



GALETECH
ENERGY SERVICES



Islandmore Wind Farm

Environmental Impact Assessment
Report

Annex 3.9: Planning-Stage
Decommissioning Plan

Islandmore Wind Farm Limited

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Galetech Energy Services (GES), on behalf of Islandmore Wind Farm Limited ('the Developer'), has prepared this Planning-Stage Decommissioning Plan to establish the appropriate methodologies to be implemented during the decommissioning of the Islandmore Wind Farm ('the project').

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THIS REPORT

The project is proposed to operate for a period of 40-years. At the end of this period, several options will be available to the Developer regarding the future of the project, as follows:-

- Continued operation of the existing project;
- Refurbishment/replacement of the wind turbines and continued operation; and
- Decommissioning of the project.

Any further operation beyond 40-years will be subject to a further planning application and EIA. However, for the purposes of this assessment, it is assumed that a full decommissioning of the project will take place after the proposed period of operations.

This Planning-Stage Decommissioning Plan is based upon current technologies, methods, and best practice. During the proposed period of operations, it is likely that additional methods will be developed, and current methods further evolved, for the decommissioning of wind farms as experience of decommissioning similar developments increases.

Prior to decommissioning, the developer will engage with the Planning Authority to agree a specific Decommissioning Plan to ensure the appropriate decommissioning and reinstatement of the site having regard to prevailing environmental conditions and to ensure the use of best available recycling technology and techniques available at the time. This document should, therefore, be considered to be a 'live' document which will be further developed by the appointed decommissioning contractor who will prepare detailed method statements relative to each individual work stream.

2.0 DECOMMISSIONING & RESTORATION PLAN

2.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Unlike most other forms of development, the decommissioning of a wind farm is typically a straightforward process. Infrastructure can readily be dismantled on site and removed. Following the restoration of the site, there will be no significant visible evidence of prior existence, and no legacy of pollution.

The decommissioning of the project is not expected to pose significant risks to the environment; nevertheless, effects need to be addressed in order to ensure that no, or minimal, impact on the environment occurs.

All measures described within the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) with regards to mitigation and protection for ecological receptors, waste management, surface water management and prevention of pollution will apply to decommissioning works; subject to review of relevant regulations and best practice

at that time.

In general, all structures above ground level shall be dismantled and removed from the site for reuse or recycling where possible; however, access tracks may be retained depending on the proposed future use of the site. It is likely that, in order to minimise environmental disturbance, the majority of sub-surface elements of the project shall remain in situ. For example, electrical and communications cabling shall be removed and recycled but the ducting within which it is located will remain to avoid unnecessary excavations and ground disturbance.

The overriding principle of the decommissioning process is to minimise the extent of any ground disturbance on site. While groundworks are an inevitable consequence of the decommissioning process, they shall only be undertaken where absolutely necessary.

The following sections detail the methodologies likely to be implemented during decommissioning; however, as described above, a site-specific approach will be agreed with the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of decommissioning works.

2.2 WIND TURBINES

Wind turbines are comprised of the tower, nacelle and blades which are modular items that can be disassembled. This will involve a process which will be similar to the construction phase, but in reverse. If the turbines are to be sold on or reused elsewhere, they shall be removed from site by specialist vehicles similar to those used during their transportation to site. If wind turbine components are not to be reused, then they shall be scrapped. This shall involve the removal of all components to an approved waste handling/recycling facility where components will be sorted according to their material of construction. Turbine components are mainly inert steel/ferrous metals which can be reused or recycled.

The turbine blades are constructed of fibreglass which is not readily re-used or recyclable. Due to the large number of turbine blades currently being decommissioned globally, extensive research¹ is being undertaken to find an alternative use for the fibreglass. There are a number of emerging innovations for fibreglass recycling including the re-purposing of fibreglass for other civil engineering projects (e.g. as a component in concrete production, roofs for social housing and incorporation to the construction of electrical powerline masts/structures.) Given the extensive research being undertaken to find a means of recycling decommissioned wind turbine blades, it is assumed that, at the proposed date of decommissioning, all blades will be fully re-purposed and that no disposal, to landfill, will be required.

2.3 TURBINE FOUNDATIONS

Wind turbine foundations are likely to be grubbed² to a depth of 1m below ground level using conventional mechanical diggers. Exposed rebar and holding down bolts shall be burned off and removed off-site to an approved waste handling facility for recycling where possible. The broken concrete will be removed from site and disposed of at an approved waste management facility. Alternatively, it may be used on site as an inert fill to make up levels as part of the wider decommissioning/restoration plan,

¹ [Re-Wind](#) and [SusWIND](#).

² Materials broken up and loosened to allow for vegetative re-growth.

reducing the need for the importation of additional material onto the site. Excavated areas shall then be soiled over and allowed to vegetate naturally.

2.4 CRANE HARDSTANDINGS

Hardstands shall be grubbed up to a depth of 1m below ground level and the excavated material shall be used to regrade the hardstand area to match surrounding ground contours and profile. Additional inert material derived from decommissioning works in other areas of the site may be used, as required, if sufficient material is available. Once the area has been profiled to match the surrounding ground, soil shall be spread over the reinstated area. This area shall then be seeded out or allowed to vegetate naturally.

2.5 ACCESS TRACKS & SITE ENTRANCES

All access track at the project site will be of a 'floated' construction type. If it is decided not to retain the access tracks on site for future use, all aggregates shall be removed and used elsewhere at the project site as part of the restoration process, removed from site for use in other construction projects or removed to an approved waste management facility.

Depending on the proposed future use of the site, site entrances (and associated fencing, gates and hedgerows) are likely to be retained to prevent unauthorised access.

2.6 ELECTRICAL & COMMUNICATIONS CABLING

The cables installed at the project site will contain a core of copper (and other metals) which can be recycled. Cables will be pulled from the existing ducting and removed to an approved waste handling facility where the cores shall be recycled, and the remaining material shall be disposed of at an approved facility.

2.7 ELECTRICITY SUBSTATION & UNDERGROUND ELECTRICITY LINE

The decommissioning of the substation will involve the strip-out and removal of steel, conductors, switches, transformer and other materials and equipment that can be reconditioned and reused or sold as scrap. A soft strip of the building shall ensure that all fixtures and fittings are removed prior to demolition.

Demolition of the building shall take place using conventional methods. Foundations and building services shall be grubbed up to a depth of 1m below ground level. The demolition waste shall comprise mainly rubble (bricks, block, broken concrete, plaster etc.) and timber. Rubble can be processed to provide an aggregate material to be used elsewhere in construction projects. Alternatively, it could be used on site as fill elsewhere on the subject site.

Timber and other waste shall be segregated according to material type with a view to recycling where possible or disposal. All demolition materials which cannot be reused on site shall be removed off site to a licensed waste handling facility for recycling or disposal. Excavations shall be backfilled with suitable material, soiled over and seeded out or allowed to revegetate naturally.

Decommissioning of the electricity line will involve the removal of the cabling from the ducting; however, the ducting will remain *in situ* to avoid further excavations. The majority of cables used in wind farm grid connections contain a core of either copper or aluminium, both of which can be recycled. All cables will be removed to an

appropriate licensed facility for recycling; while the ducting will remain *in situ* to avoid the requirement for further excavations.

2.8 SITE RESTORATION DETAILS

The detailed Decommissioning Plan, which will be agreed with the Planning Authority prior to decommissioning, will include the following:-

- Specific decommissioning and restoration method statement for each infrastructural aspect of the project;
- A method statement for ground forming, soil preparation and habitat and species establishment;
- Timelines for restoration proposals;
- Details for ongoing management/maintenance;
- Details of ecological oversight of implementation of same;
- Details of habitat linkages and continuity of habitats within and outside the project site;
- Details of water (ground and surface) management; and,
- Selection of appropriate strategies for maintaining or introducing target habitats and species.

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

3.1 WASTE MANAGEMENT

The decommissioning phase will be undertaken in accordance with all prevailing best practice methods including in relation to waste management and the waste hierarchy.

The contractor(s) appointed during the decommissioning phase will ensure that:-

- Legal obligations are met;
- Waste production is minimised;
- A framework for continuous assessment and best practice is implemented; and,
- Carbon emissions and negative environmental impacts of and from waste materials are reduced.

3.2 TIMING OF WORKS

The most intrusive decommissioning works (e.g. excavations and ground profiling) will be carefully scheduled to avoid periods of intense or prolonged rainfall.

3.3 GROUND DISTURBANCE, MATERIAL EXCAVATION & REINSTATEMENT

During decommissioning, all plant and machinery will keep to existing infrastructure (e.g. tracks and hardstanding) and will not encroach upon adjacent habitats unless this is essential in order to progress the decommissioning works.

The reinstatement of any areas disturbed during the decommissioning works will be undertaken. The contractor will record excavated volumes and storage areas, and volumes and type of material utilised for reinstatement of relevant areas. This

information will be updated for the duration of the decommissioning works.

Reinstatement will be completed using site-won materials wherever possible without compromising or damaging established/existing habitats. Given the ecological (habitat) characteristics of the project site and surrounding areas, it is proposed to allow any disturbed areas to revegetate naturally.

All temporarily stockpiled materials will be stored in designated areas and isolated from any surface drains and a minimum of 50m away from surface water where possible. Aggregate or fine materials storage will be enclosed and screened/sheeted.

3.4 GENERAL POLLUTION PREVENTION MEASURES

Pollution prevention methods will be undertaken in accordance with those measures set out in the EIAR and prevailing best practice procedures. Any material or substance which could cause pollution, including fuels/oils or silty water will be prevented from entering groundwater, surface water drains or surface waters by the appropriate use of, and appropriate placement of, temporary cut-off drains and silt traps. Any sign of ineffective water treatment measures or evidence of silted or contaminated water entering surface water on-site will be reported immediately to the contractor. The precise implementation of these measures will be detailed in a Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) to be prepared prior to decommissioning.

All refueling will be carried out in a designated area over an impermeable surface (hardstanding/protective layer/trays) at least 50m from surface waters/surface water drains where possible. Refueling and transfer of fuels will only be carried out under the supervision of an appropriately trained supervisor. Fuel pipes on plant outlets at fuel tanks etc. will be regularly checked and maintained to ensure that no drips or leaks to ground occur.

Irrespective of the buffer distance and location of refueling, interceptor drip trays will be available in accordance with standard good practice. Interceptor drip trays will be positioned under any stationary mobile plant to prevent oil contamination of the ground surface or water. Plant and site vehicles are to be well maintained, and any vehicle leaking fluids must be repaired or removed from site immediately. Any servicing operations shall take place over drip trays.

Areas of waste oil/fuel/chemical storage and refueling will be located 50m away from surface waters or drainage paths. Such storage areas will be appropriately sited to prevent the downward percolation of contaminants to natural soils and groundwater.

Fuel, oils and chemicals will be stored on an impervious base within a bund able to contain at least 110% of the volume stored. Rainwater will not be allowed to accumulate within the bund and in any way compromise the required 110% volume capacity. No tanks or containers may be perforated or dismantled on-site. A competent operator shall empty all contents and residues for safe disposal off-site in accordance with current waste regulations.

With regards to dust emissions, a water bowser will be available to spray work areas and haul roads, especially during periods of excavations works coinciding with dry periods of weather, in order to suppress dust migration from the site. Additionally, all loads which could cause a dust nuisance will be covered to minimise fugitive emissions during transport; while speed limits will be strictly enforced to avoid dust emissions.

No burning of any materials shall be permitted; while the use of herbicides will also be

avoided.



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