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Holistic Network Design (HND) Implementation Plan FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions

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FAQ

Welcome to our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document for our public consultation on the Holistic Network Design (HND) Implementation Plan.

This document aims to provide clear and concise answers to common queries regarding our publication, its objectives, and importance in sustainable planning.

Your feedback is important, and we hope this document will aid your understanding of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) Assessment and our HND Implementation Plan.

Understanding the Environmental Assessments

1. How do I navigate the suite of documents that have been published?

Please see the below list of documents that have been published and what each of them details. Each has an **executive summary** at the start which provides you with a high-level understanding of what the assessment will cover.

In addition to these main documents there are appendices that provide further detailed information.

1. **HND Implementation Plan:** provides an overview of the Holistic Network Design (HND), and Holistic Network Design Follow Up Exercise (HND FUE) design exercises carried out under the Offshore Transmission Network Review (OTNR)¹. The Plan is defined as the cumulative offshore network design recommendations from the HND and HND FUE processes, as of August 2024.
2. **MCZ Stage 1 Assessment:** This document evaluates whether activities within the screened study corridors pose a significant risk to the conservation objectives of a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ). It also assesses whether the MCZ can effectively further its conservation objectives.
3. **MCZ Stage 2 Assessment:** This involves a detailed analysis to determine if specific activities can occur without significantly hindering the conservation objectives of the MCZ.
4. **HRA Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (HRA RIAA):** This detailed report follows an initial screening process and evaluates the potential impact of a plan or project on designated European-level habitats.

¹ [gov.uk/government/groups/offshore-transmission-network-review](https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/offshore-transmission-network-review)

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5. **HRA Derogations Report:** This document outlines the necessary derogations tests as part of the Appropriate Assessment (AA) for the HND Implementation Plan.
6. **SEA Environmental Report:** The purpose of this report is to provide a formal and transparent assessment of the likely significant environmental effects arising from the implementation of the draft HND Implementation Plan, including an evaluation of reasonable alternatives.

2. What is a Strategic Environmental Assessment and why is NESO conducting one?

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic process used to evaluate the potential significant environmental effects of proposed policies, plans, and programmes.

NESO is conducting this SEA to ensure that environmental considerations are fully integrated into the planning and implementation of network designs, such as the Holistic Network Design (HND), HND Follow-Up Exercise (HNDFUE), Innovation and Targeted Offshore Generation (INTOG), and Celtic Sea projects.

The scope of this SEA specifically covers the transmission cables from offshore generators to their point of connection with the onshore electricity transmission system. Given the large scale and complexity of these design initiatives, NESO has undertaken the SEA to ensure that environmental impacts are thoroughly considered and to support informed design recommendations. These assessments also formalise the environmental appraisal works that were already completed as part of the HND design exercises.

3. How does the SEA, MCZ and HRA relate to each other?

The SEA complements NESO's Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) Assessments. These assessments have been carried out in parallel and both the HRA and MCZ feed into the SEA environmental report. Together, these assessments ensure that environmental impacts are considered at a strategic level.

Scope & Coverage

4. **Does the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Habitats Regulations Assessment and Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) Assessment encompass all the Holistic Network Design and Beyond 2030 recommendations?**

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The SEA covers all recommended designs and Impact Assessment (IA) outcomes from the Holistic Network Design (HND), Holistic Network Design Follow-Up Exercise (HND FUE), Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas (INTOG), and Celtic Sea projects as of August 2024. This is being referred to throughout the documents as the HND Implementation Plan. Any changes since the frozen baseline have not been considered in this iteration of the HND Implementation plan.

5. Will future updates to recommended designs through the Impact Assessment Process (IA) be included?

Yes. Any future updates via the IA process will be incorporated into future iterations.

6. Why do some outputs and recommendations of the HND Implementation Plan not align with project level decisions that have already been made?

The HND Implementation Plan and its associated environmental documents have been developed retrospectively, using a fixed baseline from August 2024. Our scope and methodology differ significantly from those used at the project level due to the breadth and complexity of the HND recommendations. It is important to highlight that the level of detail at the project level will be far greater than what can be addressed at this strategic level. Consequently, some outcomes detailed in our reports may not align with the decisions made at the project level.

Legal Status

7. Does NESO have the authority to enforce mitigation measures recommended in the SEA?

Developers are required to implement relevant measures through their own environmental assessments at project level. This SEA provides guidance and identifies mitigation strategies that have been successfully applied in similar contexts. NESO does not have the authority to enforce mitigation.

Consultation Details

8. How long is the public consultation open for?

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The public consultation is open for thirteen weeks, starting from **3 November and ending on 30 January**. During this period, you can submit your responses through our [feedback form](#) which includes a list of specific questions to guide your input.

9. Who can respond?

We welcome responses from everyone. Whether you are an individual, a community group, or an organisation, your views are valuable in helping to shape our Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

10. Where can I access consultation documents

All consultation documents and feedback forms are available on our website through [this link](#). Here's how you can access them:

1. **Online Access:** Visit our website to view and download all consultation documents and feedback forms. This allows you to review the materials at your convenience.
2. **Printed Copies:** If you prefer to have a printed copy of the consultation documents, please send a request to our email address: box.enexternal@neso.energy or call **07858 374917**.
Please include your mailing address and specify which documents you require.
3. **Assistance and Queries:** If you encounter any issues accessing the documents online or have any questions, feel free to contact us.

By providing both digital and printed options, we aim to ensure that everyone can participate in the consultation process comfortably.

11. How do I submit feedback?

Feedback should be submitted through our online form, available [here](#). Here's what to expect:

1. **Provide Your Contact Details:** We ask for your contact information to understand who is submitting feedback and to follow up with you if necessary.
2. **General Comments:** Here you can provide your feedback on our consultation.
3. **Confidentiality Option:** Please indicate if you would like your feedback to be treated as confidential. This helps us determine how we can use your response in any published feedback summaries.

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If for any reason you are unable to use our feedback form or would prefer to post your feedback, please send it to the following address:

FAO – HND Implementation Plan Public Consultation

National Energy System Operator

Faraday House

Warwick Technology Park

Gallows Hill

Warwick

CV34 6DA

Content & Review Process

12. Will there be a summary of consultation responses published

Yes. Following the consultation NESO will publish an overview of key themes identified in the feedback.

13. Will the HND Implementation Plan and environmental reports be updated after the consultation?

Yes. Following completion of the consultation period, feedback will be reviewed and used to refine the draft HND Implementation Plan, SEA Environmental Report, HRA Report and MCZ Report as necessary. The final version should then proceed to drafting and adoption.

Following release of the adopted HND Implementation Plan, an SEA Statement will be drafted to summarise the process undertaken and identify the manner by which environmental considerations and consultations were integrated into the final HND Implementation Plan.