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Your ref: 3954/EIAScreening

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Dear Mr Mott

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989

THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017 (AS AMENDED)

SCREENING OPINION OF THE SCOTTISH MINISTERS

IN RESPECT OF A PROPOSED APPLICATION FOR CONSENT UNDER SECTION 36 OF THE ELECTRICITY ACT 1989 TO CONSTRUCT AND OPERATE THE GRID SERVICES FACILITY AT BLACKHILLOCK IN THE PLANNING AUTHORITY AREA OF MORAY COUNCIL

Thank you for your letter dated 8 September 2020 requesting, on behalf of SpectrumReserve2 Limited, a screening opinion in respect of a proposed application under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 to construct the Grid Services Facility.

The proposed development is the Grid Services Facility (“the Development”) located adjacent to the A96 at Blackhillock Quarry, Moray, at National Grid Reference (“NGR”) 343862, 848088 (“the Site”), within the planning authority area of Moray Council (“the planning authority”).

The Development will consist of energy storage modules, a synchronous condenser housed in a building and other associated ancillary electrical infrastructure which is designed to provide grid stability services.

The proposal requires to be screened by the Scottish Ministers in accordance with regulation 7 of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (as amended) (‘the regulations’). Following a request for a screening opinion made under

regulation 8(1), Scottish Ministers are required to adopt an opinion on whether the Development is or is not EIA development.

The screening application letter was accompanied by supporting documentation which included a Site Layout map, details of the Development and surroundings with a review of the environmental baseline and assessment of effects including Use of Natural Resources; Production of Waste; Pollution and Nuisances: Air Quality, Contaminated Land and Water; Risk of Accidents and to Human Health; Landscape and Visual effects; Cultural Heritage and Archaeology; Community and Recreation; Ecology and Ornithology; Hydrology and Flood Risk; Noise and Vibration; Access, Traffic and Transport; and, Land Use.

The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

The regulations set out (at 8(2)) the information that must accompany a request to the Scottish Ministers to adopt a screening opinion. Regulation 10 requires that the Scottish Ministers must seek that information if it is not included within the application documentation. Scottish Ministers consider the information included in the application letter and supporting documents is sufficient to meet the requirements set out in regulation 8(2), and that the submitted information has been compiled taking into account the selection criteria in schedule 3 of the regulations.

Statutory Consultation

Under regulation 8(5) of the regulations, Scottish Ministers are required to consult the planning authority within whose land the proposed application is situated. The planning authority were consulted on 8 September 2020 but no response or request for an extension was received within the three weeks allowed by the regulations. The planning authority were contacted again on 5 October 2020 but no response was received.

Scottish Ministers' Considerations

EIA development is defined in the regulations, in respect of an application, as a proposed development which is either Schedule 1 development, or Schedule 2 development likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location.

The proposed development constitutes Schedule 2 development in terms of the regulations.

In adopting a screening opinion as to whether Schedule 2 development is EIA development, the Scottish Ministers must in all cases take into account such of the selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the regulations as are relevant to the proposed development, and the available results of any relevant assessment.

Scottish Ministers have taken the selection criteria in Schedule 3 and all of the information submitted in respect of the screening request into account. Scottish Ministers adopt the opinion that **the proposal does not constitute EIA development and that any application submitted for this development does not require to be accompanied by an EIA report.**

In accordance with regulation 7(2), this opinion is accompanied by the following written statement with reference to the relevant selection criteria within Schedule 3 of the regulations. In accordance with the regulations, a copy of the screening opinion has been sent to the planning authority.

Written Statement

Characteristics of Development

The key characteristics of the development are of buildings, plant and machinery associated with electricity generation and grid services. The proposed development is comprised of the following four main elements:

Development element	Detail
Energy Storage Modules (ESM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 x 50 MW modules (seven at 60m x 60 m and one at 45 m x 80 m). • The modules would typically have a height of around 3 m.
ESM Support Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESM control compound (40 m x 30 m); • ESM extra grid space (40 m x 30 m); • ESM 132kV/275kV/400kV transformer (40 m x 30 m); and • ESM 132kV/275kV/400kV switchgear (40 m x 30 m). • All 3-4 m in height. • Temporary ESN construction and laydown compound
Synchronous Condenser area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synchronous Condenser Building (42 m x 40 m x 15 m (h)); • 132kV/275kV/400kV transformer (40 m x 30 m); and • Temporary synchronous condenser construction and laydown compound (dimensions unknown).
Electricity Substation area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substation and connection point (60 m x 50 m x 6 m (h)); • 132kV/275kV/400kV control building and busbar (60 m x 40 m x 6 m (h)); and • Temporary construction and laydown compound (dimensions unknown).

Whilst the area within the Site Boundary provided on Figure 2 is 8.4 ha, it is proposed that the total built area, including access roads, will be circa 4 ha.

The development is not proposed to be of such a scale or located within surroundings as to have a cumulative impact with other developments. There would be extremely limited use of natural resources in construction and during operation, and with the site being restored when the Development is decommissioned. There will be a minimal amount of waste during construction. The risks of pollution and nuisances are low and likely to be able to controlled or mitigated. The risks of major accidents and the risks to human health are considered low.

Location of Development

The Site is located adjacent to the west of the A96 (Moss Street), at Blackhillock Quarry, Moray, which is currently operational though it is near the end of its lifetime. The 'red line boundary' of the Site shown in Figure 2 of Appendix A shows the overall development area, comprising approximately 8.4 hectares (ha). The area within which the Site is located is currently used as the Blackhillock Quarry. The exact siting of the Development within the Site has not yet been fixed and will be subject to further environmental and design

considerations. The Development would connect into the operational Blackhillock Substation, located approximately 300 m west of the Site. Given the short distance between the sites, lengthy transmission cables will not be required, and the connection will be by underground cable.

The Site is located outwith any settlement boundary, approximately 1.8 km south of Keith, with Blackhillock Substation located just 300 m west of the Site and the operational Cairdshill Quarry located immediately adjacent to the east. The surrounding area is rural countryside with existing industrial infrastructure such as quarries, high voltage overhead electricity transmission lines which connect into the Blackhillock Substation, and road networks located across extensive arable farming fields and scattered residential properties. Keith is the nearest town, with smaller settlements such as Edintore located 2.5 km southwest, and Towiemore located 4.5 km westsouthwest. There is existing mature forestry located between the quarry and the A96, which currently acts as natural screening of views from the road.

The Site is located approximately 500 m west of the Burn of Farnash watercourse, which is separated from the Site by the Cairdshill Quarry, A96, and forestry. There is a short network of culverted monitor drains that are situated adjacent to the western Site boundary and extend around the Blackhillock Substation to the northwest.

Characteristics of the Potential Impact

Given that the Development is located within an area with existing industrial development, including energy-related developments, and limited sensitive receptors within the immediate and surrounding vicinity (with the exception of the four properties within 250 m of the Site), effects arising as a result of the Development will be very limited both in magnitude and in spatial extent. Adverse effects of noise at the four properties during construction would be limited to a temporary period of time. Operational noise is unlikely to be significant given the separation distance between noise sources (the synchronous condenser and cooling equipment) and background noise levels. The inclusion of a Noise Assessment with an application will allow further consideration of impacts and mitigation.

The nature of effects arising from the Development are not anticipated to be adverse, and it is not considered likely that significant effects on the environment will occur. Given the scale of the Development, the Development will result in limited effects in specific technical areas, all of which are unlikely to be significant.

This screening opinion does not constitute pre-application advice, and is provided without prejudice to the assessment of any future application under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989.

Yours sincerely
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James McKenzie
A member of the staff of the Scottish Government

cc Moray Council