

## Scottish Offshore Wind Energy Council (SOWEC) Minutes

10 December 2025, 11:00 – 13:00

Virtual – MS Teams

### Participants

#### Council Members Present:

**Claire Mack** – Chief Executive, Scottish Renewables (SOWEC Co-Chair) (CM)  
**Michelle Quinn** – Director, Offshore Wind Directorate, Scottish Government (Co-Chair on behalf of the Cabinet Secretary) (MQ)  
**Alex Loudon** – Head of UK&IE Innovation Hub, Orsted (AL)  
**Andy Riley** – Development Manager, Supply Chain, Crown Estate Scotland (AR)  
**Colin Palmer** – Director of Offshore, Scottish Renewables (CP)  
**Lloyd Duthie** – Vice President UK, Ireland and Asia, Seaway 7 (LD)  
**Mark Baxter** – Project Director, Ocean Winds (MB) (Developers' Forum Chair)  
**Stewart McKinlay** – Skills Director, Manufacturing Skills Academy (SM)  
**Suzanne Sosna** – Director of Energy Transition, Scottish Enterprise (SE) (SS)  
**Chris Whitehead** – Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Morven (CW)  
**David Robertson** – Portfolio Director, BlueFloat Energy / Nadara Partnership (DR)  
**Paul Wheelhouse** – Head of Energy Transition, South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) (PW)

#### Others in attendance:

**Katrine Pearson** – Managing Director, 3 x 1 Group (KP) - for item 5 only  
**Ragne Low** – Deputy Director, Offshore Wind Directorate, Scottish Government (RL)  
**Catherine Williams** – Deputy Director, Directorate for Energy and Climate Change, Scottish Government (CW)  
**David Liddell** – Assistant Chief Reporter, Planning and Environmental Appeals, Scottish Government (DL)  
**Karen Dickson** – Offshore Wind Directorate, Scottish Government (KD)  
**Callum Neil** – Offshore Wind Directorate, Scottish Government (minute) (CN)  
**Elain Macrae** – Head of Energy, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (EM)  
**Marta Bera** – Cost Controller, Fred Olsen Renewables (MBe)

### Apologies

**Gillian Martin MSP** – Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy  
**David Oxley** – Director of Strategic Projects, Highlands and Islands Enterprise

### Agenda

1. Welcome and sector update
2. Minutes and action update
3. Workplan update
4. SOWEC Governance
5. Public engagement role of SOWEC
6. Onshore planning and consenting

7. Comms update
8. AOB

## Actions

Action no	Description of Action	Owner	Due Date
20251210-01	Explore options to allow theme leads to serve more than one tenure.	CM & SG	28 February 2026
20251210-02	Review section 2.2 (SOWEC Goals) of the Governance Document to be more specific and measurable and better linked to workstream plans.	PMO and Theme Leads	28 February 2026
20251210-03	Review existing public engagement activity across the sector.	3x1	February 2026

## 1. Welcome and sector update

1.1 MQ provided an update on Scottish Government policy, highlighting:

- The consultation analysis on an updated Scottish Sectoral Marine Plan (SMP) for Offshore Wind Energy and findings from the consultation on Scotland's Strategic Compensation Policy have been published. The SG is working with UK Government to agree the final policy position on strategic compensation.
- SG has finalised the Marine Recovery Fund consultation and hopes to publish the findings shortly.
- SG is regularly engaging with UK Government to press for measures that further support order book certainty.
- SG is clear that NESO must do everything possible to bring forward connections reform timescales.
- The Offshore Wind Skills Short Life Working Group published Scotland's Offshore Wind Skills Priorities and Action Plan.
- The first meeting of the new Ports Short Life Working Group will take place on 19 January 2026.

1.2 CM provided an update on market sentiment, highlighting the following:

- Scotland's offshore wind sector continues to face challenges: global cost pressures, transmission charges, lack of a fixed-bottom CfD contract since 2022.
- A record 6.7GW of Scottish projects were eligible for AR7; estimated 4.6GW fixed and 296MW floating.
- Uncertainty on TNUoS reform remains and there is an urgent need for a credible bridge on TNUoS to 2029.
- Connections reform is progressing; SOWEC members were invited to provide feedback on impacts and timelines.
- Floating offshore wind conference showed increased Asia-Pacific investor interest.

## 2. Minutes and action update

2.1 Action 20250910-03 ongoing. MB to progress in the new year.

2.2 Action 20250910-04 ongoing, with SS suggesting Scottish Enterprise could help on engaging with tier 1 transmission supply chain companies.

2.3 Action 20250910-06 noted as ongoing – refreshed web pages for offshore wind planned by to improve visibility of investment.

2.4 All other actions noted as complete.

## 3. SOWEC Workplan update

3.1 Theme Leads provided updates for their areas:

**Industrial Strategy and Investment** – SS asked SOWEC members to share details of their attendance at events to identify opportunities to coordinate.

**Supply Chain Development** – Good progress has been made with the Clean Energy Cluster, funding is now in place. This is critical for supply chain development. All actions are on track.

**Innovation** – 3 actions noted as complete. A subgroup is being established to help develop the innovation programme.

**Workforce, Skills and Training** – Good progress. Ongoing activities around sector recruitment and investors skills.

**Environment and Planning, Data and Route to Market** – Priorities include the Sectoral Marine Plan and wet storage.

**Communities and Stakeholders** – Interactions with fisheries is a critical issue.

**Programme** – Lynsey Shovlin is in post with CES as PMO lead. PMO is acting effectively as Secretariat – but more resource is required to help deliver workplans. AR noted the comms contract is due to expire in summer 2026 so will be getting retendered soon. CM considering whether some PMO resource needs assigned to each workstream.

## 4. SOWEC Governance

4.1 Paper 3 – A proposal was presented to Council members in advance of the meeting seeking agreement on SOWEC Governance and Terms of Reference.

4.2 It was noted that each workstream should have a nomination and selection process for chairs.

4.3 Currently theme leads are limited to tenures of maximum 3 years. The group questioned whether there is an option to extend. CM and SG to discuss (**action**).

4.4 Members agreed in relation to section 2.2 (SOWEC Goals) of the Governance Document that these need to be more specific and measurable and linked to workstream plans (**action**). The refreshed SOWEC Governance and Terms of Reference will be approved once this action is complete.

### Actions

- CM and SG to explore options to allow theme leads to serve more than one tenure.
- Review section 2.2 (SOWEC Goals) of the Governance Document to be more specific and measurable and better linked to workstream plans.

## 5. Public engagement role of SOWEC

5.1 CM acknowledged the current challenges around transmission upgrades and the wider shifts in politics and media consumption that are shaping public engagement.

5.2 The need to avoid fragmented or disjointed communications was noted. CM highlighted opportunity to articulate Scotland's offshore wind pipeline clearly (e.g., an infographic showing top five infrastructure projects, post-AR7) and the importance of framing around "why it matters today" from the perspective of skills, jobs, communities.

5.3 Recognition of the need to reconnect audiences with the purpose of the transition. Polling could identify local concerns and priority areas.

5.4 It was also noted that OWIC are undertaking similar thinking, and alignment is important.

### Actions

- Review existing public engagement activity across the sector including the role of members' channels.

## 6. Onshore planning and consenting

6.1 CW gave an overview of consenting process for Accelerated Strategic Transmission Investment (ASTI) projects, noting the increasing complexity of projects, and the need to balance commitment to delivery with a robust process that minimises legal risk.

6.2 DL provided an update on the Scottish Government's DPEA/ASTI work.

6.3 A question was raised on interactions between energy projects, including expected CPO requirements for offshore wind cables. CW noted that cumulative impacts are considered, but planning is not assessed spatially across the whole system.

6.4 MQ reiterated the need for government to focus on work only government can do, particularly in the current budgetary context.

## **7. Comms update**

7.1 KP gave an update on SOWEC comms:

- Finalised communications strategy and planner.
- Prepared comms plan and messaging for SIM transition.
- Website subgroup pages created and will be published by the end of 2025.
- First edition of stakeholder newsletter to be produced.

## **8. Any Other Business**

8.1 The date of the next meeting is set for **11 March 2026**.