XLINKS' MOROCCO-UK POWER PROJECT

Environmental Statement

Volume 1, Chapter 1: Introduction

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Glossary

Term	Meaning
AIL route works	Potential minor works to the Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AIL) routes, which are required for the transportation of the transformers and cable drums. The proposed AIL route runs from Appledore to the Onshore Infrastructure Area.
Alverdiscott Substation Connection Development	The development required at the existing Alverdiscott Substation Site, which is envisaged to include development of a new 400 kV substation, and other extension modification works to be carried out by National Grid Electricity Transmission. This does not form part of the Proposed Development, however, it is considered cumulatively within the Environmental Impact Assessment as it is necessary to facilitate connection to the national grid.
Applicant	Xlinks 1 Limited.
Converter Site	The Converter Site is proposed to be located to the immediate west of the existing Alverdiscott Substation Site in north Devon. The Converter Site would contain two converter stations (known as Bipole 1 and Bipole 2) and associated infrastructure, buildings and landscaping.
Converter station	Part of an electrical transmission and distribution system. Converter stations convert electricity from Direct Current to Alternating Current, or vice versa.
Development Consent Order	An order made under the Planning Act 2008, as amended, granting development consent.
Environmental Impact Assessment	The process of identifying and assessing the significant effects likely to arise from a project. This requires consideration of the likely changes to the environment, where these arise as a consequence of a project, through comparison with the existing and projected future baseline conditions.
Environmental Statement	The document presenting the results of the Environmental Impact Assessment process.
Habitat Regulations Assessment	An assessment of the likely significant effects on a European site protected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.
HVAC Cable Corridors	The proposed corridors (for each Bipole) within which the onshore High Voltage Alternating Current cables would be routed between the Converter Site and the Alverdiscott Substation Site.
HVAC Cables	The High Voltage Alternating Current cables which would bring electricity from the converter stations to the new Alverdiscott Substation Connection Development.
HVDC Cables	The High Voltage Direct Current cables which would bring electricity to the UK converter stations from the Moroccan converter stations.
Landfall	The proposed area in which the offshore cables make landfall in the United Kingdom (come on shore) and the transitional area between the offshore cabling and the onshore cabling. This term applies to the entire landfall area at Cornborough Range, Devon, between Mean Low Water Springs and the transition joint bays inclusive of all construction works, including the offshore and onshore cable routes, and landfall compound(s).
Local Planning Authority	The local government body (e.g., Borough Council, District Council, etc.) responsible for determining planning applications within a specific area.
Marine Conservation Zone(s)	Marine Conservation Zone(s) are marine nature reserves and are areas that protect a range of nationally important, rare or threatened habitats and species.
National Grid Electricity Transmission	National Grid Electricity Transmission owns and maintains the electricity transmission network in England and Wales.
National Landscape	An area of land designated for its natural features of outstanding beauty. The land is protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, in order to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. Previously referred to as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Term	Meaning
National Policy Statement(s)	The current national policy statements published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero in 2023 and adopted in 2024.
Offshore Cable Corridor	The proposed corridor within which the offshore cables are proposed to be located, which is situated within the UK Exclusive Economic Zone.
Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor	The proposed corridor within which the onshore High Voltage Direct Current cables would be located.
Onshore Infrastructure Area	The proposed infrastructure area within the Order Limits landward of Mean High Water Springs. The Onshore Infrastructure Area comprises the transition joint bays, onshore HVDC Cables, converter stations, HVAC Cables, highways improvements, utility diversions and associated temporary and permanent infrastructure including temporary compound areas and permanent accesses.
Order Limits	The area within which all offshore and onshore components of the Proposed Development are proposed to be located, including areas required on a temporary basis during construction (such as construction compounds).
Ordinary Watercourses	Watercourses (such as a river, stream, ditch, cut, sluice, dyke or non-public sewer) that are not designated a Main River under the Water Resources Act (1991). Responsibility for management lies with the Lead Local Flood Authority, or Internal Drainage Board or some watercourses where there is an Internal Drainage District.
Planning Inspectorate	The agency responsible for operating the planning process for applications for development consent under the Planning Act 2008.
Preliminary Environmental Information Report	A report that provides preliminary environmental information in accordance with the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. This is information that enables consultees to understand the likely significant environmental effects of a project, and which helps to inform consultation responses.
Proposed Development	The element of Xlinks' Morocco-UK Power Project within the UK. The Proposed Development covers all works required to construct and operate the offshore cables (from the UK Exclusive Economic Zone to Landfall), Landfall, onshore Direct Current and Alternating Current cables, converter stations, and highways improvements.
Site of Special Scientific Interest	A site designation specified and protected in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These sites are of particular scientific interest due to important biological (e.g. a rare species of fauna or flora), geological or physiological features.
Special Areas of Conservation	A site designation specified in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Each site is designated for one or more of the habitats and species listed in the Regulations. The legislation requires a management plan to be prepared and implemented for each Special Area of Conservation to ensure the favourable conservation status of the habitats or species for which it was designated. In combination with Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites, these sites contribute to the national site network.
The national grid	The network of power transmission lines which connect substations and power stations across Great Britain to points of demand. The network ensures that electricity can be transmitted across the country to meet power demands.
Transition joint bay	A transition joint bay is an underground structure at the landfall area where the offshore cables are jointed to the onshore cables.
Utility diversions	Works required by statutory utility providers to re-route infrastructure around the Proposed Development.
Xlinks' Morocco UK Power Project	The overall scheme from Morocco to the national grid, including all onshore and offshore elements of the transmission network and the generation site in Morocco (referred to as the 'Project').

Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
AC	Alternating Current
DC	Direct Current
DCC	Devon County Council
DCO	Development Consent Order
DESNZ	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ES	Environmental Statement
HVAC	High Voltage Alternating Current
HVDC	High Voltage Direct Current
IEMA	Institute of Environment Management and Assessment
MCZ	Marine Conservation Zone
NDDC	North Devon District Council
NGET	National Grid Electricity Transmission
NPS	National Policy Statement
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
PEIR	Preliminary Environmental Information Report
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
TDC	Torridge District Council
UK	United Kingdom

Units

Units	Meaning
%	Percent
km	Kilometres
km^2	Square kilometres
kV	Kilovolts
GW	Gigawatts
GWh	Gigawatt Hours
GWp	Gigawatts Peak
m	Metres

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 This chapter of the Environmental Statement (ES) introduces the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken for the United Kingdom (UK) elements of Xlinks' Morocco-UK Power Project (the 'Project'). For ease of reference, the UK elements of the Project are referred to in this chapter as the 'Proposed Development'. The ES accompanies the application to the Planning Inspectorate for development consent for the Proposed Development.

1.1.2 The chapter introduces the Proposed Development, the Applicant, the EIA process and the purpose and structure of the ES.

1.2 Overview of the Proposed Development

Xlinks' Morocco-UK Power Project (the 'Project')

1.2.1 The Proposed Development forms part of the wider Project proposed by the Applicant to develop a sub-sea electricity connection between the UK and Morocco (see **Plate 1.1**). The Project would be an electricity generation facility entirely powered by solar and wind energy combined with a battery storage facility. Located in Morocco's renewable energy rich region of Guelmim Oued Noun, the Applicant proposes to install 11.5 Gigawatts peak (GWp) generation capacity that would cover an approximate area of 1,500 km^2 and would be connected exclusively to the UK via High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) sub-sea cables. The Project would include an offshore route of approximately 4,000 km, which would run through Moroccan, Spanish, Portuguese, and French Waters before arriving within the UK Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

1.2.2 The Project proposes to facilitate the import of up to 3.6 Gigawatts (GW) of low carbon electricity into the national grid. Once complete, the Project would be capable of supplying approximately 8 percent[1] (%) of the UK's annual electricity needs. This would help enable the UK to diversify its energy supply, increase energy resilience and help support local and national carbon emission reduction targets. Together with the generation infrastructure located in Morocco, it would provide a reliable supply of electricity that seeks to help address the needs of the UK power market, especially during periods of low offshore wind production around the UK. It would also help the UK to meet carbon reduction commitments, by increasing the proportion of electricity supplied by renewable sources.

1.2.3 The Project proposes to use Direct Current (DC) cable infrastructure for the long-distance transmission of electricity as the technology offers significant advantages in comparison with the use of equivalent Alternating Current (AC) systems. HVDC transmission systems provide increased reliability and efficiency when transmitting a significant load of electricity across long distances, as the systems are less susceptible to transmission losses of power compared with equivalent AC systems. Whilst the use of DC systems brings significant benefits, it requires the

[1] Calculation assumes an annual electricity demand of 45 GW (3.6 GW / 45 GW = 8%).

construction of converter stations at either end of the system to convert from AC to DC at the generation point and then from DC to AC for connection to the national grid.

1.2.4 An overview of the Project is illustrated in **Plate 1.1**. It comprises the generation assets (e.g. solar array, wind turbine array and battery storage), an offshore route for the HVDC sub-sea cable circuits of approximately 4,000 km, together with shorter lengths of onshore electricity transmission routes between proposed converter stations at each end.

1.2.5 The Project includes the following works which are outside of the UK and therefore do not form the Proposed Development for which a Development Consent Order (DCO) is sought, or as presented in this ES. Works outside of the UK include:

- In the Territorial Waters and EEZ of Morocco, Portugal, Spain, and France[2]:
  - Cable route of approximately 3,600 km buried in the seabed or laid on the seabed with protection.
- In Morocco (onshore):
  - Generation assets comprising approximately 7.5 GWp solar photovoltaic array, 4 GWp wind turbine array and 22.5 GWh battery storage. In combination, and taking into account losses associated with generation plant and transmission, the generation assets would provide up to 3.6 GW of power for the UK.
  - High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) Cables connecting the generation assets to the converter stations.
  - Converter stations to change electricity from AC to DC.
  - Onshore HVDC Cables from the converter stations to the western coast of Morocco.
  - Transition joint bays to connect the onshore cables to the subsea cables.

[2] Whilst the Project is routed through the Territorial Waters and Exclusive Economic Zones of Morocco, Portugal, Spain, and France, it would not connect to the Moroccan, French, Portuguese, or Spanish grids.

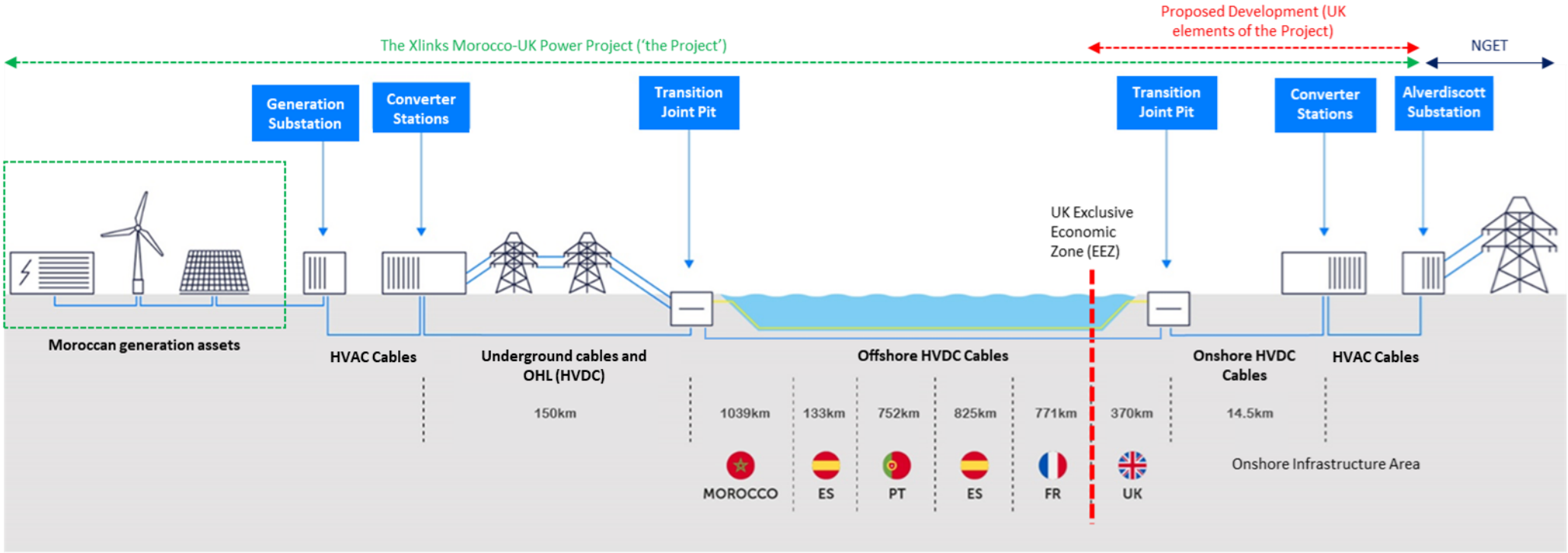

Plate 1.1: Overview of Xlinks' Morocco-UK Power Project

The Proposed Development

Geographical overview

1.2.6 This ES addresses the UK onshore and offshore elements of the Project. The Proposed Development would be located within the Order Limits, which is shown on Figure 1.1 (see Volume 1, Figures) and covers an approximate area of 206 km^2. This includes approximately 2 km^2 for the onshore elements of the Proposed Development and approximately 204 km^2 for the offshore elements.

1.2.7 The Proposed Development is predominantly located in the Local Planning Authorities of Torridge District Council (TDC) and Devon County Council (DCC). Parts of an Abnormal Indivisible Loads route on the east side of the River Torridge fall within the administrative boundary of North Devon District Council (NDDC). In particular, small elements of temporary highways works (AIL route works) to the B3233 Barnstaple Street are in NDDC. However, since DCC are the Highways Authority responsible for approval of these works, DCC are treated as being the relevant authority for the purposes of this ES.

Onshore Site Context

1.2.8 The onshore elements of the Proposed Development are proposed to be located within the Onshore Infrastructure Area (See Volume 1, Figure 1.2). The Onshore Infrastructure Area is wholly located within the local authority area of TDC (and DCC at county level) in north Devon, and extends from the Alverdiscott Substation Site to the Landfall at Cornborough Range.

1.2.9 The Onshore Infrastructure Area is located in an area that is predominantly rural. The settlements of Abbotsham, Bideford, Ford, Littleham, Landcross, East-the-Water, Gammaton Moor, Woodtown and Stony Cross are situated close to the Onshore Infrastructure Area. The Onshore Infrastructure Area includes part of the existing Alverdiscott Substation Site and there is an existing 132 kV and 11 kV overhead lines that cross the Order Limits and connect to the existing Alverdiscott Substation.

1.2.10 The Onshore Infrastructure Area includes parts of the North Devon National Landscape and Kynoch's Foreshore Local Nature Reserve. The Taw-Torridge Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is also situated approximately 1.3 km north of the Onshore Infrastructure Area.

1.2.11 The River Torridge flows through the central extent of the Onshore Infrastructure Area, with other watercourses also present along the route, including Kenwith Stream and multiple unnamed ordinary watercourses.

1.2.12 Furthermore, the Onshore Infrastructure Area includes the Hallsannery Scheduled Monument and is close to the Iron Age enclosure and Roman marching camp Scheduled Monument, which is approximately 120 metres to the west of the Onshore Infrastructure Area at the closest point.

Landfall

1.2.13 The Landfall for the Proposed Development is located at Cornborough Range on the north Devon coast, to the south west of Cornborough and approximately 4 km west of Bideford (See Volume 1, Figure 1.2). This part of the Proposed

Development lies within the North Devon Coast National Landscape and the Heritage Coast. The Mermaid's Pool to Rowden Gut SSSI is also situated along the coastline.

Offshore Site Context

1.2.14 The offshore elements of the Proposed Development are proposed to be located within the Offshore Cable Corridor, which lies within the South West Inshore and South West Offshore Marine Plan Areas (Marine Management Organisation, 2021). The Offshore Cable Corridor is proposed to be routed through the Bristol Channel and Celtic Sea, extending from the Landfall to the limit of the UK EEZ, south west of the UK. The total length of the Offshore Cable Corridor in UK waters is approximately 370 km.

1.2.15 The Crown Estate's Project Development Area 3 (Offshore Wind Leasing Round 5), which is located within the Celtic Sea, is situated to the immediate west of the Offshore Cable Corridor.

1.2.16 Part of the Bristol Channel Approaches Special Area of Conservation is situated within the Offshore Cable Corridor, with the South West Approaches to Bristol Channel Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) located adjacent to the Offshore Cable Corridor. The Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ and East of Haig Fras MCZ are also situated within 550 m of the Offshore Cable Corridor.

Key Elements of the Proposed Development

1.2.17 The key components of the Proposed Development would include the following:

- Onshore elements:
  - Converter Site: which would contain two converter stations (known as Bipole 1 and Bipole 2) immediately west of the Alverdiscott Substation Site, as well as associated infrastructure (e.g. access roads, security fencing, etc.) and landscaping to provide visual screening.
  - HVAC Cables: underground cable connection between the proposed converter stations and the national grid connection would be via the new 'Alverdiscott Substation Connection Development', of which planning and construction is to be taken forward by National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET). This is assessed cumulatively in the ES. The HVAC Cables would be located within the HVAC Cable Corridors.
  - HVDC Cables: underground cable connection of approximately 14.5 km between the proposed converter stations and the transition joint bays at the Landfall. The onshore HVDC Cables would be located within the Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor.
  - Other works to facilitate the development, including permanent road improvement works, temporary and permanent utility connections, permanent utility diversions and temporary construction compounds, drainage and access. The Proposed Development also includes opportunities for environmental mitigation, compensation and enhancement.
- Landfall:
  - This is where the offshore cables are jointed to the onshore cables. This term applies to the entire area between Mean Low Water Springs and the

transition joint bays. This includes all construction works, including the offshore and onshore cable corridors and Landfall construction compound.

- Offshore elements:
  - Offshore cables: Approximately 370 km of subsea HVDC Cables, which would be routed from the Landfall at Cornborough Range to the UK EEZ boundary. The offshore cable infrastructure would continue beyond the UK EEZ; however, this does not form part of the Proposed Development but is part of the wider Project. The offshore cables would be situated within the Offshore Cable Corridor (see Volume 1, Figure 1.1).

1.2.18 A full description of the Proposed Development is provided within Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description, of the ES. Details of the site selection process for the Proposed Development are presented in Volume 1, Chapter 4: Need and Alternatives, of the ES.

1.3 Need for the Proposed Development

1.3.1 The Proposed Development is required to connect the Moroccan generation assets to the national grid, contributing to:

- the UK Government's ambition to achieve Net Zero by 2050;
- securing the UK energy supply;
- delivering affordable energy for UK customers; and
- supporting the UK growth agenda.

1.3.2 The Proposed Development and the overall Project, therefore, have an important part to play in securing the timely delivery of the Government's renewable energy strategy and achieving legally binding emissions reduction targets.

1.3.3 There is a growing number of national and international policy commitments that demonstrate the need for new energy generation infrastructure, particularly renewable sources, in order to meet climate commitments and contribute to addressing the climate crisis. This need is confirmed within the National Policy Statements (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), 2023a; 2023b).

1.3.4 The NPS EN-1 (DESNZ, 2023a) presents a compelling case for the need for new electricity generating capacity in order to meet the UK's legally binding targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions and reach net zero by 2050. Additionally, the NPS EN-5 states that the security and reliability of the UK's energy supply, both currently and in the future, is heavily dependent on an electricity network that will allow for generation, storage, and interconnection infrastructure to meet the required rapid increase in electricity demand for the transition to net zero (DESNZ, 2023b).

1.3.5 Furthermore, due consideration is also being given to local planning policy commitments. TDC have declared a climate emergency and have developed a Carbon, Environment and Biodiversity Plan (TDC, 2023), which includes the vision to become net zero by 2030 and enhance the environment, biodiversity and sustainability.

1.3.6 Overall, the Proposed Development would allow for the connection of the generation assets and associated infrastructure to the national grid, contributing to meeting both national and local climate change goals.

1.3.7 Further information on the need for the Proposed Development is provided in the Volume 1, Chapter 4: Need and Alternatives, of the ES.

1.4 Consenting Framework

The Planning Act 2008

1.4.1 The Planning Act 2008 provides the legislative basis for applications for a DCO. It also defines the application process under which a DCO is sought. The Planning Act 2008 states that projects meeting certain criteria are classified as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). Developers wishing to construct, operate and maintain NSIPs must obtain a DCO from the relevant Secretary of State to authorise their project.

1.4.2 Under the definitions of an NSIP set out in sections 14 to 16 of the Planning Act 2008, the Proposed Development does not meet the criteria. However, under Section 35(1) of the Planning Act 2008, '*the Secretary of State may give a direction for development to be treated as development for which development consent is required*' if certain criteria (including the type and location of the development) are met.

1.4.3 In August 2023, the Applicant sought direction from the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (the 'Secretary of State') under section 35 of the Planning Act 2008 to confirm that elements of the Proposed Development should be treated as development for which development consent under the Planning Act 2008 is required. A direction was duly made on 26 September 2023 confirming the Secretary of State's conclusion that the Proposed Development is nationally significant and therefore is development requiring development consent under the Planning Act 2008. The annex of the Secretary of State direction explains that:

'The Proposed Project is of national significance, taking into account that it forms part of a generation project which is comprised of 11.5GW of renewable power in Morocco, which is intended to deliver 3.6 Gigawatts (GW) of low carbon electricity to the UK's grid and could improve the security and diversity of the UK's electricity supply.'

1.4.4 Therefore, the Applicant is now pursuing a DCO for the Proposed Development.

1.4.5 Further details of the relevant planning policy context, including the approach to consenting, as well as national and local policy and legislation, are provided in Volume 1, Chapter 2: Policy and Legislation of the ES.

1.4.6 The key stages in the Planning Act 2008 application process have been summarised in **Plate 1.2**.

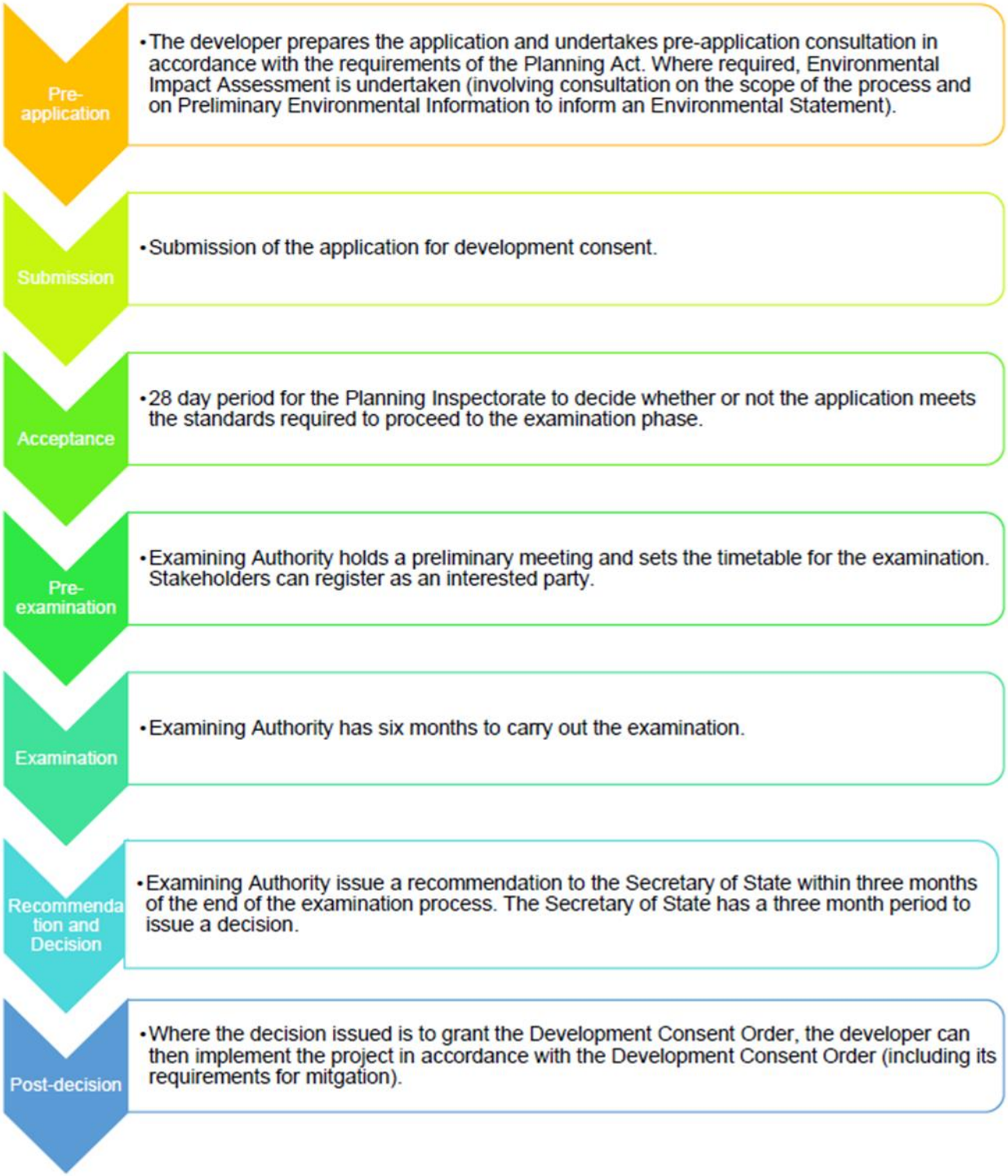

Plate 1.2: Overview of the Development Consent Order Application Process

EIA and the Purpose of the ES

1.4.7 EIA is the process of identifying and assessing the significant effects likely to arise from a project. This requires consideration of the likely changes to the environment, where these arise as a consequence of a project, through comparison with the existing and projected future baseline conditions. The

approach is iterative and involves close working between those undertaking the EIA and the engineering design.

1.4.8 The Applicant has chosen to undertake an EIA and provide the ES following the submission of a Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) and Scoping Report, in support of the DCO application for the Proposed Development, given the potential for significant environmental impacts.

1.4.9 For the Proposed Development, the legislative requirements for EIA are set out by the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, as amended (referred to in this report as the 2017 EIA Regulations), which set out the requirements for EIA under the Planning Act 2008.

1.4.10 This ES has been prepared in accordance with the 2017 EIA Regulations and Planning Inspectorate Advice Note Seven: Environmental Impact Assessment: Preliminary Environmental Information, Screening and Scoping (The Planning Inspectorate, 2020). In compliance with these regulations, the ES presents the findings of the EIA process and accompanies the application for development consent under Section 37(3) of the Planning Act 2008. The ES presents and addresses the potential significant effects that were identified within the Scoping Report and PEIR, submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in January 2024 and May 2024 respectively, and considers the Scoping Opinion provided by the Planning Inspectorate in March 2024. The ES also considers the section 42 responses received as part of the statutory consultation (further details provided in **sections 1.5.4** to **1.5.9**). The ES provides the decision makers and statutory consultees with the environmental information that they require to determine the proposals for the Proposed Development.

1.4.11 The ES provides details of the Proposed Development, together with an overview of the alternatives considered to date. For each environmental topic, details of the approach to assessment, the existing and likely future environmental conditions and the findings regarding the likely significant effects arising from the Proposed Development are set out, based on the information available at this time. Details of the measures proposed to avoid, prevent, reduce or offset significant adverse effects (known as mitigation measures or commitments) are also provided.

1.5 Consultation

Overview

1.5.1 This section provides a summary of the key points of the consultation undertaken for the Proposed Development. Full details of the consultation can be found in the Consultation Report (document reference 5.1) and in Volume 1, Chapter 5: EIA Methodology of this ES.

Scoping Report

1.5.2 In January 2024, the Applicant submitted a Scoping Report (Xlinks 1 Limited, 2024) to the Planning Inspectorate. The Scoping Report detailed the proposed scope and methodology for the technical studies to provide an assessment of any likely significant effects, and where necessary, to determine suitable mitigation measures for the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of the Proposed Development. It also described those topics or sub-topics which

were proposed to be scoped out of the EIA process, including justification as to why the Proposed Development would not have the potential to give rise to significant environmental effects in these areas.

1.5.3 Following consultation with the statutory bodies, the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) provided a formal Scoping Opinion (Xlinks 1 Limited, 2024) on 7 March 2024. This ES is based upon the Scoping Opinion and considers the key comments raised throughout. Further information about the scoping process is provided within Volume 1, Chapter 5: EIA Methodology of the ES.

Statutory Consultation

1.5.4 In accordance with Section 42 and Section 47 of the Planning Act 2008, the Applicant held a statutory consultation between 16 May and 11 July 2024. Consultation was undertaken with Section 42 consultees on the contents of the PEIR and the assessments undertaken to date. This provided the opportunity to review and comment upon the Proposed Development and its potential impacts.

1.5.5 The full PEIR was made available for review on the Applicant's website, and at 'deposit point' locations in the local area, alongside a Non-Technical Summary, a Consultation Brochure and supplementary reports, plans and drawings.

1.5.6 As part of this consultation, five consultation events were held at which members of the public and other consultees could attend to meet members of the project team. In addition, there were two online webinars that took place for those who were unable to attend the in-person events. All of these events gave consultees the opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns and provide feedback via a number of advertised routes including via feedback form, email, freepost or in person.

1.5.7 Feedback provided from consultation with the community, statutory consultation bodies and other interested parties has helped refine the design of the Proposed Development (e.g. refinement of design and Order Limits boundary) and inform development of the ES.

1.5.8 As the Proposed Development design evolved, additional targeted statutory consultation was undertaken with relevant consultees between 6 September 2024 and 7 October 2024. This provided opportunities for the relevant stakeholders to review and comment upon the further design changes and refinements, which have been taken into consideration during the EIA process.

1.5.9 Full details of the statutory consultation events, the consultation responses received and how they have been taken into account in the application are provided in the Consultation Report (document reference 5.1) submitted with the DCO application. Information about how the consultation responses that are relevant to the ES have been taken into account is provided in Volume 1, Chapter 5: EIA Methodology and in the relevant ES topic chapters within Volumes 2, 3 and 4.

Further Engagement

1.5.10 In addition to the formal consultation, relevant statutory and non-statutory consultees have also been engaged throughout the EIA process so that stakeholders could continue to be engaged up until the point of documents being

finalised for application. This consultation is also described in the relevant ES topic chapters within Volumes 2, 3 and 4.

The Applicant and the EIA Team

The Applicant

1.5.11 The Applicant is Xlinks 1 Limited. The Applicant is a UK company with a mission to capture the power of nature to generate a near constant, affordable energy supply and connect it to the point of consumption in real time. With the vision of unlocking the potential for remote renewable energy generation to enable markets with high energy demand to achieve net zero emissions. Through the development of large-scale power infrastructure spanning land and sea, the Applicant aims to transmit reliable but flexible power from resource rich remote locations, where it can be most economically and sustainably generated at scale.

The EIA Team

1.5.12 RPS and APEM Group have been contracted by the Applicant to develop this ES for the Proposed Development. Both RPS and APEM Group are registrants of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Quality Mark.

1.5.13 In accordance with Regulation 14(4) of the 2017 EIA Regulations, as amended, the ES has been prepared by competent experts. The relevant expertise and qualifications of these experts has been outlined within Volume 1, Appendix 1.1: Statement of Expertise, of the ES.

1.6 Structure of the ES

1.6.1 Although there is no statutory provision as to the form of an ES, it must contain the information specified in Regulation 14(2) and Schedule 4 of the 2017 EIA Regulations. For the avoidance of doubt, the specified information within Regulation 14(2) and Schedule 4 is set out in Volume 1, Chapter 5: EIA Methodology of this ES.

1.6.2 The ES is divided into four volumes:

- Volume 1: Introduction;
- Volume 2: Effects on the Onshore Environment;
- Volume 3: Effects on the Offshore Environment; and
- Volume 4: Effects on the Onshore and Offshore Environment.

1.6.3 Each volume is supported by figures and technical appendices. **Table 1.1** provides details of the structure of the ES.

Table 1.1: Structure of the ES

Chapter Number	Chapter Title	Document Reference
Volume 1 - Introduction		
1	Introduction	6.1.1
2	Policy and Legislation	6.1.2
3	Project Description	6.1.3
4	Need and Alternatives	6.1.4
5	EIA Methodology	6.1.5
Volume 1 is supported by Volume 1, Figures and Volume 1, Appendices.		
Volume 2 – Effects on the Onshore Environment		
1	Onshore Ecology and Nature Conservation	6.2.1
2	Historic Environment	6.2.2
3	Hydrology and Flood Risk	6.2.3
4	Geology, Hydrogeology and Ground Conditions	6.2.4
5	Traffic and Transport	6.2.5
6	Noise and Vibration	6.2.6
7	Air Quality	6.2.7
8	Land Use and Recreation	6.2.8
Volume 2 is supported by Volume 2, Figures and Volume 2, Appendices.		
Volume 3 – Effects on the Offshore Environment		
1	Benthic Ecology	6.3.1
2	Fish and Shellfish Ecology	6.3.2
3	Commercial Fisheries	6.3.3
4	Marine Mammals and Turtles	6.3.4
5	Shipping and Navigation	6.3.5
6	Other Marine Users	6.3.6
7	Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage	6.3.7
8	Physical Processes	6.3.8
9	Offshore Ornithology	6.3.9
Volume 3 is supported by Volume 3, Figures and Volume 3, Appendices.		
Volume 4 – Effects on the Combined Onshore and Offshore Environment		
1	Climate Change	6.4.1
2	Landscape, Seascape and Visual Resources	6.4.2
3	Socio-economics and Tourism	6.4.3
4	Human Health	6.4.4
5	Inter-related Effects	6.4.5
Volume 4 is supported by Volume 4, Figures and Volume 4, Appendices.		

1.6.4 A non-technical summary, which summarises the key baseline data and findings of the ES in non-technical language, is available separately (document reference 6.5).

Document Availability

1.6.5 The full ES is available in digital format on the Planning Inspectorate website. A Non-Technical Summary provides an overview of all of the technical topic assessments, as well as the site-selection process of the Proposed Development.

1.6.6 Additional copies are available on request from:

- hello@xlinks.co

1.6.7 Requests for paper copies of the ES will be considered on a case-by-case basis. A reasonable charge will be made for paper copies.

1.7 Additional Assessments

1.7.1 In addition to the Planning Act 2008 and the 2017 EIA Regulations, other environmental legislation also requires specific assessments to be undertaken. The approach to addressing this legislation within this ES is set out below.

1.7.2 The effects of the Proposed Development on designated sites have been assessed, taking into account the requirements of the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. A report setting out the findings of the assessment process has been prepared following the method set out in the Planning Inspectorate Advice Note: Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on Habitats Regulations Assessments (Planning Inspectorate, 2024). The results of the Habitats Regulations Assessment are set out in the Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (document reference 7.16).

1.7.3 The effects of the Proposed Development on Marine Conservation Zones have been assessed through a Marine Conservation Zone Assessment. The findings are set out in the Marine Conservation Zone Assessment (document reference 7.15).

1.7.4 The effects of the Proposed Development in relation to The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 and the effects on environmental objectives for surface and groundwater bodies are considered within Volume 2, Appendix 3.2: Onshore Water Framework Directive Assessment of the ES and the Offshore Water Framework Directive Assessment (document reference 7.14).

1.7.5 Additional information available is set out in the Guide to the Application (document reference 1.2).

1.8 References

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