XLINKS MOROCCO-UK POWER PROJECT

Preliminary Environmental Information Report

Volume 1, Chapter 1: Introduction

FOR ISSUE
April 2024

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Glossary

Term	Meaning
Applicant	Xlinks 1 Limited
Biodiversity Net Gain	An approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. Where a development has an impact on biodiversity, developers are encouraged to provide an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features over and above that being affected to ensure that the current loss of biodiversity through development will be halted and ecological networks can be restored.
Converter Site	The Converter Site is proposed to be located to the immediate west of the existing Alverdiscott Substation site in north Devon. The Converter Site would contain two converter stations (known as Bipole 1 and Bipole 2) and associated infrastructure, buildings and landscaping.
Converter station	Part of an electrical transmission and distribution system. Converter stations convert electricity from Direct Current (DC) to Alternating Current (AC), or vice versa.
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.
Environmental Statement	The document presenting the results of the Environmental Impact Assessment process.
Habitats Regulations Assessment	The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
HVAC Cables	The High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) cables which would bring electricity from the converter stations to the new Alverdiscott Substation Connection Development.
HVDC Cables	The High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) cables which would bring electricity to the UK converter stations from the Moroccan converter stations.
Landfall	The proposed area in which the offshore cables make landfall in the United Kingdom (come on shore) and the transitional area between the offshore cabling and the onshore cabling. This term applies to the entire landfall area at Cornborough Range, Devon, between Mean Low Water Springs and the Transition Joint Bay inclusive of all construction works, including the offshore and onshore cable routes, and landfall compound(s).
Marine Conservation Zone(s)	Marine Conservation Zone(s) are marine nature reserves and are areas that protect a range of nationally important, rare or threatened habitats and species.
National Landscape	An area of land designated for its natural features of outstanding beauty. The land is protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, in order to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. Previously referred to as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
National Policy Statement(s)	The current national policy statements published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero in 2023.
Offshore Cable Corridor	The proposed corridor within which the offshore cables are proposed to be located, which is situated within the United Kingdom Exclusive Economic Zone.
Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor	The proposed corridor within which the onshore High Voltage Direct Current cables would be located.
Onshore Infrastructure Area	The proposed area within the Proposed Development Draft Order Limits landward of the transition joint bays, which contains the onshore HVDC Cables, Converter

Term	Meaning
	Site, the Alverdiscott Substation Connection Development, highway works, utility diversions and onshore HVAC Cables.
Ordinary Watercourses	A river, stream, ditch, cut, sluice, dyke or non-public sewer that is not designated a main river and for which the Local Planning Authority has flood risk management responsibilities and powers.
Planning Inspectorate	The agency responsible for operating the planning process for applications for development consent under the Planning Act 2008.
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.
Proposed Development	The element of the Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project within the UK, which includes the offshore cables (from the UK Exclusive Economic Zone to landfall), landfall site, onshore Direct Current and Alternating Current cables, converter stations, road upgrade works and, based on current assumptions, the Alverdiscott Substation Connection Development.
Proposed Development Draft Order Limits	The area within which all offshore and onshore components of the Proposed Development are proposed to be located, including areas required on a temporary basis during construction (such as construction compounds).
Site of Special Scientific Interest	A site designation specified and protected in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These sites are of particular scientific interest due to important biological (e.g. a rare species of fauna or flora), geological or physiological features.
Special Areas of Conservation	A site designation specified in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Each site is designated for one or more of the habitats and species listed in the Regulations. The legislation requires a management plan to be prepared and implemented for each Special Area of Conservation to ensure the favourable conservation status of the habitats or species for which it was designated. In combination with Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites, these sites contribute to the national site network.
The national grid	The network of power transmission lines which connect substations and power stations across Great Britain to points of demand. The network ensures that electricity can be transmitted across the country to meet power demands.
Xlinks Morocco UK Power Project	The overall scheme from Morocco to the national grid, including all onshore and offshore elements of the transmission network and the generation site in Morocco (referred to as the 'Project').

Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
AC	Alternating Current
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
DC	Direct Current
DCO	Development Consent Order
DESNZ	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ES	Environmental Statement
GB	Great Britain
HVAC	High Voltage Alternating Current
HVDC	High Voltage Direct Current
IEMA	Institute of Environment Management and Assessment
MCZ	Marine Conservation Zone
NPS	National Policy Statement
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
PEIR	Preliminary Environmental Information Report
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
TW	Territorial Waters
UK	United Kingdom

Units

Units	Meaning
%	Percent
km	Kilometres
km^2	Square kilometres
GW	Gigawatts
GWh	Gigawatt Hours
GWp	Gigawatts Peak
m	Metres

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 This Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) has been prepared by RPS and APEM Group on behalf of Xlinks 1 Limited (the 'Applicant'). The purpose of the PEIR is to present the preliminary account of the likely significant environmental effects that have been identified to date within the surveys and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the United Kingdom (UK) elements of the Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project (the 'Project'). For ease of reference, the UK elements of the Project are referred to as the 'Proposed Development'[1], which is the focus of this PEIR.

1.1.2 The chapter introduces the Proposed Development, the Applicant, the EIA process and the purpose and structure of the PEIR.

1.2 Overview of the Proposed Development

The Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project (the 'Project')

1.2.1 The Proposed Development forms part of the wider Project proposed by the Applicant to develop a sub-sea electricity connection between the UK and Morocco (see **Plate 1.1**). The Project would be an electricity generation facility entirely powered by solar and wind energy combined with a battery storage facility. Located in Morocco's renewable energy rich region of Guelmim Oued Noun, the Applicant proposes to install 11.5 Gigawatts peak (GWp) generation capacity that would cover an approximate area of 1,500 km^2 and would be connected exclusively to the UK via High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) sub-sea cables. The Project would include an offshore route of approximately 4,000 km, which would run through Moroccan, Spanish, Portuguese, and French Waters before arriving within the UK Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

1.2.2 The Project proposes to facilitate the import of up to 3.6 Gigawatts (GW) of low carbon electricity into the national grid. Once complete, the Project would be capable of supplying approximately 8 percent[2] (%) of UK's annual electricity needs. This would help enable the UK to diversify its energy supply, increase energy resilience and help support local and national carbon emission reduction targets. Together with the generation infrastructure located in Morocco, it would provide a reliable supply of electricity that seeks to help address the needs of the UK power market, especially during periods of low offshore wind production around the UK. It would also help the UK to meet carbon reduction commitments, by increasing the proportion of electricity supplied by renewable sources.

[1] To note, the definitions used to describe the UK elements of the Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project in this Preliminary Environmental Information Report differ from those used in the section 35 Direction request submitted on 30 August 2023 by the Applicant.

[2] Calculation assumes an annual electricity demand of 45 GW (3.6 GW / 45 GW = 8%).

1.2.3 The Project proposes to use Direct Current (DC) cable infrastructure for the long distance transmission of electricity as the technology offers significant advantages in comparison with the use of equivalent Alternating Current (AC) systems. HVDC transmission systems provide increased reliability and efficiency when transmitting a significant load of electricity across long distances, as the systems are less susceptible to transmission losses of power compared with equivalent AC systems. Whilst the use of DC systems brings significant benefits, it requires the construction of converter stations at either end of the system to convert from AC to DC at the generation point and then from DC to AC for connection to the national grid.

1.2.4 An overview of the Project is illustrated in **Plate 1.1**. It comprises the generation assets (e.g. solar array, wind turbine array and battery storage), an offshore route for the HVDC sub-sea cable circuits of approximately 4,000 km, together with shorter lengths of onshore electricity transmission routes between proposed converter stations at each end.

1.2.5 The Project includes the following works which are outside of the UK and therefore do not form the Proposed Development for which a Development Consent Order (DCO) is sought, or as presented in this PEIR. Works outside of the UK include:

- In the Territorial Waters (TW) and EEZ of Morocco, Portugal, Spain, and France[3]:
  - Cable route of approximately 3,600 km buried in the seabed or laid on the seabed with protection.
- In Morocco (onshore):
  - Generation assets comprising approximately 7.5 GWp solar photovoltaic array, 4 GWp wind turbine array and 22.5 GWh battery storage. In combination, and taking into account losses associated with generation plant and transmission, generating 3.6 GW of power for the UK.
  - AC cables connecting the generation assets to the converter stations.
  - Converter stations to change electricity from AC to DC.
  - Onshore high voltage DC cables from the converter stations to the western coast of Morocco.
  - Transition Joint Bays to connect the onshore cables to the subsea cables.

[3] Whilst the Project is routed through the Territorial Waters and Exclusive Economic Zones of Morocco, Portugal, Spain, and France, it would not connect to the Moroccan, French, Portuguese, or Spanish grids.

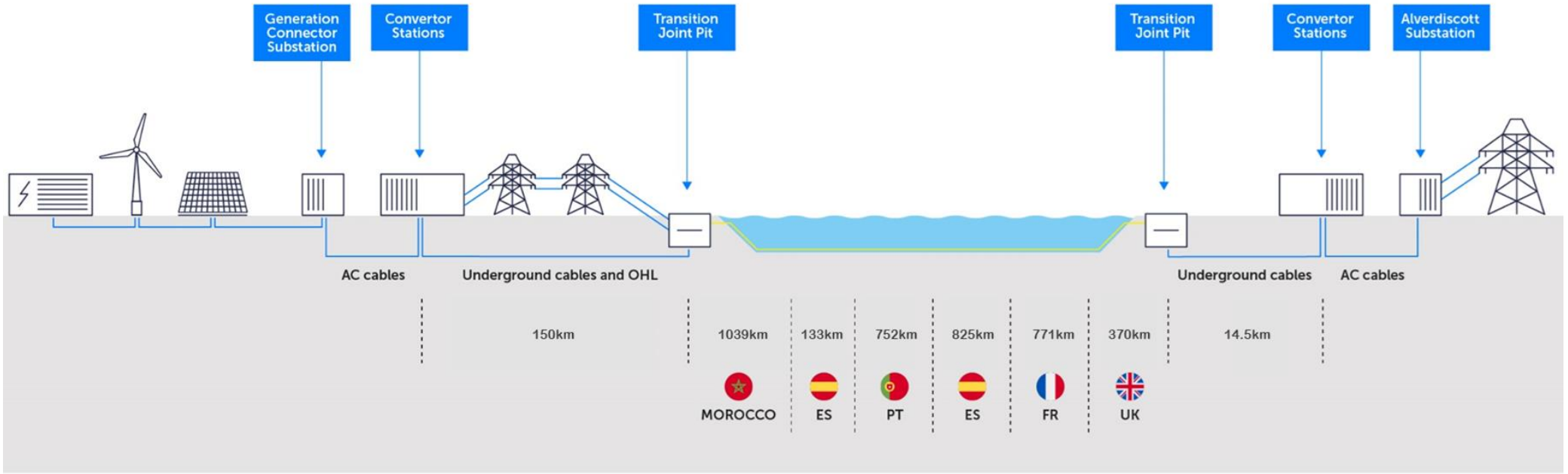

Plate 1.1: Overview of the Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project

The Proposed Development

Location

1.2.6 This PEIR addresses the UK onshore and offshore elements of the Project. The Proposed Development would be located within the Proposed Development Draft Order Limits, which is shown on Figure 1.1 (see Volume 1, Figures) and covers an approximate area of 207 km^2. This includes 3 km^2 for the onshore elements of the Proposed Development and 204 km^2 for the offshore elements.

Onshore Site Context

1.2.7 The onshore elements of the Proposed Development are proposed to be located within the Onshore Infrastructure Area (See Volume 1, Figure 1.2). The Onshore Infrastructure Area is wholly located within the local authority areas of Torridge District Council and Devon County Council, in north Devon, and extends from the Alverdiscott Substation Site to the landfall at Cornborough Range.

1.2.8 The Onshore Infrastructure Area is located in an area that is predominantly rural. The settlements of Abbotsham, Bideford, Ford, Littleham, Landcross, East-the-Water, Gammaton Moor, Woodtown and Stony Cross are situated close to the Onshore Infrastructure Area. The existing Alverdiscott Substation is located within the Onshore Infrastructure Area and there are existing 132 kV and 11 kV overhead lines that cross the Draft Order Limits and connect to the existing Alverdiscott Substation.

1.2.9 The Onshore Infrastructure Area includes parts of the North Devon National Landscape and Kynoch's Foreshore Local Nature Reserve. The Taw-Torridge Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is also situated approximately 1.3 km north of the Onshore Infrastructure Area.

1.2.10 The River Torridge flows through the central extent of the Onshore Infrastructure Area, with other watercourses also present along the route, including Kenwith Stream and multiple unnamed ordinary watercourses.

1.2.11 Furthermore, the Onshore Infrastructure Area includes the Hallsannery Scheduled Monument and is close to the Iron Age enclosure and Roman marching camp Scheduled Monument, which is approximately 120 metres to the west of the Onshore Infrastructure Area at the closest point.

Landfall

1.2.12 The proposed landfall for the Proposed Development is located at Cornborough Range on the north Devon coast, to the south-west of Cornborough and approximately 4 km west of Bideford (See Volume 1, Figure 1.2). This part of the Proposed Development lies within the North Devon Coast National Landscape and the Heritage Coast. The Mermaid's Pool to Rowden Gut SSSI is also situated along the coastline.

Offshore Site Context

1.2.13 The offshore elements of the Proposed Development are proposed to be located within the Offshore Cable Corridor, which lies within the South West Inshore and

South West Offshore Marine Plan Areas (Marine Management Organisation, 2021). The Offshore Cable Corridor is proposed to be routed through the Bristol Channel and Celtic Sea, extending from the landfall to the limit of the UK EEZ, south west of the UK. The total length of the Offshore Cable Corridor in UK waters is approximately 370 km.

1.2.14 Furthermore, the Offshore Cable Corridor passes to the immediate east of the The Crown Estate's Project Development Area 3 (Offshore Wind Leasing Round 5), which is located within the Celtic Sea.

1.2.15 Part of the Bristol Channel Approaches Special Area of Conservation is situated within the Offshore Cable Corridor, with the South West Approaches to Bristol Channel Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) located adjacent to the Offshore Cable Corridor. The Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ and East of Haig Fras MCZ are also situated within 550 m of the Offshore Cable Corridor.

Key Elements of the Proposed Development

1.2.16 The key components of the Proposed Development are likely to include the following:

- Onshore elements:
  - Converter Site: which would contain two converter stations (known as Bipole 1 and Bipole 2) immediately west of the Alverdiscott Substation site, as well as associated infrastructure (e.g. access roads, security fencing, etc.) and landscaping to provide visual screening.
  - High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) Cables: underground cable connection between the proposed converter stations and the envisaged new 400 kV substation development at the existing Alverdiscott Substation site (referred to as the 'Alverdiscott Substation Connection Development'). The HVAC cables would be situated within the boundaries of the Converter Site and Alverdiscott Substation Site.
  - Onshore High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Cables: underground cable connection of approximately 14.5 km between the proposed converter stations and the Transition Joint Bay at the landfall. The Onshore HVDC Cables would be located within the Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor.
  - Other works to facilitate the development, including permanent road improvement works, temporary and permanent utility connections, permanent utility diversions and temporary construction compounds, drainage and access. The Proposed Development also includes opportunities for environmental mitigation, compensation and enhancement.
  - Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) offsetting: BNG planting, comprising Atlantic rainforest, scrub, and species-rich grassland.
- Landfall site:
  - This is where the offshore cables are jointed to the onshore cables. This term applies to the entire landfall area between Mean Low Water Springs and the Transition Joint Bay. This includes all construction works, including the offshore and onshore cable corridors and landfall construction works compound.

- Offshore elements:
  - Offshore cables: Approximately 370 km of subsea HVDC cable, which would be routed from the landfall location at Cornborough Range to the UK EEZ boundary. The offshore cable infrastructure would continue beyond the UK EEZ, however, this does not form part of the Proposed Development. The offshore cables would be situated within the Offshore Cable Corridor.

1.2.17 A full description of the Proposed Development is provided within Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description, of the PEIR. Details of the site selection process for the Proposed Development are presented in Volume 1, Chapter 4: Need and Alternatives, of the PEIR.

1.3 Need for the Proposed Development

1.3.1 The Proposed Development is required to connect the Moroccan generation assets to the national grid, contributing to:

- the UK Government's ambition to achieve Net Zero by 2050;
- securing the UK energy supply;
- delivering affordable energy for UK customers; and
- supporting the UK growth agenda.

1.3.2 The Proposed Development and the overall Project, therefore, have an important part to play in securing the timely delivery of the Government's renewable energy strategy and achieving legally binding emissions reduction targets.

1.3.3 There is a growing number of national and international policy commitments that demonstrate the need for new energy generation infrastructure, particularly renewable sources, in order to meet climate commitments and contribute to addressing the climate crisis. This need is confirmed within the National Policy Statements (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), 2023a; 2023b).

1.3.4 The NPS EN-1 (DESNZ, 2023a) presents a compelling case for the need for new electricity generating capacity in order to meet the UK's legally binding targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions and meet the net zero by 2050. Additionally, the NPS EN-5 states that the security and reliability of the UK's energy supply, both currently and in the future, is heavily dependent on an electricity network that will allow for generation, storage, and interconnection infrastructure to meet the required rapid increase in electricity demand for the transition to net zero (DESNZ, 2023b).

1.3.5 Furthermore, due consideration is also being given to local planning policy commitments. Torridge District Council have declared a climate emergency and have developed a Carbon, Environment and Biodiversity Plan (Torridge District Council, 2023), which includes the vision to become net zero by 2030 and enhance the environment, biodiversity and sustainability.

1.3.6 Overall, the Proposed Development would allow for the connection of the generation assets and associated infrastructure to the national grid, contributing to meeting both national and local climate change goals.

1.3.7 Further information on the need for the Proposed Development is provided in the Volume 1, Chapter 4: Need and Alternatives, of the PEIR.

1.4 Consenting Framework

The Planning Act 2008

1.4.1 The Planning Act 2008 provides the legislative basis for applications for a DCO. It also defines the application process under which a DCO is sought. The Planning Act 2008 states that projects meeting certain criteria are classified as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). Developers wishing to construct, operate and maintain NSIPs must obtain a DCO from the relevant Secretary of State to authorise their project.

1.4.2 Under the definitions of an NSIP set out in sections 14 to 16 of the Planning Act 2008, the Proposed Development does not meet the criteria. However, under Section 35(1) of the Planning Act 2008, '*the Secretary of State may give a direction for development to be treated as development for which development consent is required*' if certain criteria (including the type and location of the development) are met.

1.4.3 In August 2023, the Applicant sought direction from the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (the 'Secretary of State') under section 35 of the Planning Act to confirm that elements of the Proposed Development should be treated as development for which development consent under the Planning Act 2008 is required. A direction was duly made on 26 September 2023 confirming the Secretary of State's conclusion that the overall Project is nationally significant and directed that development consent is required for the converter stations. The annex of the Secretary of State direction explains that:

'The Proposed Project is of national significance, taking into account that it forms part of a generation project which is comprised of 11.5GW of renewable power in Morocco, which is intended to deliver 3.6 Gigawatts (GW) of low carbon electricity to the UK's grid and could improve the security and diversity of the UK's electricity supply.'

1.4.4 Therefore, the Applicant is now pursuing a DCO for the Proposed Development.

1.4.5 Further details of the relevant planning policy context, including the approach to consenting, are provided in Volume 1, Chapter 2: Policy and Legislation, of the PEIR.

EIA and the Purpose of the PEIR

1.4.6 EIA is 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.

1.4.7 The Applicant has chosen to undertake an EIA and provide a PEIR, and subsequent Environmental Statement (ES), in support of the DCO application for the Proposed Development, given the potential for significant environmental impacts.

1.4.8 For the Proposed Development, the legislative requirements for EIA are set by the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, as

amended (referred to in this report as the 2017 EIA Regulations), which set out the requirements for EIA under the Planning Act 2008.

1.4.9 This PEIR has been prepared in accordance with the 2017 EIA Regulations and Planning Inspectorate Advice Note Seven: Environmental Impact Assessment: Preliminary Environmental Information, Screening and Scoping (The Planning Inspectorate, 2020). In compliance with these regulations, the PEIR presents the preliminary account of the likely significant environmental effects that have been identified to date. The PEIR presents and addresses the potential significant effects that were identified within the Scoping Report, submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in January 2024. The PEIR enables consultees to understand the likely environmental effects of the Proposed Development to help inform consultation responses.

1.4.10 The PEIR provides details of the Proposed Development, together with an overview of the alternatives considered to date. For each environmental topic, details of the approach to assessment, the existing and likely future environmental conditions and the preliminary findings regarding the likely significant effects arising from the Proposed Development are set out, based on the information available at this time. Initial details of the measures proposed to avoid, prevent, reduce or offset significant adverse effects (known as mitigation measures or commitments) are also provided.

1.4.11 The EIA process is currently ongoing, with further work being carried out to enhance the understanding of existing environmental conditions and to provide further detail of the likely significant environmental effects. As mentioned above, the assessments and findings are by their nature preliminary, which reflects the current design position of the Proposed Development. The EIA assessment has applied a precautionary approach, with a realistic worst case scenario being assessment (Further details are provided within Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description, of the PEIR). Feedback provided during the consultation process will be taken into account in refining the design of the Proposed Development, during the ongoing assessment work and during the development of further mitigation measures where necessary.

1.4.12 The results of this further work will be set out within the ES that will accompany the application for development consent. Any potentially significant effects identified within this PEIR may change once further mitigation and design information is taken into account, which will be presented within the ES.

The Applicant and the EIA Team

The Applicant

1.4.13 As set out in **section 1.1**, the Applicant is Xlinks 1 Limited. The Applicant is a UK company with a mission to capture the power of nature to generate a near constant, low-cost energy supply and connect it to the point of consumption in real time. With the vision of unlocking the potential for remote renewable energy generation to enable markets with high energy demand to achieve net zero emissions. Through the development of large-scale power infrastructure spanning land and sea, the Applicant aims to transmit reliable but flexible power from resource rich remote locations, where it can be most economically and sustainably generated at scale.

The EIA Team

1.4.14 RPS and APEM Group have been contracted by the Applicant to develop this PEIR for the Proposed Development. Both RPS and APEM Group are registrants of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Quality Mark.

1.4.15 In accordance with Regulation 14(4) of the 2017 EIA Regulations, as amended, the PEIR has been prepared by competent experts. The relevant expertise and qualifications of these experts has been outlined within Volume 1, Appendix 1.1: Statement of Expertise, of the PEIR.

1.5 Structure of the PEIR

1.5.1 Although there is no statutory provision as to the form of a PEIR, it must contain the information specified in Regulation 14(2) and Schedule 4 of the 2017 EIA Regulations. For the avoidance of doubt, the specified information within Regulation 14(2) and Schedule 4 is set out in Volume 1, Chapter 5: EIA Methodology of this PEIR.

1.5.2 The PEIR is divided into four volumes:

- Volume 1: Introduction;
- Volume 2: Effects on the Onshore Environment;
- Volume 3: Effects on the Offshore Environment; and
- Volume 4: Effects on the Onshore and Offshore Environment.

1.5.3 Each volume is supported by figures and technical appendices. **Table 1.1** provides details of the structure of the PEIR.

Table 1.1: Structure of the PEIR

Chapter Number	Chapter Title
Volume 1 - Introduction	
1	Introduction
2	Policy and Legislation
3	Project Description
4	Need and Alternatives
5	EIA Methodology
Volume 1 is supported by Volume 1, Figures and Volume 1, Appendices.	
Volume 2 – Effects on the Onshore Environment	
1	Onshore Ecology and Nature Conservation
2	Historic Environment
3	Hydrology and Flood Risk
4	Geology, Hydrogeology and Ground Conditions
5	Traffic and Transport
6	Noise and Vibration
7	Air Quality
8	Land Use and Recreation

Chapter Number	Chapter Title
Volume 2 is supported by Volume 2, Figures and Volume 2, Appendices.	
Volume 3 – Effects on the Offshore Environment	
1	Benthic Ecology
2	Fish and Shellfish Ecology
3	Commercial Fisheries
4	Marine Mammals and Sea Turtles
5	Shipping and Navigation
6	Other Marine Users
7	Marine Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
8	Physical Processes
9	Offshore Ornithology
Volume 3 is supported by Volume 3, Figures and Volume 3, Appendices.	
Volume 4 – Effects on the Combined Onshore and Offshore Environment	
1	Climate Change
2	Landscape, Seascape and Visual Resources
3	Socio-economics and Tourism
4	Human Health
5	Inter-related Effects
Volume 4 is supported by Volume 4, Figures and Volume 4, Appendices.	

1.5.4 A non-technical summary, which summarises the key baseline data and findings of the PEIR in non-technical language, is available separately.

1.6 Additional Assessments

1.6.1 In addition to the Planning Act 2008 and the 2017 EIA Regulations, other environmental legislation also requires specific assessments to be undertaken. The approach to addressing this legislation within this PEIR is set out below.

1.6.2 The effects of the Proposed Development on designated sites are being assessed, taking into account the requirements of the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. A report setting out the findings of the assessment process will be prepared following the method set out in the Planning Inspectorate Advice Note Ten: Habitats Regulations Assessment Relevant to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (Planning Inspectorate, 2022). A Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report has been undertaken and forms a document separate to the PEIR.

1.6.3 The effects of the Proposed Development on Marine Conservation Zones are being assessed through a Marine Conservation Zone Assessment. The preliminary findings to date are set out in the Marine Conservation Zone Assessment report, which is provided alongside this PEIR.

1.6.4 The effects of the Proposed Development in relation to The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 and the effects on environmental objectives for surface and groundwater bodies are considered within Volume 2, Appendix 3.2: Preliminary Onshore Water

Framework Directive Assessment and Volume 3, Appendix 1.1: Preliminary Offshore Water Framework Directive Assessment.

1.6.5 Additional information available is summarised in **Table 1.2**.

Table 1.2: Other supporting documentation

Document Type	Document
Plans and drawings	• Location plan(s) for both the onshore and offshore environment. • Works Plans – for onshore and offshore.
Development consent order	• Draft DCO.
Reports	• Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report. • Information to Support an Appropriate Assessment. • Marine Conservation Zone Assessment. • Onshore and offshore Water Framework Directive assessments.

1.7 Next Steps

1.7.1 The PEIR has been prepared to provide the basis for formal consultation under the Planning Act 2008. This builds on the statutory and non-statutory consultation undertaken to date, including engagement in relation to the scope of the EIA process. This will continue through the EIA process (see Volume 1, Chapter 5: EIA Methodology of the PEIR for further details of the engagement process).

1.7.2 Consultees are invited to consider all of the information provided in this PEIR and to advise on whether they agree with the conclusions. There are several ways that stakeholders can provide feedback on the PEIR. These include the provision of feedback through the public events and feedback forms, letter, or email.

1.7.3 The Applicant will consult widely in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act 2008, including on the contents of the PEIR. The consultation will take place from 16 May 2024 to 27 June 2024. In this period, the Applicant will invite stakeholders and the community to take part in consultation events, make information about the Proposed Development available online and at locations in the local area, and invite feedback. Further information about the Applicant's consultation is available from its website, www.xlinks.co/devon, and in its Statement of Community Consultation.

1.7.4 Comments on the PEIR should be made in writing and submitted:

- by post to: Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project, FREEPOST SEC NEWGATE UK LOCAL
- by email to: hello@xlinks.co
- by feedback form: www.xlinks.co/devon or in hard copy at events, deposit points or on request

1.7.5 The deadline for receipt of comments on this consultation is 27 June 2024.

1.7.6 Following consultation, an ES will be prepared. The ES will accompany the application for development consent and will take into account the comments received during consultation with the community, statutory consultation bodies and other interested parties.

1.7.7 Comments received during pre-application consultation will be collated and considered prior to finalising the application. A separate Consultation Report, in accordance with Section 37(3)(c) of the Planning Act 2008, will set out the comments and feedback that have been received and describe how the comments raised have been taken into account and dealt with as part of the application. The Consultation Report will also demonstrate how the Applicant has complied with Sections 42, 47, 48 and 49 of the Planning Act 2008 and relevant best practice documents and guidance published by the Planning Inspectorate. The Consultation Report will accompany the final application.

1.7.8 This PEIR can be viewed on the Applicant website at:

- www.xlinks.co/devon

1.7.9 Copies of consultation documents on USBs will be made available free of charge, one per household. Hard copies of the consultation booklet, consultation questionnaire and consultation newsletter will also be available on request.

1.7.10 Requests for paper copies of the PEIR will be considered on a case-by-case basis. A charge will be made for paper copies.

1.8 References

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