

REFERRAL OF A PROJECT FOR A DECISION ON THE NEED FOR ASSESSMENT UNDER THE *ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS ACT 1978*

REFERRAL FORM

The *Environment Effects Act 1978* provides that where proposed works may have a significant effect on the environment, either a proponent or a decision-maker may refer these works (or project) to the Minister for Planning for advice as to whether an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is required.

This Referral Form is designed to assist in the provision of relevant information in accordance with the *Ministerial Guidelines for assessment of environmental effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978* (Eighth Edition, 2023). Where a decision-maker is referring a project, they should complete a Referral Form to the best of their ability, recognising that further information may need to be obtained from the proponent.

It will generally be useful for a proponent to discuss the preparation of a Referral with the Impact Assessment Unit (IAU) at the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) before submitting the Referral.

If a proponent believes that effective measures to address environmental risks are available, sufficient information could be provided in the Referral to substantiate this view. In contrast, if a proponent considers that further detailed environmental studies will be needed as part of project investigations, a more general description of potential effects and possible mitigation measures in the Referral may suffice.

In completing a Referral Form, the following should occur:

- Mark relevant boxes by changing the font colour of the 'cross' to black and provide additional information and explanation where requested.
- As a minimum, a brief response should be provided for each item in the Referral Form, with a more detailed response provided where the item is of particular relevance. Cross-references to sections or pages in supporting documents should also be provided. Information need only be provided once in the Referral Form, although relevant cross-referencing should be included.
- Responses should honestly reflect the potential for adverse environmental effects. A Referral will only be accepted for processing once IAU is satisfied that it has been completed appropriately.
- Potentially significant effects should be described in sufficient detail for a reasonable conclusion to be drawn on whether the project could pose a significant risk to environmental assets. Responses should include:
 - a brief description of potential changes or risks to environmental assets resulting from the project;
 - available information on the likelihood and significance of such changes;
 - the sources and accuracy of this information, and associated uncertainties.
- Any attachments, maps and supporting reports should be provided in a secure folder with the Referral Form.

- A USB copy of all documents will be needed, especially if the size of electronic documents may cause email difficulties. **Individual documents should not exceed 10MB as they will be published on the Department's website.**
- A completed form would normally be between 15 and 30 pages in length. Responses should not be constrained by the size of the text boxes provided. Text boxes should be extended to allow for an appropriate level of detail.
- The form should be completed in MS Word and not handwritten.

The party referring a project should submit a covering letter to the Minister for Planning together with a completed Referral Form, attaching supporting reports and other information that may be relevant. This should be sent to:

Postal address

**Minister for Planning
PO Box 500
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 8002**

Couriers

**Minister for Planning
Level 16, 8 Nicholson Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002**

In addition to the submission of the hardcopy to the Minister, separate submission of an electronic copy of the Referral via email to ees.referrals@delwp.vic.gov.au is required. This will assist the timely processing of a referral.

PART 1 PROPONENT DETAILS, PROJECT DESCRIPTION & LOCATION

1. Information on proponent and person making Referral

Name of Proponent:	High Sea Wind Pty Ltd
Authorised person for proponent: Position: Postal address: Email address: Phone number: Facsimile number:	Rafael Munilla Chief Business Development Officer L18, 1 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne, Australia contact@highseawind.com +34610500848 -
Person who prepared Referral: Position: Organisation: Postal address: Email address: Phone number: Facsimile number:	Kim Stewart Senior Principal Marine Scientist RPS AAP Consulting Pty Ltd Level 16, 222 Exhibition Street Melbourne VIC 3000 melbourne@rpsconsulting.com +61 3 9417 9700 -
Available industry & environmental expertise: (areas of 'in-house' expertise & consultancy firms engaged for project)	High Sea Wind High Sea Wind is exclusively owned by Ocean Winds, the result of a 2019 joint venture by EDP Renewables (EDPR) and ENGIE. The Proponent, High Sea Wind Pty Ltd, is a fully owned subsidiary of Ocean Winds. EDPR and ENGIE combined their offshore wind assets and project pipeline under Ocean Winds, which has since grown to 1.5 gigawatts (GW) of projects in operation, 2.3 GW under construction and a further 17.6 GW under development. Ocean Winds has a depth of experience in offshore wind with projects in development, construction and operation across eight countries including both bottom-fixed and floating offshore projects. Its operational offshore wind projects are located in the United Kingdom, Portugal and Belgium. Construction is currently underway on projects in the United Kingdom, France and Poland. Ocean Winds has made significant internal resources available to High Sea Wind, not limited to engineering, construction management, planning, and compliance.

	RPS RPS has been appointed to deliver the High Sea Wind environmental impact assessment. Founded in 1970, RPS is now part of Tetra Tech, a leading provider of consulting and engineering services worldwide. With more than 25,000 associates in 500 offices in more than 100 countries on 7 continents, Tetra Tech has the resources of a multi-billion-dollar company and is home to industry-leading scientists, engineers and technical specialists. RPS has been an established, leading provider of professional services to the offshore wind industry since its inception in Europe in the early 2000s. RPS now successfully delivers support and advice to developers, governments and contractors internationally across Europe, the US, Australia and Asia. The Australian team has extensive experience in energy and renewables in this region and across the globe. As offshore wind consultants, the breadth of services allows teams to support proponents throughout the asset lifecycle, providing advice and expertise across: • Communication and engagement • Environmental survey design, execution and management • Approvals strategies, planning, consenting and permitting • Offshore studies including marine mammals, fish, fisheries, benthic environments, oil spill, ornithology, underwater noise, hydrodynamics, coastal process, electromagnetic field exposure and metocean • Onshore studies including flora, fauna, ecological communities, land use planning, landscape and visual, aviation, soils, ground conditions, hydrology, economics, social environments • Environmental impact assessment • Compliance management.
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2. Project – brief outline

Project title: High Sea Wind Transmission
Project location: (describe location with AMG coordinates and attach A4/A3 map(s) showing project site or investigation area, as well as its regional and local context) The High Sea Wind project is proposed in the Gippsland region in south-east Victoria. High Sea Wind includes an offshore wind farm in the Commonwealth marine area and associated transmission infrastructure spanning Victorian land and Victorian coastal waters. The subject of this referral is the transmission aspect of the High Sea Wind project, located in Victoria – High Sea Wind Transmission. It comprises the transmission infrastructure, in Victorian coastal waters and onshore, to VicGrid's onshore connection hub at Giffard and a shore crossing at McGaurans Beach (refer to Attachment 1, Figure 1).

For the purpose of this referral under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (Vic) (EE Act), the project location is an investigation area extending from the boundary of Victorian coastal waters (three nautical miles from the high-water mark), between Reeves Beach and Seaspray, to 11 kilometres inland (refer to Attachment 1, Figure 2). Onshore, the investigation area is within the Gippsland Shoreline Renewable Energy Zone (GSREZ). Australian map grid coordinates for the investigation area are provided in Attachment 2.

The transmission infrastructure and associated construction activities will be located in a smaller project site within the investigation area. The location of the project site will be refined through the environmental assessment process, and will consider avoidance of environmental sensitivities, stakeholder consultation, location of other infrastructure and constructability.

Short project description (few sentences):

The High Sea Wind project is proposed in the Gippsland region in south-east Victoria. High Sea Wind would comprise the construction, operation and decommissioning of an offshore wind farm and associated transmission infrastructure.

High Sea Wind would include:

- The offshore wind farm, including bottom-fixed wind turbines, substations and inter-array and inter-connector cables
- The offshore transmission, including cables to export from the offshore wind farm area to the onshore transmission.
- The onshore transmission, to connect to VicGrid's onshore connection hub
- Shore crossing to connect the onshore and offshore transmission, proposed to be located at McGaurans Beach.

The offshore wind farm would be located within High Sea Wind's 150 km² licence area, about 76 kilometres from shore within the Commonwealth's Gippsland offshore wind Declared Area (refer to Attachment 1, Figure 1).

For the purpose of this referral and assessment under the EE Act, High Sea Wind Transmission comprises the installation, operation and decommissioning of the following components on Victorian land and within Victorian coastal waters:

- Buried subsea export cables, from the offshore boundary of Victorian coastal waters to the shore crossing
- Export cables at the shore crossing using trenchless construction methods, and associated jointing bays
- Buried onshore export cables, and associated infrastructure, from the shore crossing to the VicGrid onshore connection hub.

Document terminology:

- Nearshore transmission investigation area: The area being investigated for the delivery of offshore transmission infrastructure through Victorian coastal waters, extending from the MHW to the Victorian coastal waters boundary, three nautical miles offshore. This area would contain export cables and the offshore aspects of the trenchless shore crossing.
- Onshore transmission investigation area: The area being investigated for the delivery of the onshore transmission infrastructure. It extends from the MHW to the VicGrid onshore connection hub near Giffard. It would contain the onshore aspects of the shore crossing and underground transmission cables as well as supporting and ancillary infrastructure.
- Project site: The area directly impacted by the proposed activities, noting this extent is markedly smaller than the referral area, where the proposed activities may occur. This includes the onshore transmission corridor up to 100 metres wide and nearshore export cable corridor up to 625 metres wide.
- Referral area: The total area under consideration in the referral, comprising the onshore transmission investigation area and the nearshore transmission investigation area within Victorian land and waters. The area includes the potential direct and indirect disturbance footprint/s, as well as avoidance area/s.

3. Project description

Aim/objectives of the project (what is its purpose / intended to achieve?):

The primary purpose of High Sea Wind is to generate renewable electricity at a large scale and supply it to the Victorian electricity grid. High Sea Wind is expected to have an installed capacity of approximately 1.3 GW, enough to power 1 million Victorian households annually. High Sea Wind will play a key role in helping the State of Victoria achieve its target of 95% renewable energy by 2035. In achieving this purpose, the project will prevent up to 5.3 million tons of CO₂ emissions each year, that could otherwise arise from fossil fuel generation.

The purpose of project components within the Victorian jurisdiction relevant to this referral is to transmit electricity from the offshore wind farm, in commonwealth waters, to the onshore connection hub near Giffard, Victoria. Within this referral, onshore works are considered those which occur landwards of Mean High Water Springs (MHWS).

Background/rationale of project (describe the context / basis for the proposal, eg. for siting):

Background to the High Sea Wind Project

Over the past few years, Commonwealth and Victorian government initiatives, policies and legislation have fostered and facilitated the exploration of offshore wind resources across a range of geographic areas across Australia.

The Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) identified the Gippsland region as well suited for offshore wind due to offshore wind capacity, proximity to existing electricity grid and infrastructure and proximity to energy demand. On 19 December 2022, the federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy declared Australia's first offshore wind zone, an area off Gippsland, as suitable for offshore renewable energy. The declared area covers approximately 15,000 square kilometres. Located in Commonwealth waters, it extends from offshore of Lakes Entrance in the east, to south of Wilsons Promontory in the west. In Commonwealth waters, the generation component of an offshore wind farm may only be developed within a declared area under the *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021* (Cwth) (OEI Act).

Victoria has legislated offshore wind energy generation targets of at least two gigawatts by 2032, four gigawatts by 2035 and nine gigawatts by 2040. In December 2022, Offshore Wind Energy Victoria (OWEV) was established as a division of the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). In addition, the Victorian Government has prioritised the Gippsland area for the development of offshore wind transmission. It has declared the Gippsland Shoreline Renewable Energy Zone (GSREZ) between the Gippsland coast and South Gippsland Highway as part of the 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan. Within GSREZ, VicGrid is coordinating the Gippsland offshore wind transmission project which will provide an onshore connection hub for offshore wind projects to connect to Victoria's electricity grid. Gippsland offshore wind developers must locate all onshore infrastructure within the GSREZ, including underground export cables. The GSREZ also includes designated areas within the zone where offshore wind export cables are allowed to cross the shoreline.

Rationale for the High Sea Wind Transmission

In April 2024, High Sea Wind was granted a feasibility license by the Australian Government for a 150 km² area within the Gippsland declared area.

The referred investigation area reflects the most direct and efficient routes for High Sea Wind's export cables between its licence area and the VicGrid onshore connection hub, while avoiding other offshore wind licence areas and crossing the shore within the proposed GSREZ shore crossing area at McGaurans Beach.

In Victorian coastal waters, the investigation area provides options for cable routes to the northeast or the southwest of the Blue Mackerel North and Iberdrola Australia OW 2 (Aurora Green) licence areas.

The final export cable route will be developed in consideration of technical feasibility assessments, environmental studies, cultural heritage investigations and stakeholder consultation. It will be finalised during the pre-construction permitting and approvals phase.

Main components of the project (nature, siting & approx. dimensions; attach A4/A3 plan(s) of site layout if available):

High Sea Wind Transmission (the project) includes the installation, operation and decommissioning of transmission infrastructure on Victorian land and within Victorian coastal waters. These components support the export of electricity from the offshore wind farm to the VicGrid connection hub near Giffard, Victoria.

High Sea Wind Transmission would include the following main components which are described in further detail below:

- Offshore export cables
- Shore crossing
- Onshore transmission:
 - Onshore cables
 - Joint bays

Offshore export cables

Up to five buried, high-voltage cables would export electricity from the offshore windfarm. The investigation area provides options for cable routes to the northeast or the southwest of the Blue Mackerel North and Iberdrola Australia OW 2 (Aurora Green) licence areas (refer to Figure 1 in Attachment 1). The overall lengths of these route options are similar, however the southwest option is potentially longer in Victorian coastal waters. The export cable route from the Victorian coastal waters boundary to the shore crossing is expected to be between five and 23 kilometres long, depending on final route selection. Cables would be buried where possible. Where cables cannot be appropriately buried cable protection systems, such as rock armouring, will be installed. Final construction methods, burial depths and protection requirements will be refined following geotechnical, environmental and heritage investigations and confirmation of the electrical design.

Shore crossing

A trenchless shore crossing would be constructed to minimise disturbance to intertidal and coastal environments. This may be horizontal directional drilling (HDD) or direct-pipe. The crossing would be located within the GSREZ shore crossing area at McGaurans Beach. A work area approximately 100 metres by 200 metres would be required onshore for construction of the crossing. The exact site location will be selected to avoid sensitive ecological and cultural heritage values as far practicable. Through a review of desktop data available via VicGov, the proposed shore crossing will not be located within 'Estuarine Wetland EVC'. The VicGov database confirms the shore crossing is not located within Wetland EVC, is not listed on the Victorian Wetland Inventory, and does not have planning overlays indicating it is land subject to inundation or land subject to flooding. Illustrated in Figure 3 of Attachment 1.

Onshore transmission

The main onshore components of the project include the following:

- **Onshore cables:** Up to five buried high-voltage export cable circuits would run from the shore crossing to the VicGrid onshore connection hub. The straight-line distance from the shore crossing location to the connection hub is around six kilometres however, the actual cable route length is expected to be longer to accommodate routing constraints and site conditions. The onshore cable corridor will be up to 100 m wide, to accommodate up to 5 trenches, inclusive of an indicative 20 m on either side for linear access and spoil storage during construction. Additional workspace may be required at select locations for bends, crossings, laydown areas or side access. The exact alignment will be developed considering landholder engagement, environmental values and heritage constraints. Trenching would be the primary installation method, with HDD or other trenchless techniques potentially used at sensitive waterways, areas of high ecology value, critical road crossings and heritage locations. Cable ducting, spacing and trench width will be

sized to conservative electrical parameters until final electrical design is confirmed. Following installation, the cables would sit with an operating easement indicatively 50 m wide, subject to design.

- **Joint bays:** Transition joint bays (up to one per cable circuit) would be constructed on the onshore side of the shore crossing. These underground concrete enclosures would house the cable joints, terminations, and associated civil and electrical equipment to connect the subsea export cables to the onshore export cables. Following reinstatement, only the access points are expected to be visible on the surface. Additional underground jointing bays will be constructed along the onshore export cable route, where cable connections are required. Jointing bays will be designed to have minimal permanent surface footprint.

The construction program is indicative and assumes the earliest commencement of onshore activities in 2033. It is expected that onshore construction duration would be one year with shore-crossing works estimated at six months and installation of export cables in Victorian coastal waters about six months. Onshore works would be scheduled to align with offshore construction activities.

Final construction methods, burial depths and protection requirements will be refined following geotechnical, environmental and heritage investigations and confirmation of the electrical design.

Ancillary components of the project (eg. upgraded access roads, new high-pressure gas pipeline; off-site resource processing):

Ancillary components of the project include the construction, operation and removal of temporary facilities associated with onshore construction activities. These would include:

- Fencing and signage
- Site access, such as turn ins and access tracks
- Laydown areas and storage facilities
- Site offices and personnel facilities.

Existing underground services, including pipelines and cables, would need to be positively located where they cross the cable route and in some instances relocation of the service, in consultation with the asset owner, may be required.

Farm infrastructure, such as troughs, water lines, yards and tracks, may need to be relocated to outside the project site, in consultation with the landowner.

Minor upgrades to existing road infrastructure may be required. A traffic management plan will be prepared to minimise disruption to traffic on local roads if required.

Key construction activities:

Offshore construction activities (Victorian coastal waters)

Installation of the offshore export cables would be undertaken within the defined nearshore transmission investigation area and would likely include the following.

- Cable laying:
 - Mobilisation of specialised cable laying and support vessels.
 - Seabed preparation to remove potential obstructions to cable laying could occur
 - Sequential cable-laying from the extent of Victorian coastal waters to the shore crossing. The width of direct disturbance of cable installation is indicatively 15 m per cable circuit, widening to 20 m where cable protection is required. The cables would be installed separately, within a wider corridor up to 1200 metres wide.
 - Burial of cables where possible using mechanical trenchers or jetting, with a target burial depth of at least one metre.
- Installation of cable protection:

- Where burial cannot be achieved, engineered cable protection such as rock placement, mattresses or concrete covers would be installed.
- Cable protection would also be installed if cables cross other subsea infrastructure.
- Offshore construction of the shore crossing (trenchless):
 - Positioning of cable and support vessels which may include dynamically positioned vessels and/or jack-up vessels.
 - Excavation of punch-out pits.
 - Retrieval and connection of a drilled conduit to the offshore cable end
 - Final jointing and testing.
 - Feed of cable for pull-through to the onshore connection point.
- Survey, testing and commissioning
- Vessel transit through coastal waters, between local ports and offshore construction area.

Onshore construction activities

Key onshore construction activities are likely to include the following.

- Establishment of the onshore construction site:
 - Survey and mark out of the site, access tracks, no-go zones.
 - Fencing, signage and farm infrastructure relocation.
 - Clearing and levelling of the construction of site access and laydown areas.
 - Delivery of plant and equipment.
 - Vegetation removal undertaken in accordance with the *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation* (DEECA 2025).
- Cable laying:
 - Clear and grade of the cable route.
 - Delivery and stringing cables.
 - Excavation and preparation of the cable trenches (up to two metres depth) and joint bays.
 - Installation of onshore cables, backfill and compaction
 - Cable burial, protection and reinstatement: Where burial is shallow (<1 m) or risk of disturbance is high, protection measures such as concrete slabs, rock armour, marker systems or CPS would be applied.
- Installation of shore crossing – trenchless construction (HDD or direct pipe). Where HDD is adopted, this activity is likely to include:
 - Drill site establishment
 - Excavation of punch-in and return pits
 - Drilling pilot hole from onshore to offshore
 - Reaming
 - Cable pull through
- Construction of termination compounds and installation of equipment.
- Removal of temporary construction facilities, equipment, waste and materials.
- Reinstatement of topsoil and reseeding.
- Testing, connection and commissioning of the system.

Key operational activities:

The planned operational life of the project is up to 40 years which is the maximum term of a commercial licence for offshore wind farms under the OEI Act.

During operation, project activities for the operation, monitoring and maintenance of transmission infrastructure would include:

- Transmission of electricity to the grid connection point
- Inspection, testing and maintenance of onshore and offshore infrastructure
- Environmental monitoring and management

Key decommissioning activities (if applicable):

Decommissioning activities will be defined during project development, in consultation with regulators, landowners and other stakeholders.

Onshore, it is anticipated that any above ground infrastructure and below ground jointing bays would either be repurposed or removed and the site rehabilitated.

Onshore and offshore buried cables and offshore cable protection would likely remain in situ to avoid impacts to the landowners and the environment that could arise from removal.

Is the project an element or stage in a larger project?

☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, please describe: the overall project strategy for delivery of all stages and components; the concept design for the overall project; and the intended scheduling of the design and development of project stages).

The larger project (High Sea Wind) is an offshore wind project that would span Commonwealth waters, Victorian coastal waters and Victorian land. The subject of this referral, High Sea Wind Transmission, is the elements of High Sea Wind within the Victorian jurisdiction. The larger High Sea Wind Project in Victoria and in the Commonwealth Marine Area will be referred under the EPBC Act.

High Sea Wind would include:

- The offshore wind farm, including bottom-fixed wind turbines, substations and inter-array and inter-connector cables
- The offshore transmission, including cables to export from the offshore wind farm area to the onshore transmission.
- The onshore transmission, to connect to VicGrid's onshore connection hub
- Shore crossing to connect the onshore and offshore transmission, proposed to be located at McGaurans Beach.

A high-level, indicative construction program for High Sea Wind is provided in the table below. Timings are indicative and will be refined as project design, procurement and approvals progress.

There is no current proposal to stage construction.

Activity	Indicative timeframe
Offshore construction commencement date	2031
Onshore construction commencement	2033
Onshore construction duration	1 years
Construction duration of shore crossing	6 months
Construction duration of transmission infrastructure in state waters	6 months

Is the project related to any other past, current or mooted proposals in the region?

☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, please identify related proposals.

Two referrals have been submitted under the EPBC Act for the High Sea Wind project construction, operation and decommissioning. Split as shown below:

- EPBC Act referral for the offshore wind farm and transmission infrastructure in Commonwealth waters: Turbines and associated foundations, inter-array and inter-

connector cables, offshore substations (including associated support structures and foundations) and offshore export cables. • EPBC Act referral for the onshore transmission area and offshore transmission in Victorian coastal waters. An additional EPBC Act referral (EPBC 2025/10280) was submitted by High Sea Wind in November of 2025 for geotechnical and geophysical investigations to better understand the geology, sediments and seabed conditions of the area where project infrastructure may be placed. In November 2025 a decision of ‘not controlled action – particular manner’ was provided. High Sea Wind also submitted an application under the Marine and Coastal Act 2018 (Vic) for investigations proposed in Victorian coastal waters. This was approved by the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) in December 2025. A related project, the Gippsland Offshore Wind Transmission 2 GW Project by VicGrid, has submitted a referral under the EPBC Act for the Gippsland Offshore Wind Transmission 2 GW Project (2024/09980) by VicGrid. This project proposes a shared transmission line to connect offshore wind projects in Gippsland to the power grid. High Sea Wind would use the proposed onshore connection hub near Giffard to connect to the power grid.
What is the estimated capital expenditure for development of the project? \$4000 - \$9000 million AUD

4. Project alternatives

Brief description of key alternatives considered to date (eg. locational, scale or design alternatives. If relevant, attach A4/A3 plans): Victorian and Commonwealth government initiatives, policies and legislation have contributed to the location of High Sea Wind in order to optimise wind resource, economic development, grid connection and minimisation of environmental impacts. Victoria has legislated offshore wind energy generation targets of at least two GW by 2032, four GW by 2035 and nine GW by 2040. To meet these targets, offshore wind farms could either be developed in coastal waters or Commonwealth waters. Development of wind farms in Victorian coastal waters is not currently supported by marine and coastal planning policy. In Commonwealth waters, offshore wind farm generation components can be developed within a declared area under the OEI Act and subject to the grant of licences by the Australian Government. Offshore wind farms in the Gippsland declared area must connect to the electricity grid at the VicGrid onshore connection hub. All onshore infrastructure for this connection must be located within the declared GSREZ. These constraints limit the locational alternatives available to the project. There are four alternative shore crossing areas within the GSREZ, where export cables can be brought onshore: • Reeves Beach shoreline crossing area • McGauran Beach shoreline crossing area • South-west Merriman Creek shoreline crossing area • Seaspray Beach shoreline crossing area.

High Sea Wind has considered cable routes for each of these crossing areas. The McGauran Beach shoreline crossing area has been selected for the project, as it is closest to the proposed VicGrid onshore connection hub, provides the most direct onshore route, and minimises impacts to landowners and the environment.

Brief description of key alternatives to be further investigated (if known):

High Sea Wind is one of nine active feasibility licence holders for offshore wind in Gippsland. The offshore feasibility licence awarded to High Sea Wind is only valid for the approved licence area, and therefore alternative areas cannot be utilised. Similarly, the onshore grid connection point is being coordinated by VicGrid and has been nominated at a particular location onshore. Whilst there is room to adjust the cable alignment within the corridor for the export cable that will connect the offshore project to the onshore grid, it will largely need to follow a certain path to ensure it can connect at the right location.

While no alternative project or timeline is considered possible, as per the inherent mitigation approach (see Attachment 10: Inherent Mitigations), the project intends for the detailed design and siting of project infrastructure to be refined to ensure no significant impacts occur.

The final cable route will be determined as part of detailed design, informed by technical and environmental assessments and consultation with stakeholders.

The referred project area described in Section 2 is an investigation area in which the offshore and onshore transmission infrastructure will be located within a smaller project site (Attachment 1, Figure 2). In the offshore area, the investigation area provides alternative options for cable routes to the northeast or the southwest of the Blue Mackerel North and Iberdrola Australia OW 2 (Aurora Green) licence areas.

Onshore, the broad investigation area provides flexibility to locate the project site to avoid and minimise impacts to existing infrastructure, landowners, cultural heritage and the environment.

5. Proposed exclusions

Statement of reasons for the proposed exclusion of any ancillary activities or further project stages from the scope of the project for assessment:

The following activities and components of High Sea Wind are excluded from the scope of this referral:

- Project components and activities in Commonwealth waters, including but not limited to pre-construction site preparation activities, construction, operation and decommissioning of the offshore wind farm generation and transmission infrastructure. These are in the Commonwealth jurisdiction and will be referred to the Australian Government for assessment under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwth) (EPBC Act).
- Environmental, cultural heritage and technical surveys will be undertaken to inform project development and environmental approvals. If required, separate consents, permits and approvals will be secured to undertake these surveys as they will be undertaken prior to primary approvals being achieved.
- Planning and delivery of the onshore connection hub and transmission infrastructure to the Latrobe Valley is being undertaken by VicGrid, and is outside the scope of the project.
- Upgrading of port facilities is being led by port authorities and is also outside the scope of the project.

- An operations control facility or supply base may be required which would use existing port infrastructure.

6. Project implementation

Implementing organisation (ultimately responsible for project, ie. not contractor):

High Sea Wind Pty Ltd

Implementation timeframe:

A high-level, indicative construction programme for High Sea Wind is provided in the table below. Timings are indicative and will be refined as project design, procurement and approvals progress.

Activity	Indicative timeframe
Offshore construction commencement date	2031
Onshore construction commencement	2033
Onshore construction duration	1 years
Construction duration of shore crossing	6 months
Construction duration of transmission infrastructure in state waters	6 months

Proposed staging (if applicable):

Any development staging of High Sea Wind will depend on Victorian Government procurement processes to meet legislated offshore wind energy generation targets. The timeline above assumes the full capacity of the project will be constructed in a single phase.

7. Description of proposed site or area of investigation

Has a preferred site for the project been selected?

☒ No ☐ Yes If no, please describe area for investigation.
If yes, please describe the preferred site in the next items (if practicable).

General description of preferred site, (including aspects such as topography/landform, soil types/degradation, drainage/ waterways, native/exotic vegetation cover, physical features, built structures, road frontages; attach ground-level photographs of site, as well as A4/A3 aerial/satellite image(s) and/or map(s) of site & surrounds, showing project footprint):

For the purpose of this referral, the project location is an investigation area extending from the boundary of Victorian coastal waters (three nautical miles from the high-water mark), between Reeves Beach and Seaspray, to 11 kilometres inland (refer to Attachment 1, Figure 2).

The transmission infrastructure would be located in a smaller project site within the investigation area. The location of the project site will be determined during detailed design, considering avoidance of environmental sensitivities, stakeholder consultation, the location of other infrastructure and constructability.

Offshore

In Victorian coastal waters, the investigation area is predominantly in Marine Planning Area 7 under the Marine Spatial Planning Framework.

The investigation area allows for offshore export cable corridor options either side of licence areas for Blue Mackerel North and Iberdrola's Aurora Green windfarms.

Water depth ranges from about 20 metres at the coastal waters boundary, to the shore.

Soft sediments, sublittoral sand and muddy sand, are the dominant seabed habitats present, with non-reef sediment epibenthos, and patches of rocky reef in the both intertidal and subtidal zones.

Onshore

Onshore, the investigation area is on the coastal plain between Ninety-mile Beach and the South Gippsland Highway. It is within the Wellington Shire local government area. It is also within GSREZ and encompasses the VicGrid onshore connection hub. The shore crossing is within the McGaurans Beach shore crossing area defined in the GSREZ.

The area is rural and predominantly used for agriculture, particularly livestock grazing, with some cropping and timber plantations.

The coastal plains are drained by several unnamed minor waters in the project area, which converge towards the coast, where ephemeral estuarine wetland is present behind coastal dunes and beach. The waterways do not currently have a direct outlet to the ocean.

Vegetation in the onshore investigation area is predominantly pasture. Modelled native vegetation cover (NV2005_EVCBCS, DEECA 2026) indicates about eight percent has native vegetation cover, although a review of aerial imagery suggests the extent of native vegetation may be much less than indicated by the modelling. Lowland Forest/Heathy Woodland Mosaic and Lowland Forest are the predominant ecological vegetation classes (about 85 % of total). Some riparian scrub is present around waterways. Coastal dune vegetation and estuarine wetland present adjacent to the shoreline.

Site area (if known): ... The referred area of investigation includes an onshore area of approximately 7300 hectares, and offshore area of approximately 6100 hectares.

The project site will be a much smaller area, determined during detailed design.

Route length (for linear infrastructure) (km) **and width** (m)

The export cable route from the state waters boundary to the shore crossing is expected to be between five and 23 kilometres long, depending on final route selection. The width of direct disturbance of cable installation is indicatively 15 m per cable circuit, widening to 20 m where cable protection is required. The cables would be installed separately, within a wider corridor up to 1200 metres wide.

The straight-line distance from the shore crossing location to the connection hub is around six kilometres however, the actual cable corridor length is expected to be longer to accommodate routing constraints and site conditions, and up to 100 metres wide, to accommodate up to 5 trenches, inclusive of an indicative 20 m on either side for linear access and spoil storage during construction. Additional work space may be required at select locations, for example for bends, crossings, laydown areas or side access..

Current land use and development:

The area of investigation is rural and predominantly used for agriculture, particularly livestock grazing, with some cropping and timber plantations.

The following land uses are identified in the Victorian Land Use Information System (VLUIS) dataset within the area of investigation (Attachment 3, Figure 5):

- Livestock grazing
- Livestock grazing (dairy)

- Timber production
- Cropping
- Roads
- Parks and reserves
- Residential rural/rural lifestyle.

Description of local setting (eg. adjoining land uses, road access, infrastructure, proximity to residences & urban centres):

Offshore

The offshore area of investigation extends from the high water mark seaward to three nautical miles offshore to the extent of Victorian coastal waters. It is predominantly used for recreational fishing, boating and tourism. Basslink, a 370 kilometre high voltage direct current electricity interconnector between Tasmania and Victoria, routes through a small section of the offshore area of investigation.

Onshore

The onshore area of investigation is rural and predominantly used for agriculture, particularly livestock grazing, with some cropping and timber plantations. Rural residences are dispersed within the area. The nearest urban centres are the towns of Seaspray, Woodside and Longford.

Roads in the area include sealed and unsealed local roads. The nearest main road is the South Gippsland Highway (A440) between Seaspray and Longford, three kilometres northeast at the closest point.

Gippsland Water's Saline Wastewater Outfall Pipeline is within the investigation area. This subsurface pipeline transports saline wastewater from power stations in Latrobe Valley to an ocean outfall in or adjacent to the investigation area, off McGaurans Beach.

Basslink makes landfall immediately southwest of the shore crossing area and bisects the onshore investigation area.

The Darriman H29 Bushland Reserve is situated within, but excluded from, the investigation area. The shoreline, including the shore crossing location, is part of the McLoughlins Beach – Seaspray Coastal Reserve, which covers nearshore marine area, as well as the beach and primary dunes.

The Ninety Mile Beach Marine National Park is located at least 1.2 kilometres east of the investigation area.

Planning context (eg. strategic planning, zoning & overlays, management plans):

Planning Schemes

The Wellington Planning Scheme is the applicable planning controls for the onshore transmission investigation area. Depending on the final project design, connection points and impacted footprint, the Wellington Planning Scheme assessment may vary, but the following zone, overlays and particular provisions are likely to apply.

The Planning Policy Framework provides the key policy influences for Wellington Shire Council at state, regional and local levels. Several policies apply to this project including:

- Clause 12 Environmental and Landscape Values, Marine and Coastal Environment.
- Clause 19.01 Energy, Energy Supply Gippsland, Renewable Energy, Pipeline Infrastructure.

In Victorian coastal waters, the investigation area is predominantly in Marine Planning Area 7 under the Marine Spatial Planning Framework.

Zones and Overlays

The onshore investigation area is subject to the following planning controls:

Zones (refer to Attachment 3, Figure 2):

- Farming Zone 1 – to protect and promote agricultural use of land while supporting sustainable land management.
- Transport Zone 3 – Significant Municipal Road – to provide for an integrated and sustainable transport system.
- Public Conservation and Resource Zone – to protect and conserve the natural environment and natural processes for their historic, scientific, landscape, habitat or cultural values.
- Public Use Zone 1 – Service and Utility – to recognise public land use for public utility and community services and facilities.

Overlays (refer to Attachment 3, Figure 3)

- Environmental Significance Overlays - ESO1 – Coastal and Gippsland Lakes environs and ESO2 – Wetlands. The environmental significance of these areas is of value and these overlays are to ensure that development is compatible with identified environmental values.
- Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) – to ensure that the development of land prioritises the protection of human life and strengthens community resilience to bushfire.
- Specific Controls Overlay (SCO2) – land use and develop control for the existing Basslink.

Particular Provisions

The following Particular Provisions are likely to apply to the project:

- Clause 52.02 Easements, restrictions and reserves
- Clause 52.05 Signs
- Clause 52.06 Car parking
- Clause 52.17 Native Vegetation
- Clause 52.29 Land adjacent to the Principal Road Network.

Local government area(s):

The onshore area is located within Wellington Shire.

8. Existing environment**Overview of key environmental assets/sensitivities in project area and vicinity**

(cf. general description of project site/study area under section 7):

OffshoreRegional context

In Victorian coastal waters, the investigation area is predominantly in Marine Planning Area 7 under the Marine Spatial Planning Framework.

It comprises areas of subtidal and intertidal environments within in the Twofold Shelf National IMCRA Bioregion and the Southeast Shelf Transition local province.

Habitats

The main benthic habitat in the referral area is sublittoral sand and muddy sand (subtidal sands). Seabed sediment nearer shore may have some gravel content. Other benthic habitats include sandy beaches (littoral sand) and small, discrete areas of high energy littoral rock (intertidal rock exposed to high energy waves and tidal currents), high energy infralittoral rock (high energy rock and other hard substrata, including gravel, cobble and boulders), and non-reef sediment epibenthos.

The investigation area includes part of two benthic habitats identified as 'significant' under the Victorian Marine Key Ecological Features Framework (DEECA 2025):

- Woodside Patch Reefs (k.vic.523) - Low profile patch reefs offshore from Ninety Mile Beach, characterised by sessile invertebrate and filter feeding assemblages.
- Woodside Offshore Sediment Bed (k.vic.524) - High diversity infauna in offshore sediments, typical of wider shelf environments.

Flora, fauna and native vegetation

The desktop assessment (Attachment 5) identified 14 species listed under the FFG Act that are known or have potential to occur within the nearshore investigation area:

- Two marine fish and shark species
- One marine mammal species
- One marine turtle species
- 10 seabird species.

Onshore

Regional context

The onshore referral area is situated on the coastal plain between Ninety-mile Beach and the South Gippsland Highway.

The area is rural and predominantly used for agriculture, particularly livestock grazing, with some cropping and timber plantations. Rural residences are dispersed within the area.

The nearest townships are Woodside (3.4 kilometres inland of the investigation area) and Seaspray (8.3 kilometres northeast of the investigation area).

It lies in Wellington Shire Local Government Area (LGA), the West Gippsland catchment management area and the Gippsland Plain (GipP) bioregion.

Landscape

The onshore investigation area sits within a highly modified landscape that has been extensively cleared for agriculture and forestry uses. Within the wider region, larger patches of remnant native vegetation are present, primarily in reserves and along roadsides. Most of these areas sit outside of the onshore investigation area.

The shore crossing is located across a section of Ninety Mile Beach (McGaurans beach). This is a linear landscape with a combination of sandy beaches, low dunes, coastal lakes and wetlands adjacent to the seas of Bass Strait.

Vegetation

Most of the onshore investigation area has been cleared of native vegetation. Modelling suggests about eight percent of the area has native vegetation present. Lowland Forest/Heathy Woodland Mosaic and Lowland Forest are the predominant ecological vegetation classes (about 85 % of total). Some Riparian scrub remains along waterways, and Coastal Dune Scrub/ Coastal Dune Grassland Mosaic and Estuarine Wetland are present immediately inland of the beach.

Water environments

The coastal plains are drained by several unnamed minor waters in the investigation area. These converge towards the coast where estuarine wetland, an ephemeral extension of Lake Denison, is present behind coastal dunes and beach. Small temporary swamps, wetlands and claypans are located in low lying areas of agricultural land.

Two wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention or in a Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia are in present in the region:

- The Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site is more than eight kilometres from the investigation area at its closest point.
- The Corner Inlet Ramsar Site is about five kilometres from the nearshore investigation area at its closest point, and more than 17 kilometres from the onshore investigation area.

Flora, fauna and native vegetation

The desktop assessment (Attachment 5) identified 32 flora species and 51 species listed under the FFG Act that are known or have potential to occur within the onshore investigation area:

- 32 flora species
- 11 terrestrial bird species
- 17 shorebird species
- Eight waterbird species
- Six terrestrial mammal species
- Three terrestrial reptile species
- Two terrestrial fish species
- Three terrestrial frog species

One threatened ecological community has potential to occur within the onshore investigation area, Coastal Moonah (*Melaleuca lanceolata* subsp. *lanceolata*) Woodland Community.

Heritage

Aboriginal cultural heritage

Known Aboriginal Places and sensitive landforms are present within the investigation area.

There are twenty-one previously registered Aboriginal Places within the investigation area. These Places include Artefact Scatters (6), Shell Middens with Artefact Scatters (5), Shell Middens (2), Scarred Trees (2), Low Density Artefact Distributions (4), a burial (1), and an Object Collection (1).

Dunes, waterways and elevated landforms near waterways as being the landforms and areas of the highest archaeological sensitivity in the region. The coastal dune system has been identified as having the highest potential to contain Aboriginal cultural heritage and the potential to contain high significance Aboriginal cultural heritage

Historic heritage

No places listed on the Victorian Heritage Register or subject to a Heritage Overlay are located within the onshore investigation area. There are three sites of local built heritage significance value within the onshore development area, and one adjacent to it that could be candidates for local heritage overlays based on their heritage values (Attachment 7).

No known shipwrecks, aircraft wrecks or other maritime heritage places are recorded within the nearshore investigation area, although maritime archaeological potential exists along the nearshore coastal zone in the region (Attachment 8).

Conservation areas

The shoreline, including the shore crossing location, is part of the McLoughlins Beach – Seaspray Coastal Reserve, which covers nearshore marine area, as well as the beach and primary dunes.

The Darriman H29 Bushland Reserve is surrounded by, but excluded from, the investigation area.

Onshore, the following reserves occur in near, but (at least 500 metres) outside the investigation area:

- Giffard (Rifle Range) Flora Reserve
- Jack Smith Lake State Game Reserve (Hunting)
- Giffard H31 Bushland Reserve

- Lake Denison Wildlife Reserve (Hunting)
- Warrigal Creek Streamside Reserve.

The Ninety Mile Beach Marine National Park is located at least 1.2 kilometres east of the investigation area.

The offshore referral area does not overlap any Australian Marine Parks (AMPs). Beagle Marine Park is the nearest AMP, and its northern edge lies 73.2 kilometres south of the referral area.

Other conservation area in the region include:

- Corner Inlet and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park, 4.78 kilometres west of the referral area;
- Corner Inlet Marine National Park, 52.8 kilometres southwest of the referral area;
- Wilsons Promontory Marine National Park, Marine Park and Marine Reserve, 68.29 kilometres southwest of the referral area.

9. Land availability and control

Is the proposal on, or partly on, Crown land?

☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, please provide details.

Approximately 822 ha (or 11 per cent) of the onshore investigation area is located on Crown land (refer to Attachment 3, Figure 4). Crown land is predominantly multiple-use public forest (93 per cent) and road reserves.

The seabed of Victorian coastal waters is also Crown land. Approximately 6100 hectares of the investigation area is in Victorian coastal waters.

The McLoughlins Beach – Seaspray Coastal Reserve spans the coastal onshore and nearshore marine areas.

Current land tenure (provide plan, if practicable):

The majority of the investigation area is freehold (refer to Attachment 3, Figure 6).

The VLUIS identifies tenure on Crown land includes:

- Nature conservation reserve – in the coastal and nearshore marine area
- Multiple-use public forest – areas used for plantation timber production
- Pastoral lease – some unused road reserves

Intended land tenure (tenure over or access to project land):

Project land requirements will be secured via negotiation of easements or lease/license agreements applied to private freehold land where these areas cannot be avoided.

Lease/license agreements, easements and/or land transfers will be required with relevant state bodies to enable access to or tenure of affected government land, including Crown land and for both onshore and offshore areas.

All affected landowners and land managers will be appropriately engaged to facilitate discussions regarding land access in construction and potential longer term lease/licence agreements, purchase, or land transfers for ongoing operations.

Other interests in affected land (eg. easements, native title claims):

The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation is the Registered Native Title Body Corporate acting as trustee for the native title rights and interests held by the Gunai/Kurnai People for parts of Gippsland and Victorian alpine region (VCD2010/001). This includes coastal Crown land and nearshore marine area in the investigation area.

Gippsland Water holds easements for its Saline Wastewater Outfall Pipeline, which runs northwest-southeast through the middle of the investigation area, with an ocean outfall in the nearshore investigation area, off McGaurans Beach.

APA holds easements for the Basslink, a 370 kilometres high voltage direct current electricity interconnector between Tasmania and Victoria, makes landfall immediately southwest of the shore crossing area and bisects the onshore investigation area.

10. Required approvals

State and Commonwealth approvals required for project components (if known):

It is anticipated that the following approvals may be required for High Sea Wind Transmission:

Commonwealth approvals

- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) – referral to determine if proposed action requires assessment and approval under the EPBC Act.

Activities in the Commonwealth marine environment, excluded from this referral, may also require approval under the EPBC Act, as well as licencing and approval under the *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021* (Cwth) (OEI Act) and subsequent regulations.

Victorian approvals

- *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (PE Act) – planning permit(s) and/or planning scheme amendment
- *Marine and Coastal Act 2018* (MACA) – consent for works in Victorian coastal waters and Crown land to 200 metres inland
- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (AH Act) – where required, a Cultural Heritage Management Plan would need to be evaluated and approved by Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC)
- *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* – licence, lease or other arrangement for works or occupation on reserved Crown land
- *Land Act 1958* – lease or licence for use of unreserved Crown land
- *Local Government Act 2020* – local laws permit for temporary traffic changes
- *Road Management Act 2004* – consent for works within a road reserve
- *Water Act 1989* – permit for works on waterways
- *Wildlife Act 1975* – authorisation for management of wildlife.

If required

- *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* – permit for incidental take of protected flora on public land
- *Heritage Act 2017* – Permit for disturbance of a state listed heritage place or object, consent for disturbance of historical archaeological sites
- *Environment Protection Act 2017* – permissions for disturbance, containment and removal of contaminated material and soil
- *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* – permit for works on days of total fire ban.

Have any applications for approval been lodged?

☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, please provide details.

High Sea Wind Pty Ltd submitted an application to the Australian Government for a Feasibility Licence under the OEI Act for a 150 km² area within the Gippsland declared area. In April 2024, High Sea Winds was granted Feasibility Licence FL-002 in the first round of offshore feasibility licences granted in Australia.

Approval agency consultation (agencies with whom the proposal has been discussed):

High Sea Wind has met with Victorian and Commonwealth regulators from early project planning. Early interactions focused on the offshore wind industry in Gippsland and regulatory requirements and pathways. More recently engagement has focused on feasibility licence activities and regulatory approvals approach. Agencies consulted include:

- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)
- Department of Transport and Planning (DTP)
- Offshore Infrastructure Regulator (OIR)
- National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA)
- National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator (NOPTA)

- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC)

Other agencies consulted:

- Australian Bureau of Meteorology as part of the Gippsland Licence Holder Advisory Committee
- First Peoples – State Relations Group, Department of Premier and Cabinet

PART 2 POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

11. Potentially significant environmental effects

Overview of potentially significant environmental effects (identify key potential effects and comment on their significance and likelihood, as well as key uncertainties):

Onshore environment

Construction, operation and decommissioning of the project may result in the following key impact pathways to ecological and social values within the onshore referral area:

- Clearing and levelling of sites, excavations and general construction activities resulting in direct loss of habitat and/or species, changes to hydrological regimes or impacts to cultural heritage sites
- Night lighting and noise and vibration associated with construction resulting in disturbance to fauna species
- Accidental spills, erosion and sedimentation, and dust pollution affecting water quality or soil health
- Movement of vehicles, construction/ operations plant and equipment resulting in the introduction of weeds and pathogens.

Marine environment

The potential direct effects from construction, operation and decommissioning of the project to marine habitats, ecological communities and species in state waters include the following key impact pathways:

- Temporary seabed disturbance from cable installation activities
- Electromagnetic field effects from operational export cables
- Underwater noise and vibration for vessels and cable installation activities
- Risk of marine fauna strike from increased vessel movements
- Artificial lighting from project vessels
- Vessel movements and use of plant and equipment resulting in the introduction of marine pests, or pollution from vessel discharges or accidental spills.

Description of the above effects, including their likelihood and significance is provided in Attachment 5 – Ecology Desktop Assessment.

Through avoidance and the application of appropriate mitigation measures, the project is not expected to have significant effects on the Victorian ecological values considered by the referral criteria within the Ministerial Guidelines under the EE Act.

Effects on the environment would occur primarily during construction, arising from the potential removal of native vegetation, and disturbance of soils and the seabed.

The key uncertainty is the location of the project site within the investigation area. This will however provide flexibility to locate the project site in order to avoid and minimise impacts to existing infrastructure, landowners, cultural heritage and the environment. High Sea Wind commits to ensuring site selection avoids significant environmental effects, as described below.

These assessments are based on preliminary desktop assessments. Detailed assessments, including site surveys, will be completed to inform project design and regulatory approvals process.

Native vegetation, flora and fauna

Onshore construction would require clearance of the cable route and work areas. Following cable installation and burial, these areas will be reinstated and reseeded.

The investigation area is predominantly pasture. Modelled native vegetation cover (NV2005_EVCBCS, DEECA 2026) indicates about eight percent of the onshore investigation area has native vegetation cover, predominantly Lowland Forest/Heathy Woodland Mosaic and Lowland Forest.

The onshore cable route and work spaces will be sited to minimise the removal of native vegetation as far as reasonably possible. To ensure this, Ocean Winds provide commitment to the below:

- Will not result in the removal, destruction or lopping of 10 hectares or more of native vegetation.
 - Approximately 92% of the onshore investigation area is modelled to have no native vegetation present, providing opportunity to site the majority of the cable route and work spaces to avoid native vegetation clearance.
- Will not clear an area determined as critical habitat under the FFG Act.
 - No areas determined to be critical habitat are present within the investigation area.
- Will not result in the loss of a significant proportion of known remaining habitat or population of a threatened species within Victoria.

There is the potential for threatened species to occur within the project site, however:

- Site selection and planning of vegetation removal will prioritise the protection of higher value vegetation (considering habitat importance, condition, conservation status) and threatened ecological species and communities.
- The proposed removal of native vegetation is not expected to have a proportional impact on any rare or threatened species habitats above 0.005 percent of the mapped habitat value for a species.
- Will not result in the loss of a significant area of an FFG Act listed ecological community;
 - Coastal dune scrub vegetation, at the shore crossing location, may support the FFG -listed Coastal Moonah Woodland community.
 - Clearance of dune vegetation will be avoided using trenchless construction methods for the installation of the shore crossing cables.
- Will not result in the loss of a genetically important population of an endangered or threatened species under the FFG Act
 - The proposed removal of native vegetation is not expected to have a proportional impact on any rare or threatened species habitats above 0.005 per cent of the mapped habitat value for a species.
 - The temporary and localised effects of the project are not expected to result in population-level impacts that could result in the loss of an important population of a species.

Water environments

- The project will not impact a wetland listed under the Ramsar Convention or in a Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia.
 - The Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site is more than eight kilometres from the investigation area at its closest point.
 - The Corner Inlet Ramsar Site is about five kilometres from the nearshore investigation area at its closest point, and more than 17 kilometres from the onshore investigation area.

- The project will not have significant effects on habitat values of a wetland supporting migratory bird species.
 - Estuarine wetland is present on the eastern margin of the onshore investigation area, where it abuts a continuation of Lake Denison. This ephemeral wetland may intermittently provide habitat for migratory wading birds.
 - Wetland areas will be avoided as far as reasonably practicable during cable route selection. Where they can not be avoided, landforms will be reinstated following cable installation and effects would be temporary.
- The project will not have extensive or major effects on the use and environmental values of water resources due to changes in water quality, water availability, stream flows, water system function, or regional groundwater levels, or the health or biodiversity of aquatic, estuarine or marine ecosystems, over the long term.
 - Construction would have only localised, short-term effects on water quality in the marine environment, due to disturbance of the seabed for cable installation.
 - Onshore cable installation will cross at least one minor waterway. This may also have localised, short-term effects on the aquatic system.

Landscape and soils

- The project will not have extensive or major effects on landscape values of regional importance.
 - Ninety Mile Beach is considered a landscape of State or regional importance.
 - Using trenchless construction methods for the shore crossing will avoid direct landscape and visual impacts on the significant coastal landscape.
- The project will not have extensive or major effects to the environment due to changes in land stability, disturbance of acid sulphate soils or project induced soil erosion over the short or long term.
 - No impacts on land stability or highly erodible soils are expected as a result of the project.
 - The majority of the onshore investigation area has low to very low potential for the presence of acid sulfate soils.
 - A small area of coastal estuarine wetland has high potential for acid sulfate soils to be present. Any disturbance of soils within this area will be managed to minimise environmental effects.

Human health

- The project will not have extensive or major effects to human health or the environment, or displacement of residents, from pollution or waste emitted to air, land, water or groundwater.
 - The project will not produce significant volumes of emissions to air, land, water or groundwater.
 - Dust and dewatering from the construction site will be managed to ensure there is no risk to human health or the environment
 - Wastes will be managed in accordance with EPA Victoria guidelines.

Heritage values

- The project will not have extensive or major effects on Aboriginal cultural heritage values protected under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic).
 - Significant cultural heritage values are present within and adjacent to the investigation area.
 - Disturbance of the coastal dune system, having the highest potential to contain Aboriginal cultural heritage and the potential to contain high significance

Aboriginal cultural heritage, will be minimised using trenchless construction methods for the installation of the shore crossing cables.

- Areas identified as containing high significance Aboriginal cultural heritage will be avoided.
- A Cultural Heritage Management Plan will be prepared for the project by a Heritage Advisor, in consultation with and subject to the approval of the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation.
- The project will not have extensive or major effects on heritage places and sites listed on the Victorian Heritage Register or the Victorian Heritage Inventory
 - no places listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) or the Victorian Heritage Inventory and no heritage places subject to a Heritage Overlay occur within the investigation area (Attachment 7).
 - No known shipwrecks, aircraft wrecks or other maritime heritage places are recorded within the nearshore investigation area (Attachment 8).

Community

- The project will not have extensive or major effects on social or economic well-being due to direct or indirect displacement of non-residential land use activities.
 - Project construction may temporarily disrupt and displace agricultural land use on directly affected properties. Directly affected landowner and occupiers would be consulted to develop suitable, property-specific plans to minimise disruption to their activities.
 - The construction activities associated with the shore crossing may temporarily disrupt local recreational users through the potential for the campsite at McGaurans Beach to be disturbed by cable installation activities. This is expected to occur over a duration of up to six months across the summer period and is considered temporary.
- The project will not displace residents and any disruption to property access will be managed in direct consultation with the affected residents.
- The project will not have significant effects on the amenity of a substantial number of residents.
 - Changes to noise and traffic conditions during construction will short-term and localised.
 - Transmission infrastructure will be buried and not have long-term visual amenity affects.

Greenhouse gas

- The project involves the installation of renewable energy infrastructure. Through the supply of renewable electricity to the grid, the project will prevent up to 5.3 million tons of CO2 emissions each year, that could otherwise arise from fossil fuel generation.

12. Native vegetation, flora and fauna

Native vegetation

Is any native vegetation likely to be cleared or otherwise affected by the project?

☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, answer the following questions and attach details.

What investigation of native vegetation in the project area has been done? (briefly describe)

A preliminary desktop assessment of vegetation has been undertaken within the investigation area, using the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's Native Vegetation - Modelled 2005 Ecological Vegetation Classes dataset (NV2005_EVC).

A detailed site assessment, by a certified native vegetation assessor, will be completed to inform project design and regulatory approvals.

What is the maximum area of native vegetation that may need to be cleared?

☐ NYD Estimated area ...9 .(hectares)

The project site will be located to ensure it will not result in the removal, destruction or lopping of 10 hectares or more of native vegetation.

The avoidance and minimisation of native vegetation clearing will be a key consideration in the siting the onshore cable corridor and associated work spaces. The design will prioritising the protection of higher value vegetation (considering habitat importance, condition, conservation status), and threatened ecological species and communities.

How much of this clearing would be authorised under a Forest Management Plan or Fire Protection Plan?

☒ N/A approx. percent (if applicable)

Which Ecological Vegetation Classes may be affected? (if not authorised as above)

☐ NYD ☒ Preliminary/detailed assessment completed. If assessed, please list.

The preliminary desktop assessment, using DEECA's modelled 2005 EVC dataset (NV2005_EVC), identified the vegetation classes listed in the following table as present within the investigation area (Attachment 5).

A review of aerial imagery suggests the extent of native vegetation may be much less than indicated by the modelled data.

Vulnerable Lowland Forest/Heathy Woodland Mosaic and Lowland Forest are the predominant ecological vegetation classes (about 85 % of total). One endangered EVC is modelled to be present, EVC 53 Swamp Scrub. Two patches, each about 1 ha, cover 0.03 % of the onshore investigation area. However, aerial imagery suggests this EVC is no longer present (Attachment 5, Figure 4-4).

NOTE: The project site will be a much smaller area within the investigation area, and the areas below do not indicate proposed clearance. The project site will be located to ensure it will not result in the removal, destruction or lopping of 10 hectares or more of native vegetation.

Ecological Vegetation Class		Bioregional conservation status	Modelled area in onshore Investigation Area (Ha)	Percentage cover of the onshore Investigation Area (%)
GipP0001	Coastal Dune Scrub/ Coastal Dune Grassland Mosaic	Depleted	6.61	0.09
GipP0010	Estuarine Wetland	Least Concern	47.72	0.65
GipP0016	Lowland Forest	Vulnerable	105.10	1.44
GipP0048	Heathy Woodland	Least Concern	1.15	0.02
GipP0053	Swamp Scrub	Endangered	2.03	0.03
GipP0191	Riparian Scrub	Vulnerable	29.49	0.40
GipP0698	Lowland Forest/Heathy Woodland Mosaic	Vulnerable	393.27	5.37
GipP0992	Water Body - Fresh	Not Applicable	2.21	0.03
		Total	587.59	8.02

Have potential vegetation offsets been identified as yet?

☒ NYD ☐ Yes If yes, please briefly describe.

Scenario testing of various onshore routes indicates the proposed removal of native vegetation is likely to require general offsets, but is unlikely to have a proportional impact on any rare or threatened species habitats above the threshold for requiring species offsets.

A detailed site assessment, by a certified native vegetation assessor, will be completed to inform project design and regulatory approvals.

Following the site assessment, and project siting to avoid and minimise impacts to environmental values as far as reasonably practicable, residual biodiversity impacts arising from the removal of native vegetation will be offset in accordance with the *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation* (DEECA 2025).

Other information/comments? (eg. accuracy of information)

The preliminary desktop assessment relies on DEECA's modelled 2005 EVC dataset (NV2005_EVC). A review of aerial imagery suggests the extent of native vegetation is likely to be much less than indicated by the modelled data.

NYD = not yet determined

Flora and fauna

What investigations of flora and fauna in the project area have been done?

(provide overview here and attach details of method and results of any surveys for the project & describe their accuracy)

Desktop assessments have been undertaken of both marine and onshore flora and fauna as described in Attachment 5 to inform environmental referrals. A marine baseline survey program has commenced for High Sea Wind to ground truth and build upon the desktop assessments. Onshore surveys will commence in 2027.

Have any threatened or migratory species or listed communities been recorded from the local area?

☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, please:

- List species/communities recorded in recent surveys and/or past observations.
- Indicate which of these have been recorded from the project site or nearby.

Offshore

A summary of species known or possible to occur within the nearshore investigation area are shown in the following tables.

Marine fish and shark

Scientific name	Common name	FFG Act status	Likelihood of occurrence within referral area
<i>Carcharodon carcharias</i>	White shark	Endangered	Known to occur
<i>Seriola lalandi</i>	Blue Warehou	Conservation Dependent	Possible

Marine mammal

Scientific name	Common name	FFG Act status	Likelihood of occurrence within referral area
<i>Eubalaena australis</i>	Southern Right Whale	Endangered	Known to occur

Marine turtle

Scientific name	Common name	FFG Act status	Likelihood of occurrence within referral area
<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>	Leatherback Turtle	Critically Endangered	Possible

Seabird

Scientific name	Common name	FFG Act status	Likelihood of occurrence within referral area
<i>Ardenna grisea</i>	Sooty Shearwater	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	Endangered	Known to occur
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	Caspian Tern	Vulnerable	Known to occur
<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	Southern Giant-Petrel, Southern Giant Petrel	Endangered	Possible
<i>Macronectes halli</i>	Northern Giant Petrel	Endangered	Possible
<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	Little Tern	Critically Endangered	Possible
<i>Sternula nereis</i>	Fairy Tern/ Australian Fairy Tern	Critically Endangered	Known to occur
<i>Thalassarche bulleri</i>	Buller's Albatross	Endangered	Possible
<i>Thalassarche carteri</i>	Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	Endangered	Possible
<i>Thalassarche cauta</i>	Shy Albatross	Endangered	Possible

Onshore

A summary of species known or possible to occur within the onshore investigation area are shown in the following tables.

Threatened flora

Scientific name	Common name	FFG Act status	Likelihood of occurrence within referral area
<i>Acacia howittii</i>	Sticky Wattle	Vulnerable	Known to occur
<i>Althenia marina</i>	Sea Water-mat	Critically Endangered	Possible
<i>Austrostipa rudis</i> subsp. <i>australis</i>	Veined Spear-grass	Endangered	Possible
<i>Caladenia aurantiaca</i>	Orange-tip Finger-orchid	Endangered	Possible
<i>Caladenia tessellata</i>	Thick-lipped Spider-orchid, Daddy Long-legs	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Calochilus imberbis</i>	Naked Beard-orchid	Critically Endangered	Possible
<i>Commersonia prostrata</i>	Dwarf Kerrawang	Endangered	Possible
<i>Corybas aconitiflorus</i>	Spurred Helmet-orchid	Endangered	Possible
<i>Corybas fimbriatus</i>	Fringed Helmet-orchid	Endangered	Possible
<i>Dianella amoena</i>	Matted Flax-lily	Critically Endangered	Possible
<i>Diuris punctata</i>	Purple Diuris	Endangered	Possible
<i>Eucalyptus arenicola</i>	Gippsland Lakes Peppermint	Endangered	Possible
<i>Eucalyptus bosistoana</i>	Coast Grey-box	Endangered	Possible
<i>Eucalyptus fulgens</i>	Green Scentbark	Endangered	Possible
<i>Grevillea chrysophaea</i>	Golden Grevillea	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Lachnagrostis robusta</i>	Salt Blown-grass	Endangered	Possible
<i>Lachnagrostis semibarbata</i> var. <i>semibarbata</i>	Purple Blown-grass	Endangered	Possible
<i>Leptorhynchus elongatus</i>	Lanky Buttons	Endangered	Possible
<i>Melaleuca armillaris</i> subsp. <i>armillaris</i>	Giant Honey-myrtle	Endangered	Possible
<i>Oxalis rubens</i>	Dune Wood-sorrel	Endangered	Possible
<i>Poa billardierei</i>	Coast Fescue	Endangered	Possible
<i>Pomaderris discolor</i>	Eastern Pomaderris	Endangered	Possible
<i>Pomaderris pilifera</i> subsp. <i>pilifera</i>	Striped Pomaderris	Endangered	Possible
<i>Posidonia australis</i>	Fibre-ball Weed	Endangered	Possible
<i>Prasophyllum spicatum</i>	Dense Leek-orchid	Critically Endangered	Possible
<i>Pseudanthus ovalifolius</i>	Oval-leaf Pseudanthus	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Pterostylis chlorogramma</i>	Green-striped Greenhood	Endangered	Possible
<i>Pterostylis grandiflora</i>	Cobra Greenhood	Endangered	Possible
<i>Senecio microbasis</i>	Slender Fireweed	Vulnerable	Known to occur
<i>Thelymitra epipactoides</i>	Metallic Sun-orchid	Endangered	Possible

<i>Xanthosia leiophylla</i>	Parsley Xanthosia	Endangered	Possible
<i>Zieria veronicea</i> <i>subsp. veronicea</i>	Pink Zieria	Endangered	Possible

Terrestrial bird

Scientific name	Common name	FFG Act status	Likelihood of occurrence
<i>Accipiter novaehollandiae</i>	Grey Goshawk	Endangered	Possible
<i>Calamanthus pyrrhopygius</i>	Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Hieraaetus morphnoides</i>	Little Eagle	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>	White-throated Needletail	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Lathamus discolor</i>	Swift Parrot	Critically Endangered	Possible
<i>Neophema chrysogaster</i>	Orange-bellied Parrot	Critically Endangered	Possible
<i>Neophema chrysostoma</i>	Blue-winged Parrot	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Ninox connivens</i>	Barking Owl	Critically Endangered	Possible
<i>Ninox strenua</i>	Powerful Owl	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Stagonopleura guttata</i>	Diamond Firetail	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	Marsh Sandpiper	Endangered	Possible

Shorebird

Scientific name	Common name	FFG Act status	Likelihood of occurrence within the referral area
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Common Sandpiper	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Ruddy Turnstone	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Calidris acuminata</i>	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Calidris canutus</i>	Red Knot	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	Curlew Sandpiper	Critically Endangered	Possible
<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>	Great Knot	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Gallinago hardwickii</i>	Latham's Snipe	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Limosa lapponica baueri</i>	Nunivak Bar-tailed Godwit	Endangered	Possible
<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Black-tailed Godwit	Endangered	Possible
<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	Eastern Curlew	Critically Endangered	Possible
<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Whimbrel	Endangered	Possible
<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	Pacific Golden Plover	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Grey Plover	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Thinornis cucullatus</i>	Hooded Plover	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Tringa brevipes</i>	Grey-tailed Tattler	Critically Endangered	Possible
<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Common Greenshank	Endangered	Possible
<i>Xenus cinereus</i>	Terek Sandpiper	Vulnerable	Possible

Waterbird

Scientific name	Common name	FFG Act status	Likelihood of occurrence within referral area
<i>Anseranas semipalmata</i>	Magpie Goose	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Ardea alba modesta</i>	Eastern Great Egret	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Ardea intermedia plumifera</i>	Plumed Egret	Critically Endangered	Possible
<i>Biziura lobata</i>	Musk Duck	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Botaurus poiciloptilus</i>	Australasian Bittern	Critically Endangered	Possible
<i>Oxyura australis</i>	Blue-billed Duck	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Spatula rhynchotis</i>	Australasian Shoveler	Vulnerable	Known to occur
<i>Stictonetta naevosa</i>	Freckled Duck	Endangered	Known to occur

Terrestrial mammal

Scientific name	Common name	FFG Act status	Likelihood of occurrence within referral area
<i>Isodon obesulus obesulus</i>	Southern Brown Bandicoot	Endangered	Possible
<i>Petauroides volans</i>	Southern Greater Glider	Endangered	Known to occur
<i>Phascogale tapoatafa</i>	Brush-tailed Phascogale	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Pseudomys novaehollandiae</i>	New Holland Mouse, Pookila	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i>	Grey-headed Flying-fox	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Synoicus chinensis</i>	King Quail	Endangered	Possible

Terrestrial reptile

Scientific name	Common name	FFG Act status	Likelihood of occurrence within referral area
<i>Lissolepis coventryi</i>	Swamp Skink	Endangered	Possible
<i>Pseudemoia rawlinsoni</i>	Glossy Grass Skink	Endangered	Possible
<i>Varanus varius</i>	Lace Monitor	Endangered	Known to occur

Terrestrial fish

Scientific name	Common name	FFG Act status	Likelihood of occurrence within referral area
<i>Galaxiella pusilla</i>	Eastern Dwarf Galaxias, Dwarf Galaxias	Endangered	Possible
<i>Prototroctes maraena</i>	Australian Grayling	Vulnerable	Possible

Terrestrial frog

Scientific name	Common name	FFG Act status	Likelihood of occurrence within referral area
<i>Litoria raniformis</i>	Growling Grass Frog	Vulnerable	Possible
<i>Pseudophryne semimarmorata</i>	Southern Toadlet	Endangered	Possible
<i>Uperoleia martini</i>	Martin's Toadlet	Endangered	Possible

Threatened ecological communities

FFG Community	Conservation status	Description	Relevant / associated EVC
Coastal Moonah (Melaleuca lanceolata subsp. lanceolata) Woodland Community	Threatened	The Coastal Moonah Woodland Community is an open grassy woodland dominated by Melaleuca lanceolata subsp. lanceolata (Moonah). This TEC tends to occur on high-level coastal dunes on strongly alkaline and developed on moderately organic aeolian sands or on dune calcarenite. This community is distributed along the Victorian coastline (DECCA n.d)	Coastal Dune Scrub/Coastal Dune Grassland Mosaic (EVC 01)

If known, what threatening processes affecting these species or communities may be exacerbated by the project? (eg. loss or fragmentation of habitats) Please describe briefly.

The following threatening processes may be relevant to project activities, however it is not anticipated that these will be exacerbated by the project.

- Alteration to the natural flow regimes of rivers and streams: While there may be some waterway crossings for the construction of onshore transmission infrastructure, the natural flow would not be altered.
- Increase in sediment input into Victorian rivers and streams due to human activities: Waterway crossing have potential for some sediment input into rivers or streams. With implementation of measures in the CEMP and those described in Attachment 10, significant impacts are not anticipated.
- Habitat fragmentation as a threatening process for fauna in Victoria: The investigation area is much larger than the area required for the project site. This provides the opportunity to avoid and minimise impacts to habitat.
- The spread or increase of pest plants and animals (e.g. weeds, rats and mice) during construction
- The spread of pathogens and diseases (cinnamon fungus, Chytrid fungus, Psittacine Circoviral Disease) during construction
- Degradation of native riparian vegetation along Victorian rivers and streams.
- Input of petroleum and related products into Victorian marine and estuarine environments.

- The discharge of human-generated marine debris into Victorian marine or estuarine waters.
- Input of organotins to Victorian marine and estuarine waters
- The introduction of exotic organisms into Victorian marine waters.

The project would seek to avoid and minimise vegetation clearance and fragmentation of habitat through route selection and use of construction techniques such as trenchless crossings or direct pipe at environmentally sensitive locations such as waterway crossings. The CEMP and OEMP will contain measures to prevent accidental introduction or spread of pest plants and animals and manage the risk of accidental spills and waste. It is unlikely that any threatening processes would be exacerbated by the project.

Are any threatened or migratory species, other species of conservation significance or listed communities potentially affected by the project?

☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, please:

- List these species/communities:
- Indicate which species or communities could be subject to a major or extensive impact (including the loss of a genetically important population of a species listed or nominated for listing) Comment on likelihood of effects and associated uncertainties, if practicable.

The tables above, in section 12, summarise the results of the ecology desktop assessment (Attachment 5) which describes the species that are known or possible to occur within the investigation area.

Field surveys have commenced to ground-truth the desktop assessments and to determine if any other species occur, or are possible to occur, within the investigation area.

There is potential that there may be effects due to the construction and operation of the project on these species. However, considering the inherent mitigations (Attachment 10) it is not anticipated that there would be major or extensive impacts on these species.

Is mitigation of potential effects on indigenous flora and fauna proposed?

☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, please briefly describe.

Prior to mitigation of flora and fauna, emphasis will be put on siting and design in order to avoid and minimise impacts.

Siting

The referral of an investigation area allows scope for siting of the project to avoid and minimise potential adverse environmental effects. Assessments would be undertaken on cultural heritage, social, environmental and ecological values, landowner consultation and existing infrastructure which would inform the ultimate design.

Work areas to facilitate the construction of the shore crossing would be located outside these sensitive areas.

High Sea Wind will ensure that there is no net loss to biodiversity as a result of the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation. This will be achieved, in accordance with the Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (the Guidelines), by:

1. Siting the onshore export cable route and construction area to avoid the removal of native vegetation where it is reasonably practicable to do so.
2. Minimising the extent of the removal of native vegetation where it cannot reasonably be avoided.

Residual biodiversity impacts arising from the removal of native vegetation will be offset in accordance with the Guidelines.

Design

The export cables would be buried and joint bays installed below ground level. This would avoid visual impacts and minimise disruption to landowners and other users of the project area during the operation phase of the project.

Mitigation

A CEMP, OEMP and DEMP will be developed and implemented. These plans will identify the risks to the environment arising from each phase of the project and specify actions to eliminate or minimise those risks.

Inherent mitigations that will be applied to reduce environmental impacts of the project, relevant to project phase and area are described in Attachment 10.

Other information/comments? (eg. accuracy of information)

13. Water environments

Will the project require significant volumes of fresh water (eg. > 1 GI/yr)?

☐ NYD ☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, indicate approximate volume and likely source.

Fresh water will be required for HDD and may be required for dust suppression during construction. The volumes required will not be significant.

Will the project discharge waste water or runoff to water environments?

☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, specify types of discharges and which environments.

Onshore

The project will not discharge waste water to onshore water environments during construction, operation or decommissioning.

Construction site runoff and trench dewatering following rainfall will be managed to contain sediment onsite and prevent it from reaching water environments, in accordance with standard construction practices and following EPA guidance.

Offshore

Routine discharges of waste water from vessels in Victorian coastal waters will be managed in accordance with the Environment Protection Regulations 2021 (Vic). Vessels will only discharge waste water where the risks of harm to human health and the environment has been minimised, so far as reasonably practicable and the waste water is:

- Part of a process of managing aquatic pests on the vessel
- Wash down water used to wash down a vessel; or
- Cooling water used to cool the engine of a vessel.

Greywater and sewage (treated or untreated) will not be discharged by vessels in Victorian coastal waters.

Are any waterways, wetlands, estuaries or marine environments likely to be affected?

☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, specify which water environments, answer the following questions and attach any relevant details.

Onshore

The coastal plains are drained by several unnamed minor waters in the investigation area. These converge towards the coast where estuarine wetland, an ephemeral extension of Lake Denison (90965), is present behind coastal dunes and beach. Small temporary swamps, wetlands and claypans are located in low lying areas of agricultural land.

Wetland areas will be avoided as far as reasonably practicable during cable route selection. Where they can not be avoided, landforms will be reinstated following cable installation and effects would be temporary.

Onshore cable installation would cross at least one minor waterway. This would typically be installed using trenched construction methods, during a period of low flow. Bed and banks would be reinstated following installation and effects on the waterway would be localised and temporary.

Offshore

The nearshore investigation area is in the marine environment, from the high water mark to the boundary of Victorian coastal waters.

Benthic habitats in investigation area are predominantly soft sediment, sand to muddy sand, with small patches of rocky reef. These include part of two areas identified as 'significant' under the Victorian Marine Key Ecological Features Framework (2025):

- Woodside Patch Reefs (k.vic.523) - Low profile patch reefs offshore from Ninety Mile Beach, characterised by sessile invertebrate and filter feeding assemblages.
- Woodside Offshore Sediment Bed (k.vic.524) - High diversity infauna in offshore sediments, typical of wider shelf environments.

The marine environment would be temporarily disturbed by subsea cable installation and burial, and installation of cable protection where necessary. However, Ocean Winds will ensure direct impacts to high-profile reef and seagrass beds will be avoided where possible, including avoidance of rock or reef cutting. As outlined in Section 3, if cables cannot be appropriately buried, cable protection systems such as rock armouring will be installed.

Are any of these water environments likely to support threatened or migratory species?

☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, specify which water environments.

Onshore

Estuarine wetland is present on the eastern margin of the onshore investigation area, where it abuts a continuation of Lake Denison. This ephemeral wetland may intermittently provide habitat for migratory wading birds.

Wetland areas will be avoided as far as reasonably practicable during cable route selection. Through a review of desktop data available via VicGov, the proposed shore crossing will not be located within 'Estuarine Wetland EVC'. The VicGov database confirms the shore crossing is not located within Wetland EVC, is not listed on the Victorian Wetland Inventory, and subject to inundation or land subject to flooding. Illustrated in Figure 3 of Attachment 1.

The desktop assessment (Attachment 5) identified 30 species listed under the FFG Act that are known or have potential to occur within the onshore investigation area that are supported by water environments:

- 17 shorebird species
- Eight waterbird species
- Two terrestrial fish species
- Three terrestrial frog species.

Offshore

The coastal marine environment is known to support threatened and migratory species. It is likely to support others that have not so far been recorded specifically within the investigation area. These potentially include invertebrates, fishes, turtles, marine mammals and birds.

The desktop assessment (Attachment 5) identified 14 species listed under the FFG Act that are known or have potential to occur within the nearshore investigation area:

- Two marine fish and shark species
- One marine mammal species
- One marine turtle species
- 10 seabird species.

See Section 12 for further description of the threatened and migratory species that may be present.

Are any potentially affected wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention or in 'A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia'?

☐ NYD ☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, please specify.

The project would not impact a wetland listed under the Ramsar Convention or in a Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia. Two such wetlands are present in the region:

- The Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site is more than eight kilometres from the investigation area at its closest point.
- The Corner Inlet Ramsar Site is about five kilometres from the nearshore investigation area at its closest point, and more than 17 kilometres from the onshore investigation area.

Given the geographic separation between the investigation area and these Ramsar sites, as well as the scale and nature of proposed project activities, these wetlands would not be impacted by activities in the project area.

Project support vessels may use facilities in the Port of Corner Inlet and Port Albert, in the Corner Inlet Ramsar Site. At such time they will be operating within existing, defined shipping routes under the well established management framework of the port. They are not expected to affect the ecological character of the Ramsar Site.

Could the project affect streamflows?

☐ NYD ☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, briefly describe implications for streamflows.

Onshore cable installation would cross at least one minor waterway. This would typically be installed using trenched construction methods during a period of low flow to minimise impacts to streamflow. If necessary, a temporary cofferdam would be used to create a dry workspace, with a flow bypass installed to avoid disruption of streamflow.

Bed and banks would be reinstated following installation and effects on the waterway would be temporary.

Depending on site conditions, trenchless construction of a waterway crossing would be investigated. As detailed in 'Q10. Required approvals', a permit for works on waterways will be sought under the Water Act 1989 if required.

Could regional groundwater resources be affected by the project?

☐ NYD ☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, describe in what way.

Regional groundwater resources are not expected to be impacted by the project.

Trenching for cable installation would be relatively shallow, typically two metres deep, and any dewatering would be temporary and have only a localised effect on shallow groundwater.

Installation of the shore crossing with HDD may intersect groundwater, but is not expected to have a significant effect on the resource. The process of HDD seals pore space in sediments around the borehole, limiting the ingress of groundwater to the borehole. HDD would use low-toxicity drilling fluids. Any effects would be localised and temporary.

Could environmental values (beneficial uses) of water environments be affected?

☒ NYD ☐ No ☐ Yes If yes, identify waterways/water bodies and beneficial uses (as recognised by State Environment Protection Policies)

Environmental values (beneficial uses) of water environments are defined in the Environment Reference Standard (ERS) under the *Environment Protection Act 2017* (Vic).

The investigation area is within the Central Foothills and Coastal Plains surface water geographic region (Rivers and Streams) and Gippsland (Two-Fold) region (marine), defined in the ERS.

Environmental values of these regions, potentially relevant to the investigation area include:

Onshore

- Water dependent ecosystems that are slightly to moderately modified
- Agriculture and irrigation
- Traditional Owner cultural values.

Offshore

- Ecosystems that are largely unmodified
- Human consumption of aquatic foods
- Water-based recreation including primary and secondary contact, aesthetic enjoyment
- Traditional Owner cultural values
- Navigation and shipping.

Project construction may have localised, short-term effects on marine and aquatic ecosystems, and on Traditional Owner cultural values associated with water environments. Effects on other values are expected to be negligible.

Detail assessment of the potential effects on the environmental values of water environments will be completed as part further investigations to inform project design and regulatory approvals (see Section 20).

Could aquatic, estuarine or marine ecosystems be affected by the project?

☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, describe in what way.

As described above, construction would likely intersect aquatic and estuarine environments and would occur in the marine environment. This has the potential to affect ecosystems within these environments.

Onshore cable installation would cross at least one minor waterway. This would typically be installed using trenched construction methods, during a period of low flow. If necessary, a temporary cofferdam would be used to create a dry workspace, with flow bypass installed to avoid disruption of streamflow. Bed and banks would be reinstated following installation and effects on the waterway would be localised and temporary. This could remove aquatic vegetation, if present, and temporarily displace aquatic fauna from the immediate vicinity of the crossing.

Ephemeral estuarine wetland near the coast will be avoided as far as practicable during site selection. Areas that can't be avoided may be cleared for construction, with landforms reinstated following cable installation. Effects on the associated ecosystem would be localised, with recovery expected in the short to medium term.

Offshore cable installation would occur in the marine environment. Ecosystem effects would primarily arise from the disturbance of benthic habitat, which is predominantly sandy seabed. Offshore cable route refinement will be informed by environmental studies in order to avoid and minimise impacts where possible.

Is there a potential for extensive or major effects on the health or biodiversity of aquatic, estuarine or marine ecosystems over the long-term?

☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, please describe. Comment on likelihood of effects and associated uncertainties, if practicable.

Potential effects on aquatic, estuarine and marine ecosystems, as describe above, arise from installation of the cables during construction. Such effects are short-term and generally localised.

Underwater noise and vibration will be generated from trenchless crossing construction and vessels operating on dynamic positioning (DP), during nearshore export cable construction. Elevated underwater noise levels can affect marine faun through:

- behavioural avoidance/displacement and behavioural changes to marine fauna, particularly for low frequency cetaceans
- high accumulated sound exposures may result in temporary or permanent hearing impairment to some marine fauna (permanent threshold shift (PTS) or temporary threshold shift (TTS))
- masking or interference with biologically important sounds used by marine fauna (e.g. vocal communication, echolocation, signals and sounds produced by predator and prey)
- behavioural disturbance, resulting in indirect reduction in prey species.

Mitigation measures will be in place during construction to ensure that potential effects to marine fauna are avoided or minimised to as low as reasonably practical. These include:

- no planned installation activities that require DP vessels in Victorian waters between 1 May to 31 October (during southern right whale reproduction)
- all bridge watch crew are trained crew, that have demonstrated sound understanding of the requirements of the action and have had experience in and demonstrated ability in whale observation, whale identification, distance estimation and reporting.
- implementing national and state guidelines on interacting with cetaceans to maintain distance with all project vessels
- monitoring for marine mammals and 'power down' procedures for vessels using DP.

Burial of cables in the marine environment may result in more extensive disturbance, due to the length of cables, but no major or long-term effects are expected. The project will avoid impacts to marine key ecological features and high-profile reef and seagrass beds where possible.

Is mitigation of potential effects on water environments proposed?

☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, please briefly describe.

Potential effects on aquatic, estuarine and marine environments, as described above, arise from installation of the cables during construction.

Through project development, the investigation area will be refined to a project site which avoids and minimises impacts on water environments. Effects that cannot be avoided will be managed through the implementation of a construction environment management plan (CEMP), prepared considering all relevant EPA guidance (see Section 18).

Other information/comments? (eg. accuracy of information)

14. Landscape and soils

Landscape

Has a preliminary landscape assessment been prepared?

☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, please attach.

A preliminary landscape assessment is attached (Attachment 4).

The installation of transmission infrastructure would result in minor, temporary visual impacts during construction. As the cable will be subsea and underground, no visual impacts are expected during operation.

Construction of the offshore windfarm in the Commonwealth waters is excluded from the scope of this referral. It is however noted that the turbines are not expected to be visible from the shoreline, at least 76 kilometres away.

Is the project to be located either within or near an area that is:

- Subject to a Landscape Significance Overlay or Environmental Significance Overlay?**
☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, provide plan showing footprint relative to overlay.

Some areas of the investigation area are subject to Environmental Significance Overlays under the Wellington planning scheme (clause 42.01) (see Attachment 3, Figure 3):

- Schedule 1 (ESO1) - Coastal And Gippsland Lakes Environs
- Schedule 2 (ESO2) - Wetlands

- Identified as of regional or State significance in a reputable study of landscape values?**
☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, please specify.

The shore crossing is located across a section of Ninety Mile Beach. This is a linear landscape with a combination of sandy beaches, low dunes, peninsulas and wetlands. It is set against the seas of Bass Strait.

Most of Ninety Mile Beach, including the referred investigation area, is not subject to a Significant Landscape Overlay. A section 18 kilometres northeast, between the Honeysuckles and Golden Beach, is subject to a Significant Landscape Overlay under the Wellington planning scheme (clause 42.01, schedule 1 (SLO1)). The statement of nature and key elements of the landscape for SLO1 notes that Ninety Mile Beach is visually of State significance in its environmental context.

- Within or adjoining land reserved under the *National Parks Act 1975* ?**
☐ NYD ☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, please specify.

No land reserved under the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic) occurs within the referred investigation area. Ninety Mile Beach Marine National Park is located to the east, more than one kilometre away at its closest point (Attachment 5, Figure 4-2).

- Within or adjoining other public land used for conservation or recreational purposes ?**

☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, please specify.
The shore crossing is located across the McLoughlins Beach - Seaspray Coastal Reserve, which includes the coastal dunes and extends to about 600 metres offshore (Attachment 5, Figure 4-2). Using trenchless construction methods for the shore crossing will be the primary mitigation to minimise impacts to this reserve. Subject to geotechnical investigations and detailed design, the shore crossing exit point is expected to be between 500 m and 600 m from shore, within the boundary of the reserve. The following reserves occur near, but (at least 500 metres) outside the investigation area: • Giffard (Rifle Range) Flora Reserve • Jack Smith Lake State Game Reserve (Hunting) • Giffard H31 Bushland Reserve • Lake Denison Wildlife Reserve (Hunting) • Warrigal Creek Streamside Reserve. Darriman H29 Bushland Reserve is surrounded by the referred investigation area, but the reserve would be avoided (Attachment 5, Figure 4-2).
Is any clearing vegetation or alteration of landforms likely to affect landscape values? ☐ NYD ☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, please briefly describe. No clearing of vegetation would occur in the coastal dunes or beach environments. The extent of vegetation clearing on the remainder of the onshore cable route will be minimised as far as reasonably practicable. It would not impact landscape values within the agricultural setting of the project. No permanent alternation of landforms would occur for the project, with reinstatement of surface contours occurring following cable installation.
Is there a potential for effects on landscape values of regional or State importance? ☐ NYD ☒ No ☐ Yes Please briefly explain response. The project is not located within an area that is subject to a Landscape Significance Overlay. Although Ninety Mile Beach may visually be a landscape of regional or State importance, utilising trenchless construction will avoid direct landscape and visual impacts on the significant coastal landscape. The project involves the installation of subsea and underground transmission infrastructure, that will not be visible once installed, and therefore will not affect landscape values of surrounding areas.
Is mitigation of potential landscape effects proposed? ☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, please briefly describe. As noted above, construction method would be the primary mitigation in the Ninety Mile Beach environs. Utilising trenchless construction would avoid direct landscape and visual impacts on this significant coastal landscape.
Other information/comments? (eg. accuracy of information)

Note: A preliminary landscape assessment is a specific requirement for a referral of a wind energy facility. This should provide a description of:

- The landscape character of the site and surrounding areas including landform, vegetation types and coverage, water features, any other notable features and current land use;
- The location of nearby dwellings, townships, recreation areas, major roads, above-ground utilities, tourist routes and walking tracks;

- Views to the site and to the proposed location of wind turbines from key vantage points (including views showing existing nearby dwellings and views from major roads, walking tracks and tourist routes) sufficient to give a sense of the overall site in its setting.

Soils

Is there a potential for effects on land stability, acid sulphate soils or highly erodible soils?

☒ NYD ☐ No ☐ Yes If yes, please briefly describe.

No impacts on land stability or highly erodible soils are expected as a result of the project.

The majority of the onshore investigation area has low to very low potential for the presence of acid sulfate soils, however the area of estuarine wetland behind coastal dunes has high potential.

A soil and contamination assessment would be undertaken to inform project design development and regulatory assessment (Section 20).

Are there geotechnical hazards that may either affect the project or be affected by it?

☒ NYD ☐ No ☐ Yes If yes, please briefly describe.

Onshore and offshore geotechnical assessments will be undertaken to inform project design development. It is not expected that geotechnical hazards would affect or be affected by the project.

Other information/comments? (eg. accuracy of information)

15. Social environments

Is the project likely to generate significant volumes of road traffic, during construction or operation?

☐ NYD ☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, provide estimate of traffic volume(s) if practicable.

Heavy vehicles would be required to transport and deliver materials, machinery and equipment for onshore construction. Light vehicles would be used by the workforce to and from the construction site. However, the increase in traffic volumes associated with the construction is not expected to be significant given the nature and scale of works.

A traffic management plan would be prepared and implemented to manage construction traffic.

Increases to traffic volumes during operation would be negligible.

Is there a potential for significant effects on the amenity of residents, due to emissions of dust or odours or changes in visual, noise or traffic conditions?

☐ NYD ☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, briefly describe the nature of the changes in amenity conditions and the possible areas affected.

Dust, noise and changed traffic conditions would occur during construction, however these are not expected to significantly affect the amenity of residents.

Dust could arise from clearing and preparation of the worksite, excavation of trenches and reinstatement. Noise would arise from activities such as fencing, movement and operation of machinery, handling of materials and HDD.

Emissions to air and noise would be managed through the implementation of a CEMP, operations environment management plan (OEMP), and decommissioning environment management plan (DEMP), prepared considering all relevant EPA Victoria guidance and requirements (see Section 18).

A traffic management plan would be implemented to manage construction traffic.

Transmission infrastructure would be subsea and underground and therefore the project would not significantly impact visual amenity.

Is there a potential for exposure of a human community to health or safety hazards, due to emissions to air or water or noise or chemical hazards or associated transport?

☐ NYD ☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, briefly describe the hazards and possible implications.

As above, emissions to air or water, noise and hazardous chemicals would be managed through the CEMP, OEMP and DEMP, prepared considering all relevant EPA Victoria guidance and requirements (see Section 18).

Some dust and noise emissions are likely to arise during construction and potentially decommissioning. With implementation of CEMP and DEMP, this would not pose a health or safety hazard to the community. Hazardous chemicals, such as herbicide for weed control, would be transported, stored, handled and used in accordance with manufacturer's guidance and regulatory requirements.

There would be no ongoing emissions to air or water, noise, chemical hazards or associated transport during the project's operation that would be a health or safety hazard to the community. An OEMP would be implemented to manage any project activities during this phase.

Is there a potential for displacement of residences or severance of residential access to community resources due to the proposed development?

☐ NYD ☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, briefly describe potential effects.

No displacement of residents is expected as a result of the project.

The investigation area provides flexibility to locate the project site and cable route to avoid existing infrastructure, residences and community areas where possible or minimise impacts.

Any disruption to property access would be temporary and managed in direct consultation with the affected landowner. Severance of access to community resources is not expected.

Are non-residential land use activities likely to be displaced as a result of the project?

☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, briefly describe the likely effects.

The onshore aspects of the project include the installation of export cable infrastructure from the shore crossing to the VicGrid onshore connection hub. This would cause some disruption and displacement of existing land use activities during the construction phase, primarily due to the exclusion of agricultural activities from the site during construction. As cable infrastructure would be buried and the site reinstated following construction, these effects will be localised and temporary. Directly affected landowner and occupiers would be consulted to develop suitable, property-specific plans to minimise disruption to their activities.

In Victorian coastal waters, cable installation may temporarily exclude other marine users from the vicinity of the works, although in the context of the broader marine environment, this is not expected to adversely affect their activities.

Do any expected changes in non-residential land use activities have a potential to cause adverse effects on local residents/communities, social groups or industries?

☐ NYD ☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, briefly describe the potential effects.

Directly affected landowner and occupiers would be consulted to develop suitable, property-specific plans to mitigate disruption of their activities and ensure there are no net adverse effects. The project would primarily be located within agricultural land. Broader adverse effects on communities, social groups or industries are not expected, but engagement would be ongoing to ensure impacts can be identified and addressed. The construction activities associated with the shore crossing may temporarily disrupt local recreational users through the potential for the campsite at McGaurans Beach to be disturbed by cable installation activities. This is expected to occur over a duration of up to six months across the summer period and is considered temporary.
Is mitigation of potential social effects proposed? ☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, please briefly describe. Mitigation measures to avoid and minimise social effects of the project would be developed as assessments are completed through the regulatory approvals process. Inherent mitigations that will be applied to reduce environmental impacts, including social effects, are outlined in Attachment 10, covering aspects such as property management, traffic, and air and noise emissions.
Other information/comments? (eg. accuracy of information)

Cultural heritage

Have relevant Indigenous organisations been consulted on the occurrence of Aboriginal cultural heritage within the project area? ☐ No If no, list any organisations that it is proposed to consult. ☒ Yes If yes, list the organisations so far consulted. High Sea Wind has met with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC), the Registered Aboriginal Party that represents the Gunaikurnai people, the Traditional Owners of the land on which the project is proposed. Consultation with GLaWAC is ongoing and will continue throughout the assessment of Aboriginal cultural heritage and the environment within the project area.
What investigations of cultural heritage in the project area have been done? (attach details of method and results of any surveys for the project & describe their accuracy) The following desktop assessments have been done for the area of investigation and surrounds: • Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Desktop Assessment (Onshore) – Attachment 6 • Non-Indigenous Heritage Desktop Assessment (Onshore) – Attachment 7 • Desktop Submerged Historical Archaeology Assessment – Attachment 8 • Desktop Submerged Palaeolandscape Assessment – Attachment 9 Known Aboriginal Places and sensitive landforms are present within the investigation area. No places listed on the Victorian Heritage Register or subject to a Heritage Overlay are located within the onshore investigation area. There are three sites of local built heritage significance value within the onshore development area, and one adjacent to it that could be candidates for local heritage overlays based on their heritage values (Attachment 7). No known shipwrecks, aircraft wrecks or other maritime heritage places are recorded within the nearshore investigation area; although maritime archaeological potential exists along the nearshore coastal zone in the region (Attachment 8).
Is any Aboriginal cultural heritage known from the project area? ☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, briefly describe:

- Any sites listed on the AAV Site Register
- Sites or areas of sensitivity recorded in recent surveys from the project site or nearby
- Sites or areas of sensitivity identified by representatives of Indigenous organisations

Known Aboriginal Places and sensitive landforms are present within the investigation area.

In the region, shell middens are the most common site type of Aboriginal Place along the coast and artefact scatters the most common site inland.



Dunes, waterways and elevated landforms near waterways as being the landforms and areas of the highest archaeological sensitivity in the region. The coastal dune system has been identified as having the highest potential to contain Aboriginal cultural heritage and the potential to contain high significance Aboriginal cultural heritage. Impact to this area will be minimised using trenchless construction methods for the shore crossing.

Are there any cultural heritage places listed on the Heritage Register or the Archaeological Inventory under the *Heritage Act 1995* within the project area?

☐ NYD ☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, please list.

Is mitigation of potential cultural heritage effects proposed?

☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, please briefly describe.

Onshore

A heritage advisor will be engaged to prepare a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) for the project, as required by the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018. The CHMP will be prepared in consultation with, and subject to the approval of, the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation.

The project will avoid and minimise impacts to known Aboriginal cultural heritage as far as reasonably practicable. Mitigation measures for areas that cannot be avoided will be developed as part of the CHMP in consultation with Gunaikurnai representatives.

Disturbance of the coastal dune system, having the highest potential to contain Aboriginal cultural heritage and the potential to contain high significance Aboriginal cultural heritage, will be minimised using trenchless construction methods for the installation of the shore crossing cables.

Areas identified as containing high significance Aboriginal cultural heritage will be avoided.

Offshore

Detailed geophysical surveys are being undertaken of the offshore export cable corridors. These surveys will provide information that can be used to identify previously unknown heritage values within the investigation area. If identified, any features can then be avoided or further assessments completed and mitigation measures developed.

Other information/comments? (eg. accuracy of information)

This size of the construction and operations workforce is yet to be determined. The peak workforce will be during construction, when indicatively up to 1000 (full time equivalent) direct roles may be required for the High Sea Wind project as a whole (Victorian and Commonwealth works). Many roles will be vessel-based, and a proportion of the workforce will be hired from within the region, reducing accommodation burden. There is the potential for both beneficial and adverse socioeconomic effects. These will be assessed in a detailed socioeconomic assessment and an appropriate accommodation strategy developed.

16. Energy, wastes & greenhouse gas emissions

What are the main sources of energy that the project facility would consume/generate?

- ☐ Electricity network. If possible, estimate power requirement/output
- ☐ Natural gas network. If possible, estimate gas requirement/output
- ☒ Generated on-site. If possible, estimate power capacity/output
- ☐ Other. Please describe.

Please add any relevant additional information.

High Sea Wind is expected to have an installed capacity of approximately 1.3 GW, enough to power 1 million Victorian households annually.

What are the main forms of waste that would be generated by the project facility?

- ☐ Wastewater. Describe briefly.
- ☐ Solid chemical wastes. Describe briefly.
- ☒ Excavated material. Describe briefly.
- ☒ Other. Describe briefly.

Please provide relevant further information, including proposed management of wastes.

The construction phase of the project is when most waste is generated. This may include surplus construction materials, packaging and materials required temporarily during construction such as crushed rock, geofabric, erosion and sediment control materials or temporary fencing materials.

Soil excavated from trenches would be reused for backfill of the trench following cable installation. Surplus trench spoil, material from the excavation of joint bays and HDD cuttings may require disposal where they can not be reused.

The operation of the project would not generate significant waste.

All wastes will be managed following EPA Victoria's *Principle of waste management hierarchy*, the General Environmental Duty and other duties under the *Environment Protection Act 2017* (Vic) and subsequent regulations.

What level of greenhouse gas emissions is expected to result directly from operation of the project facility?

- ☒ Less than 50,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per annum
- ☐ Between 50,000 and 100,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per annum
- ☐ Between 100,000 and 200,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per annum
- ☐ More than 200,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per annum

Please add any relevant additional information, including any identified mitigation options.

Through the generation and supply of renewable electricity to the grid, the High Sea Wind project would prevent up to 5.3 million tons of CO₂ emissions each year that could otherwise arise from fossil fuel generation.

17. Other environmental issues

Are there any other environmental issues arising from the proposed project?

- ☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, briefly describe.

18. Environmental management

What measures are currently proposed to avoid, minimise or manage the main potential adverse environmental effects? (if not already described above)

- ☒ Siting: Please describe briefly
- ☒ Design: Please describe briefly
- ☒ Environmental management: Please describe briefly.
- ☒ Other: Please describe briefly

Add any relevant additional information.

Siting

The referral of an investigation area allows scope for siting of the project to avoid and minimise potential adverse environmental effects. Assessments would be undertaken on cultural heritage, social, environmental and ecological values, landowner consultation and existing infrastructure which would inform the ultimate design.

Areas identified as containing high significance Aboriginal cultural heritage would be avoided.

Disturbance of the coastal dune system, having the highest potential to contain Aboriginal cultural heritage and the potential to contain high significance Aboriginal cultural heritage, as well as environmental and landscape values, would be minimised using trenchless construction methods for the installation of the shore crossing cables.

Work areas to facilitate the construction of the shore crossing would be located outside these sensitive areas.

High Sea Wind will ensure that there is no net loss to biodiversity as a result of the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation. This will be achieved, in accordance with the Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (the Guidelines), by:

1. Siting the onshore export cable route and construction area to avoid the removal of native vegetation where it is reasonably practicable to do so.
2. Minimising the extent of the removal of native vegetation where it cannot reasonably be avoided.

Residual biodiversity impacts arising from the removal of native vegetation will be offset in accordance with the Guidelines.

Design

The export cables would be buried and joint bays installed below ground level. This would avoid visual impacts and minimise disruption to landowners and other users of the project area during the operation phase of the project.

Environmental management

A CEMP, OEMP and DEMP will be developed and implemented. These plans will identify the risks to the environment arising from each phase of the project and specify actions to eliminate or minimise those risks.

Inherent mitigations that will be applied to reduce environmental impacts of the project, relevant to project phase and area are described in Attachment 10.

19. Other activities

Are there any other activities in the vicinity of the proposed project that have a potential for cumulative effects?

☐ NYD ☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, briefly describe.

There are activities associated with other proposed offshore wind projects in the Gippsland declared area that have potential for cumulative effects. In particular, these projects would also require the installation of transmission infrastructure from their respective licence areas to the VicGrid onshore connection hub. These projects currently include the following:

- Star of the South Offshore Windfarm
- Great Eastern Offshore Windfarm
- Blue Mackerel North
- Aurora Green
- Navigator North
- Orsted's Gippsland 01 and Gippsland 02
- Kut-Wut Brataualung

While there are a high number of offshore wind projects proposed in Gippsland, it is unlikely that these will all proceed to construction given that a significant proportion of funding would be supplied through a limited, competitive auction process.

Existing activities in the investigation area that have a potential for cumulative effects include the operation and maintenance of the Basslink interconnector and Gippsland Water's saline waste water outfall. As underground utility infrastructure, potential cumulative effects primary relate to land use, and prior disturbance of the environment.

VicGrid's Gippsland Offshore Wind Transmission 2 GW Project has potential for cumulative construction-related impacts to the onshore environment, including but not limited to vegetation removal, ground disturbance, noise, dust and traffic.

Other activities in the region, particularly construction, operation and decommissioning of offshore oil and gas infrastructure, are not expected to result in cumulative effects.

Project vessels may contribute to an increase in vessel traffic within the Port of Corner Inlet and Port Albert, in conjunction with vessels from other offshore wind farms and oil and gas activities.

20. Investigation program

Study program

Have any environmental studies not referred to above been conducted for the project?

☒ No ☐ Yes If yes, please list here and attach if relevant.

Has a program for future environmental studies been developed?

☐ No ☒ Yes If yes, briefly describe.

Detailed technical studies will be completed to inform project design development and regulatory assessment. The scope of the study program will be informed by consultation with relevant regulators and stakeholders. The study program is likely to include:

Onshore specialist studies

- Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Onshore ecology - Flora, fauna and native vegetation
- Waterways, hydrology and groundwater
- Soil and contamination
- Socioeconomic assessment

Offshore specialist studies

- Metocean conditions and coastal processes
- Marine ecology

- Marine archaeology
- Other marine users

Environmental studies will also be undertaken to support other statutory requirements for the project including under the EPBC Act, *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic) and *Environment Protection Act 2017* (Vic).

Consultation program

Has a consultation program been conducted to date for the project?

☒ No ☒ Yes If yes, outline the consultation activities and the stakeholder groups or organisations consulted.

High Sea Wind commenced engagement in 2023 with government, industry and several key stakeholders in the Gippsland region. Early engagement focused on establishing relationships and building an understanding of local interests and opportunities. High Sea Wind has sought to establish early partnerships with some of these stakeholders, such as a partnership with Federation University, and engage in discussions regarding opportunities for offshore wind to benefit the region.

In addition to the early project engagement, High Sea Wind has consulted with relevant stakeholders regarding offshore activities and engaged with marine users and other offshore developers about project activities.

Engagement conducted to date with specific groups of stakeholders is outlined below.

Traditional Owners

There has been a particular focus on engagement with Traditional Owners through the Registered Aboriginal Party in eastern Gippsland, GLaWAC. Engagement with GLaWAC commenced in 2024. High Sea Wind understands GLaWAC has an interest in the management of any potential impacts from the High Sea Wind project on the marine and coastal environment, marine mammals and cultural heritage. GLaWAC is also interested in opportunities that will deliver positive outcomes for First Peoples in Gippsland. High Sea Wind is in the process of establishing a partnership agreement with GLaWAC that will guide our way of working together through the life of the project, protect Country and heritage, and deliver positive outcomes for First Peoples in the region. Additionally, High Sea Wind has engaged GLaWAC in the planning of marine studies, seeking feedback on the activities and committing to sharing relevant findings. GLaWAC has indicated they are particularly interested in the marine mammal surveys and opportunities to understand more about marine mammals that have cultural significance to them.

Local communities

Engagement with local communities has primarily been through joint engagement with other offshore wind developers through the Offshore Gippsland Developers (OGD engagement days). High Sea Wind has attended nine offshore wind engagement events in 2025 and two community pop-up events so far in 2026 to share information on the High Sea Wind project and discuss offshore wind in Gippsland. During these events, High Sea Wind has received feedback from community members about the High Sea Wind project and offshore wind. The key concerns raised by community members centre on visual impact, particularly cumulative visual impact from multiple projects in the region. Due to the distance of the High Sea Wind project feasibility licence area from shore (approximately 76 kilometres), feedback from community members has indicated they are less concerned about the potential visual impact from the High Sea Wind project.

High Sea Wind has been in contact with Wellington Shire Council regarding the High Sea Wind project since early 2025. High Sea Wind met with council representatives in June 2026 to discuss the High Sea Wind project, approvals pathway and current activities, and understand local community and landholder sentiment in more detail.

Members of the public can contact High Sea Wind via the website, the project email address and the project contact phone number.

Marine users

Other engagement has focused on consulting with potentially impacted and interested stakeholders regarding marine activities and surveys. High Sea Wind has contacted stakeholders across a number of key groups to inform them of upcoming marine activities and understand

concerns or considerations that should be incorporated into the planning of these activities. This engagement has been primarily with commercial fishers, recreational fishers, ports, heritage, offshore operators and relevant government departments.

Feedback received during engagement with commercial fishers has predominantly centred on ensuring appropriate communication mechanisms are in place so stakeholders are suitably informed of activities. These communication mechanisms include issuing a Notice to Mariners prior to activities and informing fishers via representative organisations. Notification processes have been established with the South East Trawl Fishing Association (SETFIA) to notify fishers within their network, along with other fishers either through direct contact or via the Lakes Entrance Fishing Cooperative. Feedback from marine users has also emphasised the need for safety and risk management procedures to be in place prior to activities, which High Sea Wind will address through their internal processes and by engaging suitably qualified contractors.

There has been an interest in potential cultural heritage within the feasibility licence area, but for the activities undertaken to date, there have been no known heritage sites identified during consultation.

Through engagement on marine activities, High Sea Wind has also identified a small number of independent commercial fishers who operate near the offshore wind farm area. They have expressed an interest in understanding any future impacts to fishing activities which will be provided as future activities are planned.

High Sea Wind has engaged recreational fishers regarding offshore activity via representative organisations, including VR Fish and Boating Industry Association of Victoria. Feedback has indicated that activities for the High Sea Wind project are unlikely to impact recreational fishers due to their distance offshore, however, the groups encouraged engagement at local boats shows. High Sea Wind attended the Gippsland Lakes Boat Show in early 2026 to speak directly with recreational fishers as part of ODG engagement. Feedback during this event was primarily about the industry providing information on how offshore wind and fishing can coexist. High Sea Wind will address this feedback as part of future engagement, particularly via joint engagement with ODG.

High Sea Wind is involved in a recently established Fishing Coexistence Working Group made up of other offshore wind developers. The group has developed best-practice guidelines for fishing coexistence that outline how offshore developers will engage with commercial fishers to minimise disruption and promote a safe and sustainable coexistence.

Offshore developers have been engaged through regular ODG meetings and engagement activities. Offshore developers, along with oil and gas tenement holders and the CarbonNet Project, have also been directly engaged for FLiDAR consultation and notified of offshore activities, including marine surveys and geophysical surveys. No concerns have been raised regarding the offshore activities and there has been no other feedback from other developers and oil and gas licence holders.

Has a program for future consultation been developed?

☒ NYD ☒ No ☒ Yes If yes, briefly describe.

High Sea Wind has created a strategy for future engagement that focused on creating genuine opportunities to engage with interested and impacted stakeholders as the project progresses. Once the planning pathway and corresponding consultation requirements have been determined, the project will develop a more detailed engagement program that includes specific opportunities for the community and stakeholders to provide feedback on the study program, project design, impact assessment and mitigation measures. The project will focus on sharing opportunities for feedback and input with stakeholders and the community, including how the feedback will be incorporated into the project where possible, ensuring feedback channels are in place and made accessible to all stakeholders, and providing relevant, timely and tailored information for various stakeholder groups.

The future engagement approach with specific stakeholder groups is described below.

Traditional Owners

Engagement with GLaWAC will continue as a partnership agreement is explored and project activities increase. High Sea Wind will engage GLaWAC appropriately in the development of a

future community benefits framework, local workforce and procurement strategies and community development funds. Another core part of engagement with GLaWAC in the future will centre around the development and approval of any plans required as part of the planning and approvals pathway.

High Sea Wind will also broaden Traditional Owner engagement to include Traditional Owners in Tasmania, as well as other interested First Peoples from Victoria and around Australia to better understand their interests in the feasibility licence area and offshore wind. Based on the outcomes of the current marine surveys, the project intends to seek feedback from other parties who may be further from the feasibility licence area but may have a strong cultural connection to marine mammals or cultural heritage in the area.

Local communities

We understand cumulative visual impacts between proposed offshore wind projects is a significant concern in nearby communities. To address concerns about visual impacts High Sea Wind will undertake assessments based on the maximum possible height of a turbine. Outcomes of these assessments will be published on the website and shared as part of future project communications and engagement activities.

During 2026, High Sea Wind will conduct stakeholder engagement to further the project's understanding of sentiment and values in local communities and understand concerns in more depth. This will enable the project to address concerns more effectively and identify opportunities for the project to deliver long-term value to these communities.

High Sea Wind will continue to attend ODG engagement days and will establish a regular community update to keep local communities informed on the project and promote potential opportunities for jobs, partnerships and community benefits.

High Sea Wind is committed to working with local councils and groups to identify the needs of local communities and identify where the project can deliver benefits to local communities and the Gippsland economy.

Landholder engagement

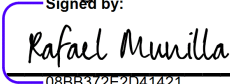
A number of potential routes for onshore transmission have been identified, with 20 land parcels within the onshore investigation area. Engagement with potentially impacted landholders commenced in 2026. Prior to submission of this referral, landholders were sent a letter notifying them the onshore transmission corridor is potentially located on their property. In order to minimise engagement fatigue, the project offered an initial meeting if landholders would like to discuss this with High Sea Wind, otherwise we indicated that the project would be in touch once the corridor route is refined. High Sea Wind will seek opportunities to streamline landholder engagement with nearby developers and minimise impacts to landholders where possible.

Marine users

Engagement regarding marine activities and surveys will continue to focus on informing and seeking feedback from stakeholders with interest in offshore activities and using the established communication mechanisms to ensure that relevant stakeholders are informed of upcoming activities. As project development progresses, the project will also work with marine users to help them understand possible project impacts and mitigations measures. Engagement with marine stakeholders with interests closer to shore will increase as planning of transmission infrastructure continues.

Authorised person for proponent:

I, Rafael Munilla.....(full name),
Chief Business Development Officer.....(position), confirm that the information
contained in this form is, to my knowledge, true and not misleading.

Signature 
Signed by: 08BB372E2D41421...
Date 03 - ago . - 2026

Person who prepared this referral:

I, Kim Stewart.....(full name),
Senior Principal Marine Scientist.....(position), confirm that the information
contained in this form is, to my knowledge, true and not misleading.

Signature 
Date 03 August 2026