



# **Morven Hawthorn Pit Grid Connection Project – Programme Document**



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## Glossary

Term	Meaning
Applicant	Morven Offshore Wind Limited (MvOWL)
Cumulative Effects Assessment	Assessment of the likely effects arising from the MHPGC Project alongside the likely effects arising from other proposed developments on the same receptor or resource.
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.
Evidence Plan Process	A voluntary consultation process with specialist stakeholders to agree the approach to, and information to support, the Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment processes for certain topics.
Expert Working Group	A forum for targeted engagement with regulators and interested stakeholders through the Evidence Plan process.
Mean High Water Spring	The height of mean high water during spring tides in a year.
Mean Low Water Spring	The height of mean low water during spring tides in a year.
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 export cables	The cables which would bring electricity from either Morven North Offshore Wind Array Project or Morven South Offshore Wind Array Project to the landfall.
Onshore export cables	The cables which would bring electricity from the Transition Joint Bay landfall to the onshore land substation.
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
Scoping Boundary	The spatial extent of the study area used to define the environmental baseline to inform impact assessment
Statement of Community Consultation	A document outlining how the Applicant's proposed approach to consultation to engage local community consultees early in the development of the Morven Hawthorn Pit Grid Connection Project, in accordance with section 47 of the Planning Act, 2008, as amended.
Statutory Consultee	Organisations that are required to be consulted by an applicant pursuant to section 42 of the Planning Act 2008, as amended, in relation to an application for development consent. Not all consultees will be statutory consultees (see non-statutory consultee definition).
Substation	Part of an electrical transmission and distribution system. Substations transform voltage from high to low, or the reverse by means of electrical transformers.

## Acronyms

Unit	Meaning
CEA	Cumulative Effect Assessment
DCO	Development Consent Order
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPP	Evidence Plan Process
ES	Environmental Statement
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
HVAC	High Voltage Alternating Current
HVDC	High Voltage Direct Current
LSS	Land Sub-Station
MCZ	Marine Conservation Zone
MHPGC	Morven Hawthorn Pit Grid Connection
MHWS	Mean High Water Springs
MLWS	Mean Low Water Springs
MvOWL	Morven Offshore Wind Limited
PEIR	Preliminary Environmental Information Report
PINS	Planning Inspectorate
SoS	Secretary of State

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of this Document

- 1.1.1** This Programme Document has been prepared by Morven Offshore Wind Limited ((MvOWL), hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant'), a joint venture between Jera Nex bp (JNbp) and Energie Baden-Württemberg AG (EnBW).
- 1.1.2** It has been prepared in compliance with requirements of the Planning Inspectorate's 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application Prospectus' and the Government's Guidance 'Planning Act 2008: Pre-application stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects' in respect of the Morven Hawthorn Pit Grid Connection MHPGC Project (hereafter referred to as 'the MHPGC Project').

## 1.2 Background to the MHPGC Project

- 1.2.1** The MHPGC Project was scoped into the Pathway to 2030 Holistic Network Design (HND) workstream of the UK Government Offshore Transmission Network Review (OTNR). As part of this review, National Grid assessed options to improve the coordination of offshore wind farm connections and associated transmission networks. In July 2022, National Grid ESO published the 'Pathway to 2030 Holistic Network Design Report' which set out the approach to connecting 50GW of offshore wind to the grid (National Grid ESO, 2022). This concluded that the Project should connect the windfarm to the National Grid substation at Hawthorn Pit.
- 1.2.2** In March 2024, National Grid ESO published the 'Beyond 2030' report. This builds on the HND and makes a set of network recommendations to be implemented throughout the 2030s (National Grid ESO, 2024). Whilst this report recommends a second grid connection, connecting to a substation in the Branxton area, Southeast Scotland, the Applicant awaits the outcomes of the HND Follow-Up Exercise (HND FUE) in respect of a final decision for the second grid connection.
- 1.2.3** As a result of the HND process and in order to progress the MHPGC Project, MvOWL will seek to consent the Morven Offshore Wind Farm generation and grid connection aspects separately. There will be a separate consenting and consultation process for the electrical infrastructure required in Scotland and the Morven Array Area, that is in Scottish territorial waters approximately 60km from the coast and adjacent to the border of English territorial waters.
- 1.2.4** For assets located in England, the Applicant sought a direction from the Secretary of State (SoS) under section 35 of the Planning Act to confirm that the onshore and offshore assets in England (including English waters) should be treated as development for which development consent is required under the Planning Act 2008, as amended.
- 1.2.5** A direction from the SoS for Energy and Net Zero was duly made on 5 March 2024 confirming that the MHPGC Project should be treated as a development for which development consent is required. The Applicant is now pursuing a single development consent for the onshore and offshore components of the MHPGC Project in England.
- 1.2.6** In respect of the MHPGC Project assets located within Scottish waters (specifically, Scottish Offshore Waters), a marine licence will be applied for from the Marine Directorate: Licensing Operations Team, in accordance with the provisions of the Marine and Coastal Access Act, 2009.

## 1.3 Proposed Development

- 1.3.1** The majority of the export cable corridor for the MHPGC Project will be located in English waters (within and beyond the 12nm inshore limit) and the onshore infrastructure will be located wholly in

England.

**1.3.2** The DCO Application for the MHPGC Project covers all offshore aspects of the project located within English waters, as well as all English onshore aspects of the project.

**1.3.3** An overview of the key components of the proposed development are outlined in **Table 1**.

**Table 1:** Overview of permanent infrastructure included within the DCO Application

Infrastructure		Description
Offshore: English Waters (up to MHWS).	High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) offshore export cables.	High voltage direct current (HVDC) cables which bring electricity from either the Morven North Offshore Substation Platform or the Morven South Offshore Substation Platform to the Transition Joint Bay at landfall.
	Cable protection.	Cable protection measures may be required to protect assets (cables) from damage, current and wave action.
Onshore: England (from MLWS).	HVDC export cables.	HVDC cables which bring electricity from the Transition Joint Bay to the onshore land substation.
	Onshore Land Substation (LSS).	A purpose-built site comprising a compound containing the electrical components for converting the HVDC to HVAC power. The LSS site associated with the MHPGC Project adjusts the power quality and power factor to meet the requirements of power supply being fed to the National Grid Hawthorn Pit Substation.
	High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) export cables.	High Voltage Alternating current (AC) cables that will connect the proposed onshore land substation to the National Grid Hawthorn Pit Substation.
	Grid connection.	The National Grid substation at Hawthorn Pit, County Durham, which the HVAC connection cables will connect into from the onshore land substation.

## 1.4 Document Purpose and Structure

**1.4.1** The purpose of this Programme Document is to provide the intended programme for the Applicant's pre-application activities for its application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to consent the MHPGC Project (hereafter the 'DCO Application').

**1.4.2** The scope of this document is limited solely to the proposed development for which development consent is sought, being the MHPGC Project. Consenting activity by MvOWL in respect of Scotland



will, therefore, not be provided within this document. However, it should be noted that the Applicant's Evidence Plan Process and wider technical engagement will enable full consideration Information about the Morven North Offshore Wind Array Project and Morven South Offshore Wind Array Project at the following website: [www.morvenoffshorewind.com](http://www.morvenoffshorewind.com)

**1.4.3** This document will be maintained by the Applicant throughout the pre-application stage. It will be updated during the pre-application process as the project is further developed, including completion of significant milestones that demonstrate progress in the preparation of the application. As is required, this Programme Document will be published on the Applicant's website.

**1.4.4** This Programme Document is structured as follows:

- Section 1: Introduction;
- Section 2: Pre-application Timetable;
- Section 3: Pre-application Issues and Potential Risks;
- Section 4: Approach to Stakeholder Engagement;
- Section 5: Risk Management.

## 2 Pre-application Timetable

### 2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1** This section summarises the Applicant’s position regarding timescales, as understood at the time of publication of this document. These timescales may be subject to change as the MHPGC Project progresses, including due to the need to take consultees’ feedback into account.
- 2.1.2** Any revisions to either the anticipated activities to be undertaken in the pre-application period or the intended submission of the DCO Application, will be communicated to the Planning Inspectorate and presented in future revisions of this document for the benefit of all stakeholders.
- 2.1.3** The Applicant has opted for the Standard service tier from the Planning Inspectorate pre-application service tiers, as this is the considered the most appropriate for the MHPGC Project. This tier enables the Planning Inspectorate to potentially attend up to six meetings with the Applicant per annum, with an additional five evidence plan meetings in an observational capacity. In accordance with the ‘Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application Prospectus’, the Applicant will follow the advised five primary service features (Programme Document; Issues Tracker and Potential Main Issues for the Examination; Adequacy of Consultation Milestone; and the Planning Inspectorate’s Advice Log).

### 2.2 Planned Submission Date

- 2.2.1** The Applicant currently intends to submit the DCO Application in Q4 2026.
- 2.2.2** The submission date will be refined as the period of submission draws closer and future revisions of this document will stipulate the anticipated calendar month. The Applicant will provide the Planning Inspectorate with regular updates regarding the submission date, as the project progresses.

### 2.3 Timetable of Activities

- 2.3.1** Proposed pre-application key consultation activities and milestones are set out below in **Table 2**. Section 8 of this document provides further information on stakeholder engagement, for example, with relevant statutory consultees. **Table 3** provides information on the anticipated key milestones preparing and reporting on environmental information.
- 2.3.2** In future revisions of this document, the Applicant intends to provide more precise date wherever possible to enable stakeholders to plan resources effectively.

**Table 2:** Proposed key consultation milestones and activities

Activity	Date <i>(please note - for future activities, the date provided is indicative)</i>
Engagement with Local Planning Authority and Parish Councils	Commenced March 2023 and ongoing
Non-statutory Consultation #1	July - September 2024
Establishment of an Evidence Plan Process, with associated Steering Group and Expert Working Groups to be convened	Q3 2025 and ongoing
Non-statutory Consultation #2	October – November 2025

Publication of Statement of Community Consultation	Q2 2025
Statutory Consultation & publication of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)	Q2 2026
Adequacy of Consultation Milestone	Q4 2026
Submission of DCO Application to the Planning Inspectorate	Q4 2026

**Table 3:** Proposed key milestones preparing and reporting on environmental information

Activity	Date <i>(please note - for future activities, the date provided is indicative)</i>
Inception Meeting with the Planning Inspectorate	October 2024
EIA Scoping request to the Planning Inspectorate and the Marine Directorate: Licensing Operation Team	February 2025
EIA Scoping Opinions received from the Planning Inspectorate and the Marine Directorate: Licensing Operation Team	March 2025
Project update meeting with the Planning Inspectorate	June 2025
Establishment of an Evidence Plan Process, with associated Steering Group and Expert Working Groups to be convened	September 2025 and ongoing
Statutory Consultation & publication of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)	Q2 2026
Project update meeting with Planning Inspectorate	Q3 2026
Submission of DCO Application to the Planning Inspectorate	Q4 2026

### 3 Pre-application Issues and Potential Risks

- 3.1.1** This section sets out the main issues identified by the Applicant during the pre-application stage, including the activities that will be undertaken to address those issues, for example, proposed management or potential mitigation.
- 3.1.2** At the time of writing, the Applicant is reviewing the Scoping Opinions received. **Table 4** contains the main issues arising from this review. Future iterations of this Programme Document will reflect key content of the Applicant's Issues Tracker that will be produced and updated through-out the pre-application period. The Issues Tracker process will cumulate in a list of Potential Main Issues for Examination, which the Applicant will submit as an application document.

**Table 4:** Main issues identified by the Applicant

Number	Issue	Proposed Management or Potential Mitigation
1.	Agreement with key technical stakeholders on survey methods and data coverage for environmental characterisation.	Initiation of the MHPGC Project's Evidence Plan Process (EPP) to engage technical stakeholders during the pre-application period to agree, for example, evidence gathering activities such as scope of surveys, associated assessment methodologies and analysis.
2.	Route optionality contained within the Scoping boundary to be reduced.	Direct engagement with statutory consultees and consultation via the EPP.  Non-statutory consultation (#2) will consult on route and site refinement options with non-statutory consultees and local communities for their feedback, which will inform the Preliminary Environmental Information Report.
3.	Interface across English and Scottish waters.	Ensuring the influence of the MHGPC Project activities in Scottish waters on English receptors and vice versa, are fully assessed in the Environmental Impact Assessment and robustly considered within the Cumulative Effect Assessment. The Applicant will enable cross jurisdiction engagement to discuss consenting strategy, including key issues and risks.

- 3.1.3** **Table 5** sets out potential risks identified by the Applicant. The Applicant notes that these might change as the project progresses through pre-application in consultation with statutory bodies.

**Table 5:** Main risks identified by the Applicant

Number	Risk	Proposed Activities
1.	MHPGC Project programme impacts/delays arising from feedback from non-statutory and statutory consultations.	Early engagement with statutory and non-statutory consultees, including key landowners ahead of PEIR to mitigate this risk.
2.	Resource pressures within statutory consultees have the potential to affect the MHPGC Project programme.	Early warning requests, targeted engagement with clear requests to be made to statutory bodies to mitigate this risk.

3.	<p>Potential for variability across Scottish and English regulatory and planning policy landscapes.</p> <p>Emergence of new policy and reform.</p>	<p>Tracking, alignment and compliance with relevant existing and emerging national policy in Scotland, and local and national English policy, via the Policy Compliance Document, Planning Policy Statement and National Policy Statement Tracker documents that will be submitted as part of the DCO Application.</p>
4.	<p>Interim status of the Scottish Marine Recovery Fund &amp; newly passed The Marine Recovery Fund Regulations 2025.</p>	<p>Opportunities for marine enhancement provision will be investigated at the national, regional and local levels and discussed with stakeholders.</p>

## 4 Approach to Stakeholder Engagement

### 4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1** The Applicant will continue to engage widely with statutory consultees, landowners and the local community throughout the pre-application period. Early consultation by the Applicant ahead of the Scoping Report submission has been undertaken, including a round of non-statutory consultation during July – September 2024. The Applicant has also undertaken a further round of non-statutory consultation between October – November 2025. This is informing both statutory and post-statutory consultation activities by the Applicant ahead of the DCO Application.
- 4.1.2** Engagement and consultation methods will be adapted to the target audience to reflect their different interests and needs, for example: direct engagement and liaison via in-person and online meetings, written briefings, in-person briefings and public exhibitions, Project website content, and online webinars.

### 4.2 Local Planning Authorities and Statutory Consultees

- 4.2.1** In addition to engagement with Local Planning Authorities and Parish and Town Councils that has been underway since Q2 2024, the Applicant will engage with all prescribed statutory consultees, including Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies, regulators and other relevant organisations such as, National Highways and non-statutory environmental organisations.
- 4.2.2** Discretionary Advice Services or similar cost-recovery mechanisms have been agreed with key statutory stakeholders, to ensure these organisations have the adequate resource to engage with the project at key times. Furthermore, at the time of writing a draft Planning Performance Agreement has been provided to Durham County Council for their consideration.
- 4.2.3** As required by section 47 of the Planning Act 2008, as amended, the Applicant will undertake statutory consultation to engage local community consultees and obtain their input into the development of the project. A Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) will be prepared outlining the Applicant's approach to community consultation. In accordance with section 47(2) and (3) of the Planning Act 2008, as amended, before publishing the SoCC, the Applicant will consult with Durham County Council and Sunderland County Council on a draft version of the SoCC for a period of no less than 28 days. The Applicant anticipates undertaking this consultation on the draft SoCC during March 2026 to afford adequate time for local feedback, with the publication of the SoCC anticipated for June 2026.
- 4.2.4** In line with section 47(5) of the Planning Act 2008, as amended, the Applicant will have regard to all responses received from the Local Planning Authorities before finalisation of the SoCC. The Applicant's Consultation Report - that will be submitted as part of the DCO Application - will set out the responses received and the way in which the Applicant has taken into account consultees' feedback in finalising its DCO application.

### 4.3 Technical Engagement and Evidence Plan Process

- 4.3.1** A key part of engagement by the Applicant includes an Evidence Plan Process (EPP). The EPP will provide a formal mechanism for statutory bodies and key technical stakeholders, to agree what information and evidence should be submitted in support of the DCO Application. This will include seeking feedback and advice from EPP members to inform both the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) processes, Marine Conservation Zone Assessment, as well as site selection and route refinement.
- 4.3.2** Whilst stakeholder engagement in Scottish territorial waters falls out with the EPP for the DCO Application, the Applicant fully recognises the need for a strong interface between Scottish and English stakeholders. To assist this interface, relevant Scottish stakeholders will be invited to participate in the EPP to support all stakeholder's understanding of the EIA approach, potential EIA

issues arising across jurisdictions and ensure all potential cumulative effects are adequately assessed. This engagement with Scottish stakeholders will be in addition to direct engagement that the Applicant will continue to undertake with them.

- 4.3.3** The development and monitoring of the Evidence Plan, and its subsequent progress through until DCO Application, will be undertaken through the EPP Steering Group. The membership of the EPP Steering Group includes the Planning Inspectorate; Marine Directorate-Licensing Operations Team; NatureScot; Natural England; Environment Agency; Marine Management Organisation; Durham County Council; and Sunderland City Council. In addition to the EPP Steering Group, Expert Working Groups (EWGs) have been established to discuss EIA-topic specific areas with the relevant stakeholders. The structure for the EPP (including Steering Group and EWGs) is shown in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1: Evidence Plan Process Steering Group and Expert Working Group structure**

- 4.3.4** The broad timescales for the EPP are shown in **Table 6**. However, the number and frequency of meetings will be agreed by each EWG. Therefore, the timescales are indicative and likely to vary across the EWGs, subject to stakeholder availability and the timing of documentation available to share for discussion.

**Table 6: Proposed EPP timescales (indicative subject to change)**

	2025		2026			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Publication of PEIR</b>				X		
<b>Submission of DCO Application, including Environmental Statement, Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment, HRA &amp; MCZ Assessments</b>						X
<b>EPP Steering Group</b>	X		X		X	

	2025		2026			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Benthic Ecology, Physical Processes, Fish and shellfish Expert Working Group</b>		X	X		X	
<b>Marine Mammals Expert Working Group</b>		X	X		X	
<b>Offshore Ornithology Expert Working Group</b>		X	X		X	
<b>Marine Archaeology Expert Working Group</b>		X	X		X	
<b>Onshore Ecology &amp; Ornithology Expert Working Group</b>		X X	X X		X	
<b>Onshore Heritage Expert Working Group</b>		X	X		X	
<b>Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Expert Working Group</b>		X	X		X	
<b>Traffic &amp; Transport, Noise and Vibration Expert Working Group</b>		X	X		X	
<b>Hydrology &amp; Flood Risk Expert Working Group</b>		X	X		X	

**4.3.5** In addition to the EPP, the Applicant will undertake targeted non-statutory consultation with key stakeholders within the following topics:

- Shipping and navigation;
- Commercial fisheries;
- Other sea users.



## **5 Risk Management**

- 5.1.1** As stated in 3.1.2, the Applicant will prepare an Issues Tracker that will be informed by consultation with stakeholders and assessment by the Applicant, during the pre-application period. It will culminate in a list of Potential Main Issues for the Examination, which will be submitted as an application document into Examination if the DCO Application is accepted.