



APPENDIX 7-1

ORNITHOLOGICAL PEER REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. SCOPE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document provides a conclusion statement for my peer review of the EIAR Ornithology chapter and associated appendices for the Meenbog Wind Farm project.

1.2. DISCLAIMER

The peer review was advisory in nature and does not constitute approval of every aspect of the assessment. Responsibility for the final content of the EIAR, including all analyses, calculations, interpretations and conclusions, remains with the authors and the applicant.

The review focused on scientific issues related to the scope of the survey work, the evaluation and interpretation of data collected from the surveys and other sources, the assessment of impacts, and the proposed mitigation. It does not constitute a comprehensive audit of all aspects of the assessment.

The review included consideration of the collision risk modelling methodology and its interpretation within the assessment. However, it did not include a detailed audit of calculations for mathematical, spreadsheet or transcription errors.

1.3. STATEMENT OF COMPETENCE

I have a BSc in Ecology, a PhD in Zoology and am a member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). I have 30 years' experience in professional ecological consultancy work and research. I have specific expertise in ornithological assessments for wind energy projects and have been involved in numerous wind energy projects. My input to these projects has variously included field surveys, collision risk modelling, writing the ornithological sections of EIS/EIAR and NIS reports, expert witness services at oral hearings, and provision of scoping advice and peer review services.

2. REVIEW SCOPE AND PROCESS

I carried out an independent peer review of draft versions of the EIAR Ornithology chapter for the prospective development and associated appendices prior to submission of the application.

The objective of the review was to identify issues that need to be addressed before submission of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

The review considered the survey scope and methodologies, receptor evaluation, impact assessment, collision risk modelling, mitigation, Hen Harrier habitat enhancement proposals, and cumulative impact assessment.

The review process included review of revised versions that responded to issues raised in my initial reviews.

3. SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

My reviews identified a number of issues. The revisions responded to my substantive review comments and largely followed my recommendations. In my opinion, these revisions have materially strengthened the assessment.

As with most wind farm ornithological assessments, there are aspects of the methodology and interpretation where alternative approaches could reasonably have been adopted. In particular, professional judgement is required when assessing the magnitude of Hen Harrier displacement effects, the treatment of survey effort extending beyond sunrise and sunset in the collision risk modelling, interpreting and evaluating collision risk predictions, and assessing cumulative effects. These issues were considered during the review process, and certain aspects remain subject to

some uncertainty. However, I do not consider them to undermine the overall robustness of the assessment.

It is important to acknowledge that aspects of all wind farm ornithological assessments involve uncertainties arising from sampling effects, ecological variability, limitations in the available scientific evidence, and the need for professional judgement when predicting future effects.

4. OVERALL CONCLUSION

In my professional opinion, the revised ornithological assessment represents a generally robust and proportionate evaluation of the likely ornithological effects of the proposed development. While some areas of uncertainty and scientific judgement remain, I do not consider these to constitute significant deficiencies in the assessment methodology, survey programme or overall conclusions of the EIAR.