

# Guidelines on Streamlining Environmental Impact Assessment for Onshore Wind Farms

Scotland's EIA Conference 2025

Focussing on Effective Practice and Outcomes

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> October

**RAMBOLL**

Bright ideas.  
Sustainable change.

# Agenda

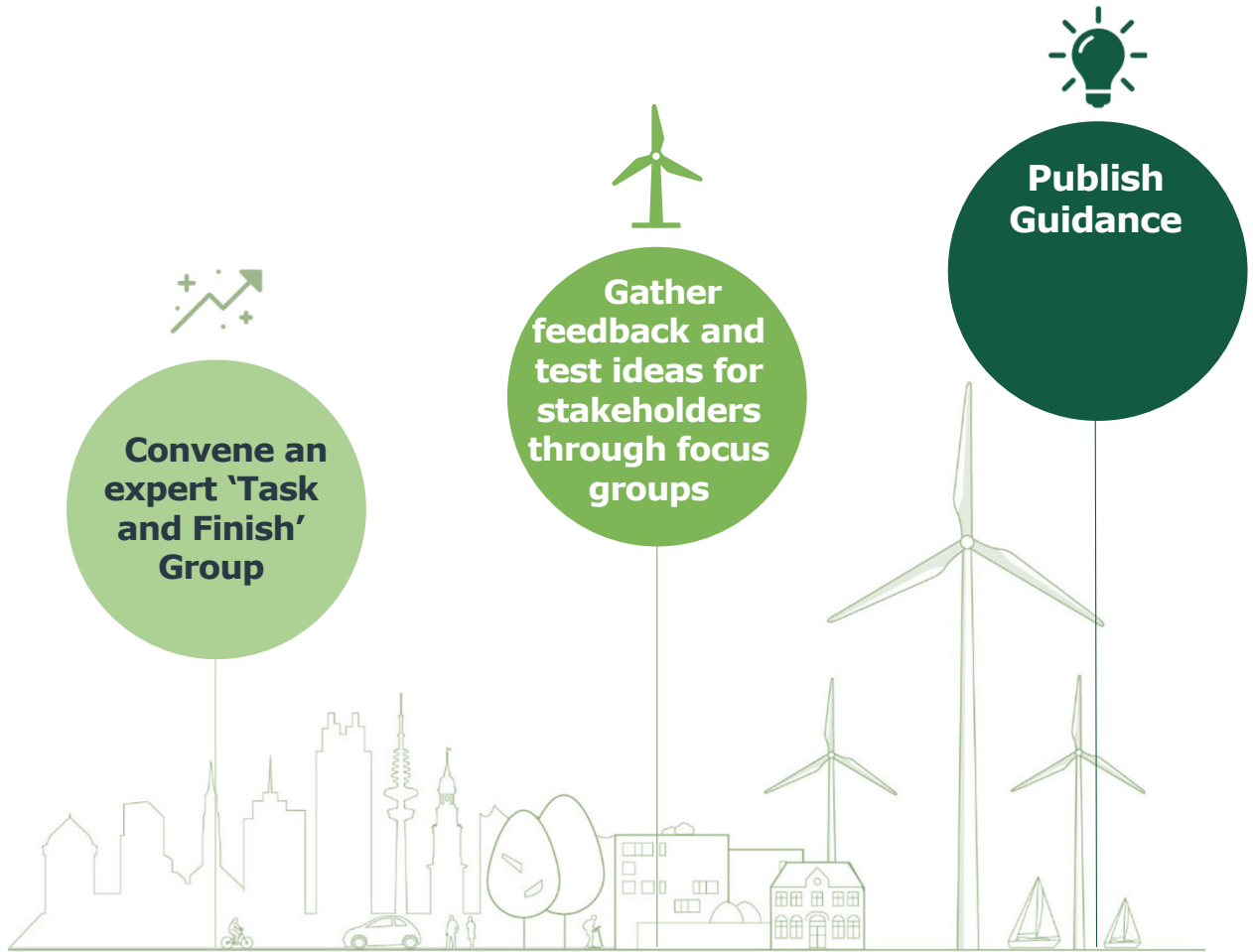
1. Welcome & objectives (2 mins)
2. Intro to EIA Guidelines and Key Messages (8 mins)
3. Breakout Group Exercise (12 mins)
4. Group Feedback & Discussion (10 mins)

# The challenge

**accelerate the planning process**

**reduce the burden on consultees and stakeholders**

**streamline and standardise**



## Task and Finish Group - Members

|                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                      |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    |    |                                                                                      |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |
|     |    | Marcus Trinick KC                                                                    |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |
|    |    |   |    |    |
|  |  |  |  |  |

# Guidelines Published September 2025

- Living document
- Feedback welcomed



**Guidelines on Streamlining  
Environmental Impact Assessment  
for Onshore Wind Farms**

**September 2025**



# Key Messages

1. What is Streamlined EIA?
2. Principles for Proportionate EIA
3. Standardisation and Evidence-Based Approach
4. Implementation

# Principles for Proportionate EIA

## Effective Scoping

### **Early consultation**

Pre-app meetings

### **Scope later**

When sufficient information  
available/design progressed

### **Ask Questions**

- Deviation from standard method

### **Refer to mitigation**

Based on 30 years' experience  
Standard conditions

# Standardisation and Evidence Based Approach

Use standard report structures

## **Scoping Matrices**

Robust mitigation

## **Evidence-based scoping**

Aim to scope-out with justification

Evidence notes

e.g.

- Preliminary ecological appraisal/ NS approved checklist
- Phase 1 peat probing
- ZTV/ initial wirelines
- Initial heritage setting findings
- Preliminary noise/hydrology

## **Consultation**

- Early
- Targeted

## **Avoid**

- Generic methods
- Detailed planning policy

## Key outcomes



# Thank you

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Sustainable change.



# Scenario and Project Team Task

## **EIA Scoping Report Preparation**

Project team is tasked with preparing an Environmental Impact Assessment scoping report for a wind farm.

## **Environmental Topics Selection**

Focus on 2–3 environmental topics such as noise, ecology, and transport for detailed assessment.

# Decision Criteria for Scoping Topics



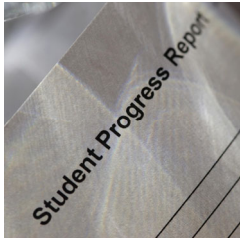
## **Scoping Out Criteria**

Identify topics that can be excluded based on relevance and impact to focus efforts efficiently.



## **Detailed Assessment Needs**

Determine which topics require in-depth analysis due to their significance or complexity.



## **Supporting Evidence and Mitigation**

Gather evidence and mitigation strategies to justify scoping decisions and ensure informed outcomes.

# Workshop Instructions and Group Activity

# Guidance for Completing the Scoping Matrix



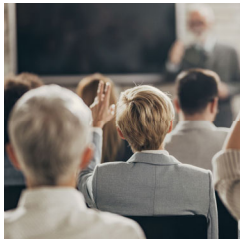
## **Use Visual Tools**

Utilize the mini-matrix or flipchart/whiteboard to organize and visualize your answers collectively.



## **Group Collaboration**

Engage in open group discussion to fill in the scoping matrix with collective input and consensus.



## **Share Key Decisions**

Be prepared to present one important decision and its rationale to the larger group for feedback.

## Mini-Matrix Example: Noise, Ecology, Transport

| <b>TOPIC</b>     | <b>SCOPE<br/>IN/OUT?</b> | <b>RATIONALE<br/>(EVIDENCE/MITIGATION<br/>)</b>                     |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Noise</b>     | Out                      | No sensitive receptors nearby;<br>compliance with ETSU-R-97 limits. |
| <b>Ecology</b>   | In                       | Protected species present; baseline<br>surveys required.            |
| <b>Transport</b> | Out                      | Low construction traffic; standard<br>mitigation applies.           |

# Scenario 1: Peatland Plateau

# Site Description and Key Features

## Site Location and Terrain

The site is an upland plateau at 400m AOD featuring largely open moorland terrain with natural elevation.

## Peatland Characteristics

Deep peat layers averaging over 1 meter are present, with priority peatland habitats showing some near natural conditions and significant modifications.

## Adjacent Conservation Area

A Special Area of Conservation for peatland lies adjacent to the site, separated by a small river.

## Surrounding Environment

The site has no residential properties within 5 km and no national landscape designations within 25 km, emphasizing its remoteness.





# Scoping Prompts and Evidence Considerations

## Identifying Scoped Topics

Determine which subjects are relevant to include or exclude in the study to maintain focus and relevance.

## Evidence for Scoping Out Noise

Use data and analysis to justify excluding noise as a factor in the current scope.

## Evidence for Hydrological Connectivity

Evaluate hydrological data to support decisions about connectivity with the Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

# Scenario 2: Bird Hotspot by a Loch

# Site Description and Key Features

## Site Location and Environment

The site is a hillside next to a freshwater loch, located close to a Special Protection Area for breeding waders.

## Bird Species Presence

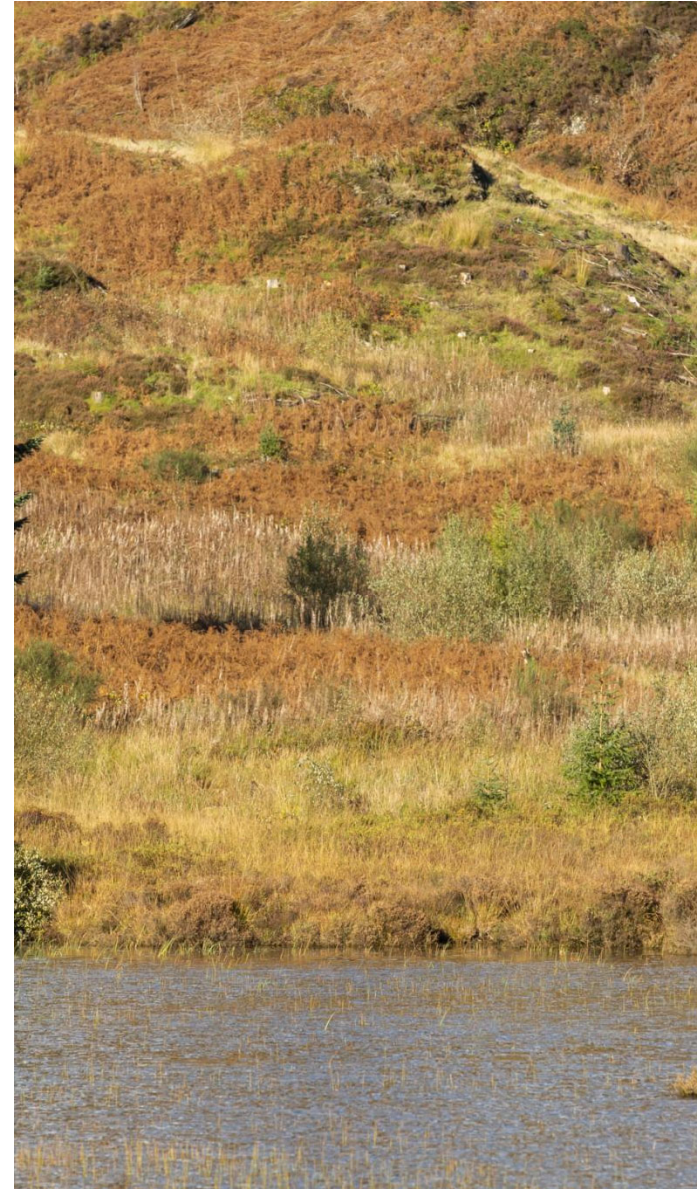
Several red-listed bird species have been recorded at the site during baseline surveys, highlighting its ecological importance.

## Habitat Types

The area consists of improved grassland and wet heath habitats, supporting diverse wildlife and plant species.

## Proximity to Settlement

The site lies within 2 kilometers of a small settlement, indicating potential interaction between human presence and wildlife.





# Scoping Prompts and Baseline Evidence

## **Shadow Flicker Assessment**

Determine if shadow flicker effects are relevant and can be excluded in the study area to refine the project scope.

## **Ornithology Considerations**

Evaluate bird species presence and behavior to understand potential impacts on local ornithology during project planning.

## **Baseline Evidence Collection**

Gather relevant baseline data to strengthen the case and support environmental assessments effectively.

# Scenario 3: Transport Corridor

# Site Description and Key Features

## Energy Infrastructure

The site features significant energy developments including high voltage lines, substations, and large turbines nearby.

## Transport and Access

The site offers easy access via a trunk road and has transport infrastructure including rail, roads, and a narrow bridge for turbine delivery.

## Nearby Village and Heritage

A nearby village is located 1.5 km from the turbine area, with several designated heritage assets such as burial cairns in the vicinity.

## Modern Environmental Features

The area includes modern features such as lighting, noise sources, and legacy mining impacting the site environment.





# Scoping Prompts for Transport and Heritage

## **Transport-Heavy Topics**

Identify topics with significant transport-related content requiring detailed exploration in assessments.

## **Proportional Detail Reduction**

Determine which topics can be summarized or reduced to balance scope and relevance in reports.

## **Evidence for Heritage Assessment**

Gather relevant evidence to inform cultural heritage assessments ensuring accurate scope and impact understanding.

# Scenario 4: Historic Highland Glen

# Site Description and Key Features

## **Remote Highland Glen**

The site is a remote glen featuring upland habitats typical of highland terrain.

## **Intervisibility with Monuments**

The site offers visual connections to several Scheduled Monuments located on surrounding ridges.

## **Ecological Features**

Blanket bog habitat is present, supporting unique ecological communities within the site.

## **Walking Routes and Topography**

Popular walking routes cross the site; topography contains visual impact mostly to northwest.





# Scoping Prompts for Landscape and Visual Impacts

## **Determining Scope Topics**

Identify key topics relevant to landscape and visual impacts to focus the study effectively.

## **Justifying Study Area**

Provide clear rationale for choosing the study area based on potential visual effects – ZTV, wirelines, early photography

# Best Practice Tips for Scoping Decisions



# Recommendations for Evidence and Mitigation

## **Refer to Guidance**

Utilise the guidance's recommendations found in Section 3 and Appendix 1 for effective scoping and mitigation.

## **Focus on Proportionality**

Ensure that all evidence and mitigation measures are proportionate to the issue being addressed.

## **Clarity and Conciseness**

Keep explanations clear and concise to enhance understanding and effectiveness.

# Group Discussion and Reference Materials



# Sharing Decisions and Facilitator Highlights

## **Group Decision Sharing**

Each group presents one decision along with the reasoning behind it to foster understanding.

## **Facilitator Highlights**

Facilitator emphasises examples showing proportionality, proper evidence use, and clear communication.

# Reference to Official Guidance Sections



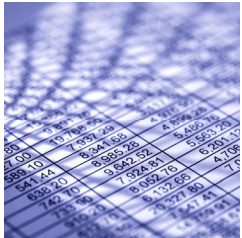
## **Overarching Principles**

Section 2 covers the fundamental principles guiding the official guidance framework and practices.



## **Scoping and Consultation**

Section 3 explains the process of scoping and consultation critical to the guidance application.



## **Example Scoping Matrix**

Appendix 1 provides an example scoping matrix used to organize and evaluate project scope.