

Impact of Scotwind

In January 2022 the bidding results were announced for the offshore ScotWind seabed auction (Crown Estates Scotland-ScotWind). The Scottish Government target was to lease sufficient seabed area to provide for 10,000MW of wind energy capacity. Due to the considerable success of the auction sufficient seabed for 24,800MW has been auctioned. A further auction will take place this summer for one area, where there were no bids. This area could provide for a further 1,500MW of capacity. These auction results add to the current operational offshore wind energy capacity of 1,892 MW, the 1,948 MW currently under construction, and the further 2,362 MW that is consented awaiting construction. A further area for 4,250MW has been leased and is committed but undergoing consenting. Together with the ScotWind auction, the current program of offshore wind will provide approximately 35,250 MW of offshore wind energy capacity by 2030. Given that Scotland has a current peak electricity demand of under 5,000MW Scotland does not now need any further wind energy developments.

The Scottish Government onshore wind energy ambition, of an 8-12GW of capacity, set out in the OWPS Refresh 2022 is not fixed in policy. The OWPS Refresh makes clear that this ambition is subject to review dependent upon “the development of other generating technologies”, the electrification of whole-system energy demand and the barriers to deployment (OWPS-Refresh, section 2.1.7). Given the huge success of the recent offshore seabed auction, delivering two and half times the hoped-for 10GW target, the Scottish Government does not now require any of the indicated onshore wind ambition. The excess of the offshore seabed leasing capacity of 14.8 GW (24.8-10) clearly far exceeds, indeed it swamps, the 8-12GW ambition. The stated review of the 8-12GW ambition may well now find that none of this is required.