

**COMMITTEE:** Planning Committee  
**MEETING DATE:** 31 March 2026  
**BY:** Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy  
**REPORT TITLE:** Application for Planning Permission for Consideration

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Application no. **25/01386/AMM**  
Proposal Approval of Matters Specified in Condition 2 in respect of the 275kV Cable Works (Development Zones 1-3 and 4a) of Planning Permission 23/00162/PPM  
Location **Land Between Skateraw and Branxton**

Applicant Berwick Bank Wind Farm Limited / CO SSE

**RECOMMENDATION** Consent Granted

### REPORT OF HANDLING

The development proposed in this application is, under the provisions of The Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009, defined as a national development and thus it cannot be decided through the Council's Scheme of Delegation. It is therefore brought before the Planning Committee for a decision.

### APPLICATION SITE

The application site has an area of some 598 hectares and stretches from the Innerwick junction of the A1 trunk road in the west to the Bilsdean/Dunglass junction of the A1 trunk road in the east, and from the coast to the north of Skateraw in the north to near Branxton in the south.

The northern part of the site is situated in the countryside on the north side of the A1 and the remainder of the site generally consists of more countryside on the southern side of the A1. The village of Innerwick is located to the south and west of the application site.

The area of land comprising the northernmost part of the application site where it meets the coast is within the Dunbar to Barns Ness Coast Special Landscape Area.

A small part of the southern end of the application site is within the Monynut to Blackcastle

Special Landscape Area.

Given the size of the application site there are numerous residential properties both within it and close to it.

## **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

The development proposed in this application is onshore electricity transmission infrastructure as part of the offshore Berwick Bank Wind Farm, which is required to facilitate connection to the national grid.

On 31 July 2025, Scottish Ministers, under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989, granted consent for the Berwick Bank Wind Farm, an off-shore wind farm which would be located approximately 37.8 km east of the Scottish Borders coastline (St. Abb's Head) and 47.6 km to the southeast of the East Lothian coastline. A maximum of 307 wind turbines have been granted to be installed within the project array area which would have an installed capacity of some 41GW, which would make Berwick Bank Wind Farm one of the largest offshore wind farms in the world capable of generating enough energy to power more than six million homes annually.

On 5 December 2023 planning permission in principle (ref: 23/00162/PPM) was granted for the construction and operation of onshore electricity transmission infrastructure in the form of either a substation or converter station, and for associated development including underground electricity cables and landfall at Skateraw. The proposal forms the onshore transmission infrastructure for the offshore Berwick Bank Wind Farm, and comprises the following key elements:

- o A new substation/converter station (a permanent compound comprising elements of electrical infrastructure including buildings) which would include:
  - (i) Substation/converter station buildings;
  - (ii) External plant and equipment;
  - (iii) Welfare facilities;
  - (iv) Parking and turning areas;
  - (v) Internal access roads; and
  - (vi) Security features including fences and gates;
- o A Landfall area where marine cables come ashore and will be joined onto the onshore underground cables;
- o Onshore underground electricity cables within a cable corridor between the landfall area and the new substation/converter station, and between the new substation/converter station and the Branxton substation the subject of separate application 23/00616/PM; and
- o Associated infrastructure, including:
  - (i) Permanent or temporary drainage infrastructure;
  - (ii) Landscaping;
  - (iii) New and upgraded access roads (permanent or temporary);
  - (iv) Re-profiled land; and
  - (v) Construction compounds, laydown areas and other temporary facilities and features required for construction purposes.

It was indicated in planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM that the proposed site for landfall for the offshore export cables would be at Skateraw harbour, where they would be connected to the landfall cables via buried transition joint bays. Each transition joint bay would consist of an underground box-like structure that houses the cable joints.

Following the connection of the offshore export cables to the onshore cables at the transition joint bays, it was indicated in planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM that

the onshore cables would be routed through predominantly agricultural land between the coast at Skateraw and the East Coast Main Line and A1 trunk road. The onshore cables would then cross beneath the East Coast Main Line and A1 trunk road and would then run to the proposed substation/converter station. Following connection to the onshore substation/converter station, the onshore cables would exit the south side of it, continue through agricultural land turning eastwards southwest of Innerwick Castle before crossing the Braidwood Burn via a cable bridge. From there, the onshore cables would connect to the Branxton substation the subject of planning permission 23/00616/PM.

Condition 2 of planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM states:

The submission for approval of matters specified in conditions of this grant of planning permission in principle shall include details of the layout, siting, design and external appearance of the substation/converter station, electricity cables and associated infrastructure, the means of access to them, the means of any enclosure of the boundaries of the site and landscaping (including landscape and visual mitigation) of the site in accordance with the matters listed below. No work shall begin until the written approval of the Planning Authority has been given, and the development shall be carried out in accordance with that approval.

- a) Details of the finished ground levels and finished floor levels of the buildings;
- b) The total height of any building (excluding any antenna/lighting rod or similar apparatus) shall not exceed 21 metres from the finished ground levels, as approved. The finished substation/converter station platform ground level shall be no higher than 44.3m AOD;
- c) Details of the proposed colour treatment of the substation/converter station and any other landscape and visual mitigation (which shall include architectural mitigation) to be incorporated into its design and external appearance;
- d) Details of all external lighting proposed;
- e) Details of the area and positioning of the substation/converter station platform, which shall not exceed a footprint of 410 metres by 260 metres and which shall generally accord with that shown on the drawing no. LF000010-DEV-MAP-231 docketed to this planning permission in principle;
- f) Details of the final route of the onshore export cables (with proposed micro siting limits), and the locations of any underground joint bay(s); and
- g) Details of the siting, design and external appearance of any permanent above ground features associated with the onshore export cables including the cable bridge and water crossings; the cable bridge and water crossings shall be designed to pass the 200 year plus climate change flow without constriction and with an appropriate allowance for freeboard.

In this condition, the substation/converter station means all the electrical equipment, buildings, ancillary equipment, internal roads and any perimeter security fence to be located on the substation/converter station platform, as indicatively described in Chapter 5 (Proposed Development Description) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report docketed to this planning permission in principle.

No part of the development hereby approved under that application for approval of matters specified in conditions shall be begun on the site until all of the above details pertaining to such development have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning

Authority.

Reason:

To enable the Planning Authority to control the development in the interests of the amenity of the development and of the wider environment.

A drawing docketed to planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM shows the application site split into 'Development Zones', numbered 1, 2, 3, 4a, 4b, 5, 6, 7 and 8, identified for different areas of the development.

## **PROPOSAL**

Through this application, permission is sought for the approval of matters specified in condition 2 of planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM in respect of the 275kV Cable Works (works within Development Zones 1-3 and 4a), so for the detail of the layout and siting of the electricity cables and the transition joint bays and the means of access to them.

In a supporting statement submitted with the application it is stated that the 275kV Cable Works consist of the most northerly part of the overall development to which planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM relates, which forms the onshore transmission infrastructure for the Berwick Bank Wind Farm. The cables would be High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC), and a total of six circuits would be required operating at 275kV. Each circuit would feature a trefoil cable arrangement utilising ducts to install the cables. The transition joint bays would be placed further inland to mitigate any risk of coastal erosion.

The supporting statement further informs that the landfall location of the cables would be within agricultural land located to the northwest of Skateraw Harbour. At landfall, six circuits (each circuit would include a trefoil cable arrangement within a duct) would come to shore using trenchless techniques. A Horizontal Direction Drill (HDD) would be used to install each duct and the cables would then be pulled through the ducts and would be connected to the onshore cable circuits via six buried transition joint bays. Two spare ducts would be installed in addition to the ducts required for the six cable circuits. Micro siting limits have also been provided.

Transition joint bays would be required to connect the offshore export cables and the onshore cables. Each transition joint bay would consist of an underground box-like structure that houses the cable joints and associated link boxes containing three of the six circuits. Joint bays would require temporary excavation around them and the installation of a concrete pad under the joint and construction of a link box required for access and maintenance before backfilling the joint bay.

A link box for each circuit would be required at each joint bay and this is the only element of the transition joint bay with a permanent above ground element. The link boxes would be either a double or a single arrangement (the double arrangement would include two boxes side by side and a third single link box). As a single arrangement a total of six link boxes with a concrete pad of some 3.3m by 3.1m would be required. As a double arrangement a total of four link boxes (two double and two single) boxes would be required with the larger double link boxes featuring a surface level concrete pad of some 4.38m by 3.3m. The link boxes will be either a double or a single arrangement (the double arrangement would include two boxes side by side and a third single link box). Each pad would have four bollards to mark the location and prevent damage to the link boxes from agricultural or other operations. These bollards would be steel bollards up to 1.5m in height. Each link box will feature a steel hatch for access and maintenance.

The cable route from the transition joint bay to the substation would be installed using an open cut technique for much of its length. In the 275kV cable works the open cut technique would be reserved for the installation within agricultural land. Trenchless crossings would be used to install the cables under the old A1 road, the East Coast Main Laine and the A1.

For areas where the open trench technique is to be utilised, before installation works begin at each section, the topsoil across the construction area would be removed using mechanical excavators and stored along the cable corridor for utilisation in ground restoration when works are complete. Mechanical excavators would be used to dig the cable trench. Once complete, each section of the onshore cables (stored on a drum) would be lifted from the delivery truck and placed into position at the end of the trench. The onshore cables would then be winched through the open trench, to a joint bay at the end of the section. The onshore cables would be laid in ducts and buried to depths of up to 2.5m. The final burial depth within the open cut sections will depend on the ground conditions encountered.

Once the onshore cables are installed, the trench would be backfilled with stabilised backfill and granular/reinstated excavated material, protective covers (where appropriate) and warning tapes, to avoid damage during any future excavations. Following completion of trench backfill, native material (i.e. topsoil) would be reinstated. Previously excavated material would be used to backfill the cable trench wherever possible to minimise the amount of material to be disposed of off-site. Any stockpiling of excavated material along the onshore cable corridor would be sited within the site.

Following backfill of the onshore cable trench, the land would be reinstated to existing ground levels to allow a return to its former use. Any fences or walls that require removal during the works would be reinstated.

After the transition joint bay, the cables would be installed within the ground using the open cut technique to reach the Dry Burn tributary which is a tributary of the Dry Burn. A culvert currently supports the farm track that currently crosses the Dry Burn tributary. In order to install the cables across the Dry Burn tributary a wider installation corridor is required than can be accommodated by the existing culvert. The existing culvert would be removed, and a larger culvert would be installed. The cables would then be installed across the new culvert. During construction a construction haul road would be built over the culvert, post construction the existing track would be reinstated.

Beyond the culvert crossing another set of joint bays would be required. Link boxes would be installed as per the details noted for the transition joint bays. Following a short section of open cut installation the cables require to cross the old A1; three trenchless crossings are proposed to allow the cables to route under existing road and rail infrastructure.

It would be ensured that the old A1 would not require to be closed during the construction works. The cables would be installed under old A1 using a pipe ram technique which would ensure that the old A1 can remain open to motorised, bicycle and pedestrian traffic at all times during the works.

Temporary works will be required for the proposed development which were covered in the assessment of planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM, these include:

- o Vegetation clearance;
- o A landfall compound and associated temporary works;
- o Temporary construction fencing around the perimeter of the site;
- o Temporary drainage works;
- o A site compound to the north of the old A1;

- o Temporary Haul Roads within the site boundaries;
- o Trenchless crossing compounds;
- o Cable Route excavation and temporary soil storage;
- o Construction Access and;
- o Cable installation and cable pulling.

Condition 2 of planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM requires that details of the means of access are provided. No permanent access is required for the operational development although temporary access would be required using new and existing accesses. A total of four access points are required to construct the 275kV Cable Works, these accesses are numbered AP1-4:

AP1 - Access to the northern cable route and landfall would be via the existing farm access located on the old A1. Access to the landfall area would be via a haul road constructed within or close to the cable route. As the access is existing, the improved bellmouth junction would be retained post construction.

AP2 - Temporary access is required to the south of the old A1 to access the cable section of the route to the East Coast Main Line. The access would be reinstated post development.

AP3 - Temporary access is required to the area between the East Coast Main Line and the A1. Access would be taken via the old A1 then using an existing farm track that leads under the East Coast Main Line to a field. A temporary construction access would be constructed within the field to access the area between the East Coast Main Line and the old A1.

AP4 - Access is required to access the southern part of the cable route south of the A1. This access would also form the main construction access relating to the substation works. The bell-mouth access is an existing access but would be upgraded. The junction improvements would be retained although it is only proposed to use the access during construction.

Some informational, safety and directional signage is also to be placed at the access points.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires that the application be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan is the adopted National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the adopted East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018 (LDP).

NPF4 identifies 18 national developments that are significant developments of national importance. National development 3 of NPF4 (Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure) supports renewable electricity generation, repowering, and expansion of the electricity grid. National development 3 informs that the electricity transmission grid will need substantial reinforcement including the addition of new infrastructure to connect and transmit the output from new on and offshore capacity to consumers in Scotland, the rest of the UK and beyond. Whilst National development 3 references a Scotland wide rather than a specific location, the south of Scotland (including East Lothian) is identified for delivering new and/or upgraded infrastructure directly supporting on and offshore high voltage electricity lines, cables and interconnectors

including converter stations, switching stations and substations.

The development approved by planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM would enable the transmission of renewable electricity and would contribute to the delivery of infrastructure of national importance. The infrastructure is a key element in the provision of renewable energy and will ensure progress towards achieving net zero and a decarbonised economy. As transmission infrastructure to support renewable energy technology, it is also part of National Development 3 and is thus supported by NPF4.

In terms of Policies 1, 2 and 3 of NPF4, the contribution this development could make to addressing the climate and nature crises (Policy 1), to make adjustments or incorporate features that reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Policy 2), or to protect, conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity (Policy 3), is largely predetermined by the previous grant of planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM.

Therefore Policy 14 (Design, quality and place) of NPF4 is relevant to the determination of this application. Also relevant to the determination of the application are Policies DP1 (Landscape Character), DP2 (Design), T1 (Development Location and Accessibility) and T2 (General Transport Impact) of the LDP.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

One written objection has been received to the application. The main grounds of objection can be summarised as follows:

- \* the application is incomplete as all the conditions of planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM have not been submitted;
- \* the proposals may impede the right to roam;
- \* issues of noise and vibration;
- \* potential damage to a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and;
- \* matters of road safety, traffic impacts and planting.

It should be noted here that through this application, permission is only sought for the approval of matters specified in condition 2 of planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM in respect of the 275kV Cable Works.

The requirements of other conditions attached to permission in principle 23/00162/PPM for these works and the wider proposals to which that planning permission relate remain in force and the approval of those separate matters are not sought through this application.

## **COMMUNITY COUNCIL COMMENTS**

East Lammermuir Community Council have been consulted on the application and advise that they do not wish to comment on the detailed technical content of the submitted documents and has faith in the expert approach of the other consultees and East Lothian Council itself to judge this content. They do make comment on the need for a Construction Traffic Management and Routing Plan (CTMRP), Public Access Management Plan, Construction Environment Management Plan and Noise.

As stated above, the requirements of other conditions attached to permission in principle 23/00162/PPM for these works and the wider proposals to which that planning permission relate remain in force and the approval of those separate matters are not sought through this application.

## **PLANNING ASSESSMENT**

The principle of the construction and operation of onshore electricity transmission infrastructure in the form of either a substation or converter station, and for associated development including underground electricity cables and landfall at Skateraw, the means of access to them, the means of any enclosure of the boundaries of the site and landscaping (including landscape and visual mitigation) are already decided by the grant of planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM.

Therefore, in the determination of this application the Council, as Planning Authority, can only concern itself with the layout and siting of the electricity cables and associated infrastructure and the means of access to them. In this regard the detailed proposals have to be considered against relevant development plan policy and the requirements of condition 2 attached to planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM.

The layout proposed through this approval of matters application for the electricity cables and associated infrastructure and the means of access to them is broadly consistent with the indicative layout docketed to planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM.

Amongst other matters policy DP1 of the East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018 requires that all new development, with the exception of changes of use and alterations and extensions to existing buildings, must be well integrated into its surroundings by responding to and respecting landform.

Policy DP2 requires, amongst other matters, that the design of all new development, with the exception of changes of use and alterations and extensions to existing buildings, must be appropriate to its location.

The proposed cables and transition joint bays themselves would be located underground. By being located beneath the upper surface level of the land in which they would be located, once constructed and the land backfilled, they would not be visible in public views and thus would not be harmfully intrusive, incongruous or exposed in their landscape setting or be harmful to the character and appearance of the landscape of the area. Neither, as a result of their size, scale and positioning would the above ground components of the transition joint bays.

The requirement for a detailed scheme of landscaping and for tree protection measures is embodied in Conditions 21, 22 and 23 of planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM and therefore remain in force. The approval of those matters as specified in Conditions 21, 22 and 23 is not sought through this application but remain in force. Thus, there is no requirement to also secure this again through conditions attached to this approval of matters specified in conditions application.

The proposed development would be located at a considerable distance away from residential properties in the area. It would not give rise to a harmful loss of privacy or amenity to any residential property.

The requirement for the submission of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and Noise Impact Assessment to identify and minimise any potential noise, vibration and dust impacts that may arise during construction of the proposed development is embodied in Conditions 8 and 9 of planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM. The approval of these matters as specified in Conditions 8 and 9 are not sought through this application but remain in force. Thus, there is no requirement to also secure these again through conditions attached to this approval of matters specified in conditions application.

In all of the above the proposals are consistent with Policy 14 of NPF4 and Policies DP1

and DP2 of the East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018.

The requirement for an Ecological Construction Method Statement and a Habitat Management and Enhancement Plan is embodied in Conditions 27 and 28 of planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM and therefore remain in force. The approval of these matters as specified in Conditions 27 and 28 are not sought through this application but remain in force. Thus, there is no requirement to also secure these again through conditions attached to this approval of matters specified in conditions application.

The **Council's Road Services** raise no objection to the proposed development, satisfied the arrangements for access are acceptable and would not result in a road or pedestrian safety hazard, consistent with Policies T1 and T2 of the East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018. They do however recommend that the over-run area at AP3 should not be formed of a loose material. This requirement can be imposed as a condition on a grant of approval of matters specified in conditions, were that to be the decision.

**Transport Scotland** also raise no objection to the application.

The requirement for a Construction Traffic Management and Routing Plan, Route Impact Report and Abnormal Load Transport Management Plan is embodied in Conditions 12, 13 and 14 of planning permission in principle 23/00162/PPM and therefore remain in force. The approval of the matters as specified in Conditions 12, 13 and 14 are not sought through this application but remain in force. Thus, there is no requirement to also secure these again through a condition attached to this approval of matters specified in conditions application.

**Network Rail** raise no objection to the application.

**Scottish Water** raise no objection to the application.

The **Council's Team Manager – Structures and Flooding** raises no objection to the application on the grounds of flooding or drainage. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) also raise no objection to the application.

Network Rail raise no objection to the application.

In conclusion, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with the provisions of the stated relevant Development Plan policies and there are no material considerations which outweigh the proposal's accordance with the Development Plan.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That approval of matters specified in conditions be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The overrun area at access point 3 as shown on drawing no. BK-JON-000-CVL-TEM-0003-000 Rev R05 shall be hard formed and shall be formed such that it slopes down in a southeast direction to allow water run-off into the adjacent field. Thereafter, the overrun area will be retained as such unless otherwise approved by the Planning Authority.

Reason:

In the interests of road safety.

- 2 The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the recommendations as set out in Part 3 of the Berwick Bank Dry Burn Crossing Flood Modelling Report February 2026 (ref: BK-JON-000-CST-BOD-0006) that is docketed to this

planning permission.

Reason:

In the interests of flood protection.