4 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Introduction

4.1.1 This chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) sets out the approach taken to the environmental assessment process for the Project. The chapter also includes details of the consultation undertaken to date and the overall approach to the assessment of the likely effects of the Project. Further details of topic specific methodologies, such as survey methods, are provided in each topic chapter of this EIAR.

Scoping

4.1.2 Scoping is the process of identifying the issues to be addressed during the EIA process. Scoping is an important preliminary procedure, which sets the context for the EIA process.

4.1.3 Regulation 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, as amended (referred to here as the EIA Regulations) allows an applicant to request an opinion as to the issues to be addressed in the EIA Report. For projects of this type, this opinion (known as a Scoping Opinion) is provided by North Ayrshire Council.

4.1.4 Whilst there is no formal requirement in the EIA Regulations to seek a Scoping Opinion prior to submission of an EIA Report, it is recognised as best practice to do so.

4.1.5 A Scoping Report was issued to North Ayrshire Council on 12 November 2021, with a request for a Scoping Opinion. The Scoping Report is provided in Appendix 4.1.

4.1.6 A Scoping Opinion was provided by North Ayrshire Council on 12 November 2021 and is provided at Appendix 4.2. As part of the statutory consultation that must be undertaken by North Ayrshire Council when providing a Scoping Opinion, the following consultees provided a response.

- Historic Environment Scotland.
- Largs Community Council.
- SEPA.
- Marine Scotland.
- North Ayrshire Council.
- Fairlie Community Council.
- NatureScot.
- Transport Scotland.
- Environmental Health Officer (EHO) North Ayrshire Council.
- Scottish Water.

4.1.7 Appendix 4.3 of this EIA Report provides a more detailed overview of the key points raised in the Scoping Opinion or by consultees for each topic area, together with a response to these. The topic chapters (Chapters 5 to 14) also provide a summary of the key points raised during consultation with both statutory and non-statutory consultees.

4.1.8 The scoping exercise highlighted a number of areas that consultees wished to see addressed within the EIA Report. Taking into account the nature, size and location of the Project, the information provided within the Scoping Opinion and other consultation responses provided throughout the EIA process, the following topics have been identified as requiring consideration within this EIA Report:

- ecology and nature conservation (chapter 5);
- historic environment (chapter 6);
- landscape and visual effects (chapter 7);
- hydrology and flood risk (chapter 8);
- hydrogeology, geology and ground conditions (chapter 9);
- traffic and transport (chapter 10);
- noise and vibration (chapter 11);
- climate change (chapter 12);
- air quality (chapter 13); and
- socio-economics (chapter 14).

4.1.9 A supporting appendix is also provided in this EIAR to address specific aspects associated with population and health (see Appendix 2.2).

Topics Scoped Out of the EIA Process

4.1.10 Effects on other aspects of the environment are not likely to be significant. The topics scoped out of the assessment are set out in the Scoping Report (Appendix 4.1), agreed via the Scoping Opinion (Appendix 4.2) and summarised below.

Planning Policy Context

4.1.11 The EIA Report provides an overview of relevant legislative and planning policy context within each topic chapter. The assessment has had regard to national and local policy documents, where relevant. A separate chapter on planning policy has not been included within the EIA Report. However, a Planning Supporting Statement has been prepared to support the planning application.

Material Assets

4.1.12 The EIA Regulations refer to 'material assets', including architectural and archaeological heritage. The phrase 'material assets' has a broad scope, which may include assets of human or natural origin, valued for socio-economic or heritage reasons. Material assets are in practice considered across a range of topic areas within an EIA Report, in particular the historic environment and socio-economics. These topics are included within this EIA Report or have been scoped out. Therefore, no separate consideration of material assets is considered necessary.

Radiation and Heat

4.1.13 The Project will generate heat as part of the extrusion process. The technical specification of the building will take into account the heat generated and provide suitable measures to prevent overheating. These are an integral part of the design of the building. The specification could be in the form of air cooling or air conditioning units in the buildings and the use of nitrous oxide. With these measures in place, it is not considered likely that significant effects in relation to heat will occur and therefore, it is not proposed that heat effects are considered further.

Daylight, Sunlight and Microclimate

4.1.14 Due to the location of the proposed works and the nature of the surrounding infrastructure and land use, it is not considered likely that the Project will have significant effects in relation to daylight and sunlight. In addition, the nature of the Project is not likely to result in microclimate

changes and therefore this topic is also scoped out of the assessment. The effects of the Project on climate change will be considered in Chapter 12: Climate Change.

Agriculture

4.1.15 The Project site is located on part of the former Hunterston Coal Yard. The Project site is not therefore in agricultural use and has no agricultural land value. Effects of the Project on agriculture have therefore been scoped out of the EIA process.

Waste

4.1.16 Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations requires consideration of the production of waste during the construction and operational phases. Details of the broad types of waste produced as a result of the Project are included within Chapter 2 (Project Description).

4.1.17 The topography of the former coal yard is flat. There is a slight reduction in elevation towards the railway line and then to the beach. Cut material will be generated by the excavation of a basement for the tower. A cut/fill balance calculation has not been completed to date but due to the small volumes involved and the ability to re-use material onsite, it is not likely there will be large amounts of waste material to be disposed of offsite. This is subject to confirmation by intrusive surveys.

4.1.18 Therefore, a separate waste chapter is not considered necessary. A draft Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) is provided in Appendix 2.1, which includes waste disposal measures for the construction period. The estimated waste types and volumes likely to be generated during the construction phase of the Project will be identified in further detail within a waste management plan prior to construction. The plan will also include a series of measures to manage waste in accordance with best practice and the waste management hierarchy.

Major Accidents and Disasters

4.1.19 The EIA Regulations require consideration of the Projects' vulnerability to major accidents and/or disasters. The development is not of a type to give rise to potential for any unusual accidents or disasters.

4.1.20 Due to the location of the Project site, it is not likely that the Project will be at risk of a major disaster from extreme flood or rainfall events. The drainage design for the Project takes into account an increase in rainfall as a result of climate change and therefore, accommodates higher flows. Further details on flooding are included within Chapter 8 (Hydrology & Flood Risk).

4.1.21 The design and construction of the buildings is at the conceptual/outline stage and has taken cognisance of/is in line with, the Building (Scotland) Regulations, which are enforced by local building control bodies. The detailed design will therefore take into account relevant legislation and guidance including the following (or their replacement versions at the time of construction) to reduce the risk of fire:

- Building Regulations 2004; and
- Building Standards Technical Handbook 2019: Non-domestic Buildings (Section 2: Fire) (Scottish Government, 2013).

4.1.22 In addition, each of the factory buildings include fire sprinklers.

4.1.23 During construction, normal construction good practice will be followed to ensure on-site safety of the workforce in accordance with the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. Independent health and safety advisors will be employed by the contractors during construction to report on the site's safety. It will be required that these reports take place monthly with the reports being provided to XLCC.

4.1.24 Nevertheless, this topic is considered within Chapter 2: Project Description of this EIA Report and, where relevant in topic chapters. No further separate consideration is required.

Sustainability

4.1.25 There are no specific requirements to address sustainability in an EIA Report. Therefore, sustainability is not considered further in this Scoping Report.

Transboundary Effects

4.1.26 The EIA Regulations outline that where a project in Scotland is the subject of EIA and is likely to have significant effects in the environment of any EEA (European Economic Area) State (other than the UK), Scottish Ministers must consult with the other EEA State and allow for them to participate in the procedures if they wish to do so.

4.1.27 Due to the nature and location of the Project no significant effects on any other EEA State are likely to occur. Therefore, transboundary effects have not been considered further in the EIA process.

Environmental Assessment Methodology

Relevant EIA Guidance

4.1.28 The EIA process has taken into account relevant government or institute guidance, including:

- Scottish Government (2013 and 2017 update) Planning Advice Note 1/2013: Environmental Impact Assessment at https://www.gov.scot/publications/planning-advice-note-1-2013-environmental-impact-assessment/pages/1/ .
- Scottish Government (2011 and 2013 update) Energy Storage: Planning Advice at https://www.gov.scot/publications/energy-storage-planning-advice/ .
- Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland (2018) Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook.
- Highways England *et al.* (2020) Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. LA 104 Environmental assessment and monitoring.
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2004) Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment.
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2011) The State of Environmental Impact Assessment Practice in the UK. Special Report.
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2015a) Environmental Impact Assessment: Guide to Shaping Quality Development.
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2015b) Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation.
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2016) Environmental Impact Assessment: Guide to Delivering Quality Development.
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2017a) Environmental Impact Assessment: Assessing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Evaluating their Significance.
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2017b) Health in Environmental Impact Assessment: A Primer for a Proportional Approach.
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2020a) IEMA Guide to Waste in Environmental Impact Assessment.

- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2020b) Digital Impact Assessment: A Primer for Embracing Innovation and Digital Working.

4.1.29 Other topic specific legislation and good practice guidance has been considered and details of these can be found in the EIA Report topic chapters.

Key Elements of the General Approach

4.1.30 The assessment of each environmental topic forms a separate chapter of the EIA Report. For each environmental topic, the following have been addressed:

- methodology and assessment criteria;
- description of the environmental baseline (existing conditions);
- identification of likely effects;
- evaluation and assessment of the significance of identified residual effects, taking into account any measures designed to reduce or avoid environmental effects which form part of the Project and to which the developer is committed;
- assessment of potential cumulative or in-combination effects with other proposals; and
- identification of any further mitigation measures envisaged to avoid, reduce and, if possible, remedy adverse effects (in addition to those measures that form part of the Project).

Methodology and Assessment Criteria

4.1.31 Each topic chapter provides details of the methodology for baseline data collection and the approach to the assessment of effects. Each environmental topic has been considered by a specialist in that area.

4.1.32 Each topic chapter defines the scope of the assessment within the methodology section, together with details of the study area, desk study and survey work undertaken and the approach to the assessment of effects. The identification and evaluation of effects have been based on the information set out in Chapter 2: Project Description.

Description of the Environmental Baseline Conditions (Including Future Baseline Conditions)

4.1.33 The existing and likely future environmental conditions in the absence of the Project are known as ‘baseline conditions’. Each topic-based chapter includes a description of the current (baseline) environmental conditions. The baseline conditions at the site and within the study area form the basis of the assessment, enabling the likely significant effects to be identified through a comparison with the baseline conditions.

4.1.34 The baseline for the assessment of environmental effects is primarily drawn from existing conditions during the main period of the EIA work in 2021 and 2022. Levels of activity at the port were relatively quiet during that period. However, it is worth bearing in mind that Hunterston Port has seen fluctuations in levels of activity in the past and further planning permissions would not be required to resume or increase port operations. It is considered that the existing baseline represents a reasonable worst case assessment scenario.

4.1.35 The baseline for the assessment should represent the conditions that will exist in the absence of the Project at the time that the Project is likely to be implemented i.e. the future baseline. The anticipated construction start date for the Project (subject to achieving planning permission) is late 2022. The construction programme would be of approximately 24 months duration. Therefore, first operation of the site has been assumed to take place in 2024. Further information about the

construction programme assessed as part of the EIA process can be found in Chapter 2: Project Description.

4.1.36 Consideration has been given to any likely changes between the time of survey and the future baseline for the construction of the Project from 2022 and for operation of the Project from 2024. In some cases, these changes may include the construction or operation of other planned developments in the area. Where such developments are built and operational at the time of writing and data collection, these have been considered to form part of the baseline environment. Where sufficient and robust information is available, other future developments in the planning system i.e. screening, scoping or in determination have been considered within the assessment of cumulative effects. A list of projects that were included in the cumulative assessment is presented at appendix 4.4.

4.1.37 The objectives of the adopted Hunterston PARC Development Framework 2021 demonstrates a vision for future occupation of the Port and sets out parameters for future development. The range of developments, infrastructure and environmental mitigation associated with these proposals is not currently known and therefore is not included in the assessment of cumulative effects.

4.1.38 Furthermore, as the first major project to be developed at Hunterston PARC, it will be incumbent upon subsequent projects to include XLCC as part of the cumulative impacts of that proposal i.e. Hunterston PARC will not be treated as a moving baseline.

4.1.39 The consideration of future baseline conditions has also taken into account the likely effects of climate change, as far as these are known at the time of writing. This has been based on information available from the UK Climate Projections project (UKCP18), which provides information on plausible changes in climate for the UK (Environment Agency and Met Office, 2018) and on published documents such as the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2021 (Committee on Climate Change, 2021).

Limitations of the Assessment

4.1.40 Each topic chapter identifies any limitations identified in the available baseline data and whether there were any difficulties encountered in compiling the information required.

Mitigation Measures Adopted as Part of the Project

4.1.41 During the EIA process, environmental issues have been taken into account as part of an ongoing iterative design process. The process of EIA has therefore been used as a means of informing the design.

4.1.42 The Project assessed within this EIAR therefore includes a range of measures that have been designed to reduce or prevent significant adverse effects arising. In some cases, these measures may result in enhancement of environmental conditions. The assessment of effects has taken into account measures that form part of the Project.

4.1.43 The topic chapters set out the measures that form part of the Project and that have been taken into account in the assessment of effects for that topic. These include:

- measures included as part of the Project design (sometimes referred to as primary mitigation) such as avoidance of sensitive areas or a change to foundation designs;
- measures to be adopted during construction to avoid and minimise environmental effects, such as pollution control measures, implemented through the CoCP (see Appendix 2.1); and
- measures required as a result of legislative requirements.

Assessment of Effects

4.1.44 The EIA Regulations require the identification of the likely significant environmental effects of the Project. This includes consideration of the likely effects during the construction and operational phases. The assessment is based on consideration of the likely magnitude of the predicted impact and the sensitivity of the affected receptor. The process by which effects have been identified and their significance evaluated is set out within each individual topic chapter. The overarching principles are set out below.

Rochdale Envelope

4.1.45 The 'Rochdale Envelope' approach to EIA most commonly employed in applications sought in principle (or outline) was coined where the nature of the proposed development means that all design details have not been confirmed and/or where the application requires a degree of flexibility.

4.1.46 EIA best practice demands that parameters of assessment and any flexibility sought is clearly set out and is consistently applied across the assessment inclusive of consultation and mitigation.

4.1.47 The XLCC assessment has been conducted against a set of cautious but reasonable 'worst-case' parameters that will not be exceeded but that provides sufficient information to identify the 'main' or 'likely significant' effects of the proposals to be identified.

Sensitivity or Importance of Receptors

4.1.48 Receptors are defined as the physical or biological resource or user group that would be affected by a Project. For each topic, baseline studies have informed the identification of potential environmental receptors. Some receptors will be more sensitive to certain environmental effects than others. The sensitivity or value of a receptor may depend, for example, on its frequency, extent of occurrence or conservation status at an international, national, regional or local level.

4.1.49 Sensitivity is defined within each topic chapter and takes into account factors including:

- vulnerability of the receptor;
- recoverability of the receptor; and
- value/importance of the receptor.

4.1.50 Sensitivity is generally described using the following scale:

- high;
- medium;
- low; and
- negligible.

4.1.51 In some cases, a further category of very high has been used.

Magnitude of Impact

4.1.52 Impacts are defined as the physical changes to the environment attributable to the Project. For each topic, the likely environmental impacts have been identified. For each topic the likely environmental change arising from the Project has been identified and compared with the baseline (the situation without the Project). Impacts are divided into those occurring during the construction and operational phases.

4.1.53 The categorisation of the magnitude of impact is topic-specific but generally takes into account factors such as:

- extent;

- duration;
- frequency; and
- reversibility.

4.1.54 With respect to the duration of impacts, the following has been used as a guide within this assessment:

- short term: a period of months, up to one year
- medium term: a period of more than one year, up to ten years; and
- long term: a period of greater than ten years.

4.1.55 The magnitude of an impact has generally been defined used the following scale:

- high;
- medium;
- low; and
- negligible.

4.1.56 In some cases, a further category of 'no change' has been used.

Significance of Effects

4.1.57 Effect is the term used to express the consequence of an impact (expressed as the 'significance of effect'). This is identified by considering the magnitude of the impact and the sensitivity or value of the receptor.

4.1.58 The magnitude of an impact does not directly translate into significance of effect. For example, a significant effect may arise as a result of a relatively modest impact on a resource of national value, or a large impact on a resource of local value. In broad terms, therefore, the significance of the effect can depend on both the impact magnitude and the sensitivity or importance of the receptor.

4.1.59 Significance levels are defined separately for each topic. Unless separately defined in the topic chapters, the assessments take into account relevant topic specific guidance, based on the following scale and guidance.

- Substantial: Only adverse effects are normally assigned this level of significance. They represent key factors in the decision-making process with regard to planning consent. These effects are generally, but not exclusively, associated with sites or features of international, national or regional importance that are likely to suffer the most damaging impact and loss of resource integrity.
- Major: These beneficial or adverse effects are considered to be very important considerations and are likely to be material in the decision-making process.
- Moderate: These beneficial or adverse effects may be important, but are not likely to be key decision-making factors. The cumulative effects of such factors may influence decision making if they lead to an increase in the overall adverse effect on a particular resource or receptor.
- Minor: These beneficial or adverse effects may be raised as local factors. They are unlikely to be critical in the decision-making process, but are important in enhancing the subsequent design of the Project.
- Negligible: No effects or those that are beneath levels of perception, within normal bounds of variation or within the margin of forecasting error.

4.1.60 The terms minor, moderate, major and substantial apply to either beneficial or adverse effects. Effects may also be categorised as direct or indirect, secondary, short, medium or long term, or permanent or temporary as appropriate.

4.1.61 Each chapter defines the approach taken to the assessment of significance. Unless set out otherwise within the chapter, topic chapters use the general approach set out in Table 4.1. For some topics, a simplified or quantitative approach is considered appropriate.

Table 4.1: Typical Assessment Matrix

Sensitivity	Magnitude of Impact				
	No Change	Negligible	Low	Medium	High
Negligible	No change	Negligible	Negligible or Minor	Negligible or Minor	Minor
Low	No change	Negligible or Minor	Negligible or Minor	Minor	Minor or Moderate
Medium	No change	Negligible or Minor	Minor	Moderate	Moderate or Major
High	No change	Minor	Minor or Moderate	Moderate or Major	Major or Substantial
Very high	No change	Minor	Moderate or Major	Major or Substantial	Substantial

4.1.62 Unless set out otherwise in each topic chapter, effects assessed as moderate or above are considered to be significant in terms of the EIA Regulations within this assessment.

Further Mitigation and Future Monitoring

4.1.63 Where required, further mitigation measures have been identified within topic chapters. These are measures that could further prevent, reduce and, where possible, offset any adverse effects on the environment.

4.1.64 Where relevant and necessary, future monitoring measures have been set out within the topic chapters.

Assessment of Cumulative Effects

4.1.65 The EIA Regulations require consideration of cumulative effects, which are effects on a receptor that may arise when the Project is considered together with other proposed developments in the area.

4.1.66 The cumulative effects of the Project in conjunction with other proposed schemes have been considered within each topic chapter of the EIA Report. Other developments considered within the cumulative assessment include those that are:

- under construction;
- permitted, but not yet implemented;
- submitted, but not yet determined; and
- identified in relevant local planning policy documents (and emerging planning policy - with appropriate weight being given as they move closer to adoption) recognising that much information on any relevant proposals will be limited.

4.1.67 It is noted that developments that are built and operational at the time of submission are considered to be part of the existing baseline conditions.

4.1.68 Details of the developments included as part of the cumulative assessment are provided in Appendix 4.4 and shown on Figure 4.1.

Inter-relationships

4.1.69 Each topic chapter considers whether or not there are any inter-related effects with other topics included within the EIA that have not already been considered in order to identify any secondary, cumulative or synergistic effects.

Summary Tables

4.1.70 Summary tables have been used to summarise the effects of the Project for each environmental topic.

Consultation

4.1.71 The Project team has undertaken consultation with, or requested information from, a number of organisations, including (but not limited to):

- Historic Environment Scotland.
- Largs Community Council.
- SEPA.
- Marine Scotland.
- North Ayrshire Council.
- Fairlie Community Council.
- NatureScot.
- Transport Scotland.
- Environmental Health Officer (EHO) North Ayrshire Council.
- Scottish Water.

4.1.72 As part of the consultation process, the applicant has engaged with the local community in order inform people about the proposals, to explain the development and its likely effects and to take on board any concerns or issues.

4.1.73 In terms of engaging with the local community and consulting on the proposed development the following has been undertaken:

- A Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) was submitted to North Ayrshire Council on 9th July 2021 in relation to a proposal to seek planning permission for the erection of a high voltage cable production facility including the construction of an extrusion tower up to 185m AGL with associated factory buildings, research and testing laboratories, offices with associated stores, transport, access, parking and landscaping with on-site generation and electrical infrastructure and cable delivery system at a site at Hunterston Coal Yard, North Ayrshire. A location plan of the site concerned was also enclosed. A copy of the PAN was also sent to Fairlie, West Kilbride, Cumbrae, Largs and Skelmorlie Community Councils as well as local councillors, MP and MSP.
- An online public exhibition (comprising 11 display boards containing information on the proposal) was held between 23rd August and 3rd September and was accessible via the following website: http://www.mcinally-associates.co.uk/hcf/index.html
- A live webchat was hosted on http://www.mcinally-associates.co.uk/hcf/index.html between 3pm and 7pm on 25th August 2021.
- Reminder letters were sent (via email) to all those on the original notification list advising of arrangements for the public exhibition.

- The online public exhibition was advertised in the Ardrossan and Salcoats Herald and Largs and Millport Herald on 11th August 2021.
- The webpage hosting the public exhibition contained functions to leave comments on the proposals and also ask questions on the proposals. Any questions received were responded to within 48 hours of receipt.
- The online public exhibition received some 266 unique visits, and 11 detailed responses / comments were received and responded to.
- Further to the above, and prior to the online exhibition, representatives of XLCC met with local interested parties / community councils to present and discuss proposals.

4.1.74 A full Pre-application Consultation Report (PAC) has been prepared and will be submitted with the planning application. This report details the public consultation process and includes all responses received / reply's given and details of how these responses have been considered in the preparation of the application.

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