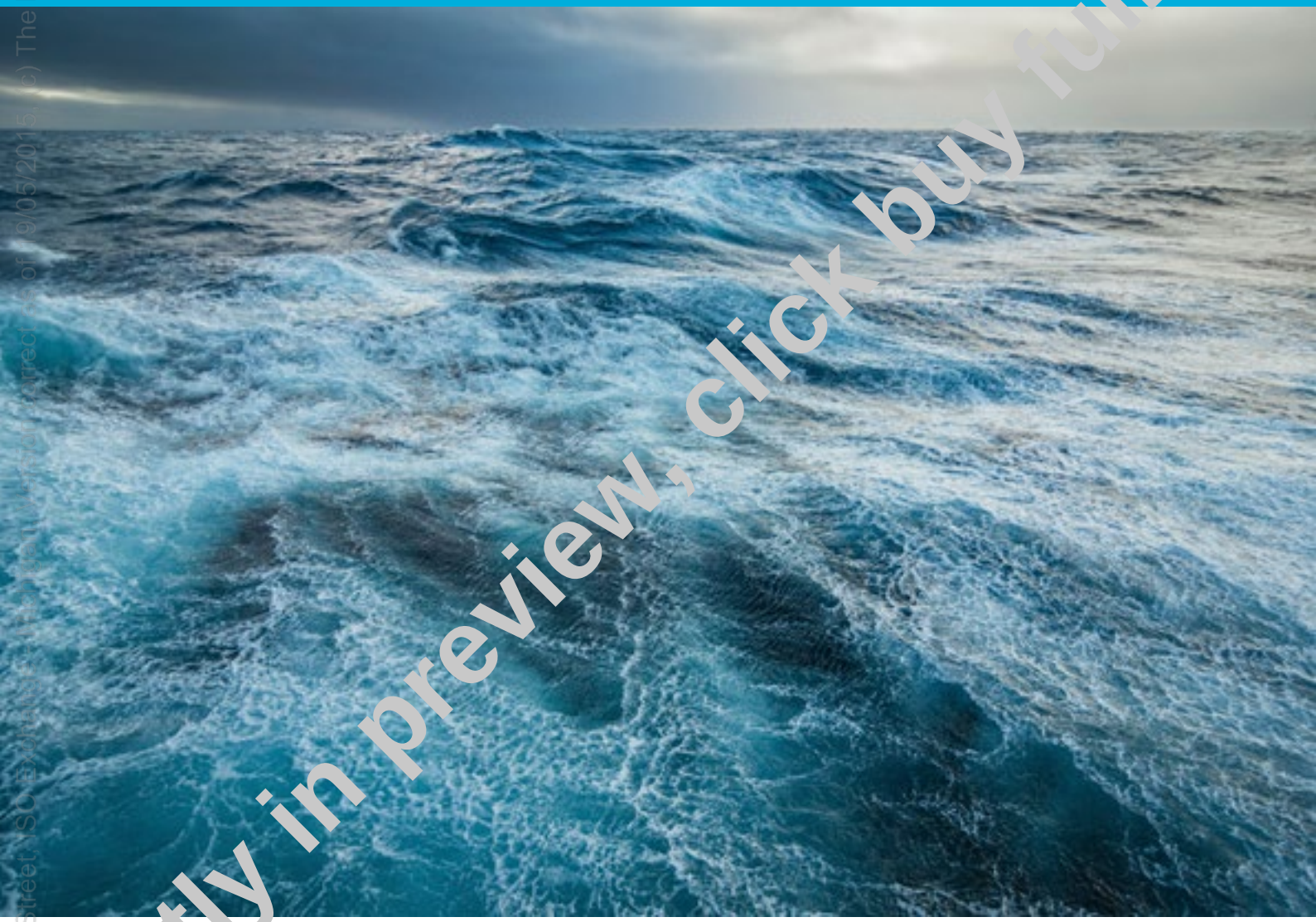
PD 6900:2015

Environmental impact assessment for offshore renewable energy projects – Guide



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Foreword

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- Marine Scotland (MS)
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- RenewableUK (RUK)
- Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)
- ScottishPower Renewables

This PD is not to be regarded as a British Standard. It will be withdrawn upon publication of its content in, or as, a British Standard.

The PD process enables a guide to be rapidly developed in order to fulfil an immediate need in industry. A PD can be considered for further development as a British Standard, or constitute part of the UK input into the development of a European or International Standard.

Use of this document

As a guide, this PD takes the form of guidance and recommendations. It should not be quoted as if it were a standard and claims of compliance cannot be made to it.

Presentational conventions

The guidance in this standard is presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Any recommendations are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is "should".

Spelling conforms to *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. If a word has more than one spelling, the first spelling in the dictionary is used.

Contractual and legal considerations

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

Innovate UK statement

Innovate UK – the new name for the Technology Strategy Board – is the UK's innovation agency. We fund, support and connect innovative businesses to accelerate sustainable economic growth.

Timely, consensus-based use of standards plays a vital role in ensuring that the knowledge created in the UK's research base is commercialized and brought to market as well as playing an important role in driving innovation.

Innovate UK is working with BSI, the Research Councils and Catapults to establish new standards earlier in the development of new technologies. We are collaborating in four areas of innovation to define standards that will accelerate the development of technologies and services to provide UK businesses with a competitive "first mover advantage" including the subject of this document; offshore renewable energy.

The UK offshore renewable energy sector (ORE) is rightly recognized as a centre for expertise but, with only a small number of original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), installations thus far have been designed to meet the bespoke needs of these OEMs. If the sector is to act as a platform for the UK to provide global leadership in ORE manufacturing and services, it needs to be more open. This will in turn boost the security of supply, stimulate further innovation, create UK jobs, and attract further inward investment. Realising this potential is crucial to meeting the UK government's 2020 renewable energy targets and delivering low-carbon future at the lowest price to consumers.

In 2011, the UK government published the first national Renewable Energy Roadmap which sought to unlock this vast potential, and specifically recognized that one of the barriers to increased deployment of renewable energy is the high cost of market entry. In 2012 the Offshore Wind Cost Reduction Task Force specifically recommended the creation of standards as an important step towards reducing the cost of offshore energy.

Creating the appropriate offshore renewable energy knowledge infrastructure – based on the development of industry-led codification of good practice – will help drive down the costs of market entry and foster an environment of collaboration which can secure the UK's global dominance both in terms of technological innovation and deployment.

Through its energy programme, Innovate UK is working to help UK industry profit from the changes the world will have to make to address the "trilemma" of energy security, affordability and sustainability.

Read more about our plans in offshore renewable energy and other energy areas here: **https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-strategy-2012-to-2015**.

Innovate UK also established the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult to accelerate innovation in the sector - find out more here: **https://ore.catapult.org.uk/**.

Read more about Innovate UK and our plans in energy and other areas here: **www.innovateuk.gov.uk or contact support@innovateuk.gov.uk**.

Introduction

The UK Government and devolved administrations are committed to a significant expansion in electricity generation from renewable energy sources, including offshore renewable energy (ORE). This will be dependent on the implementation of a large number of ORE schemes within the marine environment. All of these schemes will be subject to rigorous consenting regimes as established by national legislation in the UK devolved administrations including the requirement to undertake environmental impact assessment (EIA) for their individual projects, where required.

The requirement to carry out EIA, a process to predict the environmental consequences of proposed works prior to consenting, stems from the EC Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU) [1]. The directive was recently amended – (2014/52/EU) [2] – and entered into force on 15 May 2014 with a requirement for member states to implement the revised directive by 16 May 2017. The revised directive is designed to reduce the level of administrative burden and improve the level of environmental protection, with a view to making business decisions on public and private investments more sound, more predictable and sustainable in the longer term.

The EIA process requires a number of steps to be undertaken to assess the potentially significant effects associated with a particular project (and the effects that might occur cumulatively with other plans and projects). These steps include screening, scoping and the preparation of an environmental statement (ES). In England and Wales, for nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) granted permission under the Planning Act 2008, there is an additional step: the preparation of preliminary environmental information (PEI) prior to the submission of the formal ES. It is worth emphasising that EIA is not simply a legislative requirement in order to gain consent, but an iterative and interactive process which can influence project design and delivery to secure sustainable development.

A number of issues have been experienced by developers throughout the EIA process for ORE projects in recent years. This has been attributed to processes associated with obtaining consents and inherent challenges and uncertainties associated with understanding the environmental effects of emerging technologies operating in the marine environment. Particular challenges related to ORE projects include the often large-scale nature of such schemes and the extensive data needed to inform the assessment process.

The aim of this Published Document (PD) is to provide advice that will improve the quality and cost-efficiency of future EIAs for ORE projects (specifically for offshore wind, wave and tidal stream renewable energy projects) whilst remaining consistent with legal and policy requirements. The recommendations are also designed to be future-proof, as far as possible, in the context of emerging policies such as marine planning. The PD acknowledges the differing requirements across the UK devolved administrations where appropriate. Many of the principles contained within this PD are also applicable to EIA across all marine sectors.

The PD considers both process and topic/receptor issues and is focussed on issues where it can add most value. Key information sources that have been used to develop the PD, including the development of recommendations for best practice, include:

a) Existing EIA and ORE guidance documents (Annex A);

b) The ES and associated planning documents for previous and on-going EIAs for ORE developments. A range of projects were selected to incorporate a number of technologies, proposers and geographic locations;

c) Telephone interviews with a number of stakeholders that have had direct involvement with the consenting of ORE projects; and

d) A workshop with industry stakeholders (representatives from BSI Standards Limited, ABP Marine Environmental Research Ltd (ABPmer), 2 competent authorities, 10 developers (proposers), 1 UK government technical advisory body, 1 academic institute and 1 research centre) to discuss issues of concern and explore the degree of consensus on these issues.

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1 Scope

This Published Document (PD) gives guidance on undertaking environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for offshore wind, wave and tidal stream renewable energy projects.

The PD focusses on the main component of the offshore renewable energy (ORE) project (as opposed to the supporting infrastructure) and covers all elements of the EIA process:

a) screening;
b) scoping;
c) preliminary environmental information (PEI);
d) determining environmental impacts;
e) environmental statement (ES);
f) mitigation and monitoring plans; and
g) consultation and communication.

The PD identifies linkages to wider consenting requirements associated with offshore wind, wave and tidal stream renewable energy projects. The PD does not provide specific guidance on the processes associated with each of these additional requirements.

The intended audience of the PD is all those that have a role in the consenting of ORE projects (e.g. competent authorities, proposers and consultation bodies).

2 Terms, definitions and abbreviations

2.1 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this PD, the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1.1 competent authority

authority which determines the application for consent, permission, licence or other authorization to proceed with a proposal

NOTE *It is the authority that must consider the environmental information before granting any kind of authorization.*

2.1.2 proposer

parties which have a role in preparing and submitting the required documentation to the **competent authority** (see **2.1.1**) at all stages in the EIA process

NOTE *This includes both developers and their consultants.*

2.1.3 statutory consultation body

any recognized body specified in the relevant EIA regulations with which the **competent authority** (see **2.1.1**) must consult in respect of an ES, and having a duty to provide information and advice during the EIA process

2.2 Abbreviations

For the purposes of this PD, the following terms and definitions apply.

ABPmer	ABP Marine Environmental Research Ltd
AONB	area of outstanding natural beauty
BMAPA	British Marine Aggregate Producers Association
Cefas	Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science
CIA	cumulative impact assessment
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DCO	development consent order
DECC	Department of Energy and Climate Change
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs