

## **2 APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

### **2.1 General approach and scope of assessment**

2.1.1 This ES has been prepared with full regard to the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 and the following:

- Pre-application discussions with East Ayrshire Council and a range of other statutory and non-statutory consultees and other relevant bodies;
- PAN 58: Environmental Impact Assessment;
- Circular 3/2011: Guidance on The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2011; and
- The IEMA publication 'Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment' (2004)

2.1.2 Wardell Armstrong LLP is committed to the delivery of effective practice in EIA coordination. As a registrant of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment's EIA Quality Mark, Wardell Armstrong's EIA practice is independently reviewed in accordance with best practice.

2.1.3 A Request for a Scoping Opinion was prepared by Wardell Armstrong and submitted to East Ayrshire Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2015 (Appendix 1.1).

2.1.4 The guidance provided in the Scoping Opinion from East Ayrshire Council as well as during pre-application consultation was taken into account when determining the scope of EIA topics covered. The Scoping Opinion was received on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015 (Appendix 1.2). Particular consideration has been given to the issues of air quality, noise, traffic and transport, the coal mining legacy of the site and its surroundings, and visual impact as per the Scoping Opinion. The topic areas considered within the scope of this ES include:

- Socio-economic;
- Traffic and Transport;
- Air Quality and Human Health;
- Noise and Vibration;
- Landscape and Visual Amenity;
- Cultural Heritage and Archaeology;
- Geology and Ground Conditions

- Drainage and Flood Risk;
- Ecology and Nature Conservation; and
- Amenity.

2.1.5 The EIA has also considered any development projects in the area that have been the subject of planning applications, which in conjunction with the proposed development could collectively impose an impact on the environment (see Chapter 18 – Cumulative Impacts).

2.1.6 On the basis of the above considerations, Barr commissioned Wardell Armstrong LLP to undertake the following tasks:

- Carry out baseline studies where appropriate;
- Identify potential impacts which may arise as a result of the proposed development with regards to the topic areas;
- Assess the potential impacts arising from the construction and use of the completed development (by quantitative means where appropriate and practicable) to give an indication of their magnitude and significance;
- Advise on appropriate mitigation measures which would either eliminate or reduce any adverse effects to minimum practicable levels, and enhance positive effects where possible;
- Identify and assess any residual long-term impacts; and
- Consider cumulative effects in terms of the proposed development in combination with other developments and interactions between the various topic areas.

## **2.2 Response to the Scoping Opinion**

2.2.1 Through the scoping exercise with East Ayrshire Council, a number of elements of the EIA process have been addressed and excluded where appropriate from this Environmental Statement.

### *Protected Species/Wildlife and Ecology*

2.2.2 The requirement for a bat survey and a walkover survey of the site to be included within a Phase 1 Habitat survey featured in the Scoping Opinion. However, subsequent to the submission of the Request for a Scoping Opinion, the layout of the

proposal was altered, as a consequence of this, the existing buildings/infrastructure will be retained.

The buildings were all assessed as having negligible bat roost potential so their retention would not necessarily be of benefit to bats, although they could provide bat roosting opportunities in the future. The Scoping Opinion made reference to the possibility of the presence of barn owl nests within existing buildings/infrastructure. However, there was no evidence of barn owl activity during the site survey and the surrounding habitats are sub-optimal as hunting grounds.

#### *Landscape and Visual Impact*

- 2.2.3 Within the Scoping Opinion, East Ayrshire Council have made reference to work that they commissioned, with the support of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) on the landscape capacity within East Ayrshire to accommodate different scales of wind turbine. Whilst recognising that the study is not directly relevant, the Council have suggested that this work; 'East Ayrshire's Landscape Wind Capacity Study' (2013) provides a useful assessment which can be applied to this proposed scheme. In response to this, the landscape and visual impact assessment and chapter have addressed this study.

#### *Coal and Mining Activities*

- 2.2.4 In accordance with the Scoping Opinion, Chapter 13 of this ES has adopted the agreed risk-based approach to development management in Development High Risk Areas. A risk assessment has been carried out, which considered past coal mining activities within the site, together with any necessary mitigation measures.
- 2.2.5 The proposed EIA development is located within the defined Development High Risk Area; the site has therefore been subject to past coal mining activity. In accordance with the agreed risk-based approach to development management in Development High Risk Areas, past coal mining activities within the site should be fully considered as part of the Environmental Statement (ES); this should take the form of a risk assessment, together with any necessary mitigation measures.

### *Air Traffic impacts*

- 2.2.6 Glasgow Prestwick Airport Ltd have no objection to this proposed development on statutory safeguarding grounds. Their non-objection is subject to implementation of several statutory conditions.
- 2.2.7 In line with these conditions, the proposed development is designed and will be constructed such that it will not be attractive to bird species. Odour will be mitigated through robust odour control processes as detailed in Chapter 17 of this Environmental Statement. An assessment of amenity is provided in Chapter 17, detailing measures mitigate against odour and to ensure that access to bird species will be kept to a minimum.
- 2.2.8 The requirement for the stack structure to be fitted with aviation warning lighting has been incorporated into the design. It will be fitted with a two low intensity omnidirectional red lights at the highest practicable points on the stack.
- 2.2.9 In accordance with the condition relating to the use of cranes and associated equipment during the construction period, this will be adhered to should planning permission be granted.

## **2.3 Significance Criteria**

- 2.3.1 The criteria for the assessment of significance have been selected and applied in accordance with published guidance specific to the individual topic areas covered in the technical assessments. Such guidance represents the industry standard method for assessing potential impacts and is consistent with EIA best practice. The published guidance used in the undertaking of the assessments is referenced in each technical chapter. Where published guidance or criteria is not available, the chosen method for assessing impacts and their significance is explained in detail to ensure transparency.
- 2.3.2 Where significant impacts have been identified, mitigation measures have been recommended to avoid, reduce or remedy such impacts. These have involved modifications to the basic design or operation of the development or the introduction of specific safeguards to ameliorate potential effects. The assessment methodology has therefore been used to refine the development proposals in an iterative process.

## **2.4 Mitigation**

- 2.4.1 The development proposals, where possible, incorporate measures to avoid, reduce and remedy any potential adverse environmental impacts, and to enhance the



environmental benefits of the scheme. Potential adverse effects, issues or constraints are designed out of the scheme as far as practicably possible, with impacts that cannot be adequately mitigated through site design addressed through a combination of operational methods and techniques and best working practices.