

Streamlining EIA for Onshore Wind Farms

Workshop Handout

Key Messages from the Guidance

1. What is Streamlined EIA?

- Focuses on likely significant effects, not “everything.”
- Uses 30+ years of wind farm experience in Scotland.
- Reduces unnecessary reporting and burden on consultees.
- Encourages clarity, brevity, and robust scoping to minimize supplementary information.

2. Principles for Proportionate EIA

- Use the EIA Scoping process to focus on real potential for significant effects.
- Make the best and most efficient use of consultee time.
- Address scoped-in topics with clarity and brevity.
- Minimize supplementary information through effective scoping and robust reporting.

3. Standardization & Evidence-Based Approach

- Use standard report structures and scoping matrices (see Appendix 1 in the guidance).
- Evidence-based scoping: “scope out” non-significant topics with justification.
- Early, targeted consultation and agreement on methods is encouraged.

4. Implementation

- Requires industry-wide buy-in.
- Supports the 2030 target for onshore wind deployment.
- Applies to new wind farms, repowering, and life extension projects.

Workshop Exercise: Scoping Matrix in Practice

Scenario:

You are a project team preparing an EIA Scoping Report for a hypothetical onshore wind farm.

Task:

For 2–3 environmental topics (e.g., noise, ecology, transport), decide:

- What can be “scoped out” and why?
- What needs detailed assessment and why?
- What evidence or mitigation would support your decisions?

Instructions:

- Use the mini-matrix below (or a flipchart/whiteboard).
- Discuss as a group and fill in your answers.
- Be ready to share one key decision and rationale with the room.

Topic	Scope In/Out?	Rationale (Evidence/Mitigation)
Noise	Out	No sensitive receptors nearby; compliance with ETSU-R-97 limits.
Ecology	In	Protected species present; baseline surveys required.
Transport	Out	Low construction traffic; standard mitigation applies.

Tips:

- Refer to the guidance’s recommendations for scoping, evidence, and mitigation (see Section 3 and Appendix 1).
- Focus on proportionality, evidence, and clarity.
- Keep your explanations concise.

Discussion:

Each group shares one decision and rationale. Facilitator highlights good examples of proportionality, evidence use, and clarity.

For more detail, see:

- Section 2: Overarching Principles
- Section 3: Scoping and Consultation
- Appendix 1: Example Scoping Matrix in the official guidance.

Scenario 1 – Peatland Plateau

Site: Upland plateau, 400m AOD, largely open moorland.

Key Features:

Deep peat in several areas (average >1m). Priority peatland habitats present, with initial desk-based sources indicating some near natural condition, but large areas of heavy modification (drainage, erosion features).

Special Area of Conservation adjacent to the site (for peatland) but separated by river

Small upland watercourse crossing site

No residential properties within 5 km.

No national landscape designations within 25 km.

Prompt: Which topics are likely to be scoped in or out? How would you evidence scoping out noise? How might you evidence scoping out hydrological connectivity with the SAC?

Scenario 2 – Bird Hotspot by a Loch

Site: Hillside adjacent to a freshwater loch, within 5 km of an SPA for breeding waders.

Key Features:

Several red-listed bird species recorded in baseline surveys.

Habitats include improved grassland and wet heath.

Within 2 km of a small settlement.

Prompt: Can shadow flicker be scoped out here? What about ornithology? What baseline evidence could be useful to strengthen your case?

Scenario 3 – Transport Corridor

Site: Lowland farmland with easy access from a trunk road.

Key Features:

Significant emerging pattern of energy development with existing high voltage overhead line infrastructure, substations, and existing 'very large' typology turbines in the adjacent areas

Other features of modern infrastructure (rail, trunk roads), lighting, noise, legacy mining

Proposed turbine delivery route includes one narrow bridge.

Nearby village located 1.5 km from proposed turbine area.

A number designated heritage assets (burial cairns) within the immediate vicinity of the site

Prompt: Which scoping topics are transport-heavy? Which topics could be proportionately reduced in detail? What evidence would be needed to inform the scope of cultural heritage setting assessment?

Scenario 4 – Historic Highland Glen

Site: Remote glen with upland habitats.

Key Features:

Intervisibility with several Scheduled Monuments on surrounding ridges.

Blanket bog habitat present.

Popular walking routes cross site.

ZTV relatively localised, contained by topography to the north west but more extensive to the south east, no nationally important landscape designations within 20km, only scattered dwellings within 6km

Prompt: Which topics must remain in scope here? How would you justify your decision on landscape and visual impacts study area?