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Edward Mountain MSP
Convener,
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

By Email: netzero.committee@parliament.scot

4th March 2024

Dear Edward,

Update on delivery of an updated Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (SMP-OWE)

The Sectoral Marine Planning approach is unique to Scotland and supports the sustainable development of offshore wind in Scottish waters. The updated SMP-OWE will provide the planning framework for both the ScotWind and Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas (INTOG) leasing rounds.

I am writing to update the Committee on revisions to the timeline agreed for publication of the updated SMP-OWE. Consultation on a draft updated plan will commence in Autumn 2024 and a final plan will be adopted by Spring 2025.

Whilst our policy remains to have a plan-led approach, we recognise the need to continue to progress licensing and consenting applications. Consequently, during the period that the updated SMP-OWE is being produced, developers may continue to submit offshore wind marine license and/or consent applications, and Ministers may continue to make determination on those applications, in advance of an updated SMP-OWE

We understand that developers may be concerned about the impact that this change may have on obtaining option agreements for Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas projects. However, Scottish Government officials have worked closely with Crown Estate Scotland to mitigate this concern and Crown Estate Scotland will set out an alternative approach to the Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas process to developers in the coming days.

Taking a small amount of additional time now creates an opportunity to produce a SMP-OWE that adds maximum value to the planning, licensing, consenting and strategic compensation process, including new elements on wet storage areas that will support development and construction in the long term.

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Linked to the development of the updated SMP-OWE we are also progressing important new workstreams to implement the UK Energy Act 2023. This work is fundamental to plan and project derogation and strategic compensation measures to enable sustainable development of the sector.

Taking the appropriate time now to design this work carefully will help us to ensure that our offshore wind developments will both support Scotland's net zero commitments and enhance Scotland's marine environment to support positive biodiversity outcomes. Completing this process as quickly and as well as possible remains my central focus.

Yours sincerely,

MÀIRI MCALLAN

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