



Chapter 1: Introduction

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1.1 This Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report (EIAR) has been prepared by Environmental Resources Management Ltd ('ERM') on behalf of Valtalia UK Ltd (hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant'). The Applicant is proposing to submit an application to the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit (ECU) for consent under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 and deemed planning permission to construct and operate a ground-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) development with a generating capacity of up to approximately 165 Megawatts (MW) (AC), Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with a generating capacity of up to approximately 80 MW, associated infrastructure, access, and landscaping (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development').
- 1.1.1.2 The Proposed Development seeks to address the growing need for renewable energy, support the transition to a low-carbon energy system, and tackle energy storage challenges, thereby helping to meet both local and national energy demands.
- 1.1.1.3 The Proposed Development is located on land approximately 2.4 kilometres (km) south of the village of Cockburnspath at the closest point to the Proposed Development boundary ('the Site'). The Site is within the Scottish Borders Council (SBC) administrative area. A plan showing the proposed extent of the Site (i.e. the application boundary, outlined in red) is provided as **Figure 1.1**. The proposed layout of the Proposed Development infrastructure is shown in **Figure 1.2**.
- 1.1.1.4 This EIAR is part of a broader suite of reports and documents submitted with the Section 36 application.

1.2 Purpose of the Report

- 1.2.1.1 The purpose of this EIAR is to provide a detailed description of the existing environment (baseline) and present an assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development. **Volume 1** of the EIAR is a technical document, while **Volume 4: Non-Technical Summary** offers a more accessible summary of **Volume 1**.
- 1.2.1.2 In line with The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 ('EIA Regulations'), an EIAR should be included with the application for consent for the purposes of informing Scottish Ministers in making their determination on the Proposed Development.

1.3 The Applicant

- 1.3.1.1 Founded in 2005, Valtalia is an experienced global renewable energy developer and Independent Power Producer (IPP) developing, constructing, and operating solar, wind, hydro, biomass, and storage projects. Valtalia has assets with 2.37GW of installed capacity, with a 16.6GW pipeline of projects globally and has a long-term commitment and experienced to development in the UK.

- 1.3.1.2 Voltalia UK Ltd is focused on providing renewable energy schemes to help decarbonise the UK's electricity generation and combat the climate crisis by supplying an affordable and renewable source of clean electricity.
- 1.3.1.3 The Proposed Development is one in a series of renewable energy projects which Voltalia are proposing to construct and operate in Scotland. If consented, international experience and expertise will allow Voltalia to develop their ~600MW of onshore renewables in Scotland to help achieve the current net zero targets and fight the climate crisis.

1.4 Structure of the Report

- 1.4.1.1 The content of this EIAR aligns with Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations. This EIAR will comprise four volumes as follows:
- Volume 1: Main Report;
 - Volume 2: Figures;
 - Volume 3: Technical Appendices; and
 - Volume 4: Non-Technical Summary.
- 1.4.1.2 Volume 1: Main Report provides a detailed description of the existing environment, an assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development and identifies required mitigation. The EIA Main Report is structured as follows:
- Chapter 1: Introduction;
 - Chapter 2: Site Design and Evolution;
 - Chapter 3: Development Description;
 - Chapter 4: EIA Methodology;
 - Chapter 5: Policy and Legislative Context;
 - Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual;
 - Chapter 7: Archaeology and Cultural Heritage;
 - Chapter 8: Ecology and Nature Conservation;
 - Chapter 9: Water Resources and Flood Risk;
 - Chapter 10: Geology and Soils;
 - Chapter 11: Traffic and Transport;
 - Chapter 12: Noise and Vibration;
 - Chapter 13: Socio-economics, Land Use, Tourism and Recreation;
 - Chapter 14: Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Assessment;

- Chapter 15: Other Issues;
 - Chapter 16: In-combination Effects;
 - Chapter 17: Summary of Significant Effects; and
 - Chapter 18: Schedule of Mitigation.
- 1.4.1.3 The technical chapters (**Chapters 6 to 15**) of the EIAR present baseline conditions, details of the assessments undertaken, including any cumulative effects, required mitigation and residual effects.
- 1.4.1.4 The general structure of each technical chapter is as follows:
- Introduction;
 - Scope of assessment and methodology;
 - Baseline conditions;
 - Assessment of effects;
 - Cumulative effects;
 - Mitigation;
 - Residual effects; and
 - Summary and conclusions.

1.5 EIA Quality

- 1.5.1.1 In accordance with Regulation 5(5) of the EIA Regulations, by appointing Environmental Resources Management (ERM) Limited to coordinate the EIAR for the Proposed Development, the Applicant has ensured that the EIAR has been prepared by competent experts. The EIAR has been compiled and approved by professional EIA practitioners holding relevant undergraduate and post-graduate degrees, and membership of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA). The EIAR meets the requirements of the IEMA EIA Quality Mark scheme. This is a voluntary scheme operated by IEMA that allows organisations to make a commitment to excellence in EIA and to have this commitment independently reviewed on an annual basis. In addition, the Applicant can confirm that each of the topic-based impact assessment chapters has been prepared by competent experts and any applicable code of practice followed in their assessment work. The following specialist consultants were appointed by the Applicant for this EIAR (see also **Volume 3, Technical Appendix 1.1: EIA Team** for further EIA Team details including relevant qualifications and any professional memberships of the authors):
- EIA Co-ordination – ERM Ltd;
 - Landscape and Visual – Abseline Landscape Planning;
 - Ecology and Nature Conservation – ERM Ltd;

- Water Environment – ERM Ltd;
- Geological Environment– ERM Ltd;
- Cultural Heritage – ERM Ltd;
- Traffic and Transport – ERM Ltd;
- Noise and Vibration – ERM Ltd;
- Socio-economics – ERM Ltd; and
- Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Assessment – ERM Ltd.

1.6 Additional Documents

1.6.1 Planning Statement

- 1.6.1.1 A Planning Statement has been prepared to accompany the application. The Planning Statement sets out an assessment of the Development in the context of the national planning and energy policy and emerging planning policies, and the development plan. It also considers the potential benefits and impacts which may arise and concludes as to the overall acceptability of the proposal in relation to the planning context.
- 1.6.1.2 Although the Planning Statement does not form part of the EIAR, it draws from the findings of the EIA and is submitted as part of the material supporting the application.

1.6.2 Pre-Application Consultation Report

- 1.6.2.1 Similar to the Design and Access Statement, there is no statutory requirement for a Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report for a Section 36 application. The Applicant has however undertaken extensive consultation and engagement at the pre-application stage, and a PAC Report forms part of the application submission.

1.7 Obtaining Further Information and Making Representations

- 1.7.1.1 This EIAR and supporting documentation to the application, together with a notice of the application providing details of the public viewing venues and times, can be found on the Bowshiel Solar Farm and BESS website at: <https://bowshielsolarfarm.co.uk/>
- 1.7.1.2 Members of the public can view the application in person at the following locations:
- Cockburnspath Village Hall, Callendar Place, Cockburnspath, TD13 5XY (Note: There are no fixed opening times at this venue. To arrange to view the application please contact: enquiry@copathhall.org)
 - Dunbar Public Library, Bleachingfield Centre, Countess Road, Dunbar, EH42 1DX (Opening times: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 09:00 to 13:00 and 14:00 to 17:00. Saturday 10:00 to 13:00)

- 1.7.1.3 The application will also be available for public viewing on the Energy Consents Unit website (ECU Reference: ECU00005085) at: <https://www.energyconsents.scot/>
- 1.7.1.4 Members of the public seeking to make representations can email them to: Representations_Mailbox@gov.scot
- 1.7.1.5 Hard copies of the application submission may be obtained at a reasonable charge reflecting the cost of making the information available in the chosen format.
- 1.7.1.6 To request a copy of the application please contact: bowshielsolarfarm@erm.com