1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Proposed Development

1.1.1 RWE Renewables UK Onshore Wind Limited ('the Applicant') is seeking consent from East Ayrshire Council ('EAC') under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) to construct and operate a wind farm generating station with an installed capacity of up to 10MW and a battery storage facility up to 11MW (1Hour), resulting in a combined installed capacity of up to 21MW.

1.1.2 The Proposed Development is located in East Ayrshire approximately 6km to the south-west of New Cumnock and approximately 9km east of Dalmellington, just to the north of the border with Dumfries and Galloway. It is centred at coordinates: easting (E)258250, northing (N)606680. The Development Site boundary, which encompasses approximately 128hectares (ha), is shown in **Figure 1.1** and **Figure 1.2,** whilst the wider geographical context is shown in **Figure 9.1**. However, the wind farm infrastructure would occupy only a small part of the Development Site, which for descriptive purposes is subdivided into a 'main site' - where the turbines and the new associated infrastructure would be located - and the 'access track', with reference to the existing access track through the Pencloe Forest connecting to Afton Road.

1.1.3 The Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') Report has been prepared to accompany the application for the Proposed Development, which comprises:

- Up to two wind turbines, up to 149.9m to blade tip;
- Access tracks connecting the turbines and other infrastructure elements;
- An upgraded vehicular access from the public highway (Afton Road);
- Hard standing areas (e.g., crane pads);
- Temporary working areas e.g., construction compound;
- Control building and substation compound;
- Electrical cabling between the control building and turbines;
- Battery storage; and
- Infrastructure required to provide a connection point to the 132/33kV substation to be located at the consented Enoch Hill Wind Farm.[1]

1.1.4 A 50m micro siting allowance is proposed for the infrastructure mentioned above and consent is sought for an operational life of 35 years.

[1] The connection between the control building of the Proposed Development and the consented Enoch Hill Wind Farm Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN) substation would be by overhead line (to be constructed by SPEN). Permission for this would be sought through a separate application submitted under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989.

1.2 Existing Site and Surroundings

1.2.1 The Development Site, the boundary of which is shown on **Figure 1.2**, is located in East Ayrshire, directly north of the border with Dumfries and Galloway and the former Stewartry District.

1.2.2 The nearest large settlements to the Development Site are New Cumnock, approximately 6km to the north-east and Dalmellington, approximately 9km to the west, with the nearest residential properties located at Brockloch and Dalleagles Terrace, approximately 4.2km to the north of the nearest turbine.

1.2.3 Access to the Development Site is via an existing track off Afton Road to the east and then onto existing access track through Pencloe Forest.

1.2.4 The topography of the Development Site ranges between 230m-531m Above Ordnance Datum ('AOD'), with one summit, Strandlud Hill, located in the main part of the Development Site in the west, while the access track that connects this part to Afton Road to the east skirts Meikle and Auchincally Hills. Open moorland, including the site of the consented Enoch Hill Wind Farm, is located 2.7km to the north of the Development Site, with Carsphairn and Pencloe forests to the west, south and east. The consented Pencloe Wind Farm is located 2.1km to the east of the Development Site, with the operational Brockloch Rig Extension Wind Farm being located 13.7km to the south.

1.2.5 The Development Site is located within the 'Southern Uplands with Forest' Landscape Character Area. The Southern Upland LCA is identified as a landscape character area of medium to low sensitivity in the Ayrshire and Clyde Valley Wind Farm Landscape Capacity Study (2004). The characteristics of the Southern Uplands LCA are large smooth domed or slightly conical shaped hills. The hills often have steep sides and glens, many of which have been enlarged by glacial erosion. The landscape is large with a remote quality. The landscape type of the Southern Uplands with Forest is similar to that of the Southern Uplands though differs due to the dominant forest cover (Sitka Spruce).

1.2.6 The Muirkirk and North Lowther Uplands Special Protection Area ('SPA') is located approximately 11km to the north-east of the boundary of the Development Site and it is designated for breeding short eared owl, hen harrier, merlin, peregrine and golden plover and, during the winter season, hen harrier.

1.2.7 The derelict Monquhill Farmhouse is located on the main part of the Development Site, with the nearest residential properties being Brockloch and Dalleagles Terrace, approximately 4.2km to the north of the nearest turbine (with turbines of the consented Enoch Hill Wind Farm being in closer proximity to both).

1.3 The Applicant and the Project Team

1.3.1 This EIA Report has been prepared on behalf of the Applicant by WSP UK Limited ('WSP'), with the support of Neil McKay Forestry Consultant Ltd, and Osprey Consulting Services Ltd (aviation). It provides the environmental information that will be used by EAC to inform the process of determining the application for planning permission, under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, to build and operate the Proposed Development which would be made under section 32 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.

1.3.2 WSP is registered with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment ('IEMA')'s EIA Quality Mark scheme. The scheme allows organisations that lead the co-ordination of EIAs in the UK to make a commitment to excellence in their EIA activities and have this commitment independently reviewed.

1.3.3 A statement outlining the relevant experience and qualifications of the competent experts who have prepared this EIA Report is provided in **Appendix 1A**, whilst a full description of the EIA process is provided in **Chapter 4 – Approach to Preparing the EIA Report**.

1.4 History of the Proposed Development

1.4.1 The Enoch Hill 2 Wind Farm project was initiated in 2015 by E.ON Climate and Renewables ('E.ON'). In autumn 2019, RWE acquired E.ON's renewable energy activities. Previous to this, the feasibility of developing a wind farm on this site (at the time referred to as Monquhill) had been pursued by another developer and some baseline work relating to this period is referred to in this EIA Report (**Chapter 12 - Ornithology**).

1.4.2 The consultancy business appointed by E.ON in 2016 was Amec Foster Wheeler, which was subsequently acquired by Wood in 2017. The Environment and Infrastructure Solutions UK division of Wood (Wood EIS UK) was subsequently acquired by WSP in 2022.

1.4.3 The assessment presented in this EIA Report was initiated by Wood EIS UK in 2020 and an initial draft was completed that year prior to the project being paused.

1.4.4 The project was resumed in January 2023 and, with the exception of an amendment to the route of the access track between the two proposed turbines and the addition of a battery storage compound, the Proposed Development remains unchanged from that assessed in 2020.

1.4.5 Further site visits have been carried out in 2023 for ecology, forestry, landscape and visual, and peat, along with updated desk-based research as required to confirm baseline conditions. Where baseline reports in the appendices to this EIA Report remain unchanged from 2020, these are presented in their original format as Amec Foster Wheeler, Wood and E.ON branded documents.

1.5 Purpose of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report

1.5.1 The Proposed Development falls within Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations. A Schedule 2 development constitutes EIA development if the application is supported by an EIA Report, or if the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location. Due to the nature, size and location of the Proposed Development, it is acknowledged that an EIA is required.

1.5.2 The results of the EIA are summarised within this EIA Report, which accompanies an application made by the Applicant to the EAC under section 32 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 to construct and operate the Proposed Development. It also takes into account the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Act 2022.

1.5.3 An EIA Scoping Report was issued to EAC together with a request for an EIA Scoping Opinion under the EIA Regulations on 21 February 2020, under which EAC are required to consult with the '*consultation bodies*' as defined in the EIA Regulations. Drawing upon the EIA Scoping Opinion and subsequent assessment work, the EIA Report includes an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development. Further information on the EIA scoping process as well as information about the approach used to prepare the EIA Report, are outlined in **Chapter 4 – Approach to Preparing the EIA Report** of this document.

1.5.4 The EIA Report and NTS are available to download from the project website: **www.rwe.com/enochhill2.** Hard copies of these documents will also be placed at local libraries by EAC. An additional copy will be provided at the New Cumnock Bowling Club.

1.6 Scope of the EIA Report

1.6.1 As set out in Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations, the following information should be included in an EIA Report:

- The location of the development;
- The physical characteristics and land-use requirements of the development, considering construction and operation (including requisite demolition works where relevant);
- Operational processes such as energy, materials and natural resources used;
- Any residues and emissions (such as water, air, soil and subsoil pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation and quantities and types of waste produced during the construction and operation phases);
- The reasonable alternatives that the developer has studied, including an indication of the main reasons for the chosen option, with a comparison of their environmental effects;
- The baseline environment and its evolution (as far as natural changes to that baseline can be assessed with reasonable effort) in the absence of the development;
- A description of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on environmental factors, including population, human health, biodiversity, land, soil, water, air, climate, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape;
- A description of the methods used in the assessment to determine whether significant effects are likely to occur including details of difficulties encountered and the main uncertainties involved;
- A description of measures and monitoring that have been identified to address likely adverse significant effects;
- A description of any significant effects on the environment deriving from the development's vulnerability to major accidents and disasters;
- A non-technical summary; and
- A list of references.

1.6.2 Column 1 of **Table 1.1** lists those topics that need to be considered when preparing an EIA Report and column 2 lists where these are included in the EIA Report supporting this application, with reference to the relevant chapter numbers.

Table 1.1 Environmental Topics to be Addressed in the EIA Report and Chapter References

Topics[2] that need to be assessed under the EIA Regulations	Chapter titles in this EIA Report
Population and Human Health	Chapter 9 – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Chapter 14 – Traffic and Transport, Chapter 7 – Noise, Chapter 13 – Hydrology and Hydrogeology, Chapter 15 – Socio-economics, Tourism and Recreation.
Biodiversity	Chapters 11 – Ecology and 12 – Ornithology
Land	Chapter 13 – Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology
Soil	Chapter 13 – Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology
Water	Chapter 13 – Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology
Air	Scoped out as significant effects unlikely. Dust suppression and other standard mitigation measures aimed at reducing air quality impacts are considered in Chapter 3 – Description of the Proposed Development.
Climate	Chapter 6- Renewable Energy Policy, Carbon Balance, Climate Resilience and Peat Management
Material assets	N/A - scoped out
Cultural heritage	Chapter 10 – Historic Environment
Landscape	Chapter 9 – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
The inter-relationship between the above factors	These are assessed within each Chapter as relevant
Vulnerability to major accidents or disasters	Chapter 16 – Infrastructure and Other Issues

1.7 Structure of this EIA Report

1.7.1 The EIA Report comprises three volumes:

- **Volume 1** (i.e., this volume) is sub-divided into the following chapters:
  - **Chapter 1** introduces the Proposed Development;
  - **Chapter 2** explains the need for the Proposed Development, outlines the main alternatives considered and indicates the main reasons for the preferred choice;
  - **Chapter 3** provides a description of the Proposed Development;
  - **Chapter 4** details the approach that has been adopted in preparing the EIA Report;

[2] In this EIA Report, the word 'topic' is used when referring to the environment that could be affected by the Variation Development. Other words with the same general meaning are used in the EIA Regulations, notably 'factor' and 'aspect', but these are not used in the same context within this EIA Report.

- **Chapter 5** provides an overview of the legislation and policies that are relevant to the EIA Report; and
- **Chapters 6** to **16** set out the technical assessments for the environmental topics considered in the EIA Report.
- **Chapter 17** provides a summary of mitigation and residual effects.
- **Chapter 18** contains references utilised within the EIA Report.

- **Volume 2** contains the figures referred to in the aforementioned volumes;
- **Volume 3** contains the appendices referred to in the EIA Report;
- Non-Technical Summary ('NTS'), summarising the findings of the EIA studies.
- A glossary of technical terms is provided as **Appendix 1B** of the EIA Report in Volume 3.