

MONA OFFSHORE WIND PROJECT

Environmental Statement

Volume 7, Annex 6.1: Landscape and visual resources planning policy context

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Glossary

Term	Meaning
Key characteristics	Elements which are particularly important to the current character of the landscape and help to give an area its particularly distinctive sense of place.
Landform	The shape and form of the land surface which has resulted from combinations of geology, geomorphology, slope, elevation and physical processes.
Landscape	An area, as perceived by people, the character of which is a result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.
Landscape character	A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.
Landscape Character Areas	These are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type.
Landscape Character Assessment	The process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape and using this information to assist in managing change in the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscape distinctive. The process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment.
Seascape	The visual and physical conjunction of land and sea which combines maritime, coast and hinterland character.
Special Qualities	A term usually used in relation to National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is given to those qualities for which the area is designated.

Acronyms

Acronym	Description
AOB	Area of Outstanding Beauty
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now National Landscapes)
GLVIA	Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
LDP	Local Development Plan
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
MLWS	Mean Low Water Spring
NL	National Landscapes (previously Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty)
NRW	Natural Resources Wales
PEIR	Preliminary Environmental Information Report
SLVIA	Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
ZTV	Zone of Theoretical Visibility

Units

Unit	Description
km	Kilometre

1 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL RESOURCES PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1.1 This technical report provides a summary of the planning policy relating to landscape and visual resources which has been used to inform the baseline characterisation and assessment reported in Volume 3, Chapter 6: Landscape and visual resources of the Environmental Statement. The legislative context is summarised within this chapter.
- 1.1.1.2 A separate seascape planning annex accompanies Volume 2, Chapter 8: Seascape and visual resources of the Environmental Statement and is provided in Volume 6, Annex 8.1: Seascape and visual resources planning policy context of the Environmental Statement.

1.2 Study area

- 1.2.1.1 The Mona Offshore Wind Project landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) onshore study area (hereafter referred to as 'the LVIA onshore study area') is illustrated on Figure A1 of Appendix A. The LVIA onshore study area is based on the height of the onshore substation, which in turn formed the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). This was agreed with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) at a SLVIA workshop, held in September 2022 (refer to Table 6.7 of Volume 3, Chapter 6: Landscape and visual resources of the Environmental Statement).
- 1.2.1.2 The LVIA onshore study area comprises land to be temporarily and permanently occupied during construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning of the Mona Offshore Wind Project, which includes areas of the sea, together with:
- 1 km buffer from the Mona Onshore Development Area (i.e. the area landward of Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS)); and
 - 10 km buffer from the onshore substation.
- 1.2.1.3 The buffers used to define the landscape, seascape and visual resources study areas are based on the Maximum Design Scenario (MDS) set out in Volume 3, Chapter 6: Landscape and visual resources of the Environmental Statement.

1.3 Planning Policy

1.3.1 Introduction

- 1.3.1.1 The LVIA has been undertaken based on the guidance on landscape and visual impact assessment set out within the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) (2013) publication: Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013).

1.3.2 National Policy Statements for Energy Infrastructure

- 1.3.2.1 There are currently six energy National Policy Statements (NPSs), three of which contain policy relevant to offshore wind development and the Mona Offshore Wind Project, specifically:

- Overarching NPS for Energy (NPS EN-1) which sets out the UK Government's policy for the delivery of major energy infrastructure (Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, 2024a).
- NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (NPS EN-3) (Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, 2024b).
- NPS for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (NPS EN-5) (Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, 2024c).

- 1.3.2.2 A summary of NPS policies relating to landscape are discussed within Volume 3, Chapter 6: Landscape and visual resources of the Environmental Statement. Cross-references are provided as to how and where the provisions of the NPSs are considered within this chapter of the Environmental Statement.

1.3.3 Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

- 1.3.3.1 Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (Welsh Government, 2021a) is the national development framework, setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. It is a development plan with a strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, achieving decarbonisation and climate resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of our communities.
- 1.3.3.2 Future Wales explains at page 15 that *'It provides strategic direction for all scales of planning and sets out policies and key issues to be taken forward at the regional scale.'* The strategic direction on renewable energy in relation to nationally designated landscapes is set out on page 97: *'We recognise landscapes across Wales whose intrinsic value should be protected from inappropriate development. Sites in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are considered unsuitable for large-scale wind and solar. Outside of these areas a positive policy framework exists.'*
- 1.3.3.3 Policy 17 is concerned with renewable and low-carbon energy and associated infrastructure, which it 'strongly supports.' It notes that 'Applications for large-scale wind and solar will not be permitted in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.'
- 1.3.3.4 Policy 18 considers Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments of National Significance. And explains that that outside Pre-Assessed Areas such energy projects will be permitted, as long as the proposal *'does not have an unacceptably adverse*

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impact on the surrounding landscape (particularly on the setting of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty)’ (criterion 1) and ‘there are no unacceptable adverse visual impact on local communities and individual dwellings’ (criterion 2). The term ‘setting’ is not defined. The policy also requires the cumulative impacts of existing and consented renewable energy schemes should also be considered.

1.3.3.5 The spatial strategy separates Wales into four regions. With regards to the North region, Policy 22 – Green Belts in the North states the following:

- *‘Managing the North’s outstanding historic and natural resources is a priority for the region. Outstanding places include the coast and the Llŷn peninsula, Snowdonia National Park, and the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal and the Castles and Town Walls of King Edward World Heritage Site. They should be protected for the enjoyment of future generations and help to provide economic benefits for the region’s communities. The region’s distinctive heritage should be preserved and enhanced by high quality development.’ (Policy 22 – Green Belts in the North, Future Wales: The National Plan 2040).*

1.3.4 Welsh National Marine Plan

1.3.4.1 The Welsh National Marine Plan (Welsh Government, 2019) sets out the following policy relevant to the LVIA:

SOC 06: Designated landscapes

1.3.4.2 *‘Proposals should demonstrate how potential impacts on the purposes and special qualities for which National Parks or AONBs¹ have been designated have been taken into consideration and should, in order of preference:*

- a. *avoid adverse impacts on designated landscapes and/or*
 - b. *minimise impacts where they cannot be avoided and/or*
 - c. *mitigate impacts where they cannot be minimised.*
- *If significant adverse impacts cannot be avoided, minimised or mitigated, proposals must present a clear and convincing case for proceeding*
 - *Opportunities to enhance designated landscapes are encouraged’.*

SOC 07: Seascapes

1.3.4.3 *‘Proposals should demonstrate how potential impacts on seascapes have been taken into consideration and should, in order of preference:*

- a. *avoid adverse impacts on seascapes and/or*
 - b. *minimise impacts where they cannot be avoided and/or*
 - c. *mitigate impacts where they cannot be minimised.*
- *If significant adverse impacts cannot be avoided, minimised or mitigated, proposals must present a clear and convincing case for proceeding*

¹ All designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales became National Landscapes on 22 November 2023.

- *Opportunities to enhance seascapes are encouraged’.*

1.3.5 Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11

- 1.3.5.1 Key planning principles of Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11 and October 2023 updates to Chapter 6: Distinctive and Natural Places (Welsh Government, 2021b and 2023, respectively) are summarised below.

Maximising environmental protection and limiting environmental impact

- 1.3.5.2 ‘Natural, historic and cultural assets must be protected, promoted, conserved and enhanced’.
- 1.3.5.3 Paragraph 6.3.3, Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11 confirms that *‘all the landscapes of Wales are valued for their intrinsic contribution to a sense of place, and local authorities should protect and enhance their special characteristics, whilst paying due regard to the social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits they provide, and to their role in creating valued places and that considering landscape at the outset when proposing development is key to sustaining and enhancing their special qualities and delivering the maximum well-being benefits for present and future generations. This means (inter alia):*
- *ensuring statutorily designated sites are properly protected and managed*
 - *ensuring that the value of all landscapes for their distinctive character and special qualities is protected*
 - *ensuring the opportunities landscapes provide for tourism, outdoor recreation, local employment, renewable energy and physical and mental health and well-being are taken into account and multiple well-being benefits for people and communities secured’.*
- 1.3.5.4 Paragraph 6.3.4, Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11 states that, *‘where adverse effects on landscape character cannot be avoided, it will be necessary to refuse planning permission’.*

National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 1.3.5.5 Paragraph 6.3.5, Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11 states that *‘the statutory landscape designations that apply in Wales are National Parks and AONBs². Planning authorities have a statutory duty to have regard to National Parks and AONB purposes. This duty applies in relation to all activities affecting National Parks and AONBs, whether those activities lie within, or in the setting of, the designated areas. The designated landscapes should be drivers of the sustainable use and management of natural resources in their areas, and planning authorities should have regard to their identified special qualities in the exercise of their functions and any relevant management plans’.*
- 1.3.5.6 Paragraph 6.3.8, Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11 states that *‘National Parks and AONBs are of equal status in terms of landscape and scenic beauty and must both be afforded the highest status of protection from inappropriate developments’.*

² All designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales became National Landscapes on 22 November 2023.

Coastlines

- 1.3.5.7 Paragraph 6.5.7, Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11 states that, ‘*areas subject to constraints or considered unsuitable for development may include those where:*
- *conservation or enhancement of the natural and historic environment requires development to be limited*
 - *visual intrusion and inter-visibility between land and sea will need to be carefully considered*
 - *there are specific policies to be pursued in Heritage Coast areas’.*
- 1.3.5.8 Paragraph 6.5.12, Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11 states that ‘*development proposals should aim to protect or enhance the natural or historic character and landscape of undeveloped coastlines. The particular landscapes of the coastline should be recognised and protected where they represent significant characteristics of place. Designation as a heritage coast does not directly affect the status of the area in planning terms, however, the features which contributed to the designation of such areas will be important considerations in development plans and in making development management decisions’.*

Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

- 1.3.5.9 The following updates have been included in Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11 in October 2023. New paragraphs following paragraph 6.4.25 state that ‘*Where trees, woodland and hedgerows are present, their retention, protection and integration should be identified within planning applications. Where surveys identify trees, hedgerows, groups of trees and areas of woodland capable of making a significant contribution to the area, these trees should be retained and protected. The provision of services and utilities infrastructure to the application site should also avoid the loss of trees, woodlands or hedges and must be considered as part of the development proposal; where such trees are lost, they will be subject to the replacement planting ratios set out below.’*
- 1.3.5.10 It goes on to state that ‘*permanent removal of trees, woodland and hedgerows will only be permitted where it would achieve significant and clearly defined public benefits. Where individual or groups of trees and hedgerows are removed as part of a proposed scheme, planning authorities must first follow the step-wise approach as set out in paragraph 6.4.21’ [i.e. avoid, minimise effect, mitigated and as a last resort, compensate]. ‘Where loss is unavoidable developers will be required to provide compensatory planting (which is proportionate to the proposed loss as identified through an assessment of green infrastructure value including biodiversity, landscape value and carbon capture). Replacement planting shall be at a ratio equivalent to the quality, environmental and ecological importance of the tree(s) lost and this must be preferably onsite, or immediately adjacent to the site, and at a minimum ratio of at least 3 trees of a similar type and compensatory size planted for every 1 lost.’*

Integrating Green Infrastructure and Development

- 1.3.5.11 Further updates to Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11 in October 2023 were also made in relation to green infrastructure. Paragraph 6.2.5 states that ‘*a green infrastructure statement should be submitted with all planning applications’.*
- 1.3.5.12 It asserts that ‘*wider landscape measures, such as the creation of species rich meadows, woodlands and the improvement of linkages between areas of biodiversity*

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value should be considered for larger scale development. In most cases the green infrastructure statement should highlight any baseline data considered and surveys and assessments undertaken, including but not limited to, habitats and species surveys, arboricultural surveys and assessments, sustainable drainage statements, landscape and ecological management plans.'

1.3.6 Conwy County Borough Council

Conwy Local Development Plan 2007-2022 (adopted 2013)

1.3.6.1 Conwy Council is preparing a new local development plan (LDP) to run from 2018-2033. The Preferred Strategy Consultation occurred between the 29th of July 2019 and the 12th of September 2019. Adoption of the new LDP was expected in September 2021, however due to the coronavirus pandemic, this has been delayed with no clear indication of a revised delivery agreement.

1.3.6.2 The following planning policies set out in the Conwy Local Development Plan 2007 - 2022 (Conwy County Borough Council, 2013) are of relevance to the LVIA:

Strategic policy NTE/1 – The natural environment

1.3.6.3 *'In seeking to support the wider economic and social needs of the Plan Area, the Council will seek to regulate development so as to conserve and, where possible, enhance the Plan Area's natural environment, countryside and coastline. This will be achieved by (inter alia):*

- *Safeguarding the Plan Area's biodiversity, geology, habitats, history and landscapes through the protection and enhancement of sites of international, national, regional and local importance, in line with Policy DP/6 – National Planning Policy and Guidance*
- *Where appropriate and necessary, improving the quality of statutory and non-statutory landscapes and areas of biodiversity value affected by development, through management agreements, habitat connectivity, improved planting, landscape and maintenance specifications, in line with the Development Principal Policies and Policy NTE/3 – 'Biodiversity'*
- *Respecting, retaining or enhancing the local character and distinctiveness of the individual Special Landscape Areas in line with Policy NTE/4 – 'The Landscape and Protecting Special Landscape Areas' and as shown on the Proposals Map'.*

NTE/4 - The landscape and protecting Special Landscape Areas

1.3.6.4 *'1. Special Landscape Areas are shown on the proposal map and designated in the following locations:*

- *Great Orme and Creuddyn Peninsula*
- *Conwy Valley*
- *Abergele hinterland*
- *Elwy and Aled Valleys*
- *Hiraethog*
- *Cerrigydrudion and the A5 corridor.*

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2. In order to conserve the attributes of the Special Landscape Areas development proposals will have to show particular regard to the character of each locality in order to minimise their impact. Development will only be permitted if it is shown to be capable of being satisfactorily integrated into the landscape. In appropriate cases planning applications should be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to assess the visual and landscape impacts of the development.

3. All proposals, both within and outside Special Landscape Areas, will be considered against the Development Principles and other policies in the Plan designed to protect the environment and landscape character’.

NTE/5 - The Coastal Zone

1.3.6.5 ‘A Coastal Zone is defined on the Proposals Map. Development in the Coastal Zone, outside settlement boundaries, will only be permitted where the development:

- Specifically requires a coastal location
- Does not adversely affect the open character of the zone
- Does not adversely affect the nature conservation value of the zone with any effects identified mitigated for
- Does not detract from the tourism value or facilities
- Does not interfere with natural coastal processes
- Does not impede the function of any existing coastal defence structures
- Accords with the Development Principles of the Plan’.

1.3.7 Denbighshire County Council

Denbighshire County Council Adopted Local Development Plan 2006-2021 (adopted 2013)

1.3.7.1 Denbighshire County Council is preparing a new LDP to run from 2018-2033. The Preferred Strategy was published in May 2019 and due to be adopted in Autumn 2021 however due to the coronavirus pandemic, the has not been able to be adopted. The Delivery Agreement was revised in summer 2022, however it has not yet been published.

1.3.7.2 The follow planning policies set out in the Denbighshire County Council Adopted Local Development Plan (Denbighshire County Council, 2013) are of relevance to the LVIA:

Policy RD1 – Sustainable development and good standard design

1.3.7.3 ‘Development proposals will be supported within development boundaries provided that all the following (relevant) criteria are met:

- Respects the site and surroundings in terms of the siting, layout, scale, form, character, design, materials, aspect, micro-climate and intensity of use of land/buildings and spaces around and between buildings
- Does not unacceptably affect prominent public views into, out of, or across any settlement or area of open countryside
- Incorporates existing landscape or other features, takes account of site contours and changes in levels and prominent skylines

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- *Incorporates suitable landscaping measures, including where appropriate hard and soft landscaping treatment, the creation and/or protection of green and blue corridors, mature landscaping, and arrangements for subsequent maintenance. Landscaping should create a visually pleasant, sustainable and biodiversity rich environment that protects and enhances existing landscape features and also creates new features and areas of open space that reflect local character and sense of place’.*

Policy VOE2 – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Area of Outstanding Beauty

- 1.3.7.4 *‘In determining development proposals within or affecting the AONB and Area of Outstanding Beauty (AOB), development that would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the landscape and the reasons for designation will not be permitted’.*

1.4 References

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Appendix A: LVIA onshore study areas

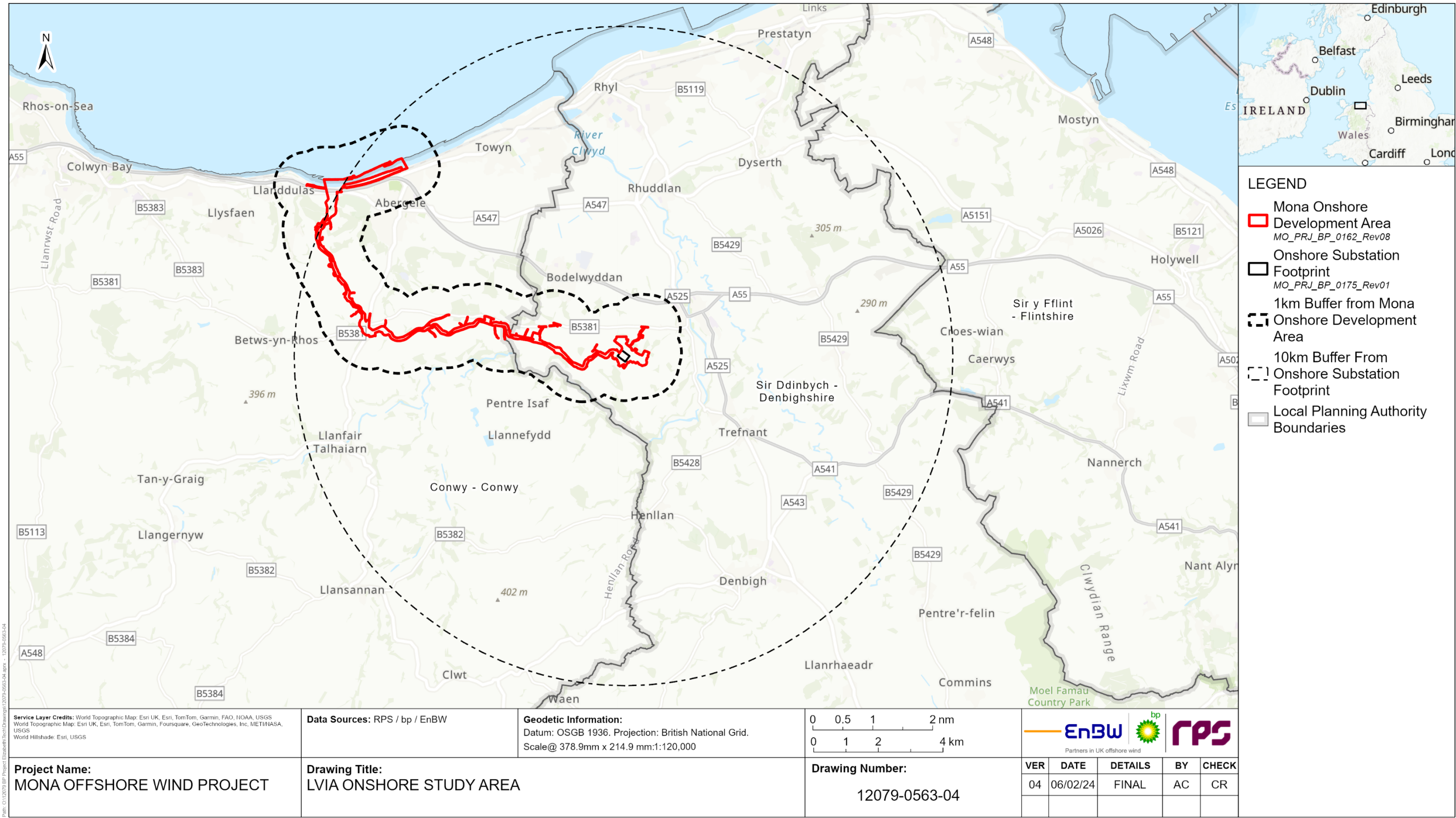


Figure A1: LVIA onshore study areas.