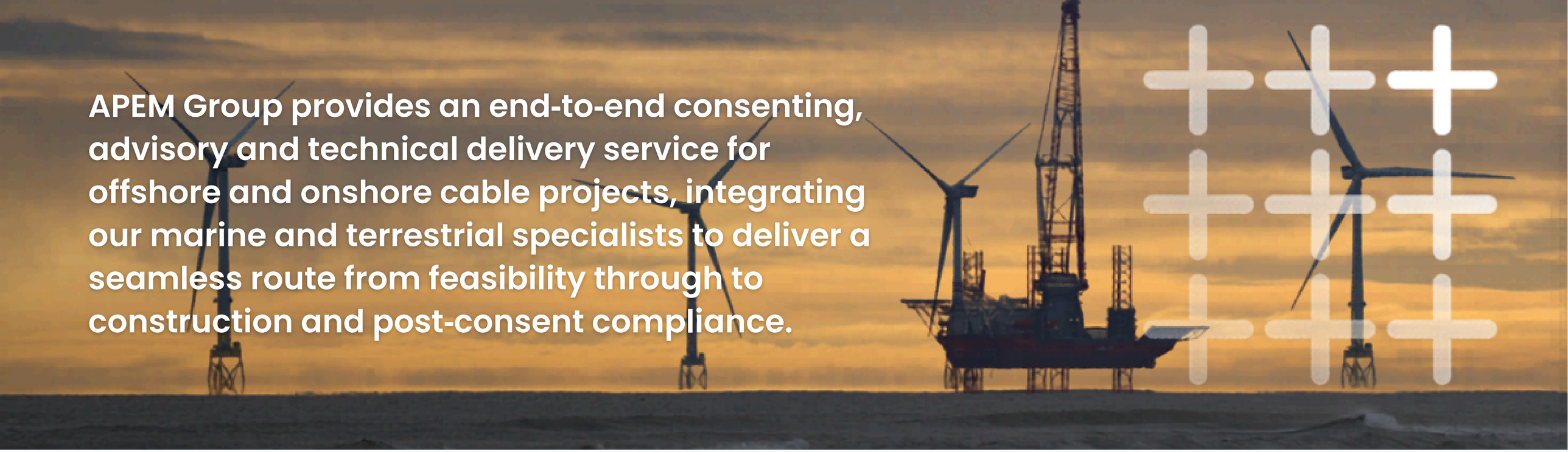
APEM Group

Cable Consent Process

UNITED KINGDOM



APEM Group provides an end-to-end consenting, advisory and technical delivery service for offshore and onshore cable projects, integrating our marine and terrestrial specialists to deliver a seamless route from feasibility through to construction and post-consent compliance.

Our teams work as one, removing the disconnect between onshore and offshore routing, environmental assessment and stakeholder engagement. The result is a single, coherent consenting strategy that reduces risk, accelerates delivery and supports robust decision-making.

With decades of experience and deep regulatory insight, APEM Group supports projects through complex and highly scrutinised cable corridors, providing clarity, structure and momentum at every stage. As pressures increase around landfall availability, grid capacity and cumulative impacts, successful cable development depends on proactive, coordinated approaches. APEM's integrated expertise ensures each stage – from feasibility and environmental assessment through to consultation, examination and post-consent monitoring – is connected, compliant and ready for delivery.

This infographic provides a clear overview of the end-to-end cable consenting process across the UK, showing how onshore and offshore activities align and how APEM's multidisciplinary teams deliver a unified route to consent.

Cable Consenting Process: England & Wales

KEY
- Offshore
- Onshore
- Offshore / Onshore

1 Early Studies

- **Consultation with shared stakeholders** on route development, alternatives and cumulative impacts.
- **Consider Water Framework Directive (WFD)** obligations.
- **Early discussions** with local authorities, landowners, National Grid and DNOs regarding feasible landing points and grid connection options.
- **Site selection studies** for cable landfall and offshore approach corridors.
- **Early-stage Cable Burial Risk Assessment** (CBRA).
- **Initial stakeholder mapping**, including local communities, navigation bodies, fisheries and NGOs.

2 Routing, Siting, Scoping & Optioneering

- **Collaborative routing refinement** between onshore and offshore teams to ensure technical continuity.
- **Consultation with shared stakeholders** on route development, alternatives and cumulative impacts.
- **Preparation for statutory scoping** by integrating cross environment technical inputs.
- **Determine the appropriate consent route** (Town & Country Planning / DCO / DNS (Wales).
- **Publish Scheme of Community Consultation** (SoCC for DCO projects) where required.
- Share **Preliminary Environmental Information** as part of early formal engagement.
- **Engage** The Crown Estate, MMO, navigation authorities and marine conservation **bodies on routing options.**
- Begin **formal scoping engagement** with PINS / MMO and marine consultees.

3 Assessment & Surveys

- **Environmental impact assessment workstreams** integrated across marine and terrestrial environments (EIAR / ES / HRA).
- **Assessment** of cumulative, environmental and navigational impacts.
- **Ongoing dialogue** with regulators and consultees to refine survey needs and data requirements.
- Commission **onshore environmental surveys** (ecology, noise, landscape, archaeology).
- **Ground investigation campaigns** to inform design and construction planning.
- Commission **geophysical and geotechnical surveys** to support seabed engineering.
- Offshore **route engineering studies** coordinated with onshore routing interfaces.

4 Design Refinement & EIA/HRA Assessment

- **Prepare and refine the EIAR, ES and supporting HRA** using integrated onshore–offshore data.
- **Respond to regulator questions**, requests for clarification and emerging evidence.
- **Assess onshore environmental and community impacts**, incorporating mitigation into refined design.
- **Assess offshore environmental, navigational, ecological and heritage impacts**, including CBRA refinements.

5 Application Preparation & Submission

- **Joint engagement sessions** with local authorities and marine statutory consultees prior to submission.
- **Preparation of the Planning Permission application** or DCO application documents, including the Environmental Statement / EIAR / HRA and supporting technical documentation.
- **Submit the Planning Permission application (to the Local Planning Authority)** or submit the DCO application to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), or submit to DNS (Welsh Ministers) for 10–350 MW onshore projects in Wales.
- **Submission of EIAR / ES / HRA documentation** to the relevant consenting authority (Planning Authority, PINS, or Welsh Ministers).
- **Submission of the Marine Licence and ES** to MMO (England) or Natural Resources Wales (NRW).
- **Application acceptance and progression to examination** (DCO projects only), including written representations and hearings (Both for DCO only).
- **Engagement with MMO / PINS** during acceptance and examination stages.

6 Examination & Determination

- **Participation in formal public hearings**, written representations, and technical issue specific meetings.
- **Provision of additional information requests** and clarifications to PINS/MMO.
- **Ongoing engagement** with regulators, statutory consultees, and stakeholders to resolve outstanding concerns.
- **Continued engagement** with local authorities, landowners, and communities during examination.
- **Coordination with maritime and navigation authorities** to resolve issues raised in examination.
- **Secretary of State / LPA / Welsh Ministers decision issued.**

7 Post Consent, Pre Construction & Construction

- **Discharge of consent conditions** and delivery of required pre commencement plans.
- **Ongoing compliance reporting** to regulators.
- **Monitoring of environmental impacts** and reporting results.
- **Secure land access** and prepare construction mitigation plans.
- **Begin construction** with agreed mitigation in place.
- **Maintain community engagement** throughout works.
- **Coordination with maritime authorities** for safe installation activities.
- Post construction **environmental monitoring.**

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Cable Consenting Process: Scotland

KEY
- Offshore
- Onshore
- Offshore / Onshore

1 Early Studies

- **Identification of licence requirements,** including Section 36 Consent for generating stations over the relevant MW thresholds, and Marine Licence for offshore works.
- **Consultation with shared stakeholders** on route development, alternatives and cumulative impacts.
- Consider **Water Framework Directive (WFD)** obligations.
- **Project Design Envelope** definition.
- **Consult Crown Estate Scotland** for leasing.
- **Site selection studies** for cable landfall and offshore approach corridors.
- **Engage with marine infrastructure consultees.**
- **Early-stage Cable Burial Risk Assessment** (CBRA).
- **Initial stakeholdermapping,** including local communities, navigation bodies, fisheries and NGOs.

2 Routing, Siting, Scoping & Optioneering

- **Collaborative routing refinement** between onshore and offshore teams to ensure technical continuity.
- **Consultation with shared stakeholders** on route development, alternatives and cumulative impacts.
- **Preparation for statutory scoping** by integrating cross environment technical inputs.
- **Engage with statutory consultees**
- **Share data with regulatory authorities** on routing options.
- **Confirm Marine Licence requirements** under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 for offshore cable installation.
- **Engage** with community panels and local authorities.

3 Assessment & Surveys

- **Environmental impact assessment workstreams** integrated across marine and terrestrial environments (EIAR / ES / HRA).
- **Assessment** of cumulative, environmental and navigational impacts.
- **Ongoing dialogue** with regulators and consultees to refine survey needs and data requirements.
- **Commission onshore environmental surveys** (ecology, noise, landscape, archaeology).
- **Ground investigation campaigns** to inform design and construction planning.
- Commission **geophysical and geotechnical surveys** to support seabed engineering.
- Offshore **route engineering studies** coordinated with onshore routing interfaces.
- **Marine Protected Area (MPA) assessment.**

4 Design Refinement & EIA/HRA Assessment

- **Prepare and refine the EIAR, ES and supporting HRA** using integrated onshore–offshore data.
- **Respond to regulator questions**, requests for clarification and emerging evidence.
- **Prepare the Section 36 application materials** and, Planning Permission application (if applicable).
- **Assess onshore environmental and community impacts,** incorporating mitigation into refined design.
- **Assess offshore environmental, navigational, ecological and heritage impacts,** including CBRA refinements.
- Prepare cable crossing agreements.

5 Application Preparation & Submission

- **Joint engagement sessions** with local authorities and marine statutory consultees prior to submission.
- **Preparation of the Section 36 application materials,** including the EIAR/HRA and supporting technical documentation.
- **Preparation of the Planning Permission application** for the Local Planning Authority, unless seeking deemed planning permission from Scottish Ministers.
- **Prepare the Marine Licence application package,** including EIAR/HRA and supporting documentation, for submission to Marine Directorate - Licensing Operations Team (MD-LOT)
- **Submit Section 36 application** to ECU (for Scottish Ministers).
- **Submit the Planning Permission application** to the Local Planning Authority (if applicable).
- **Submit the Marine Licence application** to (MD-LOT) (Offshore).
- **Participate in public hearings and written representation processes** (if required).

6 Examination & Determination

- **Participation in formal public hearings,** written representations, and technical issue specific meetings (if required).
- **Provision of additional information requests** and clarifications to support review by NatureScot and Scottish Ministers.
- **Ongoing engagement** with regulators, statutory consultees, and stakeholders to resolve outstanding concerns.
- **The Energy Consents Unit (ECU) administers the review and examination** process on behalf of Scottish Ministers.
- **Continued engagement** with local authorities, landowners, and communities during examination.
- **Address issues** related to installation of cable protection measures.
- **Coordination with maritime and navigation authorities** to resolve issues raised in examination.

7 Post Consent, Pre Construction & Construction

- **Discharge of consent conditions** and delivery of required pre commencement plans.
- **Ongoing compliance reporting** to regulators.
- **Monitoring of environmental impacts** and reporting results.
- **Secure land access** and prepare construction mitigation plans.
- Provide **Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) support.**
- **Begin construction with mitigation in place.**
- **Maintain community engagement** throughout works.
- **Coordination with maritime authorities** for safe installation activities.
- Post construction **environmental monitoring.**

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Cable Consenting Process: Northern Ireland

KEY
- Offshore
- Onshore
- Offshore / Onshore

1 Early Studies

- **Identify whether the project requires Planning Permission only, or Planning Permission plus Article 39 Consent** (for ≥10 MW generating stations).
- **Consultation with shared stakeholders** on route development, alternatives and cumulative impacts.
- **Consider Water Framework Directive (WFD)** obligations.
- **Engage early with System Operator** for Northern Ireland (SONI) / Northern Ireland Electricity(NIE) Networks.
- **Engage with** Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) **Marine & Fisheries Division.**
- **Engage with fisheries representatives.**

2 Routing, Siting, Scoping & Optioneering

- **Collaborative routing refinement between onshore and offshore teams to ensure technical continuity.**
- **Engage with local councils** for planning advice.
- **Consult DAERA** for environmental and regulatory guidance.
- **Conduct EIA screening and scoping** under NI EIA Regulations 2017.
- **Assessment** of cumulative, environmental and navigational impacts.
- **Ongoing dialogue** with regulators and consultees to refine survey needs and data requirements.
- **Engage with landowners and NIE Networks** regarding wayleave options.
- **Refine onshore routing and landfall options.**
- **Engage with DAERA Marine & Fisheries Division** regarding offshore routing and marine environmental considerations.

3 Assessment & Surveys

- **Environmental impact assessment workstreams** integrated across marine and terrestrial environments (EIAR / ES / HRA).
- **Assessment** of cumulative, environmental and navigational impacts.
- **Ongoing dialogue** with regulators and consultees to refine survey needs and data requirements.
- **Engage with DAERA, DfI and NIEA** for ecological and environmental input.
- Commission **onshore environmental surveys** (ecology, noise, landscape, archaeology).
- **Ground investigation campaigns** to inform design and construction planning.
- **Confirm whether a Marine Licence is required.**
- **Commission geophysical and geotechnical surveys.**
- **Offshore route engineering studies** coordinated with onshore routing interfaces.

4 Design Refinement & EIA/HRA Assessment

- **Prepare and refine the EIAR, ES and supporting HRA** using integrated onshore–offshore data.
- **Respond to regulator questions**, requests for clarification and emerging evidence.
- **Prepare the Section 39 / 40 application materials** and, Planning Permission application (if applicable).
- **Assess onshore environmental and community impacts,** incorporating mitigation into refined design.
- Prepare **Habitat Management Plan.**
- **Assess offshore environmental, navigational, ecological and heritage impacts,** including CBRA refinements.

5 Application Preparation & Submission

- **Joint engagement sessions with local** authorities and marine statutory consultees prior to submission.
- **Prepare the Planning Permission application** (including the Environmental Statement) for submission to the Local Planning Authority or the Department for Infrastructure, depending on project size.
- **Submit the Planning Permission application,** including the Environmental Statement.
- **Prepare the Article 39 Consent application** (required for electricity generating stations ≥10 MW or any offshore generating station ≥1 MW).
- **Apply for electricity consents** under Articles 39 / 40.
- **Secure wayleave agreements** under Article 40.
- **Prepare the Marine Licence application** for submission to DAERA Marine & Fisheries Division (required for all offshore works).
- **Submit the Marine Licence application** to DAERA.

6 Examination & Determination

- **Participate in any public inquiry** called by DfI for major or regionally significant developments (if required).
- **Engage with DAERA and DfI** during consent decision processes.
- **Planning and electricity consents** determined by DAERA / DfI.
- **Ongoing engagement** with regulators, statutory consultees, and stakeholders to resolve outstanding concerns.
- **Continued engagement** with local authorities, landowners, and consultees during the assessment of planning and Article 39 applications.
- **Marine licence reviewed** by DAERA and issued with conditions.

7 Post Consent, Pre Construction & Construction

- **Discharge of consent conditions** and delivery of required pre commencement plans.
- **Monitoring of environmental impacts** and reporting results.
- **Prepare and submit construction environmental management plans** and method statements as required by planning conditions or marine licence conditions.
- **Secure land access** and prepare construction mitigation plans.
- **Begin construction** with agreed mitigation in place.
- **Maintain community engagement** throughout works.
- **Engage with DAERA Marine Licensing** team
- **Maintain engagement** with fisheries and marine stakeholders

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APEM Group delivers end-to-end support across the entire cable consenting lifecycle. Our integrated approach brings together marine and terrestrial specialists to create a single, coherent pathway from feasibility through to construction and into operation. This removes the disconnect that often slows projects, reduces duplication, and ensures decisions are informed by the full onshore–offshore context.

- Connecting onshore and offshore teams so routing, surveys and assessments align from day one.
- Anticipating regulatory needs early, reducing the risk of surprises during examination.
- Designing proportionate, targeted survey strategies that save time and reduce unnecessary cost.
- Strengthening applications with clear evidence, well-reasoned routing decisions and high-quality reporting.
- Providing momentum when projects stall, offering transition support and issue resolution to get programmes back on track.
- Drawing on deep stakeholder insight, built from long-standing relationships with regulators, statutory bodies, fisheries, navigation authorities and local communities.

The result is a consenting strategy that is robust, defensible and aligned with project objectives, and a smoother, more efficient journey to consent.

Cable consenting faces pressures that differ from typical offshore wind or onshore infrastructure projects. Space is tightening, scrutiny is increasing and the consequences of misalignment are significant.

Key challenges include:

Highly constrained landfalls

Crowded marine corridors

Rising stakeholder expectations

Regulators under increasing workload

Risks created by onshore/offshore disconnects

APEM Group's integrated model directly addresses these issues by ensuring that **route planning, environmental assessment, and stakeholder engagement evolve together;** not as siloed workstreams.

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Future Insight

The UK's energy landscape is evolving rapidly, and cable infrastructure is set to become even more complex. Developers who plan for this future now will be better positioned to secure timely consents in increasingly challenging environments.

Looking ahead, projects will need to respond to:

- **More interconnectors, more cable routes and greater competition** for the same landfall and seabed space.
- **Increasing cumulative environmental pressure**, requiring more strategic route optimisation and stronger justification and more complex mitigation approaches.
- **A shift toward offshore grid integration**, including:
  - multi-user cable corridors
  - future offshore energy hubs
  - potential floating substations
- **Expectations for long-term compatibility**, meaning today's routing and design choices must anticipate tomorrow's infrastructure.
- **Greater emphasis on resilience**, including seabed risk management, climate adaptation and navigational safety.
- APEM Group continues to invest in the expertise and insight needed to help clients **prepare for this future**, ensuring cable projects remain viable, adaptable and technically defensible as the UK's offshore and onshore grid evolves.