22 F04).

2.8.2.3 The Applicant seeks to disapply the Land Drainage Act 1991 for works to be undertaken on Ordinary Watercourses. Both CCBC and DCC have agreed and this position is reflected in the respective SoCGs (S_D1_13 F03, S_D3_23 F04, S_D3_22 F04). [

2.8.2.4 A site-specific Flood Consequences Assessment (F7.2.1) in accordance with section 5.7 of the NPS EN-1, PPW and TAN 15 has been undertaken for the Mona Onshore Development Area. The majority of the Mona Onshore Development Area is located within Flood Zone 1, with a negligible to low risk of flooding from all assessed sources. Areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3 and with a medium to high risk of flooding are present along the mean high water line at the coast.

2.8.2.5 Areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3 are further split into Development Advice Map Zones C1 and C2, and the Justification Test has been applied to the portion of the Mona Onshore Development Area within Zone C2. In terms of the criteria within TAN 15, the development proposals are considered to meet requirements and satisfy the justification test. Owing to low flood risk, the remainder of the Mona Onshore Development Area is not subject to the Justification Test.

2.9 Geology, Hydrogeology and Ground Conditions

2.9.1 Potential impacts on the Llanddulas and Gwrych Castle Wood SSSI

2.9.1.1 ES Volume 3, Chapter 1: Geology, Hydrogeology and Ground Conditions [APP-064] presents the Applicant's assessment of effects on geological and hydrogeological resources. The Llanddulas Limestone and Gwrych Castle Wood SSSI is located within the Onshore Cable Corridor. The SSSI is of national importance and is primarily designated for its ecological habitats and protected species, however it also includes features of geological and geomorphology interest. To avoid direct impacts on the SSSI, the Mona Offshore Wind Project

has committed to install the onshore export cable using trenchless techniques (see Onshore Crossing Schedule (F.5.4.3 F04). A method statement for the crossing will be prepared in discussion with NRW and will form part of the detailed Onshore Construction Method Statement. The Onshore Construction Method Statement forms part of the Code of Construction Practice, which is secured in Requirement 9 of the draft DCO (C1 F08) and will be approved by CCBC.

2.9.1.2 The implementation of the method statement will avoid direct impacts on the SSSI. The assessment concludes that effects will be of minor adverse significance which is not significant in EIA terms. No concerns were raised during the Examination and the conclusion of the assessment was agreed with NRW within the SoCG (S_D1_13 F03).

2.9.2 Potential impacts on aquifers, private and commercial groundwater supply sources

2.9.2.1 The hydrogeological baseline within the Mona Order Limits is characterised within section 1.3.5 of Volume 3, Chapter 1: Geology, Hydrogeology and Ground Conditions (F3.1 F02). The majority of the Onshore Cable Corridor and Onshore Substation is underlain by glacial till, of variable thickness.

2.9.2.2 The assessment of construction activities (such as dewatering) concluded the effects will be of minor adverse significance.

2.9.2.3 No pathways are expected to be created where significant depths of till overlay the bedrock and therefore, no change is expected to groundwater in the Principal Aquifer and Secondary A Aquifer. Localised pathways may occur where the superficial till deposits are thinner, however the effect will be of minor adverse significance.

2.9.2.4 The Applicant has assessed the risk that groundwater supply sources (licensed and private) may be directly affected by the construction activities of the Mona Offshore Wind Project (Volume 7, Annex 1.2: Hydrogeological Risk Assessment for Groundwater Supply Sources [APP-117]). With the implementation of measures set out in the Outline Code of Construction Practice (J26 F06) the significance of effect to private groundwater supply sources is predicted to be minor adverse.

2.9.2.5 No concerns were raised by NRW during the Examination regarding the conclusion of the Applicant's assessment Volume 3, Chapter 1: Geology, Hydrogeology and Ground Conditions [F3.1 F02], as evidenced within the SoCG (S_D1_13 F03)

2.9.2.6 In its Relevant Representation (RR-009), CCBC highlighted the need for further assessment of private water supplies. The Applicant confirmed that the mitigation measures for private water supplies are set out in the Outline Code of Construction Practice (J26 F06). Subsequently, in the Local Impact Report submitted by CCBC and DCC (REP1-049) the local authorities confirmed that the approach to the assessment in Volume 7, Annex 1.2: Groundwater sources of supply – hydrogeological risk assessment [APP-116] is appropriately conservative and there is a commitment to undertake mitigation (in accordance with the hierarchy set out in the Outline Code of Construction Practice (J26 F06)) at a future date. This agreement is captured in the SoCG (S_D3_23 F04, S_D3_22 F04).

2.9.2.7 The Tan-y-Mynydd Trout Fishery have raised concerns regarding potential impacts to groundwater dependant features at the Trout Fishery [REP1-080]. In response, the Applicant prepared a Hydrogeological Risk Assessment (REP6-087) to evaluate the risk to the groundwater supply source that feeds the spring supporting the ponds. The Hydrogeological Risk Assessment concluded that the construction effects from the Mona Offshore Wind Project represented a low risk to the spring in terms of its water quality and flow. The Applicant proposed a monitoring strategy for the construction phase to demonstrate that the local impact of construction activities on the groundwater environment within the Onshore Cable Corridor is, as predicted, small and temporary; and to confirm the absence of significant change at the Tan-y-Mynydd Trout Fishery itself. The monitoring strategy is secured through the Outline Construction Surface Water and Drainage Management Plan (REP6-046) as part of the Outline Code of Construction Practice (J26 F06), see Schedule 2, Requirement 9(1)(b) of the Draft DCO (C1 F08).

2.9.3 The appropriateness of the proposed mitigations

2.9.3.1 Measures to mitigate impacts to groundwater are set out in the Outline CoCP (J26 F06) and the following management plans:

- Outline Spillage and Emergency Response Plan (REP3-036)
- Outline Construction Surface Water and Drainage Management Plan (REP6-046)

2.9.3.2 These measures include procedures to minimise the risk of groundwater pollution from spills and storage or fuels and oil. The Applicant has also committed to undertake baseline monitoring of groundwater flow and quality at agreed locations to inform hydrogeological risk assessments.

2.9.3.3 Measures to mitigate the risk to private groundwater supply sources will be developed in accordance with the hierarchy set out in paragraphs 1.10.4.8 and 1.10.4.9 of the Outline CoCP (J26 F06).

2.9.3.4 With the exception of the comments made with regard to private water supplies (see section 2.9.2), no concerns were raised during the Examination regarding the appropriateness of the proposed mitigation for geology, hydrogeology and ground conditions. This is captured in the SoCG with NRW, CCBC and DCC respectively (S_D1_13 F03, S_D3_23 F04, S_D3_22 F04).

2.10 Habitats Regulations Assessment

2.10.1 Adequacy of data and information on which the HRA would be based

2.10.1.1 The Applicant's Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been based on data gathered from a number of sources, including site-specific surveys, and modelling conducted for the Project as well as information on European sites gathered from various sources including NRW, the JNCC, Natural England and NatureScot. This data has been used to provide a comprehensive baseline for each of the relevant European sites by detailing the features, and their condition, for each site to ensure a robust appropriate assessment can be conducted. As detailed in the final SoCGs between the Applicant and NRW (A) (S_D1_12 F03)

and the JNCC (S_D1_15 F03), all parties are in agreement with the baseline characterisation for all receptors included in the HRA.

2.10.1.2 Concerns were raised by the Ørsted Interested Parties (IPs) in their Deadline 3 submission (REP3-104) relating to the baseline for marine mammals which the Applicant provided a response to at Deadline 4 (REP4-053) explaining that it had been agreed with the SNCBs that the Welsh Marine Mammal Atlas represented the most precautionary approach for harbour porpoise and bottlenose dolphin as the densities were higher compared to the site-specific survey estimates.

2.10.1.3 The data and information on which the HRA is based is comprehensive and adequate and can be relied on by the Secretary of State in their own HRA to be undertaken when determining the application.

2.10.2 Screening of protected sites, likely significant effects, and those taken forward for assessment

2.10.2.1 The Applicant's screening of European sites for the potential for likely significant effects (LSE) as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project has followed the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Offshore Habitats Regulations which transpose the European Union's (EU) Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and the Wild Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) in national law). It has also followed the Joint Defra, Welsh Government, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) guidance (2021) and is presented in the HRA Stage 1 Screening Report (E1.4 F03).

2.10.2.2 An initial screening exercise was undertaken to identify the relevant European sites requiring consideration of the potential for Likely Significant Effects (LSE). European sites for each receptor group were screened in based on three criteria: 1) direct overlap with the Mona Offshore Wind Project Boundary; 2) overlap of a mobile species range with the Mona Offshore Wind Project Boundary; and 3) European sites with relevant features within potential Zone of Influence (ZoI) associated with the Mona Offshore Wind Project. The final Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) between the Applicant and both NRW (A) (S_D1_12 F03) and the JNCC (S_D1_15 F03) confirms that all parties agree with the approach to identification of sites and features in the HRA Stage 1 Screening Report (E1.4 F03).

2.10.2.3 The European sites identified through the initial screening process were taken forward for determination of LSE as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project. The Applicant adopted a matrix approach in the HRA Stage 1 Screening Report (E1.4 F03) which resulted in 43 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) being taken forward for consideration in the HRA Stage 2 Information to Support an Appropriate Assessment (ISAA) Part 2 – SAC assessments (E1.2 F02) and 36 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) being taken forward for consideration in the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 3 – SPAs and Ramsar sites Assessments (E1.3 F03).

2.10.2.4 Concerns were raised by the Ørsted IPs in their Deadline 3 submission (REP3-104) regarding the Applicant's conclusion of no LSE from vessel collision risk for marine mammals which the Applicant provided a response to at Deadline 4 (REP4-053). In their response to the ExAQ1s, NRW (A) flagged the potential for

an in-combination contribution to LSE for collision risk (REP3-093) which was later retracted in NRW (A)'s response to the ExA's RIES (REP5-099). The Final SoCG between the Applicant and NRW (A) (S_D1_12 F03) and the JNCC (S_D1_15 F03) confirms that both parties agree with the Applicant's screening of impacts for marine mammals (and diadromous fish and Annex I habitats) in the HRA Stage 1 Screening Report (E1.4 F03), and that the approach used for determining LSE on European is appropriate and that all the relevant sites have been identified.

2.10.2.5 Extensive written submissions relating to the offshore ornithology LSE screening have been submitted by the Applicant to the ExA throughout the course of the examination, including an updated HRA Stage 1 Screening Report (E1.4 F03) which was submitted by the Applicant at Deadline 2. The Final SoCG between the Applicant and NRW (A) (S_D1_12 F03) and the JNCC (S_D1_15 F03) confirms that both parties agree with the Applicant's screening of impacts for offshore ornithology in the updated HRA Stage 1 Screening Report (E1.4 F03), and that the approach used for determining LSE on European is appropriate and that all the relevant sites have been identified.

2.10.2.6 Despite agreement with the SNCBs, disagreement remains with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Cymru, specifically in relation to Manx shearwater and the approach to collision risk assessment methodology for this species. The RSPB Cymru do not believe that the collision risk assessment for Manx shearwater accounts for the potential attraction to the turbines due to the safety (navigation and aviation) lighting. As set out by the Applicant, there is no empirical evidence for attraction to lighting on turbines. Further, the RSPB Cymru's evidence is focussed on lighthouses, which is an inappropriate example for comparison, as safety lighting is much less intense than the lighting from lighthouses. Neither NRW (A) nor the JNCC share this concern and both parties agreed that the assessment of Manx shearwater was appropriate (as detailed in both parties' response to the Examiners Question 1; REP3-084 and REP3-093). The Applicant provided Further Context to the RSPB Cymru Statement of Common Ground (S_D6_11) at Deadline 6. The RSPB Cymru's concerns are unsubstantiated and should be dismissed by the Examining Authority and Secretary of State in determining this application. For completeness, the Applicant would highlight that no SPA designated for Manx shearwater was screened out of assessment within the ISAA, as the Applicant also presented a displacement assessment, which screened in all sites (Table 1.11 of HRA Part Three: Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites Assessments Annex 1.3.1 (E1.3.1)).

2.10.3 Likelihood of adverse impact on the integrity of habitat sites including information to assess a potential derogation

2.10.3.1 The Applicant provided an HRA Stage 2 ISAA in relation to the implications of the Mona Offshore Wind Project on the integrity of European sites which was split into three parts: HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part One: Introduction and Background (E1.1 F02); HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part Two: SAC Assessments (E1.2 F02); and HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part Three: SPAs and Ramsar sites Assessments (E1.3 F03). At Deadline 7, the Applicant also submitted Assessment of proposed Ramsar Sites within the Isle of Man (E1.3.2) to allow the Secretary of State to complete an appropriate assessment on these sites if it is determined one is required.

2.10.3.2 As set out in more detail below, the HRA Stage 2 ISAA concludes that the Mona Offshore Wind Project would not have any adverse effect on the integrity of a European site either alone or in-combination with other projects and plans. No HRA derogation case is required. Both NRW and the JNCC, as the relevant statutory nature conservation bodies, agree with this conclusion.

2.10.4 Annex I habitats (offshore and coastal)

2.10.4.1 The HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 2 – SAC assessments (E1.2 F02) presents the Applicant's assessment of the potential for adverse effects on the integrity (AEoI) of European sites with Annex I habitats (offshore and coastal) features as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone and in-combination with other plans and projects. A single European site with Annex I habitats (offshore and coastal) features, the Menai Strait and Conwy Bay/Y Fenai a Bae Conwy SAC, was screened into the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 2 – SAC assessments (E1.2 F02). This site was assessed to determine if the direct and indirect impacts during the construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the Mona Offshore Wind Project would undermine the achievement of its conservation objectives.

2.10.4.2 The assessments presented in the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 2 – SAC assessments (E1.2 F02) concluded that there would be no AEoI of the Menai Strait and Conwy Bay/Y Fenai a Bae Conwy SAC as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

2.10.4.3 As detailed in the Final SoCG (S_D1_12 F03), the Applicant and NRW (A) are agreed on the assessment and conclusion of the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 2 – SAC assessments (E1.2 F02) that, provided that the mitigations measure outlined are adhered to, the Mona Offshore Wind Project will not have an AEoI on this site and therefore will not undermine the conservation objectives of the Annex I habitats (offshore and coastal) designated features of the Menai Strait and Conwy Bay/Y Fenai a Bae Conwy SAC alone or in combination with other projects and plans.

2.10.5 Annex II diadromous fish species

2.10.5.1 The HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 2 – SAC assessments (E1.2 F02) presents the Applicant's assessment of the potential for an AEoI for European sites with Annex II diadromous fish features, as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone and in-combination with other plans and projects. Nine European sites with Annex II diadromous fish features were screened into the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 2 – SAC assessments (E1.2 F02) (Dee Estuary/Aber Dyfrdwy SAC; River Dee and Bala Lake/Afon Dyfrdwy a Llyn Tegid SAC; River Ehen SAC; River Eden SAC; Afon Gwyrfai a Llyn Cwellyn SAC; River Kent SAC; River Derwent and Bassenthwaite Lake SAC; Solway Firth SAC; and River Bladnoch SAC). These sites were assessed to determine if the direct and indirect impacts during the construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the Mona Offshore Wind Project would undermine the achievement of their conservation objectives.

2.10.5.2 The assessments presented in the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 2 – SAC assessments (E1.2 F02) concluded that there would be no AEoI on any of the European sites with Annex II diadromous fish features as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

The Assessment of proposed Ramsar Sites within the Isle of Man (E1.3.2 F02) also concluded that, for all fish features of the pRamsars taken forward for full assessment, no AEoI was predicted as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

2.10.5.3 The Final SoCG between the Applicant and NRW (A) (S_D1_12 F03) demonstrates that NRW (A) are in agreement with the assessment and conclusions of the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 2 – SAC assessments (E1.2 F02) for European sites within NRW (A)'s remit.

2.10.6 Annex II marine mammals

2.10.6.1 The HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 2 – SAC assessments (E1.2 F02) presents the Applicant's assessment of the potential for AEoI for European sites with Annex II marine mammal features, as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone and in-combination with other plans and projects. A total of 33 European sites with Annex II marine mammal features were screened into the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 2 – SAC assessments (E1.2 F02). These sites were assessed to determine if the direct and indirect impacts during the construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the Mona Offshore Wind Project would undermine the achievement of their conservation objectives.

2.10.6.2 The assessments presented in the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 2 – SAC assessments (E1.2 F02) concluded that there would be no AEoI for any of the European sites with Annex II marine mammal features as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. The Assessment of proposed Ramsar Sites within the Isle of Man (E1.3.2 F02) also concluded that, for all marine mammal features of the pRamsars taken forward for full assessment, no AEoI was predicted as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

2.10.6.3 As outlined in the Final SoCGs both NRW (A) (S_D1_12 F03) and JNCC (S_D1_15 F03) agree with the Applicant's conclusions in the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 2 – SAC assessments (E1.2 F02). In the case of the JNCC, this agreement has been reached taking into consideration the Applicant's commitment to the removal of high order clearance from the Draft DCO (C1 F08) and providing the Underwater Sound Management Strategy (UWSMS) and Marine Mammal Mitigation Protocol (MMMP) are secured in the consent which the Applicant confirms is the case (Schedule 14 of the Draft DCO (C1 F08)). See Section 2.17.3 for further information on the Applicant's closing statement with respect to the inclusion of UXO clearance in the DCO.

2.10.7 Offshore ornithology

2.10.7.1 The HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 3 – SPA and Ramsar site Assessments (E1.3 F03) presents the Applicant's assessment of the potential for AEoI for European sites with offshore ornithology features, as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone and in-combination with other plans and projects. A total of 36 European sites with offshore ornithology features were screened into the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 3 – SPA and Ramsar site Assessments (E1.3 F03). These sites were assessed to determine if the direct and indirect impacts during the construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the Mona Offshore Wind Project would undermine the achievement of their conservation objectives.

2.10.7.2 The Applicant has submitted extensive written submissions into Examination on offshore ornithological matters in regard to the offshore ornithological assessments in the HRA. These documents provided the SNCBs with additional information or additional clarity to support the Applicant's conclusions of no AEoI on all sites and species. The key amendments made with regards to offshore ornithological matter between the application documents and the Deadline 7 documents are:

- additional work undertaken around gap-filling older projects submitted during examination within Offshore Ornithology Cumulative Effects Assessment and In-combination Gap-filling Historical Projects Technical Note (S_D3_12) and the inclusion of this information within the in-combination assessments;
- precautionary consideration of age-class proportions;
- provision of full in-combination tables for each species for the entire year; and
- additional clarity on where data had been taken from for other plans and projects.

2.10.7.3 The amalgamation of all these amendments has resulted in updates to the following three documents at Deadline 7:

- HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 3 – SPA and Ramsar site Assessments (E1.3 F03) provides the ExA with the Applicant's approach to the HRA. The Applicant maintains that providing a single estimate of impact which is in line with previous offshore wind farm applications and supported by evidence is a pragmatic and precautionary approach to understanding and assessing the risk to the sites and species. The SNCBs do not agree with using a single estimate for the impacts and therefore the Applicant has provided an Annex for the SNBCs (listed in bullet 3 below).
- HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 3 – SPA and Ramsar site Assessments: Annex 1.3.1 (E1.3.1 F01) provides a range-based approach to the screening and ISAA. This document is in line with the SNCBs advice as to which displacement and mortality ranges to use and to screen sites into Stage 2 of the HRA using the upper confidence interval of the collision estimates. The SNCBs stated the conclusions would not be based on worst-case scenarios, but nonetheless that they should be assessed.
- HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 3 – SPA and Ramsar site Assessments: Annex 1.3.2 (E1.3.2 F01) provides an assessment of the pRamsar sites located within the Isle of Man.

2.10.7.4 Within these assessment documents a wide range of impact scenarios have been fully assessed, and under all of the potential scenarios (included the SNCBs worst-case scenarios for each species) it was concluded that the Mona Offshore Wind Project acting alone or in-combination with other plans and projects would not lead to an AEoI on any of the sites and species considered. The provision of a wide range of potential impact scenarios has been provided so that the SNCBs (and ExA) can choose the most appropriate impact on which to base their advice. The Applicant maintains that what is presented within the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 3 – SPA and Ramsar site Assessments (E1.3 F03) provides a robust estimate of the impacts.

2.10.7.5 The SoCGs between the Applicant and NRW (A) (S_D1_12 F03) and JNCC (S_D1_15 F03) demonstrates that both parties are in agreement with these conclusions within the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part 3 – SPA and Ramsar site Assessments (E1.3 F03) that there will be no AEoI for SPAs designated for offshore ornithology features.

2.10.7.6 Despite agreement with the SNCBs, disagreement remains with the RSPB Cymru, specifically in relation to the conclusions of the collision impacts and distributional change impacts arising from the project alone and in combination with other projects for the Manx shearwater features of the Copeland Islands SPA, the Irish Sea Front SPA, Rum SPA, St Kilda SPA, Glannau Aberdaron ac Ynys Enlli/Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey Island SPA and the Skomer, Skokholm and the Seas off Pembrokeshire/Sgomer, Sgogwm a Moroedd Penfro SPA. The Applicant has provided detailed commentary on its position with the RSPB Cymru (S_D6_11) which provides the Applicant's evidence to maintain its conclusions of no AEoI.
It is respectfully submitted that the position of the Applicant and SNCBs should be preferred to that of the RSPB Cymru and the Secretary of State can and should conclude that there will be no AEoI for SPAs designated for offshore ornithology features.

2.10.8 Summary

2.10.8.1 The information presented within the ISAA for the Mona Offshore Wind Project, together with information provided through the Examination, sets out a robust assessment of the potential impacts on European sites. This concludes that the Mona Offshore Wind Project will not result in an AEoI for any of the identified European sites, either alone or in-combination with other projects and plans, and therefore an HRA derogation case is not required. Both NRW and the JNCC agree with these conclusions. The Secretary of State can rely on the information presented in the ISAA in concluding that AEoI can be ruled out.

2.11 Historic Environment

2.11.1 The effects on the onshore historic environment including designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings

2.11.1.1 The likely effects on all aspects of the onshore historic environment are set out in ES Volume 3, Chapter 5: Historic Environment [APP-068].

2.11.1.2 The potential for permanent, direct effects to onshore archaeology was identified during the construction phase. Following the implementation of mitigation measures, through completion of an agreed programme of fieldwork and preservation by record; the resulting residual effects are not significant in EIA terms. No further effects to buried onshore archaeology are anticipated during the operation or decommissioning phases.

2.11.1.3 The potential for indirect effects to occur to the significance of onshore historic assets through change within their setting has also been considered. No significant effects are predicted to occur as a result of the onshore infrastructure.

2.11.1.4 Potential indirect effects to designated historic assets arising from the presence of the wind turbines during the operational phase were assessed and included

impacts to highly designated assets such as one Registered Historic Landscape, two Grade II* Registered Parks and Gardens, one Grade II Registered Park and Garden, one Grade I listed building and three Grade II* listed buildings. In each case the assessed level of cumulative effect was moderate adverse, with the greater contribution to this adverse effect being from the consented Awel y Môr offshore wind farm.

2.11.1.5 There are no outstanding areas of disagreement with statutory consultees from a direct effects or indirect effects perspective. This is reflected in the SoCGs with Heneb: Clwyd Powys (S_D7_27), Heneb: Gwynedd (S_D7_28) and Cadw (REP6-074).

2.11.1 Effects on the intertidal and offshore historic environment

2.11.1.1 A walkover survey of the intertidal area of the Mona Onshore Development Area was undertaken and the results are presented within Volume 7, Annex 5.4: Intertidal Survey Report [APP-147]. The survey did not identify any areas of peat or similar organic material outcropping on the surface within the intertidal area.

2.11.1.2 A geoarchaeological technical report was prepared which examined the available geoarchaeological and palaeoenvironmental data for the Mona Landfall area. The results of this work are presented as an appendix within Volume 7, Annex 5.4: Intertidal Survey Report [APP-147]. The geoarchaeological technical report found there is no evidence for the presence of peat or similar deposits within the Mona Landfall area, therefore there are no likely effects on such deposits.

2.11.1.3 Volume 2, Chapter 9: Marine Archaeology (APP-061) presents the Applicant's assessment of the potential effects on marine archaeology as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project. Specifically, it considers the potential impact of the Mona Offshore Wind Project seawards of Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS) during the construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases. The assessment drew upon information contained within Volume 6, Annex 9.1: Marine Archaeology Technical Report (APP-113), which included an archaeological assessment of site-specific geophysical and geotechnical survey data as well as a desk-based assessment.

2.11.1.4 The assessment concluded that any effects on marine archaeological receptors would be of minor adverse or negligible significance. Overall, therefore, it was concluded that there will be no significant adverse effects on marine archaeology arising from the Mona Offshore Wind Project during the construction, operation and maintenance or decommissioning phases. The Examining Authority raised no queries on this assessment or conclusions during Examination.

2.11.2 The effects on archaeological remains and whether further investigation is required to understand potential significant deposits

2.11.2.1 An Outline Onshore Written Scheme of Investigation has been prepared by the Applicant [J23 F03]. This sets out the general approach to further fieldwork and reporting to be undertaken under Requirement 11 of the DCO [C1 F08]. The likely effects on buried archaeological remains and deposits of geoarchaeological and palaeoenvironmental interest will not be significant.

2.11.2.2 The key mitigation measures relevant to marine archaeology are set out in the Outline Offshore Written Scheme of Investigation and Protocol for Archaeological Discoveries (REP2-032). The mitigation measures are secured through the production of a post-consent Offshore Written Scheme of Investigation and Protocol for Archaeological Discoveries as required by the deemed marine licence in the draft Development Consent Order (REP6-016; Schedule 14, Condition 18(f)).

2.11.2.3 Following updates to the Outline Offshore Written Scheme of Investigation and Protocol for Archaeological Discoveries at Deadline 2 (REP2-032), the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) and Cadw have confirmed that the measures are appropriate (REP6-074).

2.11.3 Adequacy of mitigation measures and monitoring

2.11.3.1 The Outline Onshore Written Scheme of Investigation [J23 F03] has been agreed with Heneb: Clwyd-Powys and Heneb: Gwynedd who provide archaeological advice to the relevant local planning authorities. This agreement is set out in the Statements of Common Ground established with the relevant components of Heneb [Clwyd-Powys: S_D7_27 and Gwynedd: S_D7_28).

2.11.3.2 The key mitigation measures relevant to marine archaeology are set out in the Outline Offshore Written Scheme of Investigation and Protocol for Archaeological Discoveries (REP2-032). The mitigation measures are secured through the production of a post-consent Offshore Written Scheme of Investigation and Protocol for Archaeological Discoveries as required by the deemed marine licence in the draft Development Consent Order (REP6-016; Schedule 14, Condition 18(f)).

2.11.3.3 Following minor updates to the Outline Offshore Written Scheme of Investigation and Protocol for Archaeological Discoveries at Deadline 2 (REP2-032), the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) and Cadw have confirmed that the measures are appropriate (REP6-074).

2.12 Land Use

2.12.1 Effects on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land

2.12.1.1 Approximately 11.9 ha of BMV land would be permanently lost as a result of the construction of the Onshore Substation and associated earthworks, 1.5 ha of this land is of Subgrade 3a and 10.4 ha is of Subgrade 3b. In addition, a further >0.1 ha would be lost to allow for link boxes to be constructed. Over 20 ha of BMV will temporarily impacted by the construction of the onshore elements of the project.

2.12.1.2 Through their written representation, Welsh Government (WG) (REP1-051) requested additional information in order for the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey data and assessment of ALC grades collected by the Applicant to be verified. The soil survey data technical report (REP5-014) was updated to provide these clarifications. The landowner at the onshore substation questioned the validity of the ALC survey data (AS-025) but following further discussion with

WG and the provision of the requested information, WG confirmed the verification of the ALC survey work undertaken by the Applicant.

2.12.1.3 No further comments were received on effects on BMV agricultural land through the examination process. The Applicant is confident that the mitigation measures outlined in the Outline Soil Management Plan (REP6-060) are sufficient to minimise impacts on soil health and protect and improve soil quality as required by NPS EN-1.

2.12.2 The assessment of the significance of effects

Methodology

2.12.2.1 During the Examination, questions were raised regarding the methodology used for the assessment of land use and recreational receptors. The methodology is based on guidance from the following Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) guidance documents as laid out in Section 7.5. of F3.7 ES Volume 3, Chapter 7: Land use and recreation [F3.7 F02]:

- Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) LA 109 Geology and Soils (Highways England et al, 2020a)
- DMRB LA 112 Population and Human Health (Highways England et al, 2020b).

2.12.2.2 LA 109 contains guidance on the assessment of the assessment of soil resources and agricultural land quality according to the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food Agricultural Land Classification System 1988.

2.12.2.3 LA 112 contains guidance on the assessment of land use including agricultural land holdings (farming operations) and walkers, cyclists and horse-riders (WCH).

2.12.2.4 In relation to the effect of the Mona Offshore Wind Project on the best and most versatile land, the criteria for the assessment have been applied in accordance with the DMRB criteria, identifying the loss to be of moderate adverse significance. Expert judgement has then been applied to this assessment, based on WG guidance provided in TAN 6 to determine the significance of this effect. The Applicant notes that these criteria and professional judgement were also applied in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report and no comments on the application of this methodology were raised during the statutory consultation process, including from WG.

2.12.2.5 TAN 6 provides guidance on the thresholds to be applied to the consideration of applications affecting agricultural land at a national level through consultation with Welsh Government. This guidance states that WG should be consulted where proposals “would involve the loss of 20 hectares or more of grades 1, 2 or 3a land or a loss which is less than 20ha but is likely to lead to further losses amounting cumulatively to 20 hectares or more”. The losses of best and most versatile land associated with the Mona Offshore Wind Project would not lead to the loss of 20ha of land under the guidance in TAN 6.

2.12.2.6 Welsh Government have also in their written representation [REP1-051] referenced that the IEMA guidance (A New Perspective on Land and Soil in EIA - February 2022) should also be considered in the determination of significance.

2.12.2.7 In this context, the IEMA guidance states, at Section 5.3, in relation to the assessment of land and soil that, based on the TAN 6 guidance on consultation, that "in Wales, more than 20 ha BMV loss is considered 'nationally significant'".

2.12.2.8 As a nationally significant infrastructure project and on the basis that the Mona Offshore Wind Project would lead to the permanent loss of approximately 1.7 ha of best and most versatile Subgrade 3a land, the permanent effect of the Project on best and most versatile land has been assessed not to be significant.

Impacts to farm holdings

2.12.2.9 In relation to farm holdings, the assessment of the effects of the Mona Offshore Wind Project on farm holdings is assessed within Section 7.8.3.1 – 7.8.3.13 of the ES Volume 3, Chapter 7: Land use and recreation [F3.7 F02].

2.12.2.10 The assessment identifies that there would be potential for disruption to farming management during the construction period associated with severance, effects on drainage systems and loss of agricultural land, both temporary and permanent.

2.12.2.11 The assessment is based on information that was publicly available and information that was disclosed by the landowners or occupiers to the agents acting on behalf of the Applicant through their land referencing work and discussions with individual landowners and interested parties. This included:

1. Data on the extent of individual land holdings as far as it was disclosed.
2. Information on the nature of farming arrangements including land ownership, farming tenancies, licences or informal agreements.
3. Information on the nature and operation of the individual farming businesses affected.

2.12.2.12 During the meetings with the landowners and occupiers, provision of potential mitigation measures for the individual holdings that would assist with the continuing operation of the holdings and mitigate the impact during the construction and reinstatement phases of the development were discussed including the use of crossing points, movement of water troughs and fencing of severed land. These will be secured through the voluntary agreements where they are in place and the Outline CoCP (J26 F06) which is secured in Requirement 9 of the draft DCO [C1 F08] and includes the following outline management plans which will assist in addressing potential temporary issues related to the operation of farming enterprises:

- Outline Dust Management Plan [REP6-038]
- Outline Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan [REP6-040]
- Outline Communications Plan [REP6-042]
- Outline Construction Fencing Plan [REP6-044]
- Outline Construction Surface Water and Drainage Management Plan [REP6-046]
- Outline Biosecurity Protocol [REP6-056]
- Outline Soil Management Plan [J26.8 F03]
- Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan [REP6-050].

Old Lane Public Right of Way

2.12.2.13 During the Examination the Applicant was informed of an application to designate the Old Lane, Groesffordd Marli as a bridleway. A section of this track is included in the Application to allow access to the onshore cable easement during the operational phase. While this track has not been assessed as a Public Right of Way as it is not yet been added to the definitive Public Right of Way map, the Applicant has engaged with the Public Rights of Way Officer at Denbighshire County Council regarding this issue and they have confirmed that they have no concerns. Should the track be designated a bridleway in the future, under the Road Traffic Act (1988) the Applicant would still be permitted to use to access as proposed in the Applicant with the consent of the landowner. The Applicant is in correspondence with the neighbouring landowners regarding the rights sought at this location through which any owner / occupier considerations can be addressed.

2.13 Landscape and Visual and Good Design

2.13.1 The design of the Onshore Substation, including the layout, proposed landscape mitigations, and incorporation of good design principles

2.13.1.1 The Applicant has sought to apply good design principles and, wherever possible, to minimise the impacts of the onshore substation. This is documented within the Design Principles (REP6-024) and the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (J22 F05). The Design Principles are secured through Requirement 5 of the Draft Development Consent Order (C1 F08) and the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan is secured through Requirement 7 and Requirement 12 of the Draft Development Consent Order (C1 F08).

2.13.1.2 Denbighshire County Council have confirmed through the Statement of Common Ground (S_D3_22 F04, paragraph DCC.LVI.18) that the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (J22 F05) is appropriate with regard to the proposed landscape mitigation measures and monitoring.

2.13.1.3 The Applicant has engaged with the Design Commission for Wales with regard good design of the onshore substation and has committed within the Design Principles (REP6-024) to continuing to engage with them post-consent to ensure that good design is applied throughout the detailed design stage.

2.13.1.4 The Applicant has reviewed the new guidance published on 23 October 2024 concerning Good Design and its application to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and has demonstrated how it has addressed the points set out in Annex A of the advice in its response to the Examining Authority's Written Questions ExQ2 (REP5-080, Annex 2). In addition, the Applicant has made a number of updates to the Design Principles (REP6-024) throughout examination to address specific questions, for example including an outline colour options assessment and providing detail on post-consent design review process.

2.13.2 The Zone of Theoretical Visibility and representative viewpoints for the landscape visualisations

2.13.2.1 The ZTV for the Mona Onshore Substation was generated for a 10 km study area. The study area was extended to include areas of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape (NL) and assess the effects on that nationally designated landscape. The ZTV is illustrated in ES Volume 3, Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Resources (F3.6 F02). The acceptability of the study area is agreed by NRW and the Councils (S_D1_14 F02, S_D3_22 F04 and S_D3_23 F04) [].

2.13.2.2 Representative viewpoints were unable to be agreed with the local planning authorities before the submission of the Application, as no landscape officers are retained by those councils. Viewpoints were selected using professional judgement, which provided a representative range of publicly accessible locations, both in distance, elevation and geographical spread, along the cable route and at the Mona Onshore Substation site. These are presented in Volume 7, Annex 6.3: Visual baseline technical report - onshore development, of the Environmental Statement (APP-155). It is now agreed with the Councils that the selection of scope of landscape receptors and the viewpoints representing a range of visual receptors included in the LVIA is adequate (S_D3_22 F04 and S_D3_23 F04).

2.13.2.3 During Examination, Denbighshire County Council requested additional photography at the Denbighshire Crematorium and Memorial Park. The annotated photographs were submitted as REP4-044. The annotated photographs did not alter the assessment of the effects on visual receptors.

2.13.2.4 In addition, ‘character’ photographs were taken from within the Mona Onshore Substation site, in areas which are not publicly accessible, to aid the Applicant’s understanding of local landscape and visual effects, including those from private properties. These are presented in Volume 7, Annex 6.2: Landscape and seascape character baseline technical report Part 2, of the Environmental Statement (APP-154)

2.13.3 The cumulative visual effects with other developments (onshore)

2.13.3.1 The cumulative effects of the Mona Onshore Substation are considered in ES Volume 3, Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Resources (F3.6 F02). Additional cumulative photomontages were requested by Denbighshire County Council’s landscape consultant and were submitted as REP3-047 and REP3-048. These photomontages did not change the conclusions of the cumulative effects assessment.

2.13.3.2 Additional consideration of people walking the North Wales Pilgrims Way (routed along a minor road to the east of the substation) was undertaken, which raised the sensitivity of visual receptors along this section of road. However, it was agreed with the Councils that although this increased the significance of effects, they would not be significant (S_D3_22 F04).

2.13.3.3 Due to the distance and/or the existing treed landscape the Applicant has concluded there would be no significant landscape effects on the character of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. Similarly, there would be no significant visual effects experienced by people within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, including people using Offa’s Dyke Path.

This is agreed by NRW in the SoCG (S_D1_14 F02). The position of CCBC and DCC regarding cumulative landscape assessment is 'Not Agreed' in the SoCG due to their position on methodology and the conclusion of the landscape and visual impact assessment (S_D3_22 F04 and S_D3_23 F04). The Councils consider there will be significant adverse cumulative effects and therefore, specific mitigation is required to address cumulative effects. The Applicant disagrees with this position and considers that no significant adverse cumulative effects will occur and that the measures presented in the Outline LEMP adequately mitigate the impacts from the Mona Offshore Wind Project in the cumulative scenario.

2.14 Marine Physical Processes and Coastal Change

2.14.1.1 Volume 2, Chapter 1 Physical processes (APP-053) presents the assessment of the potential impact of the Mona Offshore Wind Project on physical processes. Specifically, it considers the potential impact seaward of MHWS during the construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases. It draws upon information contained within Volume 6, Annex 1.1: Physical processes technical report (APP-086) which details the physical processes numerical modelling study that has been undertaken to support the Environmental Statement.

2.14.1.2 It was concluded that there will be no significant effects arising from the Mona Offshore Wind Project during the construction, operations and maintenance or decommissioning phases and a result of the project alone or cumulatively with other projects/plans. These conclusions have been agreed with NRW (A) in the final SoCG (S_D1_15 F03).

2.14.1.3 Two principal issues were raised by NRW (A) in relation to scouring and scour protection in their Relevant Representations (RR-011). These were associated with the placement of scour/cable protection and the potential impact on coastal processes with specific reference to shallow nearshore waters and also regarding the use of cable protection on Constable Bank.

2.14.2 Scouring and scour protection

2.14.2.1 In their Relevant Representations (RR-011) NRW (A) requested clarification from the Applicant as to whether cable protection will be required on the Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) exit pits as, should this be required, consideration should be given to the potential obstruction to the bedload sediment transport pathways both alongshore and onshore/offshore. NRW (A) also sought assurance that cable protection will not be installed on the Constable Bank.

2.14.2.2 In the Applicant's response to the relevant representations (RR-011-51 PDA-008) clarification was provided that it is not the Applicant's intention to place cable protection in shallow water and will seek to avoid this if at all possible. The Applicant is committed to ensuring that no more than a 5% reduction in water depth (referenced to Chart Datum) will occur at any point along the Mona offshore cable corridor without prior written approval from the licensing authority in consultation with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, ensuring that any cable protection is sufficiently low profile to cause minimal changes to wave, tide and sediment transport. Through engagement with NRW (A) during the course

of the examination it was agreed that should an occasion arise where that restriction is anticipated to be exceeded in the shallow nearshore area, the Applicant will consult with NRW (A) in respect of agreeing a suitable alternative position which includes any additional physical processes assessments as required. This commitment is outlined in the Mitigation and Monitoring Schedule (MMS) (J10 F07) and as outlined in the Marine Licence Principles Document (J9 F06), is expected to be included in the standalone NRW marine licence. As such, this matter is agreed with NRW (A) in the SoCG (S_D1_15 F03).

2.14.2.3 With regards to cable protection on Constable Bank, the NRW (A) relevant representation welcomed the Applicant's commitment that no cable protection will be placed on Constable Bank which was made during extensive pre-application discussion. In the Applicant's response to the relevant representations (RR-011.50 PDA-008) clarification was provided that this commitment is included within the MMS, to be secured through the offshore Construction Method Statement (CMS). The Draft Development Consent Order requires the undertaker to submit an offshore CMS to NRW for approval in writing prior to commencement of the authorised scheme (Condition 18(1)(d), Part 2, Schedule 14 REP6-016).

2.14.3 Marine water and sediment quality

2.14.3.1 In its relevant representation, NRW (A) stated that on the basis that the cable burial techniques used in the intertidal zone will be trenchless there are no concerns from a water quality perspective and were satisfied that no impact from the disturbance and / or remobilisation of sediment bound contaminants in the cable corridor will occur during construction, operation or decommissioning. NRW (A) agreed to this being scoped out from further assessment with regards to marine water and sediment quality (paragraph 2.6.3 of RR-011).

2.14.3.2 Volume 6, Annex 2.2: Water Framework Directive Coastal Waters Assessment (F6.2.2 F02) has identified all appropriate legislation, policy and guidance relevant to the WFD Regulations. The assessment concluded that the proposed works will not cause deterioration to the water quality of either of the water bodies considered (North Wales coastal waterbody and Clwyd transitional waterbody), nor the individual elements of these water bodies, or impact the objectives of achieving Good Ecological Potential (GEP) and Good Ecological Status (GES). In response to comments from NRW (A) regarding to the assessment of sediment-bound contaminants out to 12 nautical miles (nm) seaward of Mean High Water Springs (MHWS), and the the spatial extent of the Zone of Influence (ZoI) in Volume 6, Annex 2.2: Water Framework Directive Coastal Waters Assessment (F6.2.2 F02), the Applicant provided a supporting information note at Deadline 3 (REP3-045). This note confirmed that the conclusions of Volume 6, Annex 2.2: Water Framework Directive Coastal Waters Assessment (APP-088) would not be materially affected by consideration of chemical contamination analysis results out to 12 nm, or by consideration of a larger ZoI to align with the spatial extent of numerical modelling presented in Volume 6, Annex 1.1 Physical processes technical report (APP-086). Agreement on this matter is reflected in the NRW (A) SoCG (REP6-072).

2.14.4 Effects of landfall location and effects on the coast

2.14.4.1 The Applicant is committed to adopting trenchless techniques across the intertidal and, in addition to pre-construction surveys, account will be given to

the natural envelope of beach profile change over time from the analysis of historical beach profiles to inform the final detailed design of the drill duct profile to avoid the risk of cable exposure at the beach. This is in accordance with the recommendation made by NRW (A) in their Relevant Representations (paragraph 2.4.5 of RR-011). This commitment is secured in the outline Landfall Construction Method Statement (section 1.10.3.2 REP5-044) and agreement on this issue is reflected in NRW's response in their Deadline 6 submission (para 1.4.4 REP6-137).

2.14.4.2 The assessment of the potential impact of the Mona Offshore Wind Project along the adjacent shoreline concluded that there will be no significant impacts on wave, tides, sediment transport and sediment transport pathways. The Applicant confirmed that the height of the cable protection above the seabed may be altered in relation to the given water depth at any point along the export cable corridor to ensure that the cable protection is sufficiently low profile to cause minimal changes to wave, tide and sediment transport. NRW confirmed in their Deadline 3 submission (para 116 REP3-090) that it was satisfied that there should be no significant impacts to the physical processes in the shallow nearshore environment. Further information relating specifically to the provision of cable protection in shallow water is provided in section 2.14.2.

2.14.5 Adequacy of mitigation measures and monitoring

2.14.5.1 The Mona Offshore In-Principle Monitoring Plan (J15 F03) outlines both pre- and post-construction surveys relating to monitoring of cables and their burial status, it has been included as this is considered industry best practice. A number of mitigation measures have been committed to in order to minimise changes to physical processes particularly to minimise disturbance to shoreline coastal processes and to retain the form and function of Constable Bank. The MMS (J10 F07) details the mitigation and monitoring measures and the means of securing each commitment. It includes the commitment that no more than a 5% reduction in water depth (referenced to Chart Datum) will occur at any point along the Mona offshore cable corridor without prior written approval from the Licensing Authority in consultation with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). In the event any cable protection exceeds 5% of navigable depth referenced to Chart Datum in the shallow nearshore area, NRW (A) will also be a named consultee with regards to agreeing a suitable alternative position (as discussed in section 2.14.2).(as discussed in section 2.14.2). The commitment to consider geophysical data collected for engineering and design-related studies in the context of sandwave recovery, particularly in relation to Constable Bank, has been included in response to comments raised in NRW (A)'s written submission (paragraph 2.4.8 of RR-011). NRW is in agreement that the mitigation and monitoring outlined in Volume 2, Chapter 1: Physical processes (APP-053) and the MMS are suitable for the purposes of the DCO, this is reflected within the NRW (A) SoCG (S_D1_15 F03).

2.14.5.2 In conclusion all matters raised in the Examination with respect to physical processes have been addressed and agreed with the SNCBs, and nothing remains outstanding.

2.15 Navigation and Shipping

2.15.1 The Navigational Risk Assessment, including the Cumulative Regional Navigation Risk Assessment.

2.15.1.1 The Applicant has undertaken a comprehensive Navigation Risk Assessment (NRA) supported by extensive consultation with local operators, analysis of vessel traffic and incident data, undertaken full bridge navigation simulations with ferry companies, risk modelling and hazard workshops (Volume 6, Annex 7.1: Navigational Risk Assessment (F6.7.1 F02)) in full compliance with Marine Guidance Note (MGN) 654 as agreed with the MCA in the final Statement of Common Ground (S_D1_16 F03). The assessment included the Mona Offshore Wind Project in isolation and cumulatively with other Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects.

2.15.2 Project alone and cumulative effects on navigational safety, including adverse weather routeing.

2.15.2.1 Volume 2, Chapter 7: Shipping and navigation (F2.7 F02), informed by Volume 6, Annex 7.1: Navigational Risk Assessment (F6.7.1 F02), demonstrated that the impacts on navigation safety of the Mona Offshore Wind Project in isolation are minor and that all hazards are Tolerable if As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP). When considered cumulatively with the Morgan Offshore Wind Project: Generation Assets and Morecambe Offshore Wind Farm: Generation Assets, the impacts were also assessed as minor and Tolerable if ALARP. Consensus on these conclusions was reached during the hazard workshop undertaken with stakeholders and through Statements of Common Ground with the MCA (S_D1_16 F03), Trinity House (S_D1_17 F03), UK Chamber of Shipping (S_D1_18 F04), Isle of Man Steam Packet Company (S_D5_30 F02) and Stena Line (REP5-078).

2.15.2.2 The Applicant notes that a Scoping Report was issued for the Mooir Vannin Offshore Wind Farm in October 2023, after completion of much of the NRA used to inform the Application for the Mona Offshore Wind Project. The Applicant has assessed this new project using the best available information and in compliance with the Planning Inspectorate's Advice Note Seventeen. The Applicant concluded that there was insufficient searoom between the Morgan Generation Assets and Mooir Vannin Offshore Wind Farm Scoping Boundary and therefore unacceptable hazards were concluded and this was agreed with stakeholders. However, this hazard is independent of the Mona Offshore Wind Project and therefore the Applicant cannot propose mitigation to address it. The Applicant notes that at the hazard workshop for the Mooir Vannin Offshore Wind Farm held on the 12 December 2024, a refined array boundary was shared with stakeholders which increased the separation from the Morgan Array Area from 2.5 nm to 4.1 nm, which now exceeds the minimum requirements of guidance and existing precedent elsewhere in the UK. The responsibility would lie with the Morgan Generation Assets and Mooir Vannin Offshore Wind Farm to demonstrate whether this distance was acceptable or not, rather than the Applicant.

2.15.2.3 It is the Applicant's position that all hazards identified as part of the NRA (Volume 6, Annex 7.1: Navigational Risk Assessment (F6.7.1 F02)), both individually and cumulatively, can be considered to be ALARP. This is due to the substantial mitigation introduced post-PEIR, including considerable reductions in the extent

of the Mona Array Area to address shipping and navigation concerns, and that the risk controls follow industry best practice (such as the use of safety zones during the construction phase and periods of major maintenance). It was concluded that appropriate risk controls were embedded in the Mona Offshore Wind Project's design and additional risk controls proposed (such as new traffic lanes) would be disproportionate to the reduction in risk. Therefore, the assessment concluded that all risks scored as Medium would be considered to be ALARP and therefore Tolerable without additional risk control measures. Agreements on ALARP were reached through Statements of Common Ground with the MCA (S_D1_16 F03), Trinity House (S_D1_17 F03), and Isle of Man Steam Packet Company (S_D5_30 F02) and Stena Line agreed at Issue Specific Hearing 2 (REP1-010) that the risks had been reduced to ALARP.

2.15.2.4 Stena Line, in their Statement of Common Ground at Deadline 5 (REP5-078) and response to ExQ2.15.2 (REP5-122) raise concerns about interference with marine radar. The Applicant responded to this fully within REP6-118, noting that impacts on radar are recognised within the NRA (Volume 6, Annex 7.1: Navigational Risk Assessment (F6.7.1 F02)) and assessed to be minor based on the best available evidence and operational experience of existing OWFs elsewhere in the UK. The Applicant also notes that Stena Line's route between Heysham and Belfast passes a far narrower passage between existing offshore wind farms, and the Masters are familiar with such effects and are presumably managed to maintain navigational safety. The Mona Offshore Wind Project includes infrastructure with greater spacing between structures than existing offshore wind farms and therefore any impacts on marine radar are likely to be less than those currently experienced. No concerns on this matter have been raised by the MCA (S_D1_16 F03). Therefore, the Applicant's position is that the Mona Offshore Wind Project would pose only a minor impact on marine radar and would not compromise navigational safety in the Irish Sea.

2.15.2.5 Both Stena Line in their Statement of Common Ground at Deadline 5 (REP5-078) and UK Chamber of Shipping in their final Statement of Common Ground (S_D1_18 F04) and response to ExQ2.15.3 (REP5-124) raised the potential requirement for Emergency Towage Vessels (ETVs) in the Irish Sea to ensure Medium Risk hazards were ALARP. The Applicant notes that Stena Line have previously agreed at Issue Specific Hearing 2 (REP1-010) that the risks had been reduced to ALARP and the UK Chamber of Shipping only refer to the cumulative scenario and that ETVs "may" be required and confirm (in response to ExQ2.15.3 and in their final SoCG (S_D1_18 F04)) that consideration of emergency towage does not preclude consent. Furthermore, nor have the MCA at any point suggested it may be required (S_D1_16 F03). No substantive evidence or assessment has been presented to justify why ETVs would be required. The Applicant's position as described in full within REP6-120 is that ETVs are not required, address a rare event, have limited effectiveness, are highly expensive, and would therefore not be proportionate to the risks.

2.15.2.6 In summary, the Applicant submits that the Secretary of State can and should be satisfied that risk to navigational safety is ALARP and that there are no unacceptable hazards as per Paragraph 2.8.331 of the National Policy Statement EN-3.

2.15.3 Safety Zones

2.15.3.1 The Applicant has proposed that an application for Safety Zones would be made under the Energy Act 2004 as set out in the Safety Zone Statement (APP-192), and in line with industry best practice.

2.15.3.2 The MCA, in their Statement of Common Ground (S_D1_16 F03) confirmed agreement with the proposed mitigation measures including Safety Zones. Similarly, in their response to ExQ1.15.1 (REP3-087), the MCA confirmed that they are content with the proposed safety zones.

2.15.4 Potential disruption or economic loss to the shipping and navigation industries, including strategic passenger and freight routes and lifeline ferry services serving the Isle of Man

2.15.4.1 The Applicant's assessment concludes that the Mona Offshore Wind Project would not interfere with recognised sea lanes essential to international navigation (National Policy Statement EN-3 Paragraph 2.8.326 to 2.8.327) as described in Section 1.8.2 of the NRA (Volume 6, Annex 7.1: Navigational Risk Assessment (F6.7.1 F02)). Stena Line in their Statement of Common Ground at Deadline 5 (REP5-078) and response to ExQ2.15.2 (REP5-122) argue that their ferry routes constitute sea lanes. As set out in the Applicant's response to Stena Line's submission (REP6-118) and Issue Specific Hearing 6 (REP6-083), the Applicant maintains that a sea lane equates to a Traffic Separation Scheme, and that ferry routes should be considered strategic routes and lifeline ferry services as set out in National Policy Statement EN-3 Paragraph 2.8.328 and 2.8.329. The Applicant's interpretation and overall conclusion on this matter is agreed with the MCA in the Statement of Common Ground (S_D1_16 F03).

2.15.4.2 The Applicant's assessment recognised that the Mona Offshore Wind Project would both individually and cumulatively with other Tier 1 and Tier 2 developments, have moderate adverse impacts on ferry routes in the Irish Sea (Volume 2, Chapter 7: Shipping and navigation (F2.7 F02)). Concerns were raised by stakeholders that the Mona Offshore Wind Project in combination with other Tier 1 and Teir 2 projects could threaten the commercial viability of ferry routes, such as in the MCA's Written Representation submitted at Deadline 1 (REP1-068). The Applicant's position is that whilst there are effects which are appreciable (NPS EN-3 Paragraph 2.8.328 to 2.8.329), they do not amount to unacceptable interference (NPS EN-1 Paragraph 4.1.7), do not threaten the viability of these routes and should not preclude development consent being granted. The Applicant's response to ExQ1.15.12 (REP3-062) summarises the reasons as to why this conclusion has been reached.

2.15.4.3 The Isle of Man Steam Packet route between Liverpool and Douglas passes clear of the Mona Array Area in typical weather conditions but would require an additional 12.5 minutes of additional steaming in adverse weather (Volume 2, Chapter 7: Shipping and navigation (F2.7 F02)). Such a deviation represents up to 7% of the total crossing duration on a minority of sailings in adverse weather, estimated to be up to 30 out of 600 annual crossings (Section 7.9.4 of Volume 2, Chapter 7: Shipping and navigation (F2.7 F02)), and the deviated route is both safe and feasible. The Applicant does not believe that such impacts would have a material effect on the number of cancellations, which are generally the result of wind limits for berthing in ports and other reasons rather than delays which are currently operationally managed successfully. Whilst there are further

impacts on the Isle of Man Steam Packet route between Heysham and Douglas, these are entirely the result of the Morgan Generation Assets and Mooir Vannin Offshore Wind Farm and therefore independent of the Mona Offshore Wind Project. Furthermore, it would not be credible that the Mona Offshore Wind Project would prevent the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company (IoMSPC) fulfilling the requirements of the Strategic Sea Services Agreement with the Isle of Man Government. Therefore, the Applicant has done all they can to minimise these impacts without threatening the viability of a 1.5 GW project and have been engaging with the IoMSPC to resolve residual effects which are entirely commercial in nature regarding increased transit distance and associated fuel costs. The final SoCG with the IoMSPC submitted at Deadline 7 (S_D5_30 F02) notes agreement on all matters except the mitigation of operational impacts, through a commercial side agreement which is 'not agreed, but engagement is ongoing'. Whilst the Applicant and the IoMSPC have been engaging on a commercial side agreement, it has not been possible to finalise this before the close of the Examination. The Applicant and the IoMSPC are however, committed to continuing engagement on the commercial side agreement as a priority and will provide an update to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero at the appropriate time. The Applicant does not consider this to be a relevant consideration in the determination of the application, however, if the Examining Authority disagreed then the Applicant would suggest that the Examining Authority recommend the Secreraty of State seek an update on the position prior to determination.

2.15.4.4 The Stena Line route between Liverpool and Belfast, passing west of the Isle of Man, would need to deviate north of the Mona Array Area, requiring an additional 1.1 nm and 3.4 minutes of steaming on an eight-hour crossing. Given the significant duration of the total crossing with a 0.7% deviation, the effect was judged to be minor. The Stena's response to ExQ2.15.2 (REP5-122) notes that the Mona Offshore Wind Project together with other planned offshore wind farms would not threaten the viability of their Liverpool to Belfast route but would increase costs.

2.15.4.5 Separately from the navigational safety issues raised by Stena Line that have been dealt with above (section 2.5.2) a joint position statement has been agreed between the Applicant and Stena that has been submitted at D7 (REP5-078) which records that discussion is continuing over a commercial agreement to recognise increased operating costs for Stena that may result from construction of the Development. These are considerations that sit outside of the Examination as potential impacts on safety of navigation for ferry routes have been assessed and found acceptable for environmental assessment purposes but as Stena maintains its objection to the Development pending completion of these negotiations, they are reported here for the Examining Authority's information. As part of those negotiations Stena also reserves its position on Protective Provisions which the Applicant will continue to discuss with Stena as appropriate. The Applicant and Stena Line will provide an update to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero at the appropriate time.

2.15.4.6 Other Stena Line routes impacted are entirely the result of other Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects and therefore independent of the Mona Offshore Wind Project.

2.15.4.7 NPS EN-3 recognises that "it is inevitable that there will an impact on navigation in and around the area of the site" (Paragraph 2.8.178). Direct and adverse weather routes of ferries and commercial routes within the eastern Irish Sea are

extensive and cover most of the available seaspace (Figure 7.6 of Volume 2, Chapter 7: Shipping and navigation (F2.7 F02)). Therefore, there is no location within the eastern Irish Sea where an offshore wind farm could be constructed that would avoid all impacts on lifeline ferries or strategic routes. The Mona Offshore Wind Project has therefore sought to minimise where possible the extent of these impacts in line with NPS EN-3 Paragraph 2.8.328. This includes substantial alterations to the Mona Array Area following PEIR (NRA (Volume 6, Annex 7.1: Navigational Risk Assessment (F6.7.1 F02)) and Volume 1, Chapter 4: Site Selection and Consideration of Alternatives (F1.4 F03)) which have greatly reduced the deviations required for vessels to pass around the Mona Array Area, in some cases by more than 50%. Therefore, the Applicant has acted entirely in accordance with NPS EN-3 to minimise as much as possible impacts on shipping routes. The residual deviations should also be considered in the context of the substantial benefits of the Mona Offshore Wind Project on the urgent need for decarbonisation and reduction of greenhouse gases set out in the Planning Statement (J2 F02).

2.15.4.8 Noting the above, the Applicant believes that the residual adverse impacts on shipping routes are associated with minor deviations or affecting a minority of crossings, the effects are entirely commercial in nature and do not threaten the viability of these routes. The Applicant has sought through the Examination to engage with the IoMSPC and Stena Line to address residual effects, but as reported above, commercial side agreements have not yet been finalised with engagement ongoing. Therefore, the Applicant will provide an update to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero at the appropriate time.

2.15.4.9 Separately from the navigational safety issues raised by Stena that have been dealt with above (2.15.2.4) a joint position statement has been agreed between the Applicant and Stena that is being lodged at Deadline 7 which records that discussion is continuing over a commercial agreement to recognise increased operating costs for Stena that may result from construction of the Development. These are considerations that sit outside of the Examination as potential impacts on ferry routes have been assessed and found acceptable for environmental assessment purposes but as Stena maintains its objection to the Development pending completion of these negotiations, they are reported here for the Examining Authority's information. As part of those negotiations Stena also reserves its position on Protective Provisions which the Applicant will continue to discuss with Stena as appropriate.

2.15.5 Potential effects on maritime Search and Rescue

2.15.5.1 Section 7.9.6 of Volume 2, Chapter 6: Shipping and navigation (F2.7 F02) assesses the impact of the Mona Offshore Wind Project on the safety and effectiveness of Search and Rescue (SAR) in the Irish Sea. The impact on SAR is assessed to be minor with proposed mitigation, including a commitment to two lines of orientation, a minimum of 1,400 m (excluding micrositing) between wind turbines and offshore substation platforms (OSPs) and the development of post-consent plans, particularly an Emergency Response and Cooperation Plan (ERCoP). The likelihood of requiring SAR activities within the Mona Array Area is shown to be low through the NRA, and the risks are assessed as Medium Risk – Tolerable if ALARP. The Applicant also emphasises that offshore wind farms (OWFs) can improve SAR provision through enhanced monitoring and faster response to incidents.

2.15.5.2 The SoCG with the MCA (S_D1_17 F03) notes agreement that these conclusions are consistent with MGN654 subject to the agreement of post-consent plans with the MCA. No other stakeholder has outstanding concerns on search and rescue in their final SoCGs.

2.15.5.3 Within their Written Representation (REP1-068) and response to ExQ1 (REP3-087), the MCA raised concerns on potential 125 m combined micrositing and installation tolerance provisions of wind turbines affecting SAR lanes. The Applicant in their response to REP3-087 (REP4-063) and during Issue Specific Hearing 4 confirmed that this would be reduced to 50 m micrositing and 5 m installation tolerance. This was then secured in the updates to Requirement 18 (1) (a) (iii) of Schedule 14 of the draft Development Consent Order submitted at Deadline 4 (REP4-005) and in updates to Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description at Deadline 7 (F1.3 F02).

2.15.5.4 The Applicant therefore believes that all matters related to search and rescue have been addressed subject to finalisation of plans post-consent.

2.15.6 Transboundary effects, particularly upon shipping routes between the UK and the Republic of Ireland

2.15.6.1 The Applicant's assessment included the potential impact on international shipping routes between the UK and Republic of Ireland (Volume 2, Chapter 7: Shipping and navigation (F2.7 F02)). The assessment concluded that the Mona Offshore Wind Project, both individually and cumulatively with other Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects, would have only a minor impact on those routes between the UK ports of Heysham and Liverpool, and Dublin. Neither Stena Line nor CLdN who operate these routes have raised material concerns on impacts to these particular routes during the Examination.

2.15.7 Co-existence with other operational or planned offshore wind farms in the Irish Sea

2.15.7.1 The Applicant, in conjunction with the Morgan Offshore Wind Project: Generation Assets and Morecambe Offshore Wind Farm: Generation Assets, established a Marine Navigation Engagement Forum (MNEF) at Scoping stage which met routinely up until Application to share updates with stakeholders and discuss pertinent matters on shipping and navigation. The Applicant has committed within Volume 2, Chapter 7: Shipping and navigation (F2.7 F02) to continue the MNEF post-consent which is secured at Deadline 3 within the updated Mitigation and Monitoring Schedule (J10 F07) and referenced in the Outline Vessel Traffic Management Plan (VTMP) for clarity (REP6-028). The MNEF will be used to update stakeholders on the Mona Offshore Wind Project and also be used for engagement on shipping and navigation mitigations set out within Table 1.10 and Table 1.43 of the Navigational Risk Assessment (Volume 6, Annex 7.1: Navigational Risk Assessment (F6.7.1 F02)).

2.15.7.2 In particular, the MNEF will facilitate the development of the VTMP (secured within the deemed Marine Licence within the draft DCO and in accordance with the Outline VTMP (REP6-028)) to safely manage Mona Offshore Wind Project construction and operations and maintenance activities and reduce adverse impacts on other marine users, which would include other offshore wind farm operators.

2.15.7.3 In response to questions raised by the Examining Authority, the Applicant committed to continue the MNEF for a minimum of five years into the operational and maintenance phase and this was included in the Outline VTMP at Deadline 6 (REP6-028).

2.15.7.4 Several submissions were made by Ørsted IPs that a means of engagement with them was secured in the draft DCO (REP3-103/REP5-117). The Applicant's position set out in its response at Deadline 6 (REP6-116), is that appropriate commitment to engagement with all stakeholders is already made in the Outline VTMP (REP6-028) to "existing users of the relevant sea area", which would include the Ørsted IPs. It is neither necessary or appropriate to name one party and not others and risks making the VTMP overly prescriptive. The Applicant will ensure that Ørsted IPs and other relevant stakeholders have copies of all relevant plans which will be operationally useful or support navigational safety in the eastern Irish Sea (such as the VTMP, Emergency Response and Cooperation Plan (ERCoP) and Marine pollution contingency plan (MPCP)) following approval by the licencing authority in consultation with the MCA and Trinity House, as secured in the updated Outline VTMP at Deadline 6 (REP6-028).

2.16 Noise and Vibration

2.16.1 Construction, operational and decommissioning noise and vibration effects on local residents, businesses, recreational users

2.16.1.1 ES Volume 3, Chapter 9: Noise and Vibration (F3.9 F03) presents the Applicant's assessment of the potential effects on noise and vibration sensitive receptors as a result of the Project. The assessments concluded that no potential significant adverse effects were predicted to occur at any noise and vibration sensitive receptor during the construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the Project.

2.16.1.2 The assessment presented in REP5-010 includes an update to the construction noise assessment reported in the ES Volume 3, Chapter 9: Noise and Vibration (F3.9 F03) and in the Construction noise and vibration technical report (Annex 9.2 of the ES (APP-179). This update was undertaken following concerns raised by Mr and Mrs Hussey at Deadline 1 (REP1-085) and Deadline 3 (REP3-110) and was first submitted into the examination at Deadline 4 within the Construction Noise and Vibration Clarification Note (REP4-045).

2.16.1.3 However, concerns regarding the construction noise assessment approach and the impacts were reiterated by Mr and Mrs Hussey at Deadline 5 (REP5-122) and Deadline 6 (REP6-151) and remain unresolved. In particular, Mr and Mrs Hussey reiterated their concerns about the approach to the construction noise assessment. The Applicant confirmed that the assessment of construction noise is based upon nationally accepted industry guidance and has been applied to other consented Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. In addition, the assessment methodology applied by Applicant is a matter which is agreed with local authorities, as reported in the DCC SoCG (S_D3_22 F04) and the CCBC SoCG (S_D3_23 F04). The Applicant has proposed a number of mitigations in the Outline Noise and Vibration Management Plan (REP6-040) which are in line with British Standard 5228:2009+A1:2024 and comply with NPS EN-1 and is

confident the impacts of noise and vibration will be mitigated as far as practicable, see section 2.16.2.

2.16.1.4 Following submission of the Applicant's response to the CCBC and DCC Local Impact Report at Deadline 2 (REP2-085) the Applicant updated the assessment of construction vibration impacts in Volume 3, Chapter 9: Noise and Vibration submitted at Deadline 5 (F3.9 F03). This matter has now been agreed with DCC and CCBC and is reflected in the respective SoCGs (S_D3_22 F04, S_D3_23 F04).

2.16.2 Mitigation measures and their effectiveness

2.16.2.1 The assessments presented in ES Volume 3 Chapter 9: Noise and Vibration (F3.9 F03) include assumptions on mitigation to be employed during construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases. These assumptions are set out in Table 1.13 of ES Volume 7 Annex 9.2: Construction noise and vibration technical report (REP5-016) and Table 1.2 of ES Volume 7 Annex 9.3: Operational Noise Assessment (APP-180).

2.16.2.2 With this mitigation in place, the assessment has concluded that potential significant adverse effects are avoided at all noise and vibration sensitive receptors during all phases of the Project.

2.16.2.3 The Applicant has also prepared an Outline Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan (REP6-040) which sets out general measures to mitigate noise and vibration impacts from construction activities. The Plan which is secured in Requirement 9(2)(c) of the draft DCO (C1 F08) also includes examples of noise control measures that can be applied to specific construction activities. These measures will be defined as the detailed design progresses and will be agreed with the relevant authorities via the final CNVMP. Denbighshire County Council and Conwy County Borough Council have confirmed that the measures included in the outline CNVMP are appropriate and would be expected to mitigate and minimise construction noise and vibration impacts (S_D3_22 F04 and S_D3_23 F04respectively).

2.16.2.4 In response to matters raised during Issue Specific Hearing 6 (REP6-081), the Applicant has also set noise limits to protect amenity of local residents during the mobilisation hours, as referred to in Section 2.2.8 of this Closing Submission. The limits are set out in the Outline Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan (REP6-040) and were informed by the thresholds set out in BS 5228-1. The Applicant considers these thresholds to be appropriate to ensure that residents will not be significantly impacted by mobilisation works.

2.16.3 Management and monitoring of operational noise effects

2.16.3.1 The Operational noise effects from the Mona Onshore Substation are to be controlled through the imposition of noise limit, 34 dB LAr,T, to be measured at the nearest occupied residential receptor, Tan y Bryn Uchaf, as set out in Draft DCO Schedule 2 Requirement 17. The limit has been based on the representative background sound level measured during the night-time at the most exposed residential receptor to the Mona Onshore Substation, as presented in section 1.3 of APP-180.

2.16.3.2 The relevant local authority, Denbighshire County Council, agrees that this Requirement secures sufficient control to ensure that the operational noise

associated with the Onshore Substation does not exceed an acceptable level at the nearest noise receptor to it (DCC.DCO.13 of Mona and DCC SoCG (S_D3_22 F04)).

2.17 Offshore Biodiversity, Ecology and Natural Environment

2.17.1 Fish and shellfish ecology

2.17.1.1 Volume 2, Chapter 3: Fish and shellfish ecology (F2.3 F02) presents the Applicant's assessment of the potential direct and indirect effects on fish and shellfish ecology receptors as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project. This assessment considers the potential impact of the Mona Offshore Wind Project across the east Irish Sea during the construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases. These assessments included consideration of any relevant mitigation measures as outlined in Table 3.19 of Volume 2, Chapter 3: Fish and shellfish ecology (F2.3 F02).

2.17.1.2 Overall, it was concluded that there will be no significant adverse effects on most fish and shellfish receptors arising from the Mona Offshore Wind Project during the construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases. Herring was identified as having the potential to be moderately adversely impacted by underwater sound from the construction of the Project alone, and both cod and herring have the potential to be moderately adversely impacted by underwater sound from the construction of the Project and other nearby projects cumulatively. However, this was based on a maximum design scenario for underwater noise which may not be fully realised. Furthermore, through the implementation of an Underwater Sound Management Strategy (UWSMS) in accordance with the Outline UWSMS (REP5-028), any potentially significant effects will be reduced to non-significant levels.

2.17.1.3 In the NRW Offshore Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) (S_D1_12 F03), nearly all points concerning impacts to fish and shellfish ecology have been agreed. One point (NRW.FSF.16) on the proportion of cod high intensity spawning habitat which could be potentially impacted by underwater sound remained not agreed, with NRW (A) suggesting the non-significant minor adverse impact on cod from underwater sound for the project alone should be revised up to a significant moderate adverse impact, which would require further mitigation. In light of NRW (A)'s comments the Applicant submitted an updated version of the Outline UWSMS (REP5-028) at Deadline 5. NRW (A) welcomed the change made in its Deadline 6 Submission (REP6-137) and considered that this issue would not be material based on the updates to the Outline UWSMS (REP5-028). The exact mitigation measures to be agreed and implemented will be further developed in direct consultation with NRW (A) post-consent, and this alongside the maximum design scenario assessment process provided the level of detail required for NRW to agree that the disagreement on the level of significance is not material and that effects on cod spawning will be mitigated to an acceptable level through implementation of the UWSMS.

2.17.1.4 The Isle of Man Government – Territorial Sea Committee agreed in their SoCG (S_D1_11 F04) that all issues potentially impacting fish and shellfish ecology receptors of relevance to the Isle of Man had been appropriately addressed by the Applicant and that all matters are agreed.

2.17.1.5 As set out in section 2.5 above, commercial fisheries stakeholders raised concerns in relation to impacts on king and queen scallops from the Mona Offshore Wind Project. These issues were discussed as part of the Issue Specific Hearing 4 (ISH4), and following the ISH4 the Applicant provided written summaries of the discussion points in relation to the potential impacts on scallops from the Mona Offshore Wind Project (see REP4-034), with the Applicant reiterating the evidence behind the conclusion of no significant effects on either king or scallop populations or their spawning and nursery grounds, as per the assessment in Volume 2, Chapter 3: Fish and shellfish ecology (F2.3 F02). No further concerns have been raised from commercial fisheries stakeholders on these species and it is noted that no further responses were received to the Examining Authority's written question Q2.5.11 (PD-018) on this matter. The Applicant has worked with commercial fisheries stakeholders to identify appropriate mitigation and monitoring for both king and queen scallops and commercial fishers targeting these species, including a minimum area for the scallop mitigation zone and a commitment to undertake monitoring of these species as set out in the Outline Fisheries Liaison and Co-Existence Plan (J13 F03) and the Offshore In-Principle Monitoring Plan (J15 F03). The Applicant considers that there is a high degree of confidence that there would be no significant effects on either king or queen scallop and the mitigation and monitoring commitments are appropriate.

2.17.1.6 In regard to each stakeholder concern, the relevant legislation and policies was initially identified in Volume 1, Chapter 2: Policy and legislative context (APP-049), with detail specific to fish and shellfish addressed in section 3.2 of Volume 2, Chapter 3: Fish and shellfish ecology (F2.3 F02). This section detailed the policy tests of relevance to fish and shellfish receptors in the National Policy Statements, the Planning Policy Wales, and the North West Inshore and North West Offshore Coast Marine Plans, with details on how these requirements were met throughout the chapter.

2.17.2 Intertidal and subtidal seabed habitats and species

Effects of the Project on benthic subtidal and intertidal habitats and species

2.17.2.1 Volume 2, Chapter 2: Benthic Subtidal and Intertidal Ecology (F2.2 F02) presents the Applicant's assessment of the potential direct and indirect effects on intertidal and subtidal habitats and species as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project during the construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases. These assessments included consideration of any relevant primary or tertiary mitigation measures as outlined in Table 2.19 of Volume 2, Chapter 2: Benthic Subtidal and Intertidal Ecology (F2.2 F02). Overall it was concluded that there will be no significant adverse effects on intertidal and subtidal habitats and species arising from the Mona Offshore Wind Project during the construction, operations and maintenance or decommissioning phases.

2.17.2.2 Concerns were raised by NRW (A) during the course of the examination relating to the assessment of cable protection in the nearshore environment (see paragraph 2.17.2.4 *et seq*. below). However, as detailed in the final SoCG (S_D1_12 F03), the Applicant and NRW (A) are agreed on all matters relating to effects on benthic intertidal and subtidal habitats and species.

2.17.2.3 Concerns were raised by the JNCC during the course of the examination however, as detailed in the final SoCG (S_D1_15 F03), the Applicant and the JNCC are agreed on most items relating to benthic subtidal and intertidal ecology with the exception of matters relating to the maximum design scenario (MDS), the approach adopted to the assessment of decommissioning and the assessment of the seapens and burrowing megafauna communities important ecological feature (IEF), which the JNCC consider to be material considerations. A matter raised by the JNCC in relation to the Applicant's assessment of the potential for cable and scour protection to remain in situ post-decommissioning and to contribute to both permanent habitat loss and habitat alteration is also not agreed with the JNCC, but this is not considered by either party to be a material consideration and this is reflected in the final SoCG (S_D1_15 F03).

Assessment of cable protection in the nearshore environment

2.17.2.4 Concerns were raised by NRW (A) in their relevant representation (RR-011) regarding the assessment of impacts relating to the placement of cable protection in the shallow nearshore environment. The Applicant responded to this issue in their responses to NRW (A)'s relevant representation (PDA-008) and written representation (REP2-080) confirming where the assessment is presented in Volume 2, Chapter 2: Benthic Subtidal and Intertidal Ecology (F2.2 F02) and reiterating the commitments in place (i.e. no more than a 5% reduction in water depth at any point along the Mona offshore cable corridor without prior written approval from the licensing authority in consultation with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency which is secured through the Outline Construction Method Statement (CMS) and Cable Specification and Installation Plan (CSIP)). During the course of the examination, the Applicant and NRW (A) agreed that, where the restriction is anticipated to be exceeded, NRW (A) will be a consultee in respect of agreeing an alternative position and whether further physical processes and benthic ecology assessment in the shallow nearshore area would be required, and if so on what terms that assessment would be undertaken. This commitment is set out in the Mitigation and Monitoring Schedule (J10 F07). On this basis, NRW (A) considers this matter to be agreed (S_D1_12 F03). The Applicant has also responded at Deadline 7 (S_D7_28) to the ExA's Rule 17 letter issued on 8 January 2025 on the matter of securing this mitigation and confirming that this is a matter for the standalone NRW marine licence only, and that the Draft DCO does not need to be updated in this regard.

Decommissioning of offshore infrastructure

2.17.2.5 The JNCC raised concerns during the course of Examination (RR-033, REP1-066, REP2-097, REP3-086 and REP5-094) that the assessment of the effects of decommissioning activities on benthic subtidal and intertidal receptors has not been based on currently available technology and therefore has not been fully considered by the Applicant. Detailed submissions have been made by the Applicant on this matter in the Applicant's Response to the JNCC's relevant representation (PDA-008), in the Applicant's Response to the JNCC's written representation (REP2-081), in the Applicant's response to the JNCC's Deadline 2 submission (REP3-036) and in the Applicant's response to the JNCC's Deadline 5 submission (REP6-091) highlighting that the JNCCs concerns are applicable to all offshore industries rather than being project specific or specific to the offshore wind industry more generally. For the Mona Offshore Wind Project, no offshore decommissioning works will take place until a written

decommissioning programme has been approved by the Secretary of State for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. The scope of the decommissioning works would be determined by the relevant legislation and guidance at that time. Notwithstanding this, the Applicant is confident that all infrastructure could theoretically be removed based on current-day technology in accordance with current guidance and the Applicant would not have included decommissioning options (e.g. removal of cables and all foundations) in the project description (Volume 1, Chapter 2: Project description (F1.3 F02)) if the Applicant did not consider they were feasible (REP6-091). The Applicant considers that a suitably robust assessment of the decommissioning phase of the Mona Offshore Wind Project for benthic subtidal and intertidal ecology has been undertaken in Volume 2, Chapter 2: Benthic subtidal and intertidal ecology (F2.2 F02) as required by the Overarching National Policy Statement (NPS) for Energy (EN-1; see paragraph 4.3.5) and the NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3; paragraphs 2.8.88-2.8.89, 2.8.119, 2.8.122, 2.8.227 and 2.8.233). The Applicant's assessment is based on currently available technologies and has been undertaken in accordance with good industry practice with respect to Environmental Impact Assessments (CIEEM, 2022; OSPAR, 2008) and industry guidance (OEUK, 2024) and should enable the Examining Authority and Secretary of State to have regard to the likely significant effects of the Mona Offshore Wind Project over its whole lifetime.

2.17.2.6 Given that the Applicant has compiled with relevant policy, legislation and guidance in assessing potential decommissioning effects from the Mona Offshore Wind Project, it does not consider this matter to be material. It is noted that, as detailed in the final SoCG with the JNCC (S_D1_15 F03), the JNCC does not share this view. The Applicant, however, highlights that the JNCC's position is applicable to all offshore industries and not specific to offshore wind or the Mona Offshore Wind Project and is, therefore, not something that can be addressed at the project level.

Calculation of the maximum design scenario (MDS)

2.17.2.7 In their Relevant Representations (RR-033), JNCC raised concerns about perceived inconsistencies in the calculations of the MDS for seabed take and requested further details on how the MDS was defined. The Applicant provided clarification and additional information beyond that presented at application, in the format of a worked example, in the Applicant's Deadline 3 submission (REP3-036) and Deadline 4 submission (REP4-048) confirming that there are no errors in the information provided by the Applicant in any of the written submissions or in the EIA and that the differences identified by the JNCC in their Deadline 5 submission (REP5-094) could be attributed to rounding and not error. The JNCC welcomed this information but have requested that similar information is provided for all foundation types in order that they can be confident that the values which the Applicant is quoting are correct. The Applicant does not agree that further information should be provided beyond that which is already presented in Volume 1, Chapter 2: Project description (F1.3 F02) and Volume 2, Chapter 2: Benthic subtidal and intertidal ecology (F2.2 F02). This is because, as raised with the JNCC during meetings held on 4 September, 15 October and 18 December 2024, there is a vast amount of detail and calculations which sit behind the project description and each of the MDSs which it would not be proportionate to provide. No concerns have been raised by another other interested party, including NRW (A), relating to the MDS and no other requests

for additional clarification. The level of detail provided by the Applicant in Volume 1, Chapter 2: Project description (F1.3 F02) and Volume 2, Chapter 2: Benthic subtidal and intertidal ecology (F2.2 F02) is consistent with that provided for other offshore wind farm applications. Further, the NPS EN-1 (paragraph 4.3.12) supports an assessment of an MDS provided that the likely worst case parameters for the assessment are clearly defined, which the Applicant considers to be the case.

2.17.2.8 This remains a matter which is not agreed in the SoCG between the Applicant and the JNCC (S_D1_15 F03) and a matter which has been categorised by the JNCC as a material consideration. Given that no errors were found in the clarifications presented by the Applicant, the Applicant is confident that the values quoted in Volume 1, Chapter 2: Project description (F1.3 F02) and Volume 2, Chapter 2: Benthic subtidal and intertidal ecology (F2.2 F02) are correct and, therefore, considers that there is no reasonable justification for the JNCC to not have confidence in the numbers quoted by the Applicant. Further, the Applicant acknowledges that it is the Applicant's responsibility to satisfy themselves that the Mona Offshore Wind Project can be constructed within the parameters specified within the Development Consent Order (DCO), and that they will need to adhere to those values and the MDSs assessed within the EIA. The Applicant is, therefore, confident that the values specified in the DCO are correct and accurate and will not be exceeded, that the MDS for all impact pathways is clear and has been correctly calculated and assessed in Volume 2, Chapter 2: Benthic subtidal and intertidal ecology (F2.2 F02) and that this matter is, therefore, not a material concern.

Consideration of the seapens and burrowing megafauna communities IEF

2.17.2.9 The JNCC also raised concerns in their relevant representations (RR-033), written representation (REP1-066) and in further written representations during the course of examination (REP2-097, REP3-086 and REP5-094) regarding the assessment of the seapens and burrowing megafauna communities IEF in Volume 2, Chapter 2: Benthic Subtidal and Intertidal Ecology (F2.2 F02). The Applicant has provided detailed written submissions in the Applicant's Response to the JNCC's relevant representation (PDA-008), in the Applicant's Response to the JNCC's written representation (REP2-081), in the Applicant's response to the JNCC's Deadline 2 submission (REP3-036) and in the Applicant's response to the JNCC's Deadline 5 submission (REP6-091) justifying why it is confident that the assessment of the seapens and burrowing megafauna communities IEF (magnitude of impact of low and sensitivity of receptors of medium) and the resulting conclusion of minor adverse significance from habitat loss/disturbance is sufficiently precautionary for the habitat present within the Mona Array Area.

2.17.2.10 Following the submission of additional information by the Applicant in the Applicant's Deadline 4 submission, 'Response to JNCC ExQ1 Responses' (REP4-062; reference REP3-084.5), the JNCC agreed that a magnitude of low is appropriate for the seapens and burrowing megafauna communities IEF. The JNCC have, however continued to advise that a sensitivity of high should be applied to the seapens and burrowing megafauna communities IEF and that the resulting conclusion for the assessment of habitat loss/disturbance to this IEF should be moderate adverse significance and not minor adverse as concluded by the Applicant in Volume 2, Chapter 2: Benthic subtidal and intertidal ecology

(F2.2 F02). The Applicant has met with the JNCC on 04 September 2024 and 14 October 2024 to provide further justification for their classification of the sensitivity for the seapens and burrowing megafauna communities IEF as medium rather than high. Further to this, in the Applicant's response to the JNCC's ExQ1 Responses (REP3-084.5 in REP4-062), the Applicant considered the recommendation from the JNCC of adopting a sensitivity of high for the seapens and burrowing megafauna communities IEF to further address JNCC's concerns. In this response, and also in the Applicant's Deadline 6 response (REP6-091), the Applicant presented full justification for why, if a sensitivity of high had been adopted in the Applicant's assessment, this would not have altered the overall conclusion of minor adverse significance for this IEF. The Applicant does not agree with the JNCC's recommendation that to adopt a 'worst-case scenario approach' means taking the higher end of a range of significance (i.e. automatically selecting moderate when the option is a range of minor to moderate), and nor is this consistent with the EIA methodology outlined in Volume 1, Chapter 5: Environmental Impact Assessment methodology (APP-052).

2.17.2.11 In summary, the Applicant considers that a sufficiently precautionary approach has been adopted with respect to the assessment of the seapens and burrowing megafauna communities IEF for the following key reasons:

- The habitat present within the Mona Array Area bore a negligible resemblance to the OSPAR habitat for the following reasons:
  - The maximum burrow density recorded was highly precautionary because total burrows per image were not recorded, rather burrows were assigned a range (i.e. 1 – 5, 6 – 10 etc.) and, to determine the maximum burrow density, the top end of the range bracket was used to obtain the maximum total number of burrows and from that the density then calculated.
  - The majority of burrows were small (49% within the 0 – 1 cm size range category).
  - Gravelly sediments predominated which do not typically support this habitat.
  - Burrowing fauna not associated with the 'seapens and burrowing megafauna communities' habitat locations were observed including *Ceriantharia* and *Ensis*.
  - There was no evidence of any species associated with 'seapens and burrowing megafauna communities' habitat.
  - No seapens were observed during the surveys.
- The habitat is a broadscale habitat recorded across the east Irish Sea.
- The Applicant committed to a number of project refinements post the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), which are detailed in sections 4.10 and 4.11 of Volume 1, Chapter 4: Site Selection and Consideration of Alternatives (F1.4 F03), to reduce the impact to benthic receptors.
- Impacts to the habitat from temporary habitat loss/disturbance will be intermittent over the four-year construction phase.
- The predicted recovery of the key component of the community recorded in the Mona Array Area (i.e. the burrowing megafauna component of the habitat) to temporary habitat disturbance is medium (i.e. recovery in two to 10 years) and so the habitat, as recorded, is predicted to recover.

2.17.2.12 In the JNCC's Deadline 6 submission (REP6-135), and in light of the JNCC's view that a significance of moderate adverse effect should be concluded for the impact of habitat loss/disturbance for the seapens and burrowing megafauna communities IEF, the JNCC have recommended a mitigation measure is included such that, if seapens are noted during pre-construction surveys they should be avoided as much as practically possible during the subsequent proposed operations. For the reasons outlined above, and in the detailed written submissions provided by the Applicant during examination, the Applicant does not consider that mitigation for the seapens and burrowing megafauna communities IEF is warranted or proportionate given the Applicant's confidence that the effects will be no greater than minor adverse significance on this IEF, and that the assessment presented in Volume 2, Chapter 2: Benthic Subtidal and Intertidal Ecology (F2.2 F02) is sufficiently robust and representative of a reasonable worst case scenario for the habitats recorded in the Mona Array Area. The Applicant, however, met with the JNCC on 9 January 2025 and confirmed that notwithstanding the above, it is willing to accept the requested commitment from the JNCC to avoid seapens identified in the pre-construction surveys, where possible. The Applicant has, therefore, included the following commitment in the Mitigation and Monitoring Schedule (J10 F07) "if seapens are noted during the pre-construction surveys they should be avoided as much as practically possible during the subsequent proposed operations" which aligns with the wording proposed by the JNCC in their Deadline 6 Submission (REP6-135).

2.17.2.13 Subject to the Applicant securing this commitment at Deadline 7, the JNCC confirmed in the final SoCG (S_D1_15 F03) that the adequacy of the proposed mitigation measures for offshore benthic ecology could be agreed.

Consideration of effects within offshore and inshore waters

2.17.2.14 In the JNCC's relevant representation (RR-033) and written representation (REP1-066), concerns were raised that little distinction had been made to the assessment between inshore and offshore waters, particularly with regards to the impacts of sandwave clearance on benthic receptors. To address the JNCC's concerns the Applicant provided indicative numbers for the temporary habitat disturbance associated with sandwave clearance within inshore and offshore waters of the Mona Offshore Cable Corridor in the Applicant's Response to the JNCC Deadline 2 Submission (REP3-036). This matter is now agreed in the final SoCG between the Applicant and the JNCC (S_D1_15 F03).

2.17.3 Marine mammals

2.17.3.1 Volume 2, Chapter 4: Marine mammals (F2.4 F02) presents the Applicant's assessment of the potential effects on marine mammals as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project, during the construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases. Volume 2, Chapter 4: Marine mammals (F2.4 F02) assessed injury and disturbance from underwater sound generated during piling, site investigation surveys, UXO clearance, vessel use and other (non-piling) sound producing activities, wind turbine operation, injury due to increased risk of collision with vessel and effects on marine mammals due to changes in prey availability. The Applicant has considered both potential positive and

negative effects on marine mammals for the Mona Offshore Wind Project, in accordance with (NPS EN-3 paragraph 2.8.102 – 2.8.103).

2.17.3.2 In the absence of mitigation, all assessed impacts were concluded to be not significant in EIA terms (minor adverse or negligible from the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone, except for injury to harbour porpoise from elevated underwater sound from high order UXO clearance (moderate adverse). Cumulatively, all assessed impacts were concluded to be not significant in EIA terms (minor adverse or negligible), except for injury to harbour porpoise from elevated underwater sound from high order UXO clearance (moderate adverse) and bottlenose dolphin from elevated underwater sound during piling (moderate adverse in the context of the Irish Sea Management Unit). The Applicant has committed to a range of mitigation measures, including a Marine Mammal Mitigation Protocol (MMMP) (the final version to be in accordance with the Outline MMMP (REP5-032)), Measures to minimise disturbance to marine mammals and rafting birds from transiting vessels (REP5-030) as part of the Environmental Management Plan (EMP), and an Underwater Sound Management Strategy (UWSMS). The purpose of the UWSMS in addition to the MMMP and the EMP is to reduce the magnitude of any potential significant impacts such that there will be no residual significant effects from the project alone, thereby reducing the contribution to cumulative effects. NRW (A) has confirmed in the final SoCG (S_D1_12 F03) that the UWSMS is appropriate to secure the reduction of the magnitude of impacts to an acceptable level, and the JNCC also agrees with this for all impacts aside from UXO clearance (S_D1_15 F03) due to their overarching position in respect of this matter (see paragraph 2.17.3.3 *et seq*. below). The Applicant will continue engagement with NRW (A) and the JNCC in developing the final UWSMS post-consent.

Inclusion of UXO Clearance in the DCO

2.17.3.3 As outlined in the Examination Progress Tracker (S_PD_4 F04), the JNCC has made detailed representations during the course of the Mona Examination stating its position that unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance should not be included in the Draft DCO/DML. The Applicant provided a detailed response to JNCC's representations in a UXO Clearance Position Statement at Deadline 4 (REP4-086), which sought to respond comprehensively to the concerns raised regarding the robustness of the Maximum Design Scenario (MDS) and assessment, the securing of appropriate controls and mitigation measures and the post-consent process with respect to validating the assumptions and conclusions of the Environmental Statement as well as finalising the mitigation plans. Despite this, the JNCC has maintained its position that UXO clearance should not be included as a licensable activity in the DML and standalone NRW Marine Licence.

2.17.3.4 In response to a first written question from the Examining Authority (Q1.17.9), the JNCC confirmed that whilst their preference is that all UXO clearance is excluded from the DCO/DML, they would be supportive of UXO clearance under the DCO/DML being restricted to low order clearance methods only providing that it is clearly stated that should high order clearance be required, it will be subject to a separate marine licence application (REP3-084). The JNCC also stated in its written representation (REP1-066) that "We recommend that only low noise methods of clearance are allowed and a commitment in the DCO that

if high order clearance is required, it will be requested via a separate marine licence application" (paragraph 93, part h)).

2.17.3.5 Whilst the Applicant's has committed to the implementation of a mitigation hierarchy which prioritises low-order UXO clearance methods (see REP5-032) and is approach is agreed with NRW (A) (REP3-093), the Applicant committed at Deadline 5 to the use of low-order UXO clearance (i.e. UXO clearance method which does not seek to detonate the UXO) only through the DCO. Consequently, Schedule 14 of the Draft DCO (C1 F06) was updated to secure the commitment that UXO clearance will only be undertaken under the DCO using low-order methods. As outlined in the Marine Licence Principles Document (J9 F05), this commitment is also expected to be secured in the standalone NRW marine licence (ML). Should there be a requirement to undertake UXO clearance using high-order methods (i.e. UXO clearance method, which intentionally seeks to detonate the UXO), the Applicant will apply for a standalone ML to cover this activity. Whilst the statutory nature conservation bodies (SNCBs) have welcomed this commitment, it has not altered JNCC's position on the inclusion of UXO clearance in the DCO.

2.17.3.6 During the course of the Mona Examination, the Applicant has sought to consider the representations made by the JNCC carefully and has taken significant action to obtain common ground in respect of this matter. The DCO regime, as set out within the Planning Act 2008, is designed to remove the need for Applicants for nationally significant infrastructure projects to obtain multiple consents from various authorities. Instead, the necessary consents, powers and rights can be included within the DCO as a 'one-stop shop', including a dML. Whilst not included in all offshore wind farm DCOs, there is precedent for UXO clearance to be included in DCO/DMLs; for example, East Anglia One North and East Anglia Two (both of which are located wholly within the Southern North Sea Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for harbour porpoise) were both consented in March 2022 with UXO clearance included within the DCOs as made by the Secretary of State.

2.17.3.7 The Mona Array Area is located 22.58 km from the nearest SAC designated for a marine mammal feature (North Anglesey Marine /Gogledd Môn Forol Special Area of Conservation (SAC)). The Applicant's position is that the MDS for UXO clearance assessed in Volume 2, Chapter 4: Marine mammals (F2.3 F02) presents sufficient information to inform the assessment of UXO clearance for the Mona Offshore Wind Project and that measures provided in the outline Marine Mammal Mitigation Protocol (REP5-032) and Underwater Sound Management Strategy (REP5-028) will be sufficient to reduce the risk of injury for all marine mammal species to not significant in EIA terms and that, in HRA terms, adverse effect on integrity can be ruled out for sites designated for marine mammal features. In respect of UXO clearance, the Applicant and NRW (A) agree on the assessment methodology, conclusions of the Environmental Statement (Volume 2, Chapter 4: Marine mammals (F2.3 F02)) and ISAA (HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part Two: SACs Assessments (E1.2 F02)) as well as the adequacy of the mitigation proposed (S_D1_12 F03). Although the JNCC have confirmed agreement with the ISAA conclusions and inclusion within the Environmental Statement (REP1-066, paragraph 87), agreement has not been reached on the adequacy of the MDS, the EIA conclusions and mitigation (S_D1_15 F03) due to the retention of low-order clearance within the Draft DCO/DML (C1 F08).

2.17.3.8 The Applicant, NRW, and the JNCC agree that there are no HRA concerns with respect to low-order UXO clearance. Furthermore, the Applicant and NRW also agree that there are no significant effects in EIA terms from the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone or cumulatively with other projects (see S_D1_12 F03 and S_D1_15 F03).

2.17.3.9 In light of the urgent need for low-carbon energy infrastructure, it is vital that developments such as the Mona Offshore Wind Project can come forward as quickly and efficiently as possible without the risk of significant project delays resulting from a need to obtain separate consent and licences which can have an unspecified determination period (as indicated in NRW's response to the Examining Authority's second written question, Q2.17.2 in REP5-100). This uncertainty can present significant challenges to project scheduling in the pre-construction period, when there are significant and complex interlinkages between engineering activities to finalise the project design and the preparation and discharge of pre-commencement conditions. Any uncertainty in the pre-construction programme has the potential to significant impact the timely delivery of the Mona Offshore Wind Project.

2.17.3.10 The JNCC's more recent represents in Examination (REP5-096 and REP6-135) make reference to the Government's updated Joint Position Statement on UXO clearance which is due to be published imminently. This guidance is expected to strengthen the requirement to provide more information to support licence applications for UXO clearance. At the time of writing, this guidance has not been published; however, the Application has confirmed in previous submissions that where relevant, full regard will be given to this in developing the UXO method statement and final MMMP post-consent and highlights that in accordance with Condition 21 of the DML (C1 F08), this will be done in consultation with the relevant SNCB (e.g. JNCC) and the MCA, respectively. It is entirely in the Applicant's interest to submit a detailed and comprehensive method statement and MMMP, informed by UXO surveys, to ensure timely approval by the licensing authority. The Applicant, therefore, welcomes the JNCC's agreement that investigative UXO surveys should be sought through the Draft DCO (C1 F08) and standalone NRW ML (REP6-135).

2.17.3.11 In summary, the Applicant has made a clear commitment to prioritising low noise clearance methods and using high-order clearance only where necessary in accordance with SNCB advice and current best practice guidance (Defra, 2022). The Applicant considers that UXO clearance has been rigorously assessed in the DCO application, assuming a robust worst-case scenario and the necessary commitments secured to ensure any significant effects are avoided. The MMMP and UWSMS approach is purposely designed to enable the Applicant to refine mitigations (if required) following detailed design and investigative UXO surveys to determine further details about the specific nature of any UXO potential requiring clearance and also enables the latest guidance or policy to be considered during the preparation of the final MMMP and UWSMS post consent, which must be approved in writing by the licensing authority in consultation with the relevant stakeholders (including the JNCC). In light of the Applicant's commitments, it is considered entirely appropriate to retain the inclusion of low-order UXO clearance in the DCO/DML to enable efficient and rapid delivery of the Project in accordance with the policy objectives set out in NPS EN-1.

Assessment of injury and disturbance to marine mammals from elevated underwater sound due to vessel use

2.17.3.12 NRW (A) raised a concern in their Relevant Representations (RR-011) and Written Representation (REP1-056) with the approach adopted for the assessment of injury and disturbance to marine mammals from elevated underwater sound due to vessel use. Whilst a number of representations were made by NRW (A) and the Applicant during the course of examination in respect of this matter, NRW (A) agreed that their concerns did not materially affect the conclusion of the assessment (no significant effect) (see REP2-090) and was a methodological discussion only but requested further justification from the Applicant. NRW (A) confirmed early on in their Written Representation (REP1-056) that mitigation measures were suitable to mitigate the impact (i.e. Measures to minimise disturbance to marine mammals and rafting birds (REP5-031)) and therefore agreed with the conclusions of the assessment. NRW (A) questioned basing the assessment on static impact radii rather than an elongated buffer footprint approach, or other alternative approaches (using the modelled ranges or a dose response approach). The Applicant maintained its position that summing the impact ranges for all vessels would not be realistic and the elongated buffer approach would overestimate the effect of disturbance. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the assessment based the potential numbers of animals potential impacted (and, as such, the assessment of magnitude) on the maximum disturbance ranges presented in peer-reviewed scientific studies of responses from harbour porpoise in the field, in addition to presenting the radii from conservative underwater sound modelling of the MDS for vessels (based on precautionary cumulative sound exposure levels based on 24 hours of continuous operation) to be utilised at Mona Offshore Wind Project (therefore including proportionate levels of precaution in the assessment). Following further discussion, both parties agreed that ‘a single point in time’ is an accurate and appropriate representation of the assessment methodology and the Applicant included this clarification at Deadline 5 (REP5-061) with NRW confirming, based on this Deadline 5 submission, the matter is resolved. This agreement is reflected in the final SoCG (see row NRW.MM.10 in S_D1_12 F03). The JNCC agreed with NRW (A)’s initial concerns raised (as submitted in their Deadline 1 Submission - Issue Specific Hearing 2 (ISH2) Action Point Responses (REP1-065)) but provided no further commentary on this matter at Deadline 2 onwards and therefore the Applicant considered this matter resolved.

Adequacy and security of mitigation measures – underwater sound impacts from piling & UXO clearance

2.17.3.13 Volume 2, Chapter 4: Marine Mammals (F2.4 F02) considers direct and indirect potential impacts on important marine mammals receptors, relevant marine protected areas, SACs designated for marine mammals and Marine Nature Reserves (MNRs) in Manx waters, both alone and cumulatively in accordance with the appropriate policy for wind farm EIAs and HRA assessments, and details the primary and tertiary mitigation relevant for marine mammals adopted as part of the Mona Offshore Wind Project (in accordance with the IEMA guidance (IEMA, 2024)) in line with NPS EN-3 (paragraph 2.8.52 and 2.8.53). The Applicant has also implemented an Underwater Sound Management Strategy which establishes a process of investigating options to manage underwater sound levels in consultation with the licensing authority and SNCBs

and agreeing, prior to construction of those works which would lead to underwater sound impacts, which mitigation measures will be implemented to reduce impacts such that there will be no residual significant effect from the Mona Offshore Wind Project. This UWSMS includes consideration of noise abatement technologies, if required following project refinements post consent, in accordance with NPS EN-3 paragraph 2.8.5.3.

2.17.3.14 The JNCC raised that noise abatement systems (NAS) could be given more priority in the UWSMS and MMMP. The Applicant highlighted its commitment to considering NAS as part of UWSMS, and has updated the Outline MMMP (REP5-032) and Outline UWSMS (REP5-028) in order to clarify where NAS fits into the mitigation measures and that, under the IEMA guidance (2024) it is classified as a 'secondary measure' (defined as 'actions that will require further activity in order to achieve the anticipated outcome', i.e. further mitigation). When updated regulatory guidance on NAS is released the Applicant has committed to review and align the final UWSMS accordingly. The JNCC welcomed the changes and agreed that sufficient assurance is now provided in the Outline MMMP (see the SoCG between Mona and the JNCC (S_D1_15 F03).

2.17.3.15 NRW (A) requested further consideration of the scale of Acoustic Deterrent Device (ADD) use in the assessment of injury to marine mammals from elevated underwater sound due to piling. The Applicant highlighted the assessment used an indicative 30 minute ADD activation which is not fixed, and agreed with NRW (A) on the need for proportionate and judiciary application of ADDs and both parties considered this matter agreed (see NRW(A)'s confirmation in NRW's Deadline 3 Submission - Cover Letter REP3-090).

2.17.3.16 NRW (A) also suggested adoption of a standard ISO approach to the monitoring requirement of the first four piles to be installed post-consent, and the Applicant confirmed at Deadline 6 (REP6-096) that it will adhere to the requirements and recommendations as set out in ISO18406:2017 (Measurement of radiated underwater sound from percussive pile driving) and ISO18405:2017 (Underwater acoustics Terminology), as requested by NRW (A). As such, this matter is resolved.

2.17.3.17 In their Relevant Representation (RR-033), the JNCC recommended the use of soft start chargers should be removed as part of the measures outlined in the Marine Mammal Mitigation Protocol (MMMP) (REP5-032). NRW (A) made a similar recommendation in their written representation (REP1-056) and Deadline 6 Submission (REP6-137). The Applicant requested guidance for alternatives during the seventh marine mammal expert working group meeting, and the JNCC advised that they provide advice for projects on a case-by-case basis and did not respond further on this matter during examination. The Applicant emphasises that soft start chargers are specific mitigation for high order clearance only, which is no longer included in the DCO and NRW ML, and therefore scare charges will not be used for low order clearance. The final MMMP and UWSMS will be updated post-consent to reflect this, in consultation with relevant stakeholders and thus, the inclusion of soft start chargers in the Outline MMMP (REP5-032) is not a material concern.

2.17.3.18 Other minor issues raised included collision risk, inter-related effects, impulsive noise at range, impact range from 'sparkers' during site investigation surveys and clarification on the maximum design scenario for offshore substation platforms (OSPs). Inter-related effects All matters were resolved to the

satisfaction of NRW (A) and JNCC by Deadline 6 or earlier and this is reflected in the relevant SoCG's (S_D1_12 F03 and S_D1_15 F03).

2.17.4 Offshore ornithology

2.17.4.1 Volume 2, Chapter 5: Offshore ornithology (F2.5 F04) presents the Applicant's assessment of the potential effects on offshore ornithology receptors from the Mona Offshore Wind Project. It considers the potential impact of the Mona Offshore Project seawards of MLWS during the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases. The assessments within Volume 2, Chapter 5: Offshore ornithology (F2.5 F04) included consideration of any relevant mitigation measures as outlined in Table 5.23 of Volume 2, Chapter 5: Offshore ornithology (F2.5 F04). Overall, it was concluded that there will be no significant adverse effects on offshore ornithology receptors arising from the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone or cumulatively during the construction, operations and maintenance or decommissioning phases.

2.17.4.2 The Applicant considers that a suitably robust assessment of the Mona Offshore Wind Project for offshore ornithology has been undertaken in Volume 2, Chapter 5: Offshore ornithology (F2.5 F04) as required by the Overarching National Policy Statement (NPS) for Energy (EN-3; see paragraph 5.4.22) and the NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3; paragraphs 2.8.136 to 2.8.146 and 2.8.240 to 2.8.242).

2.17.4.3 All matters relating to effects on offshore ornithology receptors are agreed, or not agreed but not material, with NRW (A) and the JNCC as confirmed in the SoCGs between the Applicant and NRW (A) and JNCC (S_D1_12 F03 and S_D1_15 F03 respectively).

2.17.4.4 The Applicant has welcomed comments from all Interested Parties (IPs) through the planning process, but in particular from NRW (A) and the JNCC on the Applicant's offshore ornithology application documents and examination submissions and is pleased that progress has been made to clarify and resolve their concerns.

Clarity of application documents and errata

2.17.4.5 The Applicant received a number of comments in Interested Parties (IPs) relevant and written representations highlighting that the offshore ornithology Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) documents submitted with the application were difficult to follow and contained a number of errata. The Applicant has sought to acknowledge and proactively address errata related to the offshore ornithology application materials and has made a number of submissions in respect of this (PDA-008, REP1-044, REP3-073 and REP4-088). The relevant application documents were updated at Deadline 2 to address errata and provide IPs clarity on the assessments as requested in the Examining Authority's Rule 17 letter (dated 15 August 2024) (PD-012). Further updates to the Environmental Statement chapter and relevant Annexes were also submitted at Deadline 4 (REP4-007 and REP4-009). As set out in the Update on offshore ornithology principal matters (REP6-098) submitted at Deadline 6, in order to draw all the application and examination materials for offshore ornithology together and to address the remaining minor outstanding matters between the Applicant and the IPs, the

Applicant has undertaken a final update to Volume 2 Chapter 5: Offshore Ornithology (F2.5 F04) and the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part Three: SPAs and Ramsar sites Assessments (E1.3 F03) to repackage the relevant examination materials into a series of Annexes, which have been appended to the Environmental Statement chapter and ISAA at Deadline 7.

2.17.4.6 The Applicant has also submitted an Offshore Ornithology Final Position Paper (S_D7_6) at Deadline 7 to provide clarity on the final offshore ornithology assessments contained within the EIA and HRA documents.

Additional supporting information

2.17.4.7 Following submissions from NRW (A) and the JNCC written representation (REP1-056 and REP1-066 respectively) at Deadlines 1 and subsequent submissions (REP2-096, REP2-097, REP2-098, REP2-099 and REP2-100) at Deadline 2, the Applicant submitted the Offshore Ornithology Supporting Information in line with SNCB advice at Deadline 3 (REP3-059) which was subsequently revised at Deadline 4 (REP4-030) following further SNCB feedback. This note represented the application material in a format discussed with the SNCBs as well as the presentation of apportioned impacts to designated sites adopting a range-based approach (e.g. considering the full range of displacement and mortality rates recommended by the SNCBs for the assessment of displacement).

2.17.4.8 The Applicant maintains that the scenario of 50% displacement and 1% mortality for auk species, black-legged kittiwake and Manx shearwater presented in the application documents is both robust and precautionary for the purposes of the assessment. The Applicant does not consider that the most conservative scenarios advised by the SNCBs and presented within the Offshore Ornithology Supporting Information in line with SNCB advice (REP4-030) (i.e. 70% displacement and 10% mortality rate) are a realistic worst-case scenario. The Applicant notes that in their written representations at Deadline 1, both the JNCC and NRW (A) stated (see NRW (A)'s written representation (REP1-056) and the JNCC's written representation (REP1-066)) that they would not base their consideration of impact solely on the worst-case assessment scenario but would consider the predicted impacts for the full range of advised assessment scenarios.

2.17.4.9 The Applicant also highlights that the JNCC was the only SNCB involved in the Expert Working Groups for the Mona Offshore Wind Project that requested the Applicant provide a displacement assessment for black-legged kittiwake. Both NRW (A) and Natural England have stated there is insufficient evidence to undertake a displacement assessment for black-legged kittiwake (See D3.1 of Technical Engagement Plan Appendices - Part 1 (A to E) APP-042). As such, displacement assessments have not been undertaken for most previously consented projects in English and Welsh waters. As requested by the JNCC (see the JNCC's written representation (REP1-066)), a displacement assessment for black-legged kittiwake is included in the Offshore ornithology ISAA supporting information (E1.3.1) submitted at Deadline 7 and considers 70% displacement and 10% mortality. NatureScot advises an assessment for black-legged kittiwake based on 30% displacement and 1-3% mortality for Scottish offshore wind projects (NatureScot, 2023), which is considerably lower than the worst-case scenario requested by the JNCC and yields very similar impact estimates to the Applicant's scenario of 50% displacement and 1%

mortality. A 30% displacement and 3% mortality scenario is also presented in the Offshore ornithology ISAA supporting information (E1.3.1) for comparison. The level of assessment for black-legged kittiwake presented in the Offshore ornithology ISAA supporting information (E1.3.1) far exceeds the requirements and statutory advice of Natural England and NRW and is at the upper bounds of what would be considered scientifically robust by NatureScot.

2.17.4.10 The Applicant therefore maintains that the scenarios presented in Volume 2, Chapter 5: Offshore ornithology (F2.5 F04) and the HRA Stage 2 Information to Support an Appropriate Assessment Part Three: Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites Assessments (E1.3 F03) are sufficiently robust to conclude no adverse effects on all sites beyond reasonable scientific doubt and no significant effects in EIA terms.

Mona Offshore Wind Project apportioning during the non-breeding season

2.17.4.11 At Deadline 3, NRW (A) and the JNCC (REP3-090 and REP3-086, respectively), expressed uncertainty about the process by which the age-class proportions have been included within the non-breeding season apportioning for the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone by the Applicant. The Applicant provided the Offshore Ornithology Apportioning Clarification Note (REP4-042) at Deadline 4 to provide further information on the non-breeding season apportioning method used for the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone assessment compared to the approach recommended by NRW (A) and the JNCC. This comparison showed that the Applicant's apportioning method for the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone assessment in the non-breeding season resulted in greater impacts being apportioned to each designated site when compared to the approach recommended by NRW (A) and the JNCC and is, therefore, more precautionary. The comparison also shows that for the in-combination assessment, the Applicant's approach resulted in the same predicted impacts being apportioned during the non-breeding season as the SNCBs advised approach. In their Deadline 4 submission (Appendix 1 to NRWs Comments on Submissions received at Deadline 3 (REP4-105)), NRW (A) acknowledge that 'the Applicant's approach to calculating non-breeding season apportionment values is precautionary' and were satisfied to conclude no potential for adverse effects on Welsh SPAs for the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone. This matter is therefore agreed in the final SoCGs with NRW(A) and the JNCC (See row NRW.OO.14 in S_D1_12 F03 and row JNCC.OO.14 in S_D1_15 F03, respectively).

Age class proportions during the breeding season within the in-combination assessments

2.17.4.12 During the third expert working group (Section D.4. of the Technical Engagement Plan Appendices Part 1 (A to E) (APP-042)) NRW(A) and the JNCC requested that where no site-specific data is available on the ratio of adults to juveniles/immatures recorded during site-specific surveys, then 100% of the birds should be considered adults. The Applicant followed the SNCBs advice within the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone assessment within the application documents. In light of the absence of site-specific data on age-class proportions from the majority of other offshore wind projects considered in the in-combination assessment, the Applicant used the stable-age structure from Furness (2015) in the Application documents to calculate adult impacts for all

projects rather than assuming that 100% of the birds are adults. This approach was also taken within the Offshore ornithology supporting information in line with SNCB advice submitted at Deadline 3 (REP3-059) and Deadline 4 (REP4-030) which were provided to address a number of other comments from NRW(A) and the JNCC.

2.17.4.13 Following further engagement with the SNCBs on 22 November 2024, the SNCBs confirmed that they were unable to advise on the potential for AEoI in-combination without seeing an assessment that assumes 100% of the birds are adults during the breeding season. Therefore, an in-combination assessment for the relevant sites and species as requested by the SNCBs was provided at Deadline 5 in the Offshore Ornithology Additional Supporting In-combination Assessment Information in line with SNCB Advice (REP5-074). The Applicant has compiled the additional supporting information submitted into examination into the offshore ornithology ISAA Supporting Information (Document Reference E1.3.1). This matter is therefore agreed in the final SoCGs with NRW(A) and the JNCC (See row NRW.OO.14 in Mona and Natural Resource Wales (Advisory) Offshore SoCG (S_D1_12 F03) and row JNCC.OO.14 in Mona and Joint Nature Conservation Committee SoCG (S_D1_15 F03). Both NRW and the JNCC have been able to conclude that there will be no adverse effect on integrity for SPAs designated for offshore ornithology features for any impacts from the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone and in-combination (see row NRW.HRA.37, NRW.HRA.38 and NRW.HRA.39 in Mona and Natural Resource Wales (Advisory) Offshore SoCG (S_D1_12 F03) and row JNCC.OO.31 and JNCC.OO.33 in Mona and Joint Nature Conservation Committee SoCG (S_D1_15 F03).

2.17.4.14 The Applicant considers using the stable-age structure from Furness (2015) to be the most biologically realistic (rather than assuming 100% of unaged birds are adults during the breeding season) given that populations are made of a significant proportion of immature birds whilst also remaining sufficiently precautionary. The approach to assume 100% of unaged birds are adults has required the Applicant re-calculate the impacts from other consented offshore wind projects included in the in-combination assessment from what was included in their applications to assume that all birds are 100% adults (where there is no site-specific age-class data). It is therefore the Applicant's position that the assessments presented within offshore ornithology ISAA Supporting Information (Document Reference E1.3.1) hyperinflate the potential impacts and do not use the 'best-scientific evidence' on the age-class structures and displacement rates. The ratios of adults to immatures from Furness (2015) used by the Applicant within the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part Three: SPAs and Ramsar sites Assessments (E1.3 F03), are widely used in offshore wind farm EIAs and HRAs and Plan Level HRAs including for Round 4 and 5 and is considered by the Applicant to be the most robust scientific evidence available. Therefore, the Applicant highlights that while the SNCB advised approach has been provided within offshore ornithology ISAA Supporting Information (Document Reference E1.3.1), the Applicant maintains that assessment provided within the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part Three: SPAs and Ramsar sites Assessments (E1.3 F03) is sufficiently robust to conclude no adverse effects on all sites beyond reasonable scientific doubt.

2.17.4.15 Consideration of new information on other projects and plans made available after application.

2.17.4.16 Following the Examining Authority's first written questions (Q1.0.1, Q1.10.15 and Q1.19.6), the Applicant undertook a review of new and amended assessment material that has been published for projects considered in the Mona Offshore Wind Project CEA, and new projects not previously considered in the CEA which have information that has entered the public domain since November 2023 (the cut off used for the application which was to be three months before submission). The Applicant submitted the Review of Offshore ornithology CEA and In-Combination Assessment at Deadline 4 (REP4-027). The Applicant determined in light of this review that the conclusions of the CEA assessments presented in Volume 2, Chapter 5: Offshore ornithology submitted at Deadline 4 (REP4-007) and the in-combination assessment presented in the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part Three: SPAs and Ramsar sites Assessments submitted at Deadline 2 (E1.3 F03), would not change considering the revised or new information available for the offshore wind projects considered with the CEA.

2.17.4.17 Following a meeting on 22 November 2024, NRW (A) and the JNCC were unable to rule out potential for AEoI for Skomer, Skokholm and the Seas off Pembrokeshire/Sgomer, Sgogwm a Moroedd Penfro SPA, Grassholm SPA and Glannau Aberdaron ac Ynys Enlli/Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey Island SPA. This was, in part, because the SNCBs considered that the Applicant's CEA and in-combination assessments should be updated to include new or revised impacts estimates available for other offshore wind projects within the cumulative and in-combination assessments that have recently submitted consent applications after the Mona Offshore Wind Project application (namely Morgan Generation Assets, Morecambe Offshore Wind Farm: Generation Assets, and Llŷr 1 Floating Offshore Wind Farm). It is not standard practice to provide detailed updated assessment calculations during Examination to account for new applications or information unless the new information is likely to significantly alter the conclusions of the assessments. Notwithstanding this, the Applicant has included these projects in the cumulative and in-combination assessments within Volume 2, Chapter 5: Offshore ornithology (F2.5 F04), the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part Three: SPAs and Ramsar sites Assessments (E1.3 F03) and Offshore ornithology ISAA Supporting Information (E1.3.1) submitted at Deadline 7. These updates do not alter the conclusions of the Applicant's assessments that there is no potential for cumulative significant effects in EIA terms and no potential for AEoI from the Mona Offshore Wind Project in-combination with other projects and plans beyond reasonable scientific doubt.

2.17.4.18 This cumulative and in-combination assessments are now agreed in the final SoCGs with NRW (A) and the JNCC (See row NRW.HRA.34 and NRW.OO.17 in S_D1_12 F03 and row JNCC.OO.18 and JNCC.OO.29 in S_D1_15 F03, respectively).

Consideration of the gap filled historical projects in the cumulative and in-combination assessments

2.17.4.19 NRW (A) and the JNCC's relevant representations (RR-011 and RR-033, respectively) and written representations (REP1-056 and REP1-066/REP1-067, respectively) commented that the qualitative assessment included in Volume 2, Chapter 5: Offshore Ornithology submitted at Application (APP-057) and the HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part Three: SPAs and Ramsar sites Assessments (APP-033) did not adequately account for the impacts of historical projects and that a quantitative assessment is required. In response to the SNCBs comments, the

Ornithology Cumulative Effects Assessment and In-combination Gap filling Historical Projects Technical Note (REP3-044) was presented at Deadline 3 to provide the indicative gap-filled numbers for historical offshore wind projects. This note was updated at Deadline 4 (REP4-028) along with the Offshore Ornithology Supporting Information in line with SNCB Advice (REP4-030) to provide a complete and comprehensive in-combination assessment for the full range of assessment scenarios advised by the SNCBs which included the gap-filled projects.

2.17.4.20 At Deadline 5, the Ørsted IPs highlighted that their understanding that no additional consents are required to continue operating Barrow Offshore Windfarm beyond 2026 (see Comments on Deadline 4 Submissions (REP5-117)) and therefore, challenged the Applicant's justification to exclude this project from the Ornithology Cumulative Effects Assessment and In-combination Gap filling Historical Projects Technical Note (REP4-028) based on the assumption that Barrow would be decommissioned before the Mona Offshore Wind Project could be commissioned as its operational licence expires in 2026. The Applicant also believes that North Hoyle (which is also a project in the East Irish Sea) is in a similar position with respect to the potential for life extension. Considering the comments received from the Ørsted IPs and for completeness, the Applicant has included indicative gap-fill numbers for both these two projects, where relevant, in the final Volume 2 Chapter 5: Offshore Ornithology (F2.5 F04) and HRA Stage 2 ISAA Part Three: SPAs and Ramsar sites Assessments (E1.3 F03) at Deadline 7.

2.17.4.21 These additional calculations do not alter the conclusions of the Applicant's assessments that there is no potential for cumulative significant effects in EIA terms and no potential for AEoI from the Mona Offshore Wind Project in-combination with other projects and plans beyond reasonable scientific doubt on designated ornithological features.

2.17.4.22 The cumulative and in-combination assessments are now agreed in the final SoCGs with NRW (A) and the JNCC (See row NRW.HRA.34 and NRW.OO.17 in S_D1_12 F03 and row JNCC.OO.21 in S_D1_15 F03, respectively).

Differences from the Morgan Offshore Wind Project Generation Assets Cumulative Assessment

2.17.4.23 The Applicant received minor comments from NRW (A) and the JNCC requesting that the Applicant align the cumulative numbers for other projects to be aligned between the Mona Offshore Wind Project, the Morgan Offshore Wind Project: Generation Assets and Morecambe Offshore Wind Farm: Generation Assets assessments. For the species assessed within the Mona Offshore Wind Project application documents, the main differences between Mona Offshore Wind Project and the Morgan Offshore Wind Project: Generation Assets applications are related to the use of the impact estimates and associated data from documentation that was available at the time of writing (e.g. the Mona Offshore Wind Project assessment used the Morgan Generation Assets PEIR numbers as the Morgan Generation Assets application was submitted after the Mona Offshore Wind Project). A collaborative exercise was undertaken by Mona Offshore Wind Project and Morgan Generation Assets pre-application to align the population estimates and predicted impacts from other projects used in both applications. The numbers used, therefore, broadly align between the two

projects for most species. Any differences in the abundance estimates between the two projects are not considered to materially alter the assessment outcomes.

2.17.4.24 At Deadline 6, NRW(A) welcomed the alignment undertaken by the Applicant with the Morgan Generation Assets on the CEA to ensure the numbers are as consistent as possible (see NRWs Deadline 6 Submission (REP6-137)). The Applicant provided further detail on the efforts made to align the projects and the differences in the Summary of Principal Offshore Ornithological Matters (REP5-072) at Deadline 5 and the Offshore Ornithology final position statement (S_D7_7) at Deadline 7.

Consideration of the Measures to minimise disturbance to marine mammals and rafting birds from transiting vessels (REP5-030)

2.17.4.25 NRW (A) and the JNCC provided comments on the Measures to Minimise Impacts to Marine Mammals and Rafting Birds from transiting vessels at Deadline 4 (see NRW Comments on Submissions received at Deadline 3 (REP4-105) and JNCC Comments on Minimise Impacts to Marine Mammals and Rafting Birds (REP4-099). Their main comments were querying the extent to which the measures apply to pre-commencement activities, in particular UXO clearance and how the seasonal restriction of export cable activities between 1 November and 31 March in Liverpool Bay SPA/Bae Lerpwl SPA was secured as this commitment is only relevant to the standalone NRW Marine Licence. The Applicant responded to these queries at Deadline 4 and undertook further consultation with NRW (A) and JNCC between Deadline 4 and 5 which resulted in an updated version of the Measures to minimise disturbance to marine mammals and rafting birds from transiting vessels being submitted at Deadline 3 (REP3-020) and Deadline 5 (REP5-030) to address NRW (A) and the JNCC comments.

2.17.4.26 Whilst it is the Applicant's position that AEoI can also be ruled out beyond scientific doubt for the Mona Offshore Wind Project in-combination with other plans and projects (for all sites, features and assessment scenarios considered within the application and examination materials), NRW (A) and the JNCC were unable to confirm their position on AEoI in-combination with respect to Liverpool Bay/Bae Lerpwl SPA at Deadline 5 in response to the Report on the Implications for European Sites (RIES) (REP5-095 and REP5-099). NRW (A)'s and the JNCC's concerns with respect to Liverpool Bay/Bae Lerpwl SPA red-throated diver and common scoter features were also discussed with the Applicant during the meeting on 22 November 2024 and it was established that the SNCB's principal concern related to the potential impact of UXO clearance on features of the SPA during the overwintering period (1 November to 31 March). The Applicant understood this concern applied to both low and high-order UXO clearance.

2.17.4.27 In light of this, the Applicant removed high-order UXO clearance from the draft DCO (C1 F08) at Deadline 5. Furthermore, the Applicant committed to a seasonal restriction on low-order UXO clearance within the Liverpool Bay/Bae Lerpwl SPA between 1 November and 31 March. This commitment is outlined in the Measures to minimise disturbance to marine mammals and rafting birds from transiting vessels (REP5-030) document and the Mitigation and Monitoring Schedule (REP5-026) submitted at Deadline 5 and is expected to be secured via the standalone NRW ML as outlined in the updated Marine Licence Principles Document (REP5-022) submitted at Deadline 5.

2.17.4.28 In light of the Applicant's Deadline 5 submissions, the Applicant, NRW (A) and the JNCC are now agreed that the mitigation measures set out in the Measures to minimise disturbance to marine mammals and rafting birds from transiting vessels (REP5-030) are appropriate to avoid the risk of significant effects or AEoI and that these measures are appropriately secured. The Applicant, NRW (A) and the JNCC are also agreed that adverse effect on integrity of the Liverpool Bay/Bae Lerpwl SPA red-throated diver and common scoter features can be ruled out for the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone and in-combination. These agreements are reflected in the updated SoCGs between the Applicant and both NRW (A) – Offshore (S_D1_12 F03) and the JNCC (S_D1_15 F03).

Assessment and mitigation for great black-backed gulls

2.17.4.29 At Deadline 3, NRW (A) and the JNCC disagreed with the Applicant's conclusion of no significant effects in EIA terms for collision risk on greater black backed gulls cumulatively with other plans and projects (See the JNCCs Comments on Applicant's response to ExQ1 (REP4-098) and paragraph 37 of NRWs Comments on Submissions received at Deadline 3 (REP4-105)). The Applicant maintains that a minor adverse effect is correct and proportionate as detailed within section 1.4.1 of Summary of Principal Offshore Ornithological Matters at Deadline 5 (REP5-072). The Applicant notes and welcomes the comments by JNCC and NRW (A) that the mitigation proposed for the Mona Offshore Wind Project (i.e. increasing the air gap to 34 m above the lowest astronomical tide) is adequate and that further mitigation is not required (See the JNCCs Comments on Applicant's response to ExQ1 (REP4-098) and NRWs Comments on Submissions received at Deadline 3 (REP4-105). Whilst the Applicant and SNCBs do not agree on the conclusions, this is not considered to be material as agreement has been reached that sufficient mitigation has been provided. This matter is therefore not agreed – not material in the final SoCGs with NRW(A) and the JNCC (See row NRW.OO.27 in S_D1_12 F03 and row JNCC.OO.20 S_D1_15 F03, respectively).

Pen y Gogarth / Great Orme's Head SSSI

2.17.4.30 In their written representation (REP1-056), NRW (A) requested a detailed assessment of the potential impacts of the project on the breeding seabird features of Pen-y-Gogarth / Great Orme's Head Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This was addressed through a dedicated submission by the Applicant at Deadline 1 (Offshore Ornithology Assessment of Pen y Gogarth/Great Orme's Head SSSI (REP1-037)), which was subsequently updated at Deadline 4 (REP4-026) in light of NRW (A)'s feedback during examination.

2.17.4.31 At Deadline 5, NRW (A) highlighted that they considered that there is potential a moderate adverse impact on the kittiwake colony of the Pen y Gogarth / Great Orme's Head SSSI cumulatively with other plans and projects (see NRW - Deadline 5 Submission (REP5-098) paragraph 14). NRW (A) agreed with the Applicant that that the Mona Offshore Wind Project alone and cumulatively with other plans and projects is unlikely to have a significant adverse effect (i.e. not greater than minor adverse) for the guillemot and razorbill features of the Pen y Gogarth / Great Orme's Head SSSI. The Applicant maintains that the effect on the kittiwake colony of the Pen y Gogarth / Great Orme's Head SSSI is of minor adverse (not significant in EIA terms) (see Offshore Ornithology Assessment of Pen y Gogarth/Great Orme's Head SSSI (REP4-025)). NRW (A) recognised and

welcomed the commitment already made to raise turbine draught height to 34 m above lowest astronomical tide. Therefore, NRW (A) was content that the Applicant has provided proportionate mitigation for kittiwake at this site (see Natural Resources Wales - Deadline 5 Submission (REP5-098) paragraph 12). Whilst the Applicant and SNCBs do not agree on the conclusions, this is not considered to be material as agreement has been reached that sufficient mitigation has been provided. This matter is therefore not agreed – not material in the final SoCGs with NRW(A) (S_D1_12 F03). JNCC did not raise similar concerns as the Pen y Gogarth / Great Orme's Head SSSI is outside their remit. The Applicant has undertaken a final update to Volume 2, Chapter 5: Offshore ornithology (F2.5 F04) to append the final SSSI assessment submitted at Deadline 4 (REP4-026) as an annex to the Environmental Statement (F6.5.7 F02) at Deadline 7.

Consideration of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

2.17.4.32 RSPB Cymru expressed concern regarding the population scale impacts on seabird populations from the 2022 outbreak of the H5N1 strain of HPAI. This concern was raised during Expert Working Group (EWG) meeting four (in February 2023) (see Technical Engagement Plan Appendices - Part 1 (A to E) APP-042) and has been raised by RSPB Cymru through the SoCG process in examination (see RSPB.OO.9 within the Mona and RSPB Cymru SoCG (S_D2_8 F03)). The RSPB Cymru consider that the scale of the impact of HPAI means that seabird populations will be much less robust to additional mortality arising from offshore wind farm developments.

2.17.4.33 The RSPB Cymru do not agree with Natural England's guidance on HPAI in relation to baseline characterisation of offshore renewable projects (see RSPB.OO.9 within the Mona and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Cymru SoCG (S_D2_8 F03)). The Applicant notes that there is no guidance from NRW (A), the JNCC or the RSPB Cymru, nor any agreed industry wide guidance on how HPAI should be considered within assessments or in the interpretation of results from baseline characterisation surveys. The Applicant acknowledged the unknown short-, medium- and long-term effects of the 2022-2023 HPAI outbreak as a data limitation within section 5.3.11 of Volume 2, Chapter 5: Offshore ornithology (REP4-007). The Applicant also considered the available evidence base on HPAI when determining the sensitivity of the offshore ornithology receptors within Volume 2, Chapter 5: Offshore ornithology (REP4-007) - for example, see paragraph 5.7.2.86 with respect to northern gannet.

2.17.4.34 The RSPB Cymru has acknowledged in further engagement that this concern is industry wide and not solely in relation to the Mona Offshore Wind Project. Therefore, the Applicant has considered the impact of HPAI as far as possible and considers that further action to resolve this concern should be undertaken through industry and stakeholder groups rather than by the Mona Offshore Wind Project.

2.17.4.35 The Applicant also set out its position in response to the RSPB Cymru SoCG in the Further Context to the RPSB Cymru Statement of Common Ground (REP6-089) at Deadline 6. NRW (A) and the JNCC did not raise concerns regarding the consideration of HPAI during examination.

Collision risk methodology for Manx shearwater

2.17.4.36 In their relevant representation (RR-071), the RSPB Cymru outlined concerns in relation to consideration of behaviour change due to the safety lights on offshore structures in the assessment of collision for Manx shearwater. The RSPB Cymru has acknowledged that there is no guidance regarding the assessment of behavioural change due to offshore structures (e.g. wind turbines) illuminations, and this concern needs to be addressed by the wider industry and other stakeholders. All parameters used within collision risk modelling utilised SNCBs recommended parameters (such as Nocturnal Activity Factors (NAFs)) were agreed with the SNCBs during the second, third and fourth EWG meetings (and technical notes provided for the second meeting) during the pre-application phase (as presented in Consultation Report Appendices - Part 3 (D.25 to F) (APP-040)). The Applicant has considered the impact of offshore structure illumination as far as possible and further action to resolve this concern should be undertaken through industry and stakeholder groups rather than by the Mona Offshore Wind Project.

2.17.4.37 The Applicant set out its position on this matter in the Further Context to the RPSB Cymru Statement of Common Ground (REP6-089) at Deadline 6. In response to the first Examining Authority's first written questions JNCC confirmed that 'JNCC are satisfied with the collision risk assessment for Manx Shearwater and its conclusion' (see JNCC Response to ExQ1 REP3-084). NRW(A) also confirmed 'given the limitations of the existing evidence base, we are satisfied that the collision risk model is as robust as it currently can be' (see NRW Response to ExQ1 (REP3-093)). As such, this matter is not considered to be material.

Threshold for undertaking Population Viability Analysis (PVA)

2.17.4.38 During engagement with the RSPB Cymru in respect of the SoCG process, RSPB Cymru raised concerns with the Applicant's approach to determining in which scenarios PVA ought to be undertaken (see row RSPB.OO.31 and RSPB.OO.17 in S_D2_8 F03). The Applicant has undertaken additional assessments (PVAs) where the impact on bird populations shows a >1% increase in baseline mortality. This was used in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report and the Application (Volume 2, Chapter 5: Offshore ornithology (F2.5 F04) and Volume 6, Annex 5.6: Offshore ornithology population viability analysis technical report (REP2-024)). While this threshold does not originate from guidance, it is widely accepted by SNCBs for English and Welsh offshore wind projects. This threshold is accepted by NRW (A) and the JNCC for the Mona Offshore Wind Project assessments (see row NRW.OO.15 in S_D1_12 F03 and row JNCC.OO.15 in S_D1_15 F03, respectively)). The Applicant recognises that the RSPB Cymru supports the NatureScot guidance (NatureScot, 2023) that advises PVAs should be undertaken where the baseline mortality increase is above 0.02%. However, the Mona Offshore Wind Project is in Welsh waters and so has used the assessment parameters accepted by NRW (A) and the JNCC. In the SoCG between the Mona Offshore Wind Project and the RSPB Cymru (S_D2_8 F03), the RSPB Cymru has noted that NRW (A) and the JNCC support the use of the 1% threshold (see row RSPB.OO.31 and RSPB.OO.17). This matter is therefore considered not material.

2.18 Wider ecosystem impacts and interactions and relevant protected migratory species

Wider ecosystem impacts and interactions

2.18.1.1 Volume 2, Chapter 11: Inter-related Effects – Offshore (F2.11 F02) presents the potential for multiple effects on a receptor group, as presented within the topic-specific chapter, to interact to create wider ecosystem impacts during the construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases. In order to understand the potential for wider ecosystem impacts and interactions, Volume 2, Chapter 11: Inter-related Effects – Offshore (F2.11 F02) drew on the other relevant impact assessments and Annexes in the Environmental Statement and considers both project lifetime effects and receptor-led effects.

2.18.1.2 The Applicant's assessment has considered Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 9 (Planning Inspectorate, 2018) regarding the need to consider the assessment as a whole and not as a series of unconnected specialist reports. The Applicant's approach is also considered to accord with NPS EN-1 paragraph 4.3.19 which sets out that the Secretary of State should consider how the accumulation of, and interrelationship between, effects might affect the environment, economy or community as a whole, even though they may be acceptable when considered on an individual basis with mitigation measures in place.

2.18.1.3 Volume 2, Chapter 11: Inter-related Effects – Offshore (F2.11 F02) concluded that wider ecosystem impacts during the construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases would result in no additional significant effects from the individual receptor Environmental Statement chapters.

2.18.1.4 In their relevant representation (RR-071), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Cymru outlined concerns that wider ecosystem impacts had not been fully considered in the application in respect of offshore ornithology. The Applicant responded to the RSPB Cymru's Relevant Representation in section 2.71 of the Applicant's Response to Relevant Representations (PDA-008) signposting to Volume 2, Chapter 11: Inter-related Effects – Offshore (F2.11 F02). In the Examining Authority's first written questions (PD-013), Q1.1.7.15 requested that the Applicant explain how the application considers the resilience of ecosystems and potential ornithology effects regarding: displacement from foraging areas; species energy expenditure; impact on forage fish; and ocean stratification (Irish sea). The Applicant provided a detailed account in Response to Examining Authority's Written Questions (REP3-062) of how these elements of indirect ecosystem impacts were considered within Volume 2, Chapter 5: Offshore ornithology (F2.5 F04) in relation to the assessment of ecosystem level effects relevant to offshore ornithology.

2.18.1.5 From further engagement with the RSPB Cymru, the Applicant understands that the RSPB Cymru would like to see specific elements of indirect ecosystem impacts considered separately in future assessments. However, the RSPB Cymru agreed in the final SoCG (S_D2_8 F03) that for the Mona Offshore Wind Project, this matter would not make a material difference to the assessments presented in the application.

Protected migratory species

2.18.1.6 Offshore protected migratory species include offshore ornithology, fish and marine mammals receptors which were assessed within Volume 2, Chapter 3: Fish and shellfish ecology (F2.3 F02), Volume 2, Chapter 4: Marine mammals (F2.4 F02) and Volume 2, Chapter 5: Offshore ornithology (F2.5 F04). These chapters concluded that there would be no significant effects on protected migratory species during the construction, operations and maintenance or decommissioning phases. Effects on protected migratory species were not raised by any stakeholders.

2.19 Onshore Biodiversity, Ecology and Natural Environment

2.19.1 Temporary and permanent effect of the construction and operation on designated sites and habitats of nature conservation importance, including hedgerows, ancient woodland and veteran trees

2.19.1.1 ES Volume 3, Chapter 3: Onshore Ecology (F3.3 F02) presents the Applicant's assessment of the potential effects of the construction and operation of the Mona Offshore Wind Project on onshore ecological receptors, including designated sites and habitats of nature conservation importance. A number of errata regarding classification of important ecological features have been identified through Examination, these have been corrected in the latest version of the chapter (F3.3 F02).

2.19.1.2 The site selection process (Site Selection and Consideration of Alternatives (F1.4 F03)) has avoided direct impacts to any international, national or locally designated site. The Mona Offshore Wind Project has also committed to avoiding direct impacts on designated sites and habitats of nature conservation importance by using trenchless techniques (e.g. at Llandulas Limestone and Gwyrch Castle Wood SSSI) (see the Onshore Crossing Schedule (F5.4.3 F04)) and the implementation of appropriate buffers to woodland edges to avoid disturbance/ damage (see the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) (J22 F05).

2.19.1.3 NRW and the local authorities have agreed with the assessment of effects on designated sites and habitats of nature conservation (see SoCGs S_D1_13 F03, S_D3_23 F04 and S_D3_22 F04).

2.19.1.4 Throughout Examination there have been a number of questions from the Examining Authority, local authorities and Welsh Government regarding the impacts to trees and hedgerows, including questions on the survey results and construction buffers and planting densities. The Applicant has addressed these comments through the submission of a tree survey clarification note (REP3-050) and updates to the Outline Arboriculture Method Statement (REP6-066) and the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (J22 F05). The local authorities have now agreed all but two issues regarding arboriculture (see SoCGs S_D3_23 F04 and S_D3_22 F04):

2.19.1.5 CCBC have outstanding concerns regarding the trenchless crossing of Gwyrch Castle Wood. The Applicant has undertaken a feasibility exercise and is confident that it will be possible to achieve a trenchless crossing under Gwyrch

Castle Wood, however, it did not deem it appropriate to provide this feasibility report as it contains parameters and project design elements that have been subsequently been disregarded. The Applicant acknowledges that if a trenchless crossing beneath Gwrych Castle Wood is not possible there is no alternative option and therefore the onshore cable could not be installed in this area and the consent would be unimplementable – this reflects the Applicants confidence in the feasibility of using a trenchless crossing technique for crossing Gwrych Castle Wood. The Applicant has updated the Outline Arboriculture Method Statement (REP6-066) to include set back distances for the trenchless crossing to ensure no tree roots are impacted. The final Arboriculture Method Statement will form part of the Code of Construction Practice that will be approved by CCBC as secured by Requirement 9 of the draft DCO (C1 F08).

2.19.1.6 DCC have concerns around the mitigation proposed for two veteran trees identified at the access to Temporary Construction Compound 5. The Applicant acknowledges these concerns, however, in the absence of a full detailed design for the access it cannot commit to the requests from DCC. The Applicants position is that DCC will have the opportunity to approve the proposed mitigation once an appropriate level of detail is available, through the discharge of the final Arboriculture Method Statement. The final Arboriculture Method Statement will form part of the Code of Construction Practice that will be approved by CCBC as secured by Requirement 9 of the draft DCO (C1 F08). The Applicant believes this is an appropriate level of control for this stage of the Project.

2.19.2 Temporary and permanent effects on species of nature conservation importance, including protected species licensing

2.19.2.1 ES Volume 3, Chapter 3: Onshore Ecology (F3.3 F02) presents the Applicant's assessment of the potential effects of the construction and operation of the Mona Offshore Wind Project on species of nature conservation importance. A number of errata regarding classification of important ecological features have been identified through Examination, these have been corrected in the latest version of the chapter (F3.3 F02).

2.19.2.2 Specific questions regard great crested newt (Triturus cristatus) and Barn Owl (Tyto Alba) have been raised during the Examination, these have been addressed through updated to the Outline LEMP (J22 F05), which have been agreed with NRW and the local authorities (S_D1_13 F03, S_D3_23 F04 and S_D3_22 F04).

2.19.2.3 The principles of protected species mitigation have been presented in an Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) (J22 F05). A final LEMP will be prepared and agreed with the relevant planning authorities in consultation with NRW (as secured in Requirement 12 of the draft DCO (C1 F08)). Detailed mitigation requirements for protected species will be set out and implemented through European Protected Species mitigation licences (for great crested newt, hazel dormouse and bats) and a badger licence. The licences will be in place prior to construction. NRW have agreed to the proposals set out in Outline LEMP (J22 F05) (see S_D1_13 F03).

2.19.3 The adequacy of proposed mitigation and monitoring measures, and how they could be secured

2.19.3.1 The proposed mitigation and monitoring for onshore ecology is outlined in the Outline LEMP (J22 F05). Throughout examination the Applicant has updated the Outline LEMP (J22 F05) to provide clarity on its proposals for mitigation based on questions from the Examining Authority, NRW and the local authorities. It has also updated the Outline LEMP (J22 F05) to include detail on the long-term management plans for newly created and enhanced habitat. The Outline LEMP has been agreed with NRW and the local authorities and this is reflected in the respective SoCGs (S_D1_13 F03, S_D3_23 F04 and S_D3_22 F04).

2.19.3.2 The Outline LEMP is secured through Requirements 7 and 12 of the Draft DCO (C1 F08). In addition, Requirement 8 of the draft DCO (C1 F08) has been reworded to provide clarity on maintenance period for planting.

2.19.4 Net benefit for biodiversity and the future management and control of created habitats

2.19.4.1 The Applicant's proposals for net biodiversity benefit are set out in the Biodiversity Benefit and Green Infrastructure Statement (APP-193). The proposals have been welcomed by NRW and this is reflected in their relevant representation (RR-011).

2.19.4.2 Throughout Examination there have been questions from both NRW and the local authorities regarding the long-term management of the measures the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (J22 F05), including those proposed to provide net benefit for biodiversity. Following engagement with the relevant stakeholders, the Applicant has updated the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (J22 F05) to include further details on the proposed long-term management of newly created and enhanced habitats. This has been agreed with NRW, CCBC and DCC and is reflected in the respective SoCGs (S_D1_13 F03, S_D3_23 F04 and S_D3_22 F04).

2.20 Other Offshore Infrastructure and Activities

2.20.1 Effects on, and co-existence with, other offshore infrastructure, including oil and gas and telecommunications assets

2.20.1.1 Relevant Representations were made by Eni UK (RR-019), euNetworks (RR-0202) and Virgin Media O2 (RR-085). Eni UK is an energy company that has operational oil and gas assets in Liverpool Bay. EuNetworks and Virgin Media O2 are telecommunications cable owners and, or operators with existing telecommunications cable assets in and around the Mona Offshore Wind Project.

2.20.1.2 Key concerns for Eni UK related to proximity of the Mona Array Area to its oil and gas assets in the eastern Irish Sea, notably the Conwy Platform, simultaneous operations and shipping and navigation. The southeastern boundary of the Mona Array Area presented in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) was located approximately 1.8 km from the Conwy Platform. Post-PEIR, this distance was increased to approximately 8.5 km; as set out under Table 4.23 of Section 4.11.2 in Volume 1, Chapter 4: Site selection

and consideration of alternatives (F1.4 F03), the main environmental benefits associated with the reduction in the eastern extent of Mona Array Area was, amongst other things, avoidance of the existing oil and gas industry activity. In terms of simultaneous operations, the measures adopted as part of the Mona Offshore Wind Project in Volume 2, Chapter 10: Other sea users (APP-062) include "consultation with other offshore energy operators to promote and maximise cooperation between parties and minimise both spatial and temporal interactions between conflicting activities". The Applicant and Eni UK agree that this is a key measure and in line with industry best-practice, the parties have agreed to meet regularly to discuss their respective activity programmes in order to minimise disruption to either party's operations and to maximise coexistence. Where necessary, this will include establishing simultaneous operations procedures in accordance with recognised industry good practice. Regarding shipping and navigation, the commitment to prepare a vessel traffic management plan (VTMP) in accordance with the outline VTMP (REP6-029) and commitment to continue the marine navigation engagement forum (MNEF) post-consent and for a minimum of five years into the operational and maintenance phase are key measures to ensure other sea users are made aware and kept informed of development of the Mona Offshore Wind Project. The Applicant expects this will be reflected in the final SoCG with Eni UK (S_D1_30) which will be submitted at the close of Examination.

2.20.1.3 Virgin Media O2 and euNetworks own and or operate the Sirius South and Rockabill telecommunications cables respectively. In both cases the Applicant noted in its responses to relevant representations (PDA-008) that these telecommunications cables were identified as existing asset in the Volume 2, Chapter 10: Other sea users (APP-062), where it is noted under section 10.9.4 that "cable crossing and proximity agreements will be established with relevant cable operators, to minimise the potential for any impact in accordance with recognised industry good practice. These agreements will ensure close communication and planning between both parties to ensure disruption of activities is minimised". The Applicant is engaging with both parties on crossing and proximity agreements which will be finalised post-consent, prior to commencement of construction, following best practice. No further representations were made.

2.20.1.4 Microsoft Ireland Operations Ltd ('Microsoft') submitted a Written Representation (REP1-069) to notify the Applicant of its plans to develop a submarine telecommunications cable linking Wales and Ireland in the same area as Mona Offshore Wind Project and which is likely to cross the Mona Offshore Export Cable Corridor. Microsoft requested the Applicant to engage in agreeing a draft crossing agreement, as is best practice. The Applicants response (REP2-078) welcomed engagement with Microsoft on their proposed telecommunications cable and an initial meeting was held in November 2024. No further representations have been submitted by Microsoft.

2.20.1.5 Volume 2, Chapter 10: Other sea users (APP-062) predicted no adverse effects greater than minor on other offshore infrastructure, including oil and gas and telecommunications assets. Matters with Eni UK have been agreed as set out in the SoCG submitted at Deadline 7 (S_D1_30 F03) and representations by existing and planned telecommunication cable owners and, or operators were closed out early in the Examination.

2.20.2 Effects on other offshore industries and commercial activities, including potential wake effects for other offshore wind farms

2.20.2.1 Relevant Representations were made by 6 windfarm operators (Barrow Offshore Wind Limited, Burbo Extension Ltd, Morecambe Wind Limited, Ørsted Burbo (UK) Limited, Walney Extension Limited and Walney (UK) Offshore Windfarms Ltd) regarding potential wake effects on their operational projects. Throughout the Examination those parties have made representations as a group, referred to as the Ørsted Interested Parties (Ørsted IPs). The Ørsted IPs projects range from 30.6 km to 43.3 km from the Mona Array Area, at their closest points.

2.20.2.2 Despite there being other operation windfarms in the eastern Irish Sea, including projects closer than any of the Ørsted IPs, no other wind farm operators have made representations on potential wake effects. No representations have been made on this matter by any regulators or public bodies, including Welsh Government, DESNZ or any Local Authorities.

2.20.2.3 The Applicant considered the issue of wake effects in the Other Sea Users chapter of the ES (APP-062), presenting information on compliance with The Crown Estate (TCE) Round 4 separation criteria with existing projects (including those non-Ørsted IP projects), and setting out the distances between Mona and those projects. On the basis of those separation distances the potential for wake effects was not considered further.

2.20.2.4 The Applicant and the Ørsted IPs have disagreed throughout the Examination on the legal and policy requirement for undertaking an assessment of wake effects on the Ørsted IPs operational projects. The Applicants consider that, on a proper interpretation of the EIA Regulations and the paragraphs of NPS EN- 3 referenced by the Ørsted IPs, there is no requirement for the Applicant to conduct a detailed wake loss assessment, and that the NPS policy tests have been met.

2.20.2.5 It is notable that the NPS paragraphs relied on by the Ørsted IPs are in the same terms as the provisions set out in the 2011 NPS. If the effect of those provisions was to require any new offshore wind farm development to assess wake loss effects on existing wind farms, that would have become a well-established practice in the industry by this point. That is simply not the case. That is not how those policies have been applied historically and there is no basis for a change in interpretation now. The Ørsted IPs note that reference to wake effects has been made in previous DCO Examinations (reference to Awel y Mor Burbo Bank Extension and Hornsea Two), however, to the Applicant's knowledge none of those Examinations have included detailed assessment of wake effects on operational wind farms, as the Ørsted IPs suggest is required. These limited examples, which themselves did not require detailed wake assessment, do not support the interpretation put forward by the Ørsted IPs when considered against the far greater number of offshore wind farm DCO applications that have been determined without any wake loss assessment, or indeed any suggestion that there should be one.

2.20.2.6 NPS EN-3 para 2.8.197 sets out that where a potential offshore wind farm is proposed close to existing operational offshore infrastructure, or has the potential to affect activities for which a licence has been issued by government, the applicant should undertake an assessment of the potential effects of the proposed development. At over 30 km (at the very closest) from the Ørsted IPs projects the Mona Offshore Wind Project cannot in any sense be said to be close

to those projects. Had it been the intention of this policy to apply to all existing offshore infrastructure the word “close” would not have been used to limit or contain circumstances when assessment required. The activities that a licence has been issued to the Ørsted IPs project for relate to the installation and operation of the respective projects, and not a licence that regulates extraction of power from the wind. This paragraph must be read in the context of activities for which a licence has been issued by Government as opposed to simply any activities in the Irish sea. On this basis para 2.8.197 paragraph is not engaged in this context.

2.20.2.7 NPS EN-3 para 2.8.198, states an assessment should be undertaken for all stages of the lifespan of the wind farm in accordance with the appropriate policy and guidance for offshore wind farm areas. The Applicant has demonstrated throughout the examination that there is no appropriate policy or guidance for offshore wind farm areas on which to undertake a wake loss effects assessment, and no established regulator looking at this matter. An assessment of this nature is not something that has previously been undertaken for any consent application or assessment to date, and there is no guidance in existence which would allow a transparent and informed assessment to be undertaken of a new wind farm on the yield of existing operational wind farms.

2.20.2.8 The Crown Estate (TCE) Round 4 separation criteria, as referenced above, is also important in considering the correct application of paragraphs 2.8.197 and 2.8.198 of NPS EN-3. TCE have a key role in the offshore wind industry as the authority responsible for leasing rounds. They have a strategic role to play in the development of the industry, part of which is implemented through the criteria that they impose for each leasing round. That criteria is fixed taking account of industry representations and concerns, ultimately determining criteria that the Crown Estate consider acceptable to manage interactions with other sea users, subject to the details of any specific project. TCE increased the separation distance between projects between Round 3 and Round 4 from 5 km to 7.5 km, deliberately limiting proximity of projects. That increase took into account submissions made by the wider offshore wind industry and, as far as the Applicant is aware, there was no suggestion by the industry that 7.5 km was unacceptable. Paragraphs 2.7.197 and 2.8.198 should be read in light of that wider strategic context, and the exercise already undertaken by TCE in assessing what separation distance was acceptable for Round 4 projects.

2.20.2.9 Notwithstanding the lack of policy need for an assessment to be undertaken the Applicant has set out the complexity in undertaking an assessment. The modelling of wake loss effects is dependent on very accurate information of the wind farm that is being proposed as well as the existing operational wind farm (in terms of their current yield, when they have downtime, their internal wakes etc.). This information is either not known (for instance power curves for turbines that represent Mona’s MDS) or confidential and not available in the public domain. There is also a large range of modelling options (model types, developers, settings, assumptions) and no currently accepted industry standard model or methodology. There is also no recognised approach to assessment (e.g. IEMA guidance) that allows any robust analysis to be undertaken.

2.20.2.10 The Applicant notes that in presenting its own assessment of impacts the Ørsted IPs have not been able to overcome those limitations, and as such have presented an incomplete and unverifiable assessment. The report includes reference to commercially sensitive data that cannot be disclosed, makes

assumptions for the basis of modelling that do not reflect Mona's MDS, and fails to present a repeatable or verifiable case. The results of that report must be read in this context, and the Applicant therefore has been unable to verify whether the results of the report are representative or accurate.

2.20.2.11 The Applicant has demonstrated that if any potential effects on the Ørsted IPs projects energy production are taken into account in an assessment of the Greenhouse Gas abatement of Mona, the results of that assessment remain unchanged, showing an overwhelmingly positive benefit from Mona. By considering a first principle model approach (as compared to a detailed project specific model, which as set out above is not possible) the Applicant has demonstrated that mitigation, in the form of boundary/area reduction to the Mona array, as suggested by the Ørsted IPs, would be have a net negative effect on the GHG abatement of all projects taken together. The impacts of any mitigation would have significantly greater impact on Mona than on projects over 30 km away (as to be expected given wake effects are significantly greater within wind farms than at a distance of over 30 km), and therefore any spatial mitigation would reduce the overall GHG abatement of Mona, whilst providing very little benefit to the Ørsted IPs projects. The potential effects on the Ørsted IPs are already minimised by the siting of Mona at a distance of over 30 km away. Any greater increase through amendment to the boundary/area of the Mona array would compromise the objective of Mona to deliver 1.5 GW of clean energy by 2030 and compromise the broader policy ambitions of the UK Government, through the NPS and otherwise, to maximise clean energy production. No further amendment to the Mona array can be justified.

2.20.2.12 The Applicant does not believe that a DCO requirement is either justified or workable, and would fail the tests set out in paragraph 4.1.16 of EN-1 that a requirement must be necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development to be consented, enforceable, precise, and reasonable in all other respects.

2.20.2.13 As the Applicant has set out through its representations, it does not consider an assessment needs to be conducted, given the lack of policy and guidance to undertake one. That lack of policy and guidance is also of relevance to the drafting and benefit of a DCO Requirement which might seek to control design parameters (similar to that included in the Awel y Môr DCO) in order to address the Ørsted IP's issue. The Applicant is unclear how any Requirement would work in the absence of guidance that sets out what constitutes a significant effect, or what change against a baseline mitigation might need to deliver against the impact any mitigation would have on the new generation delivered by the Mona Offshore wind farm. There is considerable doubt as to how such a requirement would be discharged and how it can be enforced by the Secretary of State, failing two of the relevant tests. It is also clear that any mitigation would have a significantly more detrimental impact on the energy generation from Mona than any minor benefit that may be accrued by the Ørsted IPs projects, both on an annual basis and even more so when considering the lifetime impacts on Mona of potential mitigations will persist well past the decommissioning of the Ørsted IPs projects. Such a requirement is unnecessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, and wholly unreasonable.

2.20.2.14 The Applicant submits that a commercial agreement is not suitable or necessary in this matter. Commercial agreements are only relevant where there are identified residual effects (either by the Applicant or as proposed by a

regulator/SNCB) under the EIA process, undertaken against guidance established by regulators in the relevant field, and where supported by policy, which is not the case for the Ørsted IPs issue of wake effects. The Applicant does not believe there is therefore a case for meaningful engagement on a commercial side agreement on that basis. In any event, the need to enter into a commercial agreement is a matter that would be discussed between the parties outside of the planning system.

2.20.2.15 In selecting a site that accords with the Crown Estate Round 4 siting criteria the Applicant has taken account of the Ørsted IPs in designing its project. The distance between Mona and the Ørsted IPs projects is, at its closest, over 4 times that 7.5 km specified buffer (and over 5 times for some of the Ørsted IPs projects). The Applicant made changes to the project design through the development phase of the project, principally in relation to navigation risk, but which had the added effect of increasing the distance to some of the Ørsted IPs projects by over 4 km.

2.20.2.16 The Applicant notes, from submissions made by the Ørsted IPs (REP5-118) that any possible impact from Mona on the management of the Ørsted IPs assets will not be realised in the near-term, and may only be relevant in long-term decision making where the individual Ørsted IPs projects are already operating in a marginal way. The Applicant notes that any potential wake effects therefore may not be relevant at all in decision making for some of the Ørsted IPs assets, and it is the Applicant's understanding that in reality it may not be relevant for decision making regarding any of the IPs assets. There are a large number of factors that will influence the decision to continue to operate an asset at some time in the future. These include the operational condition of the assets, the operations and maintenance costs of the project at the time, the power price agreement the project holds, and other factors related to both the asset itself and the portfolio of assets it sits within. Mona would not affect any of these factors. Any potential in-direct affect from Mona for some of the most marginal of the Ørsted IPs assets would be at most of minor relevance to decision making in the long-term. The Mona project can therefore not be argued to be affecting the future viability of the Ørsted IPs assets.

2.20.2.17 The Secretary of State can and should conclude that no detailed wake loss assessment is required, that Mona has fully complied with the terms of the NPS and that no DCO requirement relating to wake loss is necessary of justified.

2.20.3 Direct and indirect effects on recreational sea users

2.20.3.1 The description of the baseline environment in Volume 2, Chapter 10: Other sea users (APP-062) notes that the local other sea users study area supports recreational dive site, sailing and motor cruising, recreational fishing and inshore water sports. Indeed, the Royal Yachting Association and Cruising Association both attended marine navigation engagement forum (MNEF) meetings and the navigation risk assessment workshop's (see section 7.3 of Volume 2, Chapter 7: Shipping and navigation (F2.7 F02) and section 10.3 of APP-062) and the Applicant engaged with recreational fishing stakeholders (as set out in section 10.3 of APP-062).

2.20.3.2 Volume 2, Chapter 10: Other sea users (APP-062) predicted no adverse effects greater than minor on recreational sea users. One Relevant Representation was received by a recreational sea user on this matter regarding their use of the area for sailing (Menna Jones (RR-042)). No subsequent representations were

submitted into the Examination by recreational sea users and no specific questions or actions were placed to the Applicant by the Examining Authority.

2.20.4 Mitigation and commercial agreements

2.20.4.1 As set out in the Applicants positions above, no specific mitigation has been required for other offshore infrastructure and activities beyond the measures adopted as part of the Mona Offshore Wind Project set out in section 10.8 of Volume 2, Chapter 10: Other sea users (APP-062).

2.21 Seascape and Visual Resources

2.21.1 The adequacy of assessment methodology and approach including the extent of study areas

2.21.1.1 Volume 6, Annex 8.4: Seascape, landscape and visual resources impact assessment methodology (F6.8.4 F02) describes the methodology used to undertake the seascape, landscape and visual impact assessment (SLVIA), including the collection of baseline information and the assessment of likely significant effects, contained in Volume 2, Chapter 8: Seascape and visual resources (F2.8 F02). The Applicant has progressed a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) with Natural Resources Wales Advisory (NRW (A)) (S_D1_14 F02) and Isle of Anglesey County Council (IoACC) (S_D1_10 F03); both of which considered the assessment methodology associated with the Mona SLVIA.

2.21.1.2 As agreed with NRW (A) (S_D1_14 F02), the Applicant's SLVIA methodology is based on the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013). The methodology has also considered sector specific guidance, specifically Guidance on the Assessment of the Impact of Offshore Wind Farms: Seascape and Visual Impact Report (DTI, 2005) and Offshore Energy Strategic Environmental Assessment: Review and Update of Seascape and Visual Buffer study for Offshore Wind Farms (White, 2020), as directed by the National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (NPS EN-3) (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2024; paragraph 2.8.208).

2.21.1.3 Queries were raised by NRW (A) on the use of GN 017: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment guidance for Wales (NRW, 2023) within the Mona SLVIA. The Applicant confirmed that when it was published, GN 017 was reviewed in the context of the Mona SLVIA (REP6-128). However, the Applicant noted that GN 017 is primarily guidance on how to undertake or update an area-wide landscape character assessment, not methodology on how to assess the sensitivity of a landscape to a particular development. GN 017 and the Mona Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment include definitions that are broadly similar. A comparison of the definitions of landscape sensitivity in GN 017 (NRW, 2023) and Volume 7, Annex 6.4: Landscape, seascape and visual impact assessment methodology (APP-156) were included in (REP6-128). Most noticeable is the fact that both GN 017 and the Mona definitions of sensitivity include nationally designated landscapes within high and very high definitions. Both Mona and GN 017 use LANDMAP as the basis for determining value.

2.21.1.4 The Mona SLVIA and the wider Mona Environmental Statement (Volumes 2, 3 and 4) used a matrix approach to determine the significance of effect (Table 8.15 of Volume 2, Chapter 8: Seascape and Visual Resources (F2.8 F02)). The matrix was derived from The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) (Highways England *et al*., 2020; LA 104 Environmental assessment and monitoring (LA 104)), as described in REP4-032 (78). The categories used in the Mona matrix follow the DMRB guidance which does not use a 'Very large' category for magnitude of impact.

2.21.1.5 The use of split categories of significance of effect was questioned, as was the significance status of moderate effects. The Applicant noted that the DTI (2005) matrix uses split categories of effect. The Applicant also noted that moderate effects can be significant or not significant as set out in White Consultants (2020; paragraph 5.45), which states that moderate effects can be judged to be significant, although it is most likely that they are not.

2.21.1.6 The Applicant notes that whilst NRW (A) are in disagreement on the use of the matrix within the Mona SLVIA (S_D1_14 F02), IoACC are in agreement on the methodology used to assess significance of effects (S_D1_10 F03). Further, the Applicant notes that no other stakeholders, including NRW (A) on other topics, has raised this as a methodological concern.

2.21.1.7 The study areas used in the Mona SLVIA are agreed with NRW (A) (S_D1_14 F02) and IoACC (S_D1_10 F03).

2.21.2 The approach to seascape and visual impact assessments

Adequacy of viewpoint locations

2.21.2.1 As outlined in Table 8.6 of Volume 2, Chapter 8: Seascape and visual resources (F2.8 F02), in March 2022 the Applicant sought to agree the representative viewpoints for the landscape photography with NRW (A), Eryri National Park and Isle of Anglesey Country Council. The Councils in north Wales suggested using the same viewpoints as were used for the Awel y Môr Offshore Wind Farm project. Where the applicant considered additional viewpoints would be useful to assessing the impacts of the proposed development, while out in the field, these were added. Similarly, where the Awel y Môr viewpoints were not appropriate, due to the difference in the location of the Mona Offshore Wind Project Array and the Awel y Môr Offshore Wind Project Array, they were not taken forward.

2.21.2.2 No comment on the adequacy of viewpoint locations has been received during the Mona examination.

Accuracy of photomontages

2.21.2.3 Photomontages of the viewpoint photography were produced to assist and illustrate the assessment of the Mona Offshore Wind Project. The methodology for the production of photomontages is set out in Volume 6, Annex 8.4: Seascape, landscape and Visual Resources Impact Assessment Methodology (F6.8.4 F02). At the request of the ExA, a number of viewpoints were revisited to improve the quality of the photography (REP4-038 and REP4-039). These viewpoints were chosen due to the discussion surrounding difficulty in distinguishing the horizon in some of the photography used in the application during Issue Specific Hearing 3. The updated photography and photomontages

(REP4-038 and REP4-039) did not alter the assessment of the Mona Array Area, as the Applicant assessed a worst-case (i.e. most visible) weather scenario, evidenced by the Applicant finding adverse (although not significant) effects beyond 50 km, barring one cumulative effect, from an elevated location in Eryri National Park.

2.21.2.4 The methodology used for the production of the photomontages was undertaken in accordance with Visual Representation of Wind Farms (NatureScot, 2017), GLVIA 3 (Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013) and Technical Guidance Note on Visual Representation of Development Proposals (Landscape Institute, 2019). Daytime visualisations and wirelines were produced to illustrate the Mona Array Area and allow the potential proportions of the wind turbines to be assessed. Fully rendered photomontages were produced using ReSoft WindFarm software, to provide a photorealistic image of the appearance of the Mona Offshore Wind Project. The format of the daytime photomontages was based on NatureScot (2017) due to its suitability to encompass the horizontal spread of the Mona Array Area and show the turbines at a representative scale and distance. In some views, two adjacent 53.5° photomontages were required to capture the full horizontal spread of the Mona Array Area.

2.21.2.5 The ExA queried the approach to assessing the nighttime photomontages. The ReSoft software used to generate the night-time visualisations automatically sets the lighting levels at the brightest intensity, 2,000 candelas. In good visibility conditions, the aviation lighting will be kept to 200 candelas. In poor visibility (e.g. foggy conditions), the lighting levels may rise to 2,000 candelas. The visualisations have used the worst case (2,000 candelas) for the aviation lighting, which is a situation which would never occur, as in clear conditions the level of light used would be 200 candelas. The higher lighting intensity would only be used in poor visibility conditions, in which situations the aviation lighting would not be visible from shore due to the poor visual conditions. The requirement to use the lowest permissible lighting intensity level is secured in Requirement 3(3) of the draft Development Consent Order (C1 F08).

2.21.2.6 Volume 6, Annex 8.6: Seascape visualisations (APP-106 to APP-112) showed the central wind turbines facing the viewer directly, with the full rotor diameter visible at its tallest extent. In the photomontages, the wind turbine rotors are shown with a random position with the central wind turbines facing the viewer directly. Following the request of NRW for additional cumulative wirelines, the turbines in these later wirelines were all presented with one blade vertical, i.e. at the highest point of the blade rotation (REP3-046 to REP3-048). The production of these wirelines did not alter the Applicant's assessment of the seascape and landscape effects of the Mona Array Area.

Maximum Design Scenario

2.21.2.7 NRW (A) and IoAACC agree that the identification and assessment of the Mona worst-case (Maximum Design Scenario) is appropriate (S_D1_14 F02 and S_D1_10 F03 respectively). The maximum rotor swept area of the turbines, which is a key parameter considered in the SLVIA Maximum Design Scenario, is secured in Schedules 2 and 14 of the draft Development Consent Order (C1 F08).

Visibility

2.21.2.8 The Mona SLVIA was undertaken on the basis of MetOffice 'Excellent' visibility (i.e. a visibility of greater than 40 km). This assessment of a realistic worst-case (best visibility) is evidenced by the Applicant finding adverse, albeit not significant, effects beyond 50 km from some locations.

Sensitivity of seascape, landscape and visual resources and receptors

Introduction

2.21.2.9 The sensitivity of the seascape and landscape receptors has been undertaken using the methodology set out in Volume 6, Annex 8.4: Seascape, landscape and visual resources impact assessment methodology (F6.8.4 F02). The sensitivity of the landscape receptors was assessed using GLVIA3 (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013) methodologies and the LANDMAP evaluations.

2.21.2.10 The Applicant's approach to determining the sensitivity of seascape and landscape receptors was to use published landscape and seascape character assessment descriptions and evaluations, where they exist, and the published sensitivities where relevant to the type of development proposed.

2.21.2.11 The Applicant summarised the published seascape character in which the Mona Array Area is located and the areas through which it is viewed in Response to NRW Deadline 3 Submission (REP4-047; paragraph REP3-090.167), in response to NRW's comment that the Mona Array Area would introduce development into an area of sea unaffected by development. It is the Applicant's position that the character of the seascapes in which the Mona Array Area is located/viewed through are not areas of the sea unaffected by development. The full description of the seascapes in which the Mona Array Area is located is set out in Volume 6, Annex 8.2: Seascape and landscape character baseline technical report (APP-100). The following sections provide an overview of the seascape character areas of relevance to the Mona Array Area.

The Isle of Anglesey and Eryri Seascape Character Assessment

2.21.2.12 The Mona Array Area lies beyond The Isle of Anglesey and Eryri Seascape Character Assessment (Fiona Fyfe Associates, 2013) Seascape Character Areas (SCA), which only extend to 12 nautical miles (nm) (22.2 km). The closest SCA to the Mona Array Area is SCA28: North-east of Anglesey, which is 6.6 km from the Mona Array Area. The summary description of SCA28 provides information on its character and visibility, as summarised in the Applicant's response to NRW at paragraph REP3-090 of REP4-047.

Welsh National Marine Character Areas

2.21.2.13 The Mona Array Area lies beyond the Wales National Marine Character Areas (MCA), which only extend to 12 nm (22.2 km). The closest MCA to the Mona Array Area is MCA04: North Wales Open Waters, which is located 6.6 km from the Mona Array Area. The relevant key characteristics of MCA04 are summarised in the Applicant's response to NRW at paragraph REP3-090.167 of REP4-047.

Seascape Sensitivity Zones

2.21.2.14 The Mona Array Area lies within Seascape Sensitivity Zone (SSZ) 2: North East Wales Offshore and SSZ 5: North Wales and Anglesey Outer Offshore (White Consultants, Stage 3 report, 2019). The relevant key characteristics of SSZ 2 and SSZ 5 are summarised in the Applicant's response to NRW at paragraph REP3-090.167 of REP4-047. The Applicant notes that NRW (Deadline 3 Response, REP3-089; paragraph 199) identified an 'error' in the Seascape and visual sensitivity to offshore wind farms in Wales: Strategic assessment and guidance Stage 3- Seascape and visual sensitivity assessment for offshore wind farms (White Consultants, 2019; Stage 3 report). The Applicant notes that the author of the report has not issued an errata regarding this matter.

2.21.2.15 Both SSZ 2 and SSZ 5 have medium/low sensitivity. The Mona Array Area has been set back 18.2 km from the southern boundary of the SSZ 2 and accordingly from the Eryri NP, on which the susceptibility of this SSZ relies. On this basis the sensitivity in relation to the proposed Mona Array Area is likely to be on the lower side of the medium/low sensitivity spectrum.

2.21.2.16 The proposed Mona Array Area is at the distance of 29 km, at its closest point, from the Isle of Anglesey NL, which comprises the northeast facing coast approximately between Amlwch and Moelfre, and Penmon Point. White Consultants (2019; Stage 3 report) does not make any reference to the susceptibility and value of the Isle of Anglesey NL in relation to the SSZ 2. This is considered as indication to its lower sensitivity in relation to the Isle of Anglesey NL, which abuts with SSZ 3. The attributed values of SSZ 3 also indicate reduced sensitivity of the SSZ 2 in relation to the Isle of Anglesey NL.

2.21.2.17 SSZ 5 is located in the outer offshore area, at least 44 km offshore from the coastal edge of the Isle of Anglesey NL, Llŷn NL and Eryri NP. White Consultants (2019; Stage 3 report) states that SSZ 5 has the potential to accommodate all scales of offshore wind farm development, and that turbines below 350 m are likely to have less than a low magnitude of effect. It is stated that the least susceptible area lies to the northeast as this is located further out to sea than existing wind, oil and gas development to the south and east. The northern section of the proposed Mona Array Area lies within this least susceptible part of the SSZ 5.

2.21.2.18 In summary, the views from the north coast of Wales are not views of an area of sea unaffected by development, but a sea which is both affected by static development, as well as dynamic marine vessels. Both SSZs in which the Mona Array Area is located are noted as having low/medium sensitivity to offshore wind development (White Consultants, 2019; Stage 3 report).

Approach to Defining Landscape Value

2.21.2.19 The Applicant notes that value is inherent but varies within the nationally designated landscapes, and refers to Hearing Summary (ISH3) Environmental Matters (REP4-032; point 76).

2.21.2.20 The Isle of Anglesey County Council (Isle of Anglesey AONB Management Plan 2023-2028 Annex 3, Objective 1) states: "*LANDMAP is used as the process by which the landscape character of the AONB is valued and assessed*". The Applicant has used LANDMAP Visual and Sensory evaluations to value and assess the various landscape areas within the Isle of Anglesey (AONB) National

Landscape. The Applicant has responded to the apparent discrepancy between Technical Guidance Note TGN-2024-01: Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute, 2024; section 5(4)) and the documents it refers to, to assist in establishing landscape sensitivity, includes GN 017 (NRW, 2023). GN 017 (NRW, 2023) states that nationally designated landscapes can have high or very high sensitivity (REP4-085). Guidance produced by NatureScot (2022; Figure 5) also contradicts Landscape Institute (2024) and states that international designations have the highest sensitivity (i.e. very high). Landscape Institute (2024) does not consider internationally designated landscapes.

2.21.2.21 White Consultants (2020; paragraph 4.47) notes that the sensitivity of the coastline of Wales varies, as does the sensitivity of the people using the Wales Coast Path. The sensitivity of the people using the Wales Coast Path generally reflects the area they are passing through. The sensitivity of visual receptors within the SLVIA similarly varies, with walkers within the nationally designated landscapes having a high or very high sensitivity, primarily derived from the LANDMAP visual and sensory Aspect Area overall evaluations.

2.21.2.22 The Applicant's methodology recognises that nationally designated landscapes can have either very high or high value. Accordingly the Applicant considered the overall visual and sensory evaluations of the different Aspect Areas within the national landscape and found some areas to have a very high value and others to have a high value.

Magnitude of Impact on seascape, landscape and visual resources and receptors

Introduction

2.21.2.23 As reaffirmed in the Applicant's submissions (REP6-096; paragraph REP5-098.78) regarding its use and consideration of LANDMAP in relation to the magnitude of the impact, it has not underestimated the magnitude of change. The sections below provide an overview of how the magnitude of impact was defined.

Use of wirelines to determine magnitude of impact

2.21.2.24 Wirelines are part of the process of generating photomontages, not an end-point to determine magnitude of impact and establish thresholds for different heights of turbines. GLVIA3 (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013; paragraph 3.32) specifically advises against using 'thresholds of significance' such as those used in the White Consultants (2019; Stage 2 Report) and White Consultants (2020) buffer studies and promotes professional judgement.

Use of ZTVs to determine magnitude of effect

2.21.2.25 The limitations of ZTVs are explained in the Applicant's Response to NRW D4 Submission (REP5-061; paragraph REP4-105.80). The Applicant notes that the ZTV overestimates the extent of the visibility of the Mona Array Area as it is based on bare-earth (topography only) data. The Applicant notes that the ZTV is a tool to identify areas where the Mona Array Area might be visible, not how much or how visible it is.

2.21.2.26 The Applicant's SLVIA has been undertaken assuming that the Mona Array Area would be visible, as set out in various of the Applicant's responses (REP4-047; paragraphs REP3-090.167, REP3-090.168 and REP3-090.186). This is evidenced by the finding of adverse effects from the Mona Array Area out to 50+ km. The Mona Array Area is however, in an area of open sea, away from the coast, in offshore and outer offshore waters, not seen in relation to scalable development/objects.

Visual acuity

2.21.2.27 The Applicant has noted in REP4-047, paragraphs REP3-090.189 to REP3-090.198, that Hill et al. (2001; section 2.4) sets out the difficulties of scale and distance, one of which is visual acuity. Appendix 1 of CCW (2009; page 254) provides further evidence on visual acuity in a series of photographs from boat to shore, noting that at 15 km the Earth's curvature hides low-lying land leaving just hills and showing little other detail. A precautionary approach has been taken in the SLVIA using a 50 km study area range for visual receptors in non-nationally designated landscapes and a 60 km study area for visual receptors within nationally designated landscapes.

2.21.2.28 The Applicant's response at paragraph REP3-090.171 of REP4-047 addresses available views. The response notes that all representative viewpoints in the Isle of Anglesey NL and the Eryri NP are 360° panoramas, as agreed with statutory consultees. The Mona Array takes up less than 10% of these views and people at these locations will not only be looking in the direction of the Mona Array Area.

Location and layout of the Mona Array Area

2.21.2.29 The Applicant confirmed in REP4-032 (77) that in relation to magnitude, the Applicant conclusions considered the siting and design of the Mona Array Area. The Applicant confirmed the Mona Array Area is within the lowest category (low/medium) of sensitivity within Welsh territorial waters. The Applicant confirmed that it followed the design principles in White Consultants (2020) and in DTI (2005). The Applicant confirmed that the turbines will not be located within designated seascapes and landscapes. The Mona Array Area comes closest to the designated eastern coast of the Isle of Anglesey NL at a distance of 29.5 km at Point Lynas. Otherwise, it remains beyond 35 km from the Isle of Anglesey NL (including Puffin Island) and Eryri NP. The Mona Array Area is located within low impact magnitude range in relation to the nationally designated landscapes.

2.21.2.30 The Applicant continued that the turbines are not close to or in the middle distance from the coast and are in SSZ 2 and SSZ 5 (SSZ 2 being offshore and SSZ 5 being outer offshore). The Applicant confirmed that the turbines are not in inshore waters or in coastal waters as it is located 29 km from the coast at the closest point and not located within an inner bay, therefore not a focus point where the coast meets the sea.

2.21.2.31 During the examination, the Applicant provided context on how the Mona Array Area was chosen and the Order Limits defined, with reference to the Mona SLVIA. Figures 4.2 and 4.18 of Volume 1, Chapter 4 of the Environmental Statement on Site Selection and Consideration of Alternatives (F1.4 F03) showed the initial array area, which was identified through the Round 4 leasing round issued by the Crown Estate. The site at this stage was larger than the current Order Limits, with additional space to the east and north which has been

removed because of several constraints in the area, principally shipping and navigation impacts which require adequate sea room for safety and navigation between this project and other projects that are proposed nearby (such as the Morecambe Offshore Wind Project and Morgan Offshore Wind Project). Other constraints such as wind availability, water depth, ground conditions, constraints on the seabed, as well as other sea users and activities, were also taken into account. The current siting of the Mona Array Area is appropriate and there is no opportunity to move the site materially further from the Isle of Anglesey NL. The Order Limits could have been moved further west, which would mean that views from the Isle of Anglesey NL are extended, and would push the Mona Array into deeper water.

2.21.2.32 If White Consultant (2019; Stage 2 Report) were to be adhered to without taking into account additional constraints or assessment, the Mona Array Area would not have the capacity for a 1,500 MW project. As such, the Applicant concludes that NPS EN-1 (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2024; paragraph 5.10.26) is not relevant here as a small change cannot be made to the site that would have a marginal loss in function and that there is no alternative design for this project that would be possible without a very significant change in the scale and nature of the project.

2.21.2.33 The Applicant concludes that the Mona Array Area complies with all principles set out in White Consultant (2019; Stage 2 Report, Table 4.1), which reflects the Guidance on the Assessment of the Impact of Offshore Wind Farms: Seascape and Visual Impact Report (DTI, 2005), which seek to avoid or minimise seascape and visual effects attributable to the proposed development. The Mona Array Area:

- is located far away from the coastline/ landscape designations
- is located in lowest sensitivity seascapes
- avoids stacking effect
- is set back from the existing/ consented offshore wind farms
- avoids developments being visible in juxtaposition with sensitive views to headlands/ islands
- avoids providing scale reference in views with small islands or coastal landforms/ features
- avoids filling framed views in between headlands.

2.21.2.34 The shape and layout of the Mona Array Area means that the extent of the Mona Array Area boundary facing the coast would occupy only a limited field of view. The proposed Mona Array Area would appear distant beyond the Awel y Môr offshore wind farm in views related to the headland of Great Orme and Puffin Island. The proposed Mona Array Area is located 29 km, at its closest, from the coast and would not appear in framed views or across inner firths, where developments would take up more of the horizon.

The effects on seascape character

2.21.2.35 The effects on seascape character from the Mona Array Area will not be significant, as reported in Volume 2, Chapter 8: Seascape visual resources (F2.8 F02). As described above in paragraph 2.21.2.15, the Mona Array Area is in an area of sea with medium/low sensitivity. The character of that area of the sea

and that of the adjacent areas of sea off the north coast of Wales is described above in paragraph 2.21.2.14 et seq., but notably is in offshore and outer offshore territorial waters, with busy shipping lanes and other marine activities and development between the coast and the Mona Array Area.

2.21.2.36 A summary of the assessment of the effects on seascape character from the Mona Array Area is as follows:

- direct impacts to SSZ 2 and SSZ 5: the magnitude of the potential seascape impact within the Mona Array Area itself (including parts of SSZ 2 and SSZ 5) during the operations and maintenance phase is deemed to be large and the sensitivity of these receptors is low to medium. The direct effects are moderate to major adverse within the Mona Array Area, which are significant. Overall impact to SSZ 2 and SSZ 5: The magnitude of potential impact during the operations and maintenance phase will reduce with increasing distance from the Mona Array Area and is deemed to be medium overall for SSZ 2 and small overall for SSZ 5. The sensitivity of these receptors is low to medium. The significance of indirect effect on seascape character was therefore concluded to be minor to moderate adverse overall for SSZ 2, and minor adverse for SSZ 5 when considered as a whole, both of which are not significant.
- indirect impacts to SSZ 4: The magnitude of the potential seascape indirect impact due to the offshore elements of the Mona Offshore Wind Project is deemed to be small overall and the sensitivity of the receptor is medium. The effect will be minor adverse at most, which is not significant.
- indirect impacts to MCA 38: A small magnitude of seascape indirect impact is expected to arise resulting in a negligible to minor adverse effect which is not significant.

2.21.2.37 As part of the review of local seascape and landscape character, the effects on the Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) of the Isle of Anglesey were reviewed (Table 1.11 of REP4-087). No significant effects on seascape character were identified.

2.21.2.38 Nothing was raised in the Mona Examination on the conclusions of the seascape character assessment.

Local seascape and landscape assessment

2.21.2.39 A local seascape and landscape character assessment was provided at Deadline 4 (REP4-087). The local seascape and landscape assessment found that there were no significant effects experienced by these receptors resulting from the development of the Mona Array Area and no effects greater than those on the special qualities of the nationally designated landscapes. NRW welcomed the provision of the additional assessment, although due to the disagreements in methodological approach (described above) did not agree with the findings (S_D1_14 F02).

2.21.3 Effects on special qualities, character and purposes for designation of nationally designated landscapes

2.21.3.1 The Applicant provided a comprehensive assessment of the effects of the Mona Array Area on the special qualities of the nationally designated landscapes in Volume 6, Annex 8.5: International and nationally designated landscape study

(APP-105). The sections below provided an overview of the effect of the Mona Array Area on nationally designated landscapes and the position reached with stakeholders at the conclusion of the Mona examination.

Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape

2.21.3.2 It is agreed with NRW (S_D1_14 F02) that there will not be significant effects on the special qualities of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape (NL) arising from the development of the Mona Array Area, nor will the landscape character, or views and visual amenity of those within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley NL be affected significantly.

Eryri National Park

2.21.3.3 The Applicant did not identify any significant effects from the Mona Array Area alone on the character of and views, and visual amenity on Eryri NP. This is primarily due to the distance of the Mona Array Area from the Eryri NP. For example, from representative viewpoint 31: Tal y Fan summit, the closest turbine of the Mona Array Area is 42 km, with the vast majority of turbines being over 44 km from the viewpoint (Figure 2.1). Due to the elevation of the viewpoint, the curvature of the Earth does not significantly reduce the height of the visible turbines.

2.21.3.4 The Applicant and NRW (A) (S_D1_14 F02) are in agreement that there will be no significant effects on special qualities in the Eryri NP arising from the Mona Array Area alone. However, the Applicant's position is that there will be no significant effects on visual receptors in the Eryri NP primarily due to distance, which is not agreed with NRW (A) who has assessed the views from viewpoints 29, 30, 31 and 32 as "moderate and potentially significant" (REP1-056, paragraph 420) and from viewpoint 33: Conwy Mountain variously as "minor to moderate" (REP1-056, paragraph 419) and "moderate/major adverse and significant" (REP1-056, paragraph 420). The Applicant's assessment is consistent and correct due to the distance of the Mona Array Area from Eryri National Park and the shape/orientation of the Mona Array Area.

2.21.3.5 In relation to the cumulative effects on the visual receptors and special qualities of Eryri NP, the Applicant and NRW (A) (S_D1_14 F02) agree that baring one significantly affected special quality and the three representative viewpoints within the Eryri massif, there will be no other significant cumulative effects on the Eryri NP.

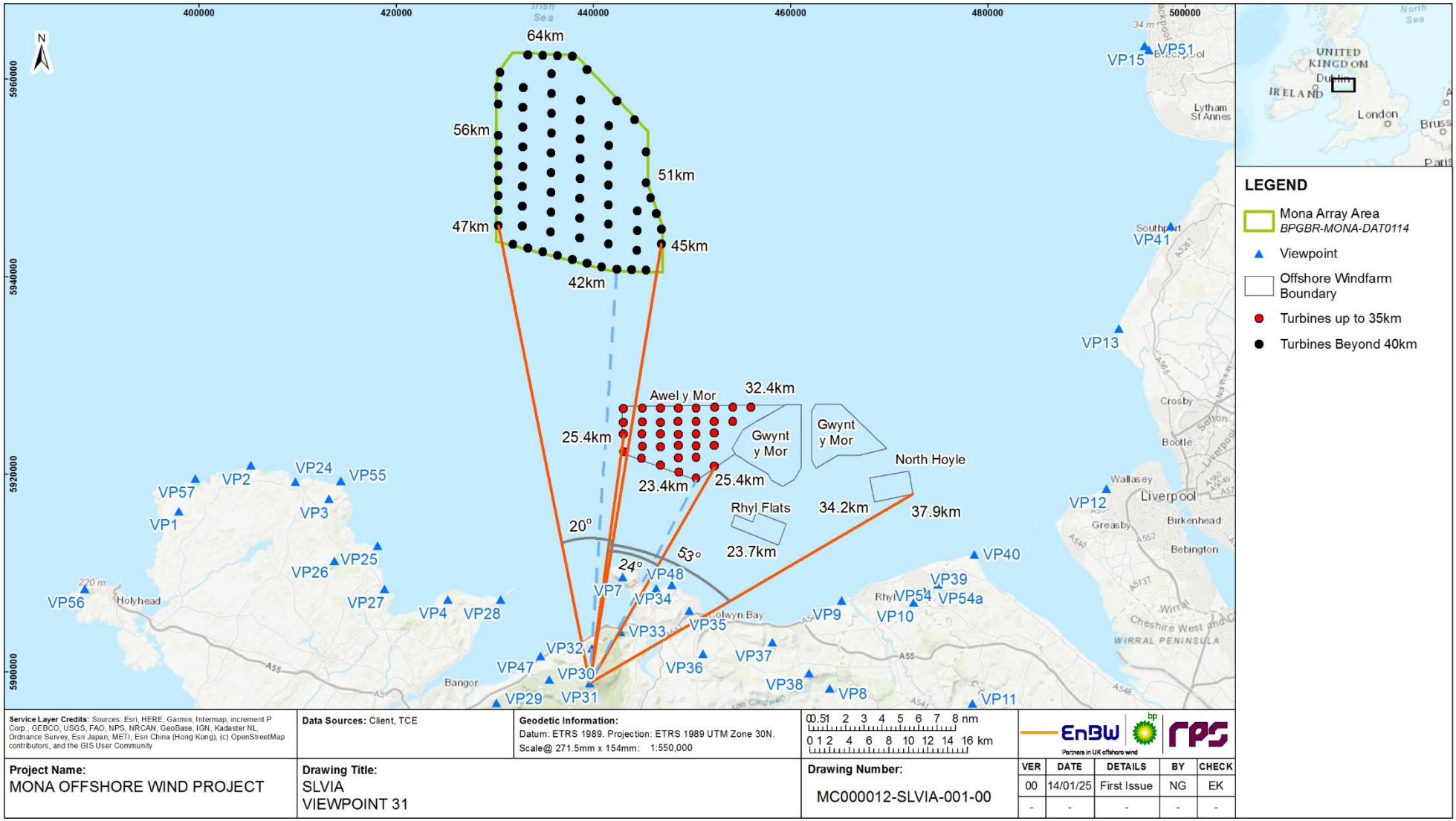

Figure 2.1: Representative viewpoint 31: Tal y Fan summit.

Isle of Anglesey National Landscape

2.21.3.6 The Applicant confirmed that the Mona Array Area would be visible from the northern section of the Isle of Anglesey NL (response to NRW paragraph REP3-090.168 of REP4-047). However, it will not be a dominant or prominent element in these views, see response to NRW paragraph REP3-090.167 of REP4-047. The Applicant highlighted that the Isle of Anglesey NL includes most of the coast of the Isle of Anglesey and the assessment has therefore looked at the impacts of the Mona Array Area on the special qualities of this NL as a whole. The impact from the Mona Array Area was considered in relation to two special qualities (Expansive Views and Peace and Tranquillity) of the Isle of Anglesey NL, out of a total of 14 special qualities that apply to it. The significance of effects resulting from the presence of the Mona Array Area on both special qualities was judged to be minor to moderate adverse and not significant.

2.21.3.7 The Applicant and NRW (A) (S_D1_14 F02) are not in agreement that there will be no significant effects on special qualities and visual receptors in the Isle of Anglesey NL, arising both from the Mona Array Area alone and cumulatively with other projects. The Applicant's view is that the judgement of the significance of effects on the character of the Isle of Anglesey NL or views from it, is based primarily on the distance of the Mona Array Area from the Isle of Anglesey.

2.21.3.8 Two examples of viewpoints have been undertaken to demonstrate this: representative viewpoint 3: Mynydd Eilian (Figure 2.2), which is outside the NL, and representative viewpoint 28: Penmon Point (Figure 2.3) which illustrate distance and HFoV. The Applicant notes that at these low elevations the curvature of the Earth reduces the amount of closest turbine visible by 47 m to 48 m (i.e. the total height of the visible turbine at these locations is 316 m to 317 m, reduced from 364 m).

2.21.3.9 Representative viewpoint 3 lies outside the Isle of Anglesey NL and inland from the coast. The HFoV was discussed with NRW and the IoACC during a SoCG meeting. The IoACC considered that with the Mona turbines and the Awel y Môr turbines there would be a significant percentage of the view continuously taken up with wind turbines. The Applicant disagrees, as the Mona Array Area is clearly separate from the Awel y Môr Array Area. In addition, those turbines to the southeast and northwest of the Mona Array Area are further from the viewpoint and would not be as visible as the closer turbines of the Awel y Môr Array.

2.21.3.10 For representative viewpoint 28, NRW has assessed the Mona Array Area as having visual effects of "moderate/major and significant" (REP1-056, paragraph 400) which is the same assessment as they made for the Awel y Môr Array Area, despite the Mona Array being considerably further from the viewpoint (closest turbine 35 km, as opposed to 19.3 km for Awel y Môr) and not seen behind Puffin Island (turbines of Awel y Môr Array are visible either side of Puffin Island), and a LANDMAP visual and sensory Aspect Area of outstanding value. The Applicant's position, as outlined in paragraph 2.21.3.7 above, is that there will be no significant effects on visual receptors in the Isle of Anglesey NL.

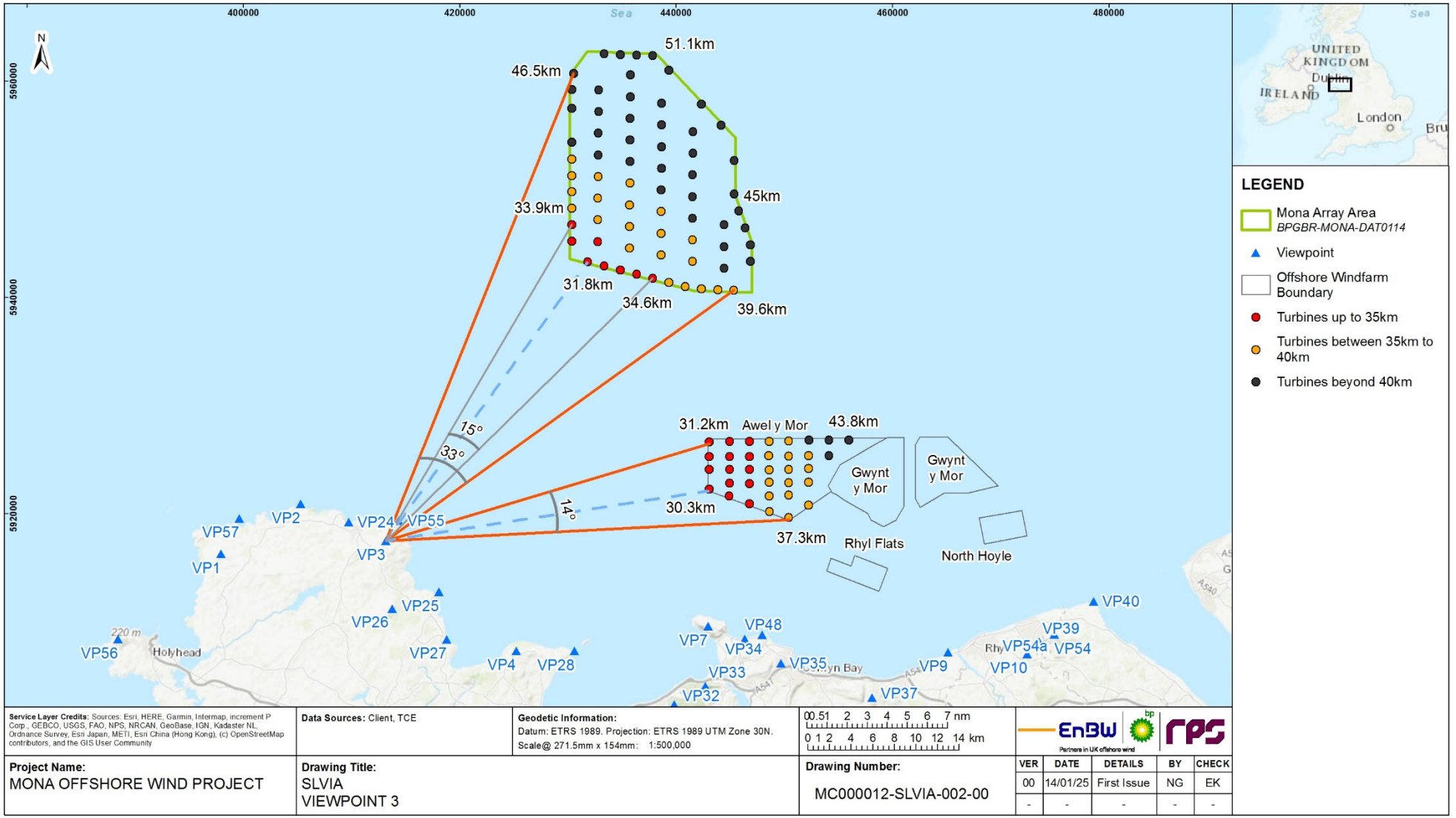

Figure 2.2: Representative viewpoint 3: Mynydd Eilian.

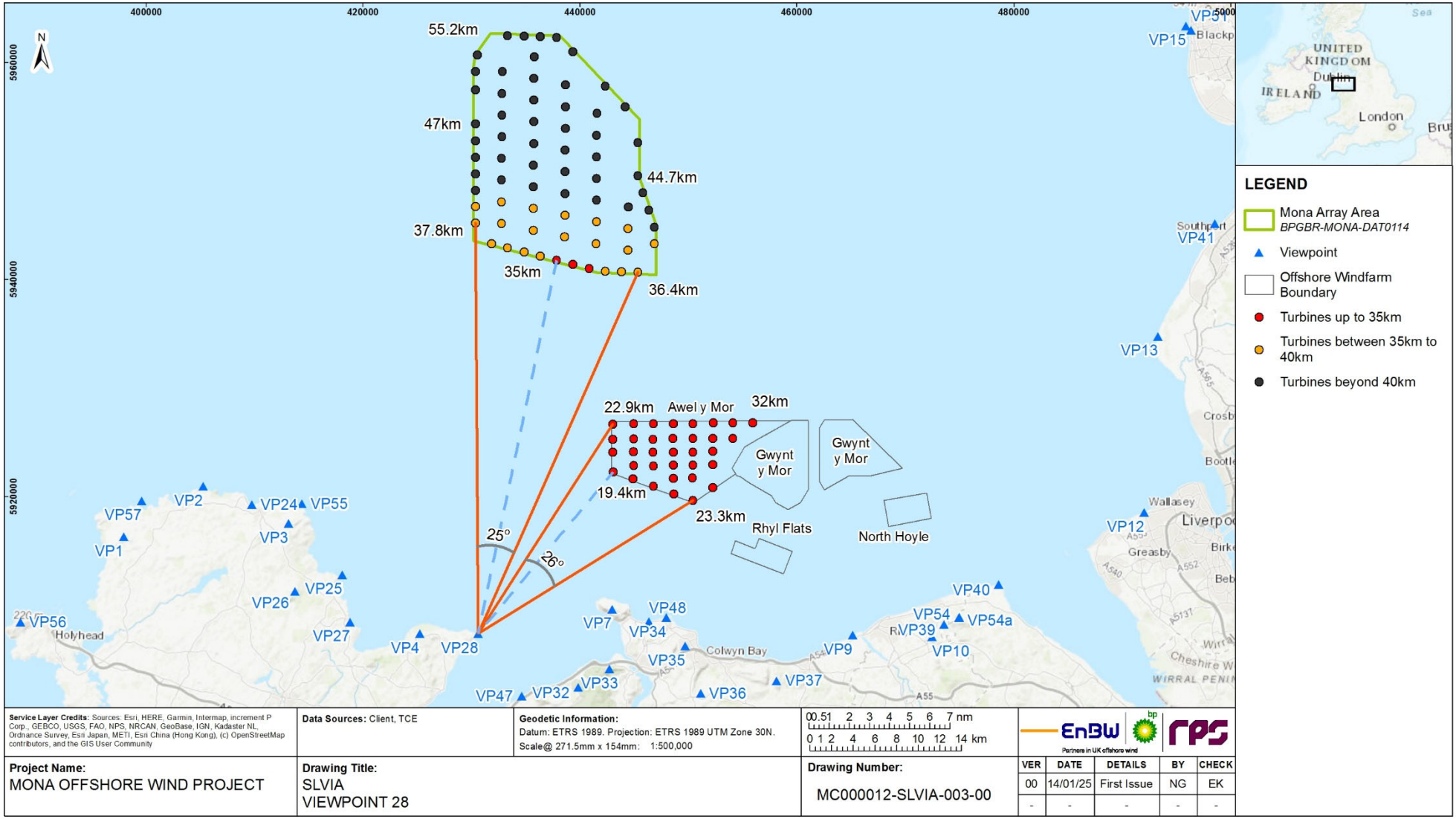

Figure 2.3: Representative viewpoint 28: Penmon Point.

Effect on the purposes of the nationally designated landscapes

Introduction

2.21.3.11 REP4-036 (Annex 1.1) sets out the Applicant's response to ISH3_HAP_23 on how the statutory duties under s.85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROWA) 2000 and s.11A of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (NPACA) 1949 are met.

2.21.3.12 For the purposes of the Mona Offshore Wind Project, the Examining Authority and Secretary of State are required to have regard to s85(1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROWA) (2000) in relation to the potential seascape, landscape and visual impacts of the project on the Isle of Anglesey NL and the Eryri NP. Regarding the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley NL, the Applicant and NRW have concluded that given the context of views towards the Mona Array Area from the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley NL (beyond the existing wind farms and at a distance of over 40 km), the Mona Array Area would not significantly affect the special qualities and the character of that NL (S_D1_14 F02).

Mona Array Area

2.21.3.13 In considering the extent to which the CROWA 2000 and NPACA 1949 are met, the following has been considered with regards to the siting of the Mona Array Area in order to minimise harm to the Eryri NP and IoA NL.

- alternative sites: As outlined in paragraph 2.21.2.31 above, alternative locations for the Mona Array Area are not possible due to other constraints, give rise to unacceptable cumulative effects, or would not materially reduce seascape, landscape and visual impacts.
- reduction in project scale: Reducing the scale of the Mona Array Area, such that all of it is outside of the White Consultants (2019; Stage 2 report) low magnitude buffer distance, would require pushing the southwest turbines back from a closest distance of approximately 29 km to a distance of 44 km from the IoA coastline (outer end of 35 km to 44 km). This would result in a significant loss of array area and generation capacity. Such a large reduction in area would significantly impact project generation capacity, turbine spacing (requiring the turbines to be located closer to each other), and therefore yield and project deliverability, without, in the Applicant's view, significantly reducing the impacts from the IoA NL.
- size of turbines: Smaller turbines are not available for the Mona project and are not economically viable.

National Policy Statement Compliance

2.21.3.14 Having considered the statutory duty of preserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the IoA NL and Eryri NP, it is then relevant to consider whether consenting the Mona project would be in accordance with the National Policy Statement (NPS) such that any perceived adverse impact would be outweighed by its benefits.

2.21.3.15 The factors to be considered in determining the degree of harm that may arise as a result of Mona on the IoA NL and how this should be considered in the decision-making process are as follows:

- the IoA AONB Management Plan 2023 - 2028 identifies fourteen Special Qualities that are integral to its designation. The majority of these qualities and resources are anticipated to remain unaffected by the Mona Array Area, owing to the development's nature and its considerable distance from the IoA NL.
- it is the relationship and quality of the landscape resources and receptors and activities within the IoA NL that largely define its inherent character and integrity and these are not affected by the Mona Array Area. The IoA NL would only be affected through visibility of the Mona Array Area, which is located at a substantial distance offshore, and not as a result of any physical change to the balance of its features or activities.
- the IoA NL is predominantly coastal but also includes inland areas that form the backdrop to the coast.
- the landscape of the IoA NL and its context has evolved substantially over time.
- whilst there is no large-scale industrial development within the IoA NL, there has, since its designation in 1966, been a strong association between the IoA NL and large-scale development, which unlike the Mona Array Area, are located very close to its boundaries (e.g. Wylfa nuclear power station).
- the need to balance potential development that may be proposed within or affecting the IoA NL is recognised in the IoA AONB Management Plan 2023 – 2028 (Isle of Anglesey Council, 2023).
- the Mona Array Area is not within or adjacent to the boundary of the IoA NL. The Mona Array Area is visible, but not prominent, from the IoA NL. It could be construed that it is within the visible setting of the NL, however, settings to designated areas are not designations or receptors in their own right and will vary with the nature of the development proposed.

2.21.3.16 The factors to be considered in determining the degree of harm that may arise as a result of Mona on the IoA NL and how this should be considered in the decision-making process are as follows:

- there are nine Special Qualities identified in Cynllun Eryri - The Snowdonia National Park Partnership Plan 2020 (Eryri National Park Authority, 2021). The Mona Array Area affects only one of these (Tranquillity and Solitude – Peaceful Areas), and the remaining eight special qualities remain unaffected.
- the ENP would only be affected through visibility of the Mona Array Area at a substantial distance offshore (approximately 36 km) and not as a result of any physical change to the balance of features or activities therein.
- visibility of the Mona Array Area from within Eryri NP does not result in significant effects on any of the identified special qualities, landscape character or seascape character receptors.

- the Eryri NP extends back from the steeply sided coastal hills. These, as well as the next ridge of hills inland, provide a high degree of visual screening of the Mona Array Area from the majority of Snowdonia National Park (SNP) further to the south.
- 96.65% of the total area of Eryri NP would have negligible or no change to views or character as a result of the visibility of the Mona Array Area as part of its diverse context.
- there would be no changes to the diverse landscapes of Eryri NP around the Dyfi, Mawddach and Dwyryd estuaries or to the numerous valleys and passes between the upland areas that are specifically noted in the Cynllun Eryri - The Snowdonia National Park Partnership Plan 2020 (Eryri National Park Authority, 2021).
- land between the northern part of the ENP and the coast has been highly modified by development uses which include the A55, rail infrastructure, and extensive views of urban development as well as a number of operational offshore wind farms.
- there would be no visibility of the Mona Array Area from the Synchant Pass.
- strong inherent character of the landscape character area (LCA), which is largely informed by the features and patterns of elements within the geographical extent of the LCA itself and make it distinctive from other parts of the landscape, will remain predominant.

2.21.3.17 The Mona Array Area is located and set out in such a way as to minimise the effects upon the special qualities and views from the nationally designated landscapes. The Mona Array Area is neither a dominant, nor prominent element in views from any of these landscapes. Whilst the Mona Array Area will affect one of the Isle of Anglesey NL's special qualities and two of Eryri NP's special qualities, the effect on these perceptual qualities of the overall designations would not be compromised by the Mona Array Area, i.e. their integrity would remain conserved. In part the development of the Mona Offshore Wind Project would assist in mitigating climate change and conserve the other special qualities of the nationally designated landscapes.

2.21.3.18 In conclusion, The Applicant considers that it has had due regard to the purpose of the IoA NL and Eryri NP, consistent with the statutory duty. In addition, the Secretary of State can conclude with confidence that the effects of the Mona Array Area on designated landscapes would be consistent with the relevant policy in the NPS, in particular paragraph 5.9.12 of NPS EN-1 (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2024). The adverse effects on the Eryri NP and IoA NL are limited and will not result in overall harm with the identified special qualities continuing to define these areas' overall and fundamental character.

2.21.4 Landscape Enhancement Fund

2.21.4.1 NRW (A) and IoACC raised the need for a landscape enhancement fund to offset the potential effects from the Mona Array Area, and the Ex.A requested the Applicant consider provision of such a fund. IoACC and NRW (A) requested the Applicant consider a scheme similar to that secured in the Awel y Môr DCO to offset the effects from the Awel y Môr Array Area.

2.21.4.2 The Applicant engaged with IoACC and NRW (A) regarding the landscape enhancement scheme, and following a meeting on 7 January 2025 agreed to

the principles of the scheme, set out in S_D7_30. Agreement on this matter is captured in the IoACC SoCG (S_D1_10 F03, reference IOACC.SLV.14) and NRW (A) SLVIA SoCG (S_D1_14 F02, reference NRW.SVR.12).

2.21.4.3 The Applicant has committed to secure the scheme, rather than offering it on a without prejudice basis, as was presented by the Applicant in ISH6 and other representations. The Draft Development Consent Order (C1 F08) (Draft DCO) has been updated at Requirement 28 (Schedule 2) to include a landscape enhancement scheme requirement.

2.21.4.4 The landscape enhancement scheme principles (S_D7_30) set out that the scheme principles will form the basis of a Section 106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 agreement (s106 agreement), to be engaged on with the relevant parties. The intention of the Applicant is that the s106 agreement will be provided to the Secretary of State, in an agreed form, in advance of the decision on the Mona DCO application. The s106 agreement would be bound to land within the control of the Applicant within Denbighshire. Denbighshire County Council (DCC) have agreed that Requirement 28 provides an appropriate mechanism for the discharge of the landscape engagement scheme, as captured in the DCC SoCG (S_D3_22 F04, reference DCC.DCO.13).

2.22 Socio-economics

2.22.1 The effects of the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development on economic receptors locally, regionally and nationally, including local businesses, tourism and recreational activities

2.22.1.1 ES Volume 4, Chapter 3: Socio-Economics [APP-077] presents the Applicant's assessment of the effects of the Mona Offshore Wind Project at national (Wales, UK) and sub-national (North Wales, North West England) levels (where relevant), including those on the economic receptors identified in the Examining Authority's Rule 6 Letter (PD-005).

2.22.1.2 The assessment considers potential impacts on economic (employment, GVA, and local employment opportunities) social (population, housing and accommodation) and tourism receptors. The Applicant also assessed potentially significant cumulative effects on commercial operators including strategic routes and lifeline ferries, and potentially significant cumulative effects on adverse weather routing. The methodology for the assessment (including the definition of the economic and social study areas) followed industry guidance.

2.22.1.3 The assessment concluded that the Mona Offshore Wind Project would not lead to any significant adverse effects, however beneficial effects were predicted. Most notably. the operations and maintenance phase will sustain around 680 full-time equivalent years of employment and contribute £65 million GVA across the UK. These impacts will to significant beneficial effects on economic receptors.

2.22.1.4 The Chamber of Shipping raised concerns that the assessment of socio-economic impacts on shipping sector does not consider the full range of lifeline ferry services. The Applicant's position is that the analysis of the assessment is adequate and is in line with the scope agreed at the Scoping stage and through

the consultation process. The Applicant also notes that its assessment follows the NPS EN-3 definition of lifeline ferry services and confirms that the routes to and from the Isle of Man were identified as the only routes potentially affected by the Mona Offshore Wind Project. The Examining Authority and Secretary of State can rely on the Applicant's assessment as presenting robust conclusions.

2.22.1.5 In its written representation [REP1-050] Welsh Government requested engagement with the Applicant on the use of Welsh ports and the wider Welsh supply chain. In response, the Applicant has committed to developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Welsh Government to address these matters and engagement on the matter is ongoing.

2.22.1.6 Several Interested Parties raised questions through relevant representations and written submissions regarding potential impacts to the local economy and tourism sectors. The Applicant has provided responses in PDA-008 and REP1-011 and considers the comments have been addressed.

2.22.2 The social effects of the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development in terms of the population, culture, housing and accommodation

2.22.2.1 ES Volume 4, Chapter 3: Socio-Economics [APP-077] presents the Applicant's assessment of the social effects of the Mona Offshore Wind Project, including on the population, culture, housing and accommodation. Potential social impacts are also estimated within Volume 8, Annex 3.1: Socio-economic impact report [APP-184]. The Applicant's assessment also considered impacts to the Welsh language [E5 Community and Linguistic Impact Assessment [APP-045]).

2.22.2.2 The Applicant's assessment does not identify any significant adverse effects including on population, housing and accommodation. The Community and Linguistic Impact Assessment [APP-045] concluded an overall neutral effect in terms of population characteristics, quality of life, infrastructure supply and social and cultural aspects, with a beneficial effect in terms of local employment opportunities.

2.22.2.3 In its written representation [REP1-052], the Welsh Government welcomed the Community and Linguistics Assessment but stated that there was a need to continue to assess the impacts on the Welsh language as the Mona Offshore Wind Project progresses and cross reference to the housing strategy to identify mitigation measures (where necessary) to reduce any negative impacts on the Welsh language. In its response [REP2-079] the Applicant committed to continued engagement with the Welsh Government's Wels Language Unit and the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner to ensure ongoing consideration is given to the Welsh language. The Welsh Government considered there would be value for the Community and Linguistics Assessment to be reviewed by an experienced language planner [REP3-081]. It was agreed that discussions regarding Welsh Language would be included in the development of the Memorandum of Understanding [REP6-101].

2.22.3 The Outline Skills and Employment Plan

2.22.3.1 The key mitigation measures addressing the management of potential socio-economic impacts are set out in the Outline Skills and Employment Plan [J24 F02] which is secured in Schedule 2, Requirement 19 of the Draft DCO [C1 F08].

2.22.3.2 As set out in the Outline Skills and Employment Plan [J24 F02], the Mona Offshore Wind Project will seek to maximise the benefit to local communities and support the wider development of the offshore wind sector. The final Skills and Employment Plan will be submitted to Denbighshire County Council (DCC) for approval on behalf of the 'relevant authorities' (DCC, CCBC, Isle of Man Government, and the Isle of Anglesey County Council), following consultation with those authorities on the details to be submitted.

2.23 Traffic and Transport

2.23.1 The assessment of effects from construction traffic and abnormal invisible loads

2.23.1.1 ES Volume 3, Chapter 8: Traffic and transport [F3.8 F02] presents the Applicant's assessment of the potential effects on traffic and transport as a result of the Mona Offshore Wind Project. It considers the potential impact of the Project landward of Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) during the construction phase from construction traffic including abnormal indivisible loads.

2.23.1.2 The assessments of potential impacts upon traffic and transport during the construction phase from construction traffic including abnormal indivisible loads has been undertaken in accordance with the following the methods set out in Guidelines for the Environmental Assessment of Road Traffic (GEART), Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) and Technical Advice Note 18: Transport (TAN18: Transport). Overall, it is concluded that there will be no significant adverse effects on traffic and transport arising from the Mona Offshore Wind Project during the construction phase from construction traffic including abnormal indivisible loads.

2.23.1.3 The content, including its assessments and conclusions, of Volume 3, Chapter 8: Traffic and transport [F3.8 F02] is agreed with DCC through the Statement of Common Ground [S_D3_22 F04] and with CCBC through the Statement of Common Ground [S_D3_23 F04].

2.23.2 The assessment of effects arising from operations, maintenance, and decommissioning traffic.

2.23.2.1 ES Volume 3, Chapter 8: Traffic and transport [F3.8 F02] sets out that during the operations and maintenance phase, the only vehicle movements generated will be maintenance visits, which will be infrequent and significantly under thresholds on which assessment is required. Therefore, there will be no significant effects resulting from the traffic generated during the operations and maintenance phase and assessment of this was scoped out.

2.23.2.2 This is agreed with DCC through the Statement of Common Ground [S_D3_22 F04] and with CCBC through the Statement of Common Ground [S_D3_23 F04].

2.23.2.3 ES Volume 3, Chapter 8: Traffic and transport [F3.8 F02] sets out that the identification of significant effects resulting from traffic generated during the construction phase would also apply to the decommissioning phase. An assessment of traffic generated during the decommissioning phase was scoped out on the basis of there being no significant effects predicted. This is agreed

with DCC through the Statement of Common Ground [S_D3_22 F04] and with CCBC through the Statement of Common Ground [S_D3_23 F04].

2.23.3 The appropriateness of the measures included within the Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan

2.23.3.1 The key mitigation measures addressing the management of construction traffic and abnormal indivisible loads are set out in the Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) (REP6-060) as part of the Outline Code of Construction Practice (REP6-034) secured through Requirement 9 in the draft DCO [C01 F08].

2.23.3.2 The content of the Outline CTMP (REP6-060) and the measures contained therein are agreed with DCC through the Statement of Common Ground [S_D3_22 F04] and with CCBC through the Statement of Common Ground [S_D3_23 F04].