Agenda Item	**6.2**
Report No	**PLS-06-22**

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: South Planning Applications Committee

Date: 08 February 2022

Report Title: 21/04080/S36: SSE Generation Limited

Glenmoriston Estate, North of Levishie, Invermoriston

Report By: Area Planning Manager – South

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Bhlaraidh wind farm extension - Erection and Operation of Wind Farm for period of 50 years, comprising of 18 Wind Turbines with maximum blade tip height 180m, access tracks, borrow pits, substation, control building, and ancillary infrastructure

Ward: 12 – Aird And Loch Ness

Development category: Major

Reason referred to Committee: Major Development

All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal accords with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is acceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations.

Recommendation

Members are asked to agree the recommendation to **RAISE NO OBJECTION** to the application, subject to the removal of three turbines (Turbines 13, 14 and 18) as set out in section 11 of the report.

1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

1.1 The Highland Council has been consulted by the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU) on an application made under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 (as amended). The proposed development comprises;

- Up to 18 no. Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs) with a tip height of up to 180m – AOD would range from 441m (T15) to 533m (T3). An elevation drawing of a typical turbine is illustrated in Figure 2.7.
- Crane hardstanding and associated laydown area for each wind turbine.
- On site access tracks, of which approximately 10.1km are new access tracks and approximately 13.7km are existing tracks where upgrades may be required.
- On-site substation buildings which will measure approx. 55m by 25m and 12m in height, the compound will measure approx. 150m by 130m.
- A network of underground cabling to connect each wind turbine to the on-site substation, two cross country cables are proposed between T1 and T2 (approx. 700m in length) and between T14 and T15 (approx. 450m in length).
- A LiDAR unit to collect meteorological and wind speed data and associated hard standing.
- Watercourse crossings.

In addition, the construction phase would require the following temporary facilities:

- Two temporary construction compound areas, including welfare facilities, site cabins, and parking.
- Batching plant facilities for temporary concrete batching plants.
- Borrow pits – plans include up to 8 search areas, including three which were used to construct the Levishie hydroelectric scheme.

While the proposed turbines are over 150m the applicant has reached an agreement with the Civil Aviation Authority the visible aviation lighting is not required.

1.2 The grid connection from the on-site substation to the National Grid would be subject to a separate consent application by the network operator. Details of the grid connection are undefined at this time, but it is anticipated that the grid connection would be made to the Fort Augustus substation.

1.3 Access to the site will be via the existing access tracks constructed for the Bhlaraidh Wind Farm and includes the existing site entrance off the A82. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be prepared and agreed with the Council and Transport Scotland prior to works commencing. It is proposed that all abnormal turbine loads will originate from Kyleakin/Kyle of Lochalsh and Inverness and access the site via the A82/A87/A887.

1.4 The applicant has requested a micro-siting allowance of 50m for site infrastructure (tracks, turbine locations, underground cables and crane hard standing areas) this is to avoid or minimise environmental or engineering constraints identified during pre-construction ground investigation or construction phase excavation works. The final design of the turbines (colours and finish), aviation lighting, substation, welfare and store buildings/compounds/ancillary electrical equipment, landscaping and fencing etc. are expected to be agreed with the Planning Authority and the Energy Consents Unit, by condition, at the time of project procurement. Whilst indicative drawings for these elements are set out in the application, turbine manufacturers regularly update the designs that are available, thereby necessitating the need for some flexibility in the approved design details.

1.5 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the applicant was unable to hold on-site public consultation events. Following consultation with the community councils, it was agreed that the information that would have been presented at the public exhibitions in Spring 2020 would be published on a Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension section of the applicant's website. A postcard, providing a summary of the Proposed Development and details of how to access the web space, was distributed via mail to household and business addresses within the three community council areas of Fort Augustus & Glenmoriston, Glen Urquhart and Strathglass in June 2020.

1.6 A follow up virtual exhibition was held in 2021, with an eight-page newsletter, containing information on the proposed development and details of how to access the virtual exhibition, being distributed to households and residents in the three community council areas. Invitations were extended via email to constituency MP and MSPs, local authority councillors and community councils within the consultation area. The online exhibition was available for public access from 24 February to 12 March 2021. Live Chat sessions were conducted from 10am to noon on 24, 25 and 26 February. At the request of Glen Urquhart Community Council, further live chat sessions were added on 10 March from 10am to noon and from 2-4pm. Feedback on the consultation events is contained within the submitted Pre-Application Consultation Report.

1.7 Pre-Application Consultation: The applicant sought formal pre-application advice from the Planning Authority in 2019 (19/01917/PREMAJ). The scheme presented at the pre-application stage was for a wind farm comprising up to 41 new wind turbines with a tip height of up to 180m. The below is the summary of the advice provided to the applicant:

"Whilst the Council is supportive of renewable energy developments in principle, this must be balanced against the environmental impact of development. It is considered that this proposal has certain positive aspects.

This is a technically challenging site, however the majority of the challenges have been overcome through the original Bhlaraidh proposal and advice is provided throughout this pack on the impact of the turbines proposed through the extension.

The operational Bhlariadh Wind Farm does have a visual impact in close proximity (e.g. from Meal Fuar Mhonaid) and can be seen from elevated positions on the south side of Loch Ness. However, this is limited due to the mitigation secured through the design of the scheme. There is concern that the extension as currently proposed would undo the previously secured mitigation, have an impact on the

setting of Loch Ness and not accord with the established pattern of wind energy development.

Further the increase in blade tip height and rotor diameter will increase the visual impact of the proposal and potentially have an impact on with qualities of the wild land areas. These matters need to be thoroughly assessed and mitigation identified through the design process. There is concern that turbines of this scale would be out of keeping with the existing pattern of onshore wind energy development based on the proposals submitted to the Planning Authority.

While this would be an extension to an existing wind farm and some of the original supporting information may be used as background information, it must be recognised that a full suite of supporting documentation will be required to facilitate the consideration of any forthcoming application. This should take into consideration the advice contained within this pre-application advice pack."

1.8 The application is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) which includes chapters on Planning Policy; Landscape and Visual Impacts (including ZTVs, wireframes and visualisations); Ecology; Ornithology; Hydrology and Hydrogeology; Geology and Soils, Cultural Heritage; Traffic and Transport; Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism, Noise, Carbon Balance, Aviation and Radar and other issues. The application is also accompanied by Technical Appendices, a Pre-Application Consultation Report, an EIA Non-Technical Summary (NTS), a Design and Access Statement and a Planning Statement.

1.9 The wind farm has an expected operational life of 50 years. Following this a further planning application would be required to determine any future re-powering proposal the site, which may include retention of the development. If the decision is made to decommission the wind farm, the detailed method and extent of the decommissioning activities would need to be agreed via a decommissioning method statement. Decommissioning is expected to take approximately 12 months.

1.10 The applicant anticipates that the wind farm construction period will last 18 months. A Construction Environment Management Document (CEMP) will be in place during the construction phase. This would also include a programme of site reinstatement which would allow for the rehabilitation of disturbed areas as early as possible.

1.11 Variations: No formal variations have been made to the application since submission, however, the applicant has agreed in principle to the following variations suggested on the basis that the Council raise no objection to the application:

- Removal of turbines 13, 14 and 18 and any associated infrastructure.

The rationale for this request is detailed later in this report.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The application site is located to the north-west of Loch Ness and the Great Glen, on a high rocky plateau. The proposal is located on adjacent land to the east of the operational 32 turbine Bhlaraidh Wind Farm. As detailed in the EIAR this open, undulating moorland includes several rocky outcrops, small hills, many lochs, lochans, watercourses, areas of bog, tracks, hydroelectric infrastructure, and turbines of the existing Bhlaraidh Wind Farm. To the west, this plateau transitions to a rugged, exposed landscape of large mountains, while to the north and south, there are the wooded glens of Glen Urquhart and Glen Moriston, and to the north, the farmed broad Strathglass valley. The low-lying areas of the glens and river valleys contain the majority of settlement and transport infrastructure. The site area measures approximately 1,107ha and is predominantly moorland owned by Glenmoriston Estate. The built development of the wind farm would be a much smaller area of approximately 13.17ha.

2.2 The site itself is not covered by any statutory international, national, regional or local landscape-related designations. The Cairngorms National Park is located approx. 25.7km from the site. The nearest statutory designation to the site is the Glen Affric National Scenic Area (NSA) which is located approximately 11.6km from the site. There are two further National Scenic Areas within the wider study area, Glen Strathfarrar NSA which is located approx. 11.4km from the development and Kintail NSA which is located 34.5km from the scheme. The closest Wild Land Area (WLA) is WLA 25: Central Highlands which is 10.6km to the site with a further five WLAs within the wider study area. Whilst WLAs are not designated landscapes, they are afforded protection through Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). In terms of local landscape designations, the closest Special Landscape Areas (SLA) is the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA which is approx. 1.9km from the site and the Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA which is 10.7km. There are a further four SLAs within the wider study area.

2.3 There are no statutory designated nature conservation sites for ecological features occur within the Site boundary of the proposed development. The following designations are within 10km of the site.

- Levishie Wood SSSI - 1.4km to the south of the turbines
- River Moriston SAC - 2.51km to the south of the turbines
- Ness Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) - 6.30km to the south-east
- Easter Ness Forest SSSI - 6.30km to the south-east
- Loch Knockie and Nearby Lochs SPA/ Knockie Lochs SSSI – 6.7km to the south.
- North Inverness Lochs SPA – 7.7km to the northwest
- Dubh Lochs SSSI – 7.7km to the northwest
- Glen Affric to Strathconon SPA/ Glen Affric SSSI - 7.9km northwest

- Glen Affric National Nature Reserve (NNR) 8.31km to the north west
- Strathglass Complex SAC - 9.22km
- Glen Affric SSSI – 9.22km
- Loch Bran SSSI - 9.84km to the south-east

2.4 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings or Conservation Areas within the application site. Within 5km from the Site, there is one Scheduled Monument, one Category A Listed Building, seven Category B Listed Buildings and two Category C Listed Buildings. Between 5km and 10km from the Site, there are a further seven Scheduled Monuments and five Category A Listed Buildings.

2.5 When considering wind farm projects consideration is also given to the issue of cumulative impact of any project with other operational or consented schemes within the surrounding landscape. The following table outlines the schemes within 25km of the site.

Site Name	No. of Turbines	Tip Height (m)	Location and Distance from the Proposed Development
Operational Sites			
Bhlaraidh Wind Farm	32	125/135	0.4km
Corrimony Wind Farm	5	100	4.3km
Millennium Wind Farm	26	115/125	15.1km
Corriegarth Wind Farm	23	120	17.1km
Stronelairg Wind Farm	66	125/135	17.7km
Beinneun Wind Farm	25	133.5	19.6km
Beinneun Wind Farm Extension	7	136	19.9km
Dunmaglass Wind Farm	33	120	21.5km
Farr	40	100	32.2km
Glen Kyllachy	20	110	31.1km
Consented / Sites Under Construction			
Millennium South Wind Farm	10	132	16.0km
Dell Wind Farm	14	130.5	16.8km
Aberarder Wind Farm	12	130	23.1km

Application / Appeal Sites			
Corriegarth 2 Wind Farm	18	149.9	16.5km
Cloiche Wind Farm	36	149.9	17.3km
Glenshero Wind Farm	39	35	21.9km

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1	17.01.2014	12/02556/S36: 36 Turbines (108MW Installed Capacity) Bhlaraidh Wind Farm, Invermoriston	Approved by Scottish Ministers
3.2	23.08.2019	19/03373/SCOP: Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension	Scoping Application Decision Issued
3.3	14.03.2016	16/00482/FUL: Relocate Borrow Pit 3 at Bhlaraidh Wind Farm	Planning Permission Granted
3.4	29.06.2016	16/01998/FUL: Relocate the previously consented borrow pit no 8	Planning Permission Granted
3.5	19.09.2018	18/03690/FUL: Retention of lower construction compound for the use of parking and forestry laydown area (retrospective).	Planning Permission Granted
3.6	25.06.2019	19/01917/PREMAJ: Proposed to be over 50MW, comprising turbines with a tip height of up to 180m and a rotor diameter of up to 150m	Advice Issued
3.7	30.04.2021	21/01826/PAN: Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension - Erection and Operation of a Wind Farm, comprising of 18 Wind Turbines with a maximum blade tip height 180m, access tracks, two temporary construction compounds, borrow pits, substation, and ancillary infrastructure	
3.8	11.10.2021	21/03253/FUL: Erection of 70m high meteorological mast	Planning Permission Granted

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.1 Advertised: EIA Development

Date Advertised:

20.08.2021 in The Edinburgh Gazette and The Herald.
20.08.2021 and 27.08.2021 in The Press & Journal and The Inverness Courier.

Representation deadline: 27.09.2021

Representations received by The Highland Council	1 objection comment received 10 support comments
Representations received by Energy Consents Unit	1 objection comment received 16 support comments

4.2 Matters considerations raised by those objecting to the development:

- Visual and Landscape Impacts – including cumulative and scale of turbines
- Impacts upon Wild Land Area 24.
- Impact upon wildlife
- Impacts from construction
- Adverse transportation impacts
- Impact upon tourism
- Policy position does not allow development at any cost to the environment.
- Not in compliance with the Development Plan
- Provisions of the Electricity Act 1989 are not met.

4.3 Matters considerations raised by those in support of the development:

- Economic benefit
- Benefit of the proposal in relation to the climate change emergency and road to net zero
- Appropriate to extend existing schemes if constraints and potential negative impacts can be addressed/ mitigated
- Limited change in visual influence of turbines.

4.4 Non-material considerations raised in representations:

- Community Benefit

4.5 All letters of representation are available for inspection via the Council's eplanning portal accessed through the internet at www.wam.highland.gov.uk/wam.

5. CONSULTATIONS

Consultations undertaken by The Highland Council

5.1 **Glen Urquhart Community Council** objects to the application on the following grounds.

- scheme will spoil views to the west;
- Development is in a sensitive area with many lochans and peat areas – it considers that this will be damaged by construction (roads and crane pads) and ongoing maintenance access. Further it considers, the development will have an impact upon flora and fauna, particularly in relation to access for amphibians and fish life in the area;
- There are a number of re-wilding projects currently being planned for surrounding areas – it considers that expansion of this development could have an adverse impact on these projects, and a balance should be sought between the potentially conflicting projects;
- Visual impact - from the top of a Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, it considers the It notes that there are currently a significant number of windfarm projects currently planned around Loch Ness, and surrounding areas. It considers that projects which can store energy from wind such as pump storage schemes should be given greater consideration to ensure security of supply. It is of the view that rather than expansion of windfarms consideration needs to be given to alternative renewable energy generation schemes.

5.2 **Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Council** object to the application. It is concerned that public access is adversely affected has had a detrimental effect on how local people are able to access the countryside for recreation. It hopes that this proposed development would honour public access and hopefully enhance it once the development is finished. It has concerns over the increase in height of the turbines from 135m to 180m in the proposed extension as these will need to be lit for aviation safety purposes and would cause light pollution in a dark sky environment. It raises concerns regarding the increase in traffic through the local communities.

5.3 **Strathglass Community Council** objects to the application. It raises concerns with regards to: impacts on peat; impacts on the Glen Affric NSA and NNR in terms of nature and visual impacts; adverse economic impacts due to visual impacts on Glen Affric; and adverse impacts upon wild land areas and the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig Special Landscape Area. It considers these impacts would be as a result of the development on its own as well as cumulatively with other developments around the area.

5.4 **Access Officer** does not object to the application. He welcomes the submission of an Outdoor Access Plan. He disagrees with the assessment as to the effect of the development from Meal Fuar Mhonaidh which he considers to be significant. To mitigate this the development and implementation of plans to upgrade and maintain the path up to Meall Fuar Mhonaidh should be financed and delivered by such schemes. In addition, he requests a condition to secure a finalised Outdoor Access Plan.

5.5 **Development Plans Team** do not object to the application. It outlines the applicable Development Plan policies and wider policy assessment.

5.6 **Environmental Health Officer** does not object to the application. He considers that given the distance to receptors and the adherence to a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) construction noise is not likely to be a significant issue. He recommends a planning condition to control operational including cumulative noise limits based on the simplified criterion described in ETSU-R-97, limiting noise levels at the nearest noise sensitive properties to no more than 2dB above the predicated levels within Tables 11.9 and 11.10 of the EIAR. He requests a condition for the monitoring of water quality with regard to private water supplies and a contingency plan in the event of an adverse impact occurring.

5.7 **Flood Risk Management Team** do not object to the application and have no comments to make.

5.8 **Forestry Team** do not object to the application and confirm that there are no areas of woodland that would be affected by the proposals

5.9 **Historic Environment Team** do not object to the application and are satisfied that direct impacts have been designed out of the proposal. It considers that the potential for unrecorded buried remains to survive is not such that mitigation is recommended in this case.

5.10 **Transport Planning Team** do not object to the application. It recommends conditions to secure: a construction traffic management plan (CTMP), which will include a risk assessment for transportation during daylight and hours of darkness, proposed management and mitigation within any settlements along the access route, contingency plan prepared by the abnormal load haulier, monitoring of road conditions during the construction period, protocol for the delivery of abnormal loads, conclusion of a Section 96 wear and tear agreement under the Roads Scotland Act; a programme of notification of any maintenance which may involve HGV / abnormal load movements during the operational life of the development.

Consultations Undertaken by The Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU)

5.11 **Aberdeen International Airport** do not object to the application and have no comments to make.

5.12 **British Horse Society** do not object to the application. It notes that projects such as this provide opportunities to improve connections and resolve problems of access, transport and travel.

5.13 **British Telecom** do not object to the application.

5.14 **Crown Estate Scotland** do not object to the application. It confirms that the assets of Crown Estate Scotland are not affected by the proposal.

5.15 **Historic Environment Scotland (HES)** do not object to the application and are content that there would be no direct physical impact on any assets within their

remit. It is also content that the development would not affect the integrity of the setting of the scheduled monuments in the surrounding area.

5.16 **Joint Radio Company** do not object to the application and does not foresee any potential problems based on known interference scenarios.

5.17 **Ministry of Defence, Defence Infrastructure Organisation** do not object to the application, but request a condition requiring the submission of an aviation lighting scheme and that they are notified at least 14 days prior to the commencement of the development.

5.18 **Mountaineering Scotland** confirmed that they have no comments to make on the application.

5.19 **National Air Traffic Services Safeguarding (NATS)** do not object to the application. It notes that the proposal does not conflict with its safeguarding criteria.

5.20 **NatureScot** do not object to the application. In relation to the River Moriston Special Area of Conservation (SAC), it notes that there is potential for construction-related pollution to affect the qualifying interests of the SAC, however, the proposal could be progressed with appropriate mitigation secured via a planning condition.

It explains that the proposal would have significant adverse effects on golden eagle at the regional scale, this will result in a slowing in the regions ability to recover to a favourable conservation status. In relation to the Loch Ruthven, West Inverness-shire Lochs and Loch Knockie and Nearby Lochs SPAs, it confirms that the development will not have an adverse effect on these SPAs.

In relation to peatland habitat, it advises that a more ambitious restoration proposals would be more appropriate to mitigate any potential loss.

It agrees with the EIAR assessment that impacts upon the Landscape Character Areas, the National Scenic Area and Wild Land Areas will not be significant. It agrees with the applicants assessment that the potential visual impacts will be from Suidhe viewpoint and B862 of Foyers. However, it also considers that effects from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh will be significant. It welcomes the effort put into mitigating the effects of visible turbine lighting by the applicant, in gaining agreement with the Civil Aviation Authority that visible lighting is not necessary on any of the turbines this mitigates potentially significant landscape impacts on nationally important. We recommend a condition is applied which ensures any turbine lighting fitted is invisible to the naked eye.

5.21 **Scottish Forestry** do not object to the application.

5.22 **Scottish Water** do not object to the application. It notes that the proposal may impact on existing Scottish Water assets and this requires to be discussed between the applicant and Scottish Water. It notes that there are no drinking water or water abstraction sources that would be affected by the proposed development.

5.23 **Scottish Environment Protection Agency** do not object to the application but require planning conditions to secure a finalised Peat Management Plan, adherence to the mitigation measure outlined in chapter 16 and the Outline Environmental Management Plan. In addition, it requires the implementation of the design changes

and further actions outlined in Table 5.5.4 of Appendix 5.5 to limit impact on high quality habitat. Micro-siting of up to 50m should not onto peat deeper than currently shown in the submission.

It requires that the M11 mire habitat identified in Target Note 2 on Figure 5.6 shall be physically marked on site so that it can be suitably protected from disturbance during construction. It requests that adherence to a finalised Habitat Management Plan is secured with no less than 6.93 ha of peatland improvement works but would encourage the developer to try and delivery significantly more than will be directly and indirectly lost.

It highlights that any new watercourse crossings shall be designed following the recommendations in the Watercourse Crossing Schedule (Appendix 9.1) with single span bridges designed to pass the 1 in 200-year flood plus an allowance for climate change.

It requests that borrow pits are restored at the end of the construction phase and a finalised Decommissioning and Restoration Plan with proposals in line with SEPAs Guidance on the life extension and decommissioning of onshore wind farms shall be secured.

It has set out that the proposal is “capable” of being authorised under the Controlled Activities Regulations authorisation process.

5.24 **Transport Scotland** do not object to the application. It requests conditions to secure visibility splays from the access, a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), details of the final abnormal road route, any temporary traffic measures required must be undertaken by a quality assured traffic management consultant and wheel washing facilities.

6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

The following policies are relevant to the assessment of the application

6.1 Highland Wide Local Development Plan 2012

28 - Sustainable Design
29 - Design Quality & Place-making
30 - Physical Constraints
31 - Developer Contributions
51 - Trees and Development
53 - Minerals
54 - Mineral Wastes
55 - Peat and Soils
56 - Travel
57 - Natural, Built & Cultural Heritage
58 - Protected Species
59 - Other important Species
60 - Other Importance Habitats
61 - Landscape
63 - Water Environment
64 - Flood Risk
65 - Waste Water Treatment

66 - Surface Water Drainage
67 - Renewable Energy Developments:

- Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage
- Other Species and Habitat Interests
- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Amenity at Sensitive Locations
- Safety and Amenity of Individuals and Individual Properties
- The Water Environment
- Safety of Airport, Defence and Emergency Service Operations
- The Operational Efficiency of Other Communications
- The Quantity and Quality of Public Access
- Other Tourism and Recreation Interests
- Traffic and Transport Interests

68 - "Community" Renewable Energy Developments
69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure
72 - Pollution
73 - Air Quality
77 - Public Access

Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMFLDP) (2015)

6.2 No policies or allocations relevant to the proposal are included in the adopted Local Development Plan. It does however confirm the boundaries of Special Landscape Areas within the plan's boundary.

The Highland Council Supplementary Guidance

Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance, Nov 2016 (OWESG)

6.3 The document provides additional guidance on the principles set out in HwLDP Policy 67 - Renewable Energy Developments and reflects the updated position on these matters as set out in Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). This document forms part of the Development Plan and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

6.4 The document includes a Spatial Framework, which is in line with Table 1 of SPP. The proposed site lies partially within Group 2, which are Areas of Significant Protection, this is due to the presence of Carbon Rich Soils, Deep Peat and Priority Peatland Habitat (CPP). CPP is a nationally important mapped environmental asset that indicates where the resource is likely to be found with a detailed peat assessment being required to guide development away from the most sensitive areas and help inform potential mitigation. The site is also partially within Group 3, which are areas with potential for wind farm development.

6.5 The document also contains the Landscape Sensitivity Appraisals which identifies Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways as well as Landscape Character Area sensitivities and guidance. This appraisal forms part of the statutorily adopted Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance. The site falls within the area covered by the Loch Ness study, with the turbine envelope for this application falling

within the Landscape Character Area (LCA) LN10 Separation of Glen Urquhart and Glen Moriston, Rocky Moorland Plateau.

Other Supplementary Guidance

6.6 The following Supplementary Guidance also forms a statutory part of the Development Plan and is considered pertinent to the determination of this application:

- Developer Contributions (November 2018)
- Flood Risk & Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)
- Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)
- Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (March 2013)
- Highland Renewable Energy Strategy & Planning Guidelines (May 2006)
- Managing Waste in New Developments (March 2013)
- Physical Constraints (March 2013)
- Special Landscape Area Citations (June 2011)
- Standards for Archaeological Work (March 2012)
- Trees, Woodlands and Development (Jan 2013)

7. OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 The Highland-wide Local Development Plan is currently under review and is at Main Issues Report Stage. It is anticipated the Proposed Plan will be published following publication of secondary legislation and National Planning Framework 4.

7.2 In addition, the Council has further advice on delivery of major developments in a number of documents. This includes Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (Aug 2010) and The Highland Council Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments (Jul 2016).

Scottish Government Planning Policy (SPP) and Guidance

7.3 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) advances principal policies on Sustainability and Placemaking, and subject policies on A Successful, Sustainable Place; A Low Carbon Place; A Natural, Resilient Place; and A Connected Place. It also highlights that the Development Plan continues to be the starting point of decision making on planning applications. The content of the SPP is a material consideration that carries significant weight, but not more than the Development Plan, although it is for the decision maker to determine the appropriate weight to be afforded to it in each case.

7.4 SPP sets out continued support for onshore wind. It requires Planning Authorities to progress, as part of the Development Plan process, a spatial framework identifying areas that are most likely to be most appropriate for onshore wind farms as a guide for developers and communities. It also lists likely considerations to be taken into account relative to the scale of the proposal and area characteristics

(Para. 169 of SPP).

7.5 Paragraph 170 of SPP sets out that areas identified for wind farms should be suitable for use in perpetuity. This means that even though the consent is time limited the use of the site for a wind farm must be considered as, to all intents and purposes, a permanent one. The implication of this is that operational effects should be considered as permanent, and their magnitude should not be diminished on the basis that the specific proposal will be subject to a time limited consent.

7.6 National Planning Framework 4 will, in due course, supersede Scottish Planning Policy and form part of the Development Plan. Draft National Planning Framework 4 was published in November 2021. It comprises four parts, summarised below:

- Part 1 – sets out an overarching spatial strategy for Scotland in the future. This includes priorities, spatial principles and action areas.
- Part 2 – sets out proposed national developments that support the spatial strategy.
- Part 3 – sets out policies for the development and use of land which are to be applied in the preparation of local development plans; local place plans; masterplans and briefs; and for determining the range of planning consents. It is clear that this part of the document should be taken as a whole, and all relevant policies should be applied to each application.
- Part 4 – provides an outline of how Scottish Government will implement the strategy set out in the document.

7.7 The Spatial Strategy sets out that we must embrace and deliver radical change so we can tackle and adapt to climate change, restore biodiversity loss, improve health and wellbeing, build a wellbeing economy and create great places. It makes it clear that new development and infrastructure will be required to meet the net zero targets by 2045. To facilitate this, it sets out that we must rebalance our planning system so that climate change and nature recovery are the primary guiding principles for all our decisions. It sets out that significant weight should be given to the global climate emergency when considering development proposals. The draft sets out that the planning system should support all forms of renewable energy development in principle. Specific to this proposal it states that development proposals to extend and expand existing wind farms should be supported unless the impacts identified (including cumulative effects) are unacceptable. It continues to highlight a range of considerations for renewable energy applications, similar to the existing provisions of Scottish Planning Policy.

Other Relevant National Guidance and Policy

7.8 A range of other national planning and energy policy and guidance is also relevant, including but not limited to the following:

- National Planning Framework for Scotland 3, NPF3
- Scottish Energy Strategy (Dec 2017)
- Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS, 2019)
- PAN 1/2011 - Planning and Noise (Mar 2011)
- Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (May 2017)

- PAN 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (Jan 2008)
- 2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy (Jun 2011)
- Onshore Wind Energy (Statement), Scottish Government (Dec 2017)
- Onshore Wind Energy (Statement) Refresh Consultation Draft, Scottish Government (October 2021)
- Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape, SNH (Aug 2017)
- Wind Farm Developments on Peat Lands, Scottish Government (Jun 2011)
- Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map, Scottish Government (May 2018)
- Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas, Technical Guidance, NatureScot (Sep2020)

8. PLANNING APPRAISAL

8.1 As explained, this application has been submitted to the Scottish Government for approval under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 (as amended). Should Ministers approve the development, it will receive deemed planning permission under Section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended). While not a planning application, the Council processes S36 applications in the same way as a planning application as a consent under the Electricity Act will carry with it deemed planning permission.

8.2 Schedule 9 of The Electricity Act 1989 contains considerations in relation to the impact of proposals on amenity and fisheries. These considerations mean the developer should:

- Have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest; and
- Reasonably mitigate any effect which the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects.

8.3 It should be noted that for applications under the Electricity Act 1989 that the Development Plan is just one of a number of considerations and Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 which requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, is not engaged.

Determining Issues

8.4 This means that the application requires to be assessed against all policies of the Development Plan relevant to the application, all national and local policy guidance and all other material considerations relevant to the application.

Planning Considerations

8.5 The key considerations in this case are:

a) compliance with the development plan and other planning policy

b) energy and economic benefits;

c) construction;

d) transport and access;

e) hydrology, hydrogeology and peat;

f) natural heritage (including ornithology);

g) built and cultural heritage;

h) design, landscape and visual impact (including wild land areas)

i) noise and shadow flicker;

j) telecommunications;

k) aviation;

l) decommissioning, and

m) other material considerations.

Development plan/other planning policy

8.6 The Development Plan comprises the adopted Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP), Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMFLDP) and all statutorily adopted supplementary guidance. The HwLDP was in place at the time of consideration and determination of the original application.

8.7 The principal HwLDP policy on which the application needs to be determined is Policy 67 - Renewable Energy. HwLDP Policy 67 sets out that renewable energy development should be well related to the source of the primary renewable resource needed for operation, the contribution of the proposed development in meeting renewable energy targets and positive/negative effects on the local and national economy as well as all other relevant policies of the Development Plan and other relevant guidance. In that context the Council will support proposals where it is satisfied, they are located, sited and designed such as they will not be significantly detrimental overall, individually or cumulatively with other developments having regard to 11 specified criteria (as listed in HwLDP Policy 67). Such an approach is consistent with the concept of Sustainable Design (HwLDP Policy 28) and aim of SPP to achieve the right development in the right place; it is not to allow development at any cost.

8.8 If the Council is satisfied that the proposal is not significantly detrimental overall, then the application will accord with the provisions of the HwLDP.

Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMFLDP) (2015)

8.9 No policies or allocations relevant to the proposal are included in the adopted Local Development Plan. Para 2.6 of the plan confirms the extent of the SLAs within the Inner Moray Firth area. The impact of this development on landscape is primarily assessed in the Design, Landscape and Visual Impact section of this report.

Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG)

8.10 The Council's OWESG is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The supplementary guidance does not provide additional tests in respect of the consideration of development proposals against Development Plan policy. However, it provides a clear indication of the approach the Council towards the assessment of proposals, and thereby aid consideration of applications for onshore wind energy proposals

8.11 The OWESG contains a Spatial Framework for wind energy as required by SPP. The proposed site lies partially within Group 2, which are Areas of Significant Protection, this is due to the presence of Carbon Rich Soils, Deep Peat and Priority Peatland Habitat (CPP). CPP is a nationally important mapped environmental asset that indicates where the resource is likely to be found with a detailed peat assessment being required to guide development away from the most sensitive areas and help inform potential mitigation. The application has been supported by a peat assessment as detailed in EIAR Chapter 10 (Geology and Soils) and a draft Peat Management Plan has also been submitted which demonstrates how any impacts will be minimised and mitigated. The site is also partially within Group 3, which are areas with potential for wind farm development.

8.12 Further, the OWESG approach and methodology to the assessment of proposals is applicable and is set out in the OWESG Para 4.16 - 4.17. It provides a methodology for a judgement to be made on the likely impact of a development on assessed "thresholds" in order to assist the application of HwLDP Policy 67. The OWESG lists ten landscape and visual criteria that the Council uses as a framework for assessing proposals. They are not absolute requirements but set out key considerations of the Council. Consideration of the proposal against the criteria is contained within Appendix 2 of this report. The applicant has also provided an assessment against these criteria.

8.13 The OSWESG also provides strategic considerations that identify sensitivities and potential capacity for wind farm development. These are called the Landscape Sensitivity Appraisals (LSA) and form part of the statutorily adopted Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance. The Appraisals identify Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways as well as Landscape Character Area sensitivities and guidance. The site falls within the area covered by the Loch Ness study, with the turbine envelope for this application falling within the Landscape Character Area (LCA) LN10 Separation of Glen Urquhart and Glen Moriston, Rocky Moorland Plateau. This area is identified (OWESG: p57) as having:

- No scope for small or medium turbines
- Limited scope for micro turbines where closely associated with buildings
- Limited scope for additional large turbines within the existing pattern

The following recommendations are provided for the siting of wind turbines within this LCA:

- Turbines should be set back from Key Routes
- Preserve mitigation established by current schemes

- Maintain the landscape setting of each existing scheme.
- Respect spacing and scale of existing development pattern.
- Minimise visual confusion from higher ground to the west and north and with Meall Fuar-mhonaidh.

Further consideration of this is outlined in the Landscape and Visual section of this report.

National Planning Policy

8.14 National planning policy remains supportive of onshore wind energy development with the framework for assessing wind farm proposals set out in Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). SPP sets out that areas identified for wind farms should be suitable for use in perpetuity.

8.15 Notwithstanding the overarching context of support, SPP recognises that the need for energy and the need to protect and enhance Scotland's natural and historic environment must be regarded as compatible goals. The planning system has a significant role in securing appropriate protection to the natural and historic environment without unreasonably restricting the potential for renewable energy. National policies highlight potential areas of conflict but also advise that detrimental effects can often be mitigated, or effective planning conditions can be used to overcome potential objections to development.

8.16 Criteria outlined within SPP for the assessment of applications for renewable energy developments include landscape and visual impact; effects on heritage and historic environment; contribution to renewable energy targets; effect on the local and national economy and tourism and recreation interests; benefits and dis-benefits to communities; aviation and telecommunications; development with the peat environment, noise and shadow flicker; and cumulative impact. A number of criteria are set out in SPP against which proposals for on-shore wind energy development should be assessed (paragraph 169). These criteria are primarily reflected in Policy 67 (Renewable Energy) of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan. A failure against one of these criteria does not necessarily mean that a development fails, all these criteria must be given consideration.

8.17 As a statement of the Government's approach to spatial planning in Scotland, National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3) is a material consideration that should be afforded significant weight in the planning balance. NPF3 considers that onshore wind has a role in meeting the Scottish Government's targets to achieve at least an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and to meet at least 30% overall energy demand from renewables by 2020, including generating the equivalent of at least 100% of gross electricity consumption from renewables. However, it should be noted that the targets set out in NPF3 have now been superseded by legislation which sets the legally binding target of net zero by 2045.

8.18 As set out above, National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) was published in draft form in November 2021. This document is still going through the parliamentary process and consultation, therefore the weight to be attached to the document is not the same as the adopted Scottish Planning Policy, National Planning

Framework 3 or the Development Plan. However, it can be given weight in the process of determining applications. It will be up to Scottish Ministers to determine the weight to be afforded to it in reaching their determination depending on the status of the document at the time of reaching their determination on this application. It is anticipated that the Planning Authority may wish to make further representation to the application if it is not determined at the time of adoption of NPF4.

8.19 A number of matters of relevance arise out of the draft NPF4 in relation to this proposal and these are explored further below:

- Draft NPF4 identifies electricity generation from renewable sources of, or exceeding 50MW as national development. The proposed development would therefore be classed as a national development as it would have a capacity of 100.8 MW (based on a candidate turbine with an indicative 5.6 MW capacity). Such developments have been identified as national developments due to the need an increase in renewable energy production in order to meet net zero targets. It also highlights that Generation is for consumption domestically as well as for export to the UK and beyond, with new capacity helping to decarbonise heat, transport and industrial energy demand. It notes that this has the potential to support jobs and business investment, with wider economic benefits.
- For the first time in a planning policy document, confirmation has been provided that when considering all developments significant weight should be given to the Global Climate Emergency. As a development that generates renewable energy this proposal has inherent support from this aspect of NPF4, however the impact on the carbon resource as a result of the development will require further consideration to determine whether the impact of the proposed development is positive or negative in this regard. This aspect is outlined later in this report, the overall carbon payback period is considered to be acceptable.
- Recognising the Ecological Emergency, the draft NPF4 also sets out that proposals should contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity. The proposed development includes provision for peatland restoration which meets with the provisions of the proposed approach in draft NPF4 for the restoration of degraded habitats and the strengthening of nature networks.
- Considerations for green energy applications have been updated and there is no longer an explicit spatial framework for onshore wind energy developments. Instead, it sets out that proposals for new development, extensions and repowering of existing renewable energy developments should be supported. The proposal subject to this application would be considered an extension so would benefit from this in principle support. However, it goes on to set out that such proposals should be supported unless the impacts identified (including cumulative effects), are unacceptable. Draft NPF4 also highlights a number of matters which must be taken into account in reaching a determination on an application for renewable energy. Subject to some minor wording changes, this is largely reflective of the considerations set out in SPP paragraph 169.

8.20 A number of publications relating to national energy policy have been published by the Scottish Government. In short, none indicate a relevant distinct policy change. Most relevant to this application are as follows:

- Scottish Energy Strategy: The future of energy in Scotland (Dec 2017)
- On-shore Wind Policy Statement (Dec 2017)
- Scottish Government, Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero: Climate Change Plan 2018–2032 – update, December 2020;
- Committee on Climate Change, The Sixth Carbon Budget, *The UK's Path to Net Zero*. (including Policy and Methodology) December 2020;
- National Audit Office, Net Zero Report, December 2020;
- HM Government, Energy White Paper, Powering our Net Zero Future, December 2020.

8.21 Further to the above, in late 2019 the Scottish Government's targets for reduction in greenhouse gases were amended by The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019. This sets targets to reduce Scotland's emissions of all greenhouse gases to net-zero by 2045 at the latest, with interim targets for reductions of at least 56% by 2020, 75% by 2030, 90% by 2040.

8.22 However, it is also recognised that such support should only be given where justified. The Onshore Wind Policy Statement sets out the need for a more strategic approach to new development that acknowledges the capacity that landscapes have to absorb development before landscape and visual impacts become unacceptable. With regard to planning policy, these statements largely reflect the existing position outlined within NPF3 and SPP, a policy framework that supports development in the justified locations. In addition, it must be recognised that the greenhouse gas reduction targets and the targets in the Energy Strategy are related not just to production of green energy but also related to de-carbonisation of heat and transportation.

8.23 The Scottish Government published Onshore Wind Policy Statement Refresh 2021: Consultative Draft in October 2021. This set out that onshore wind remains vital to Scotland's future energy mix and that we will need additional onshore wind energy toward the target of net zero. However, in doing so it was clear that additional capacity is not at any cost and it needs to be balanced and aligned with protection of natural heritage, native flora and fauna. The document also highlights the challenges and opportunities faced by the deployment of additional onshore wind energy capacity as well as consulting on a target of an additional 8-12GW of onshore wind energy capacity being delivered. Importantly it notes that the matter of landscape and visual impacts of onshore wind development remains an evolving area. As part of this evolution, it considers that while decisive action to tackle climate change will change how Scotland looks Scotland's most cherished landscape are a key part of natural and cultural heritage and must be afforded the necessary protection.

Energy and Economic Benefits

8.24 The Council continues to respond positively to the Government's renewable energy agenda. The government's recent Onshore Wind Energy Statement Consultation Draft states that there is currently 8.4 GW of installed capacity in Scotland, with a further 4.69 GW in the planning/consenting process, 4.64 GW are awaiting construction and 0.43 GW under construction. Highland onshore wind energy projects currently have an installed capacity of 2.5 GW, there is a further 1.18 GW of generation permitted but not yet built and 1.3 GW currently under construction. Onshore wind in Highland therefore accounts for around 29.8% of the national installed onshore wind energy capacity. There is also a further 1.326GW of onshore wind farm proposals currently in planning pending consideration in Highland, and 1.7GW of off-shore wind when accounting for all installed, under-construction or consented schemes around the coast of Highland.

8.25 While Highland Council has effectively met its own target, as previously set out in the Highland Renewable Energy Strategy, it remains the case that there are areas of Highland capable of absorbing renewable developments without significant effects. However, equally the Council could take a more selective approach to determining which wind farm developments should be supported, consistent with national and local policy. This is not treating targets as a cap or suggesting that targets cannot be exceeded, it is simply a recognition of the balance that is called for in both national and local policy.

8.26 The scheme has the potential to generate up to 100.8 MW, with each turbine expected to have the potential to generate around 5.6MW. The existing 32 turbine Bhlaraidh Wind Farm has an installed capacity of 108 MW. Later in this report further visual impact mitigation will be outlined which will recommend the removal of three turbines from the scheme. If accepted by Ministers, this will reduce the energy yield by approx. 16.8MW. However, even with this reduction, the yield from this development would be significant. Therefore, notwithstanding any significant impacts that this proposal may have upon the landscape resource, amenity and heritage of the area, the development could be seen to be compatible with Scottish Government policy and guidance and increase its overall contribution to the Government targets

8.27 The proposed development anticipates a construction period of 18 months and 50 years of operation prior to decommissioning or repowering. Such a project can offer significant investment/opportunities to the local, Highland, and Scottish economy including businesses ranging across construction, haulage, electrical and service sectors. The application has been accompanied by a socio-economic, recreation, tourism and recreation assessment (see EIAR chapter 13) which looks at both the construction and operational phases for the development.

8.28 The EIAR estimates that proposed development would cost approximately £99.1 million. During the construction phase this could generate up to £14.4 million Gross Value Added (GVA) and 196 years of employment in the Highlands. A further £36.6 million GVA and 494 years of employment could be generated in Scotland. The EIAR concludes that the effect on the Highland economy of the spending association with the construction and development of the proposed development

was assessed as minor (beneficial). During each year of the operational phase, expenditure on operations and maintenance is predicted to be £2.7 million and could generate up to £0.8 million GVA and 11 jobs in Highland; and £1.6 million GVA and 26 jobs in Scotland. The EIAR considers that the effect of operations and maintenance expenditure on the Highland and Scottish economies to be negligible (beneficial).

8.29 Additional wider benefits associated with the proposed development will be via a Community Fund, this will provide funding to local communities and community projects. In addition, the applicant is committed to supporting the Scottish Government's ambitions for shared ownership and to offering opportunities for communities to share in the value of its wind farm developments where possible. It is currently considering potential options and will engage with relevant local communities at the appropriate time. The economic benefits of the development are highlighted in many of the letters of support for the development.

8.30 However, as highlighted in representations and the response from community councils in the area there is also likely to be some adverse effects caused by construction traffic and disruption, these will be temporary in nature and managed through the identified mitigation. In terms of impact upon tourism, the applicant's socio-economic assessment identified seven visitor attractions within 15km of the proposed development. This assessed the potential impact upon the Caledonian Canal, Glen Affric, Loch Ness Centre & Exhibition, Nessieland and Cruise Loch Ness, Clansman Centre at Fort Augustus and Urquhart Castle. In addition, the EIAR cites a number of studies which conclude that there is no empirical evidence linking wind farm development and the number of visitors and tourism related employment. The EIAR concludes that the development is unlikely to have a significant adverse impact on tourism.

8.31 EIAR Chapter 14 and Technical Appendices 14.1 and 14.2, state that the net emissions of carbon dioxide from the development are expected to be 259,871 tonnes of CO2. Over its 50-year lifetime the project is expected to generate 11,752,836 MWh of electricity, this represents a savings of carbon dioxide for each unit of electricity generated by the project which otherwise would have been generated by other sources. The EIAR states that the project has a payback time of 4.4 years compared to grid-mix electricity generation. These savings are even greater (and payback time faster) when compared to fossil fuel-mix electricity (2.5 years) and coal-fired electricity (1.2 years). However, these calculations are based on an 18 turbines scheme, if the recommended removal of three turbines (as outlined previously in this report) is accepted then the payback period will change. Further elements of the carbon offsetting will come in the form of peatland restoration which will occur as part of the habitat management plan.

Construction

8.32 It is anticipated that the construction period for this scale of development would be 18 months. The proposed working hours are 07.00 – 19.00 Monday to Friday, 07.00 – 14.00 on Saturday with no Sunday of Bank Holiday working. Developers have to comply with reasonable operational practices with regard to construction noise so as not to cause nuisance. Section 60 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 sets restrictions in terms of hours of operation, plant and equipment used and noise

levels etc. and is enforceable via Environmental Health. The applicant is committed to ensuring that best practice mitigation measures are adopted to manage noise emissions during construction, including restrictions on construction working hours. These will be form part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Environmental Health are content that given the distance from receptors and the commitments controlled through the CEMP that construction noise is not likely to be a significant issue.

8.33 The applicant has stated they will utilise a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) that will be used in conjunction with a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) throughout the construction period. SEPA have also requested adherence to the mitigation outlined in the Schedule of Environmental Commitments (Table 16.1) and that all works are carried out following the Outline Environmental Management Plan (Appendix 2.1). It is recommended that the final versions of these documents should be secured via planning conditions. These should be "plan based" highlighting the measures being deployed to safeguard specific local environmental resources and not simply re-state best practice manuals. Due to the scale of the development SEPA will control pollution prevention measures relating to surface water run-off via a Controlled Activities Regulations Construction Site Licence.

8.34 In addition to the requirement for submission and agreement of the above, the Council will require the applicant to enter into legal agreements and provide financial bonds with regard to its use of the local road network (Wear and Tear Agreement) and final site restoration (Restoration Bond). In this manner the site can be best protected from the impacts of construction and for disturbed ground to be effectively restored post construction and operational phases.

8.35 The applicant has requested a micro-siting allowance of 50m for site infrastructure (tracks, turbine locations, underground cables and crane hard standing areas) this is to avoid or minimise environmental or engineering constraints identified during pre-construction ground investigation or construction phase excavation works. This is considered to be a reasonable allowance to address unforeseen onsite constraints, anything in excess of 50m may have a significant effect on the composition of a development. SEPA are content with this distance subject to any siting within this allowance not being located on peat deeper than presented in on Figure 10.2 or onto high quality habitat as identified in Table 5.5.2 of Appendix 5.5 and related Figure 5.8 of the EIAR.

8.36 The applicants are committed to ongoing engagement with the community, through a Community Liaison Group, this will ensure that the community council and other stakeholders are kept up to date and consulted before and during the construction period.

Transport and Access

8.37 The application has been supported by a Transport Assessment (TA); the results are contained within Chapter 12 of the EIAR. The existing Bhlaraidh Wind Farm site access from the A887(T) road will be utilised. It has also been assumed in the applicant's TA that all stone material will be delivered from on-site borrow pits. In addition, further concrete batching will take place on site. The EIAR indicates that it

is proposed that all abnormal turbine loads will originate from either Kyleakin/Kyle of Lochalsh or Inverness and would route via the A82(T)/A87 to reach the site access on the A887(T). The blades will route from Kyleakin while all non-blade loads will originate from the Port of Inverness. The submitted Route Survey Report includes mitigation measures to enable the component parts to the delivered. Transport Scotland have no objection but states that any modifications to the trunk road network will require further approval by Transport Scotland.

8.38 Representations have highlighted concerns with regard to the level of traffic and the transport implications of the proposed development, predominantly during the delivery of components and materials to site. The EIAR details the weekday average two-way flows for the daily construction traffic movements for the anticipated 18-month construction programme, with the maximum traffic movements predicted to occur in months 7-9 of the programme. During these months, an average of 34 HGV movements is predicted per day and it is estimated that there would be 45 car and minibus / LGV movements per day. The maximum percentage increase on trunk road traffic will occur on the A887(T) between Bunloyne and Invermoriston, with an increase in total traffic of 6.96% and an increase in HGV traffic of 18.83%. The results for the A87(T) and A82(T) are all lower than these figures. The applicant's TA found that there would be no significant effects as a result of increased vehicle movements. The applicant proposes a range of mitigation measures which will be contained within a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP). This will also ensure that potential cumulative impacts arising with other major developments are mitigated. In addition, the applicants are committee to establishing a Community Liaison Group (CLG) will be established to facilitate meaningful engagement between the Applicant and representatives of communities who may be impacted by construction activity of the development.

8.39 Transport Scotland has no objection to the application and has confirmed that it is satisfied with the EIAR conclusions and agrees that the effect of construction traffic (and associated environmental effects) would not be significant on the trunk road network. Transport Scotland have recommended a series of planning conditions to secure visibility splays from the access, a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), detailing of the final abnormal road route and any temporary traffic measures required must be undertaken by a quality assured traffic management consultant and wheel washing facilities. The Transport Planning Team has confirmed that it has no objection to the scheme or the findings of the EIAR. Again, this is subject to a number of planning conditions relating to upgrade works to Kyleakin Pier, a CTMP, to include matters such as traffic management and mitigation measures, regular monitoring of road conditions and the setting up of a Community Access Liaison Group as well as further conditions controlling operational and decommissioning activities. Finally, there will be a requirement for a s96 "wear and tear" agreement.

8.40 The application has been accompanied by an Outdoor Access Plan, which is welcomed by the Access Officer, however, a finalised version will need to be secured by a planning condition. This will need to include measures to ensure that a locked gate at NH395172 is altered to allow for a pass gate. This may assist in addressing the concerns raised by Fort Augustus Community Council that the proposed development would have an adverse impact on recreational use of the

countryside. The Access Officer also disagrees with the assessment as to the visual effect of the development from Meal Fuar Mhonaidh which he considers to be significant, this is a view shared by officers and NatureScot. The Access Officer considers that mitigation should be sought for the implementation and finance of plans to upgrade and maintain the path up to Meall Fuar Mhonaidh. Whilst the reasons for this request are understandable, the land is not under the control of the applicants and the proposal is unlikely to put additional pressure on this track and therefore the tests set out in Circular 4/1998: The use of conditions in planning permissions would not be met.

Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Peat

8.41 The EIAR has identified, assessed impacts and offered mitigation measures on Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Peat. The results of the applicant's assessment are outlined in Chapters 5, 9 and 10 of the EIAR and a summary of the mitigation measures are detailed in Chapter 16. Mitigation through design and layout has been used as far as practical, for instance the use of buffers from watercourses. In addition, the applicant is committed to providing a finalised Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) which will ensure that potential sources of pollution on site can be effectively managed throughout construction. A draft CEMP has been submitted with the application. During the operational phase, water quality mitigation measures will be included as part of the permanent drainage design and run-off from the Site will be managed and monitored as part of an Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP).

8.42 There are numerous watercourses and waterbodies across the site. The EIAR considers that the potential flood risk to the site is low. The Flood Risk Management Team have offered no objection to the application. The EIAR also states that the majority of the site drainage is anticipated to flow to the Allt Saigh, either directly or via the Allt Carn Choire Rainich or smaller unnamed watercourses. The west of the site is included within the Allt Bhlaraidh catchment. The site extends into the River Moriston catchment in the south however the large majority of the Site area is assessed as not being in hydraulic connectivity to the River Moriston with the exception of the lower part of the existing access track and construction compound.

8.43 The River Moriston is also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and is designated for its Atlantic Salmon interest and as it supports a freshwater pearl mussel population. At its closest point, the SAC lies 18m from the proposed temporary construction compound which is connected to the SAC through the Allt Bharaidh watercourse. NatureScot consider that given the potential for construction related pollution, its advice is that this proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of the SAC. However, NatureScot has concluded that if the development is undertaken in accordance with the pollution prevention and environmental management measures, as summarised at EIAR Chapter 16 then the development will not adversely affect the integrity of the site. These include measures to mitigate against effects of potential chemical contamination, sediment release and alteration to surface water run-off and flows, setbacks from water courses, employment of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) and undertaking a programme of baseline water quality and quantity monitoring surveys prior to construction and during construction and operation of the wind farm. Subject to a planning condition controlling the implementation of these mitigation measures

NatureScot has no objection to the scheme. In addition, SEPA has no objection subject to planning conditions to control the design of new or replacement watercourse crossings and adherence to the mitigation outlined in the Schedule of Environmental Commitments (EIAR Chapter 16 Table 16.1) and the Outline Environmental Management Plan. With that said, it is for Scottish Ministers, as the determining Authority to undertake a Habitat Regulations Appraisal (including Appropriate Assessment) prior to the determination of the application.

8.44 The potential presence of Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTEs) has been one of the elements which has informed the design evolution process. The majority of infrastructure is situated on M15c habitat (Scirpus cespitosus-Erica tetralix wet heath, Cladonia sub-community). The EIAR states that, following previous consultation with SEPA, it was confirmed that it is very unlikely to be groundwater dependent in this setting and does not need to be considered as a constraint to development. The EIAR also considered that the remaining potential GWDTEs on the site are not dependent on groundwater and instead are fed by surface water run-off and incident rainfall. SEPA has no objection to the scheme but require that the M11 mire habitat (Carex demissa-Saxifraga aizoides mire) identified in Target Note 2 on Figure 5.6 shall be physically marked on site so that it can be suitably protected from disturbance during construction.

8.45 The applicant has undertaken a survey of private water supplies in the area and concludes that there is a low to negligible risk of an adverse impact on these supplies which becomes negligible through the implementation of standard mitigation. Environmental Health has no objection subject to a planning condition to secure an ongoing monitoring regime of private water supplies that should include contingency plans in the event of an adverse impact occurring.

8.46 The EIAR details the soil types which are present on the site.

- The central area of the Site around T12 and T15 is predominantly Class 1 soils;
- The eastern and southern areas of the Site are predominantly Class 2 soils around T04, T10, T16 and T18;
- The areas around T02, T03, T07, T08, T09, T13, T14 and T15 are predominantly Class 5 soils; and
- Class 0 soils are present around T01, T06 and T11.

The presence of priority Class 1 and Class 2 peatland habitat soils places the Site within Group 2 of the Scottish Government planning policy category (SPP), where wind farms may be appropriate in some circumstances, but further consideration is required to demonstrate that any significant effects on the qualities of these areas are substantially overcome by siting, design or other mitigation. Concerns regarding peat have been raises by Strathglass Community Council and third parties. Detailed site-specific peat depth surveys and a peatland condition assessment have been completed and the design of the wind farm layout has evolved to avoid the deepest pockets of peat on the site. The application has been accompanied by a peat depth survey, a Habitat Management Plan (HMP) Peat Management Plan and a Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessment.

8.47 Representations from members of the public and from community councils have raised concern over impact on peat. Peat depths vary across the site but most of the peat was found to be less than 1.0m depth (92% of probe locations), with localised thicker peat accumulations (> 1.5m). Thick peat accumulations have developed in areas where the terrain is relatively flatter around lower lying areas of the site between the topographical highs. Two peat depth probes encountered peat of greater than 3.0m depth out of a total of 2,909 probes undertaken. The thickest peat encountered during the survey was 3.3m. The applicant's Peat Slide Risk Assessment in the EIAR found that the risk of peat slide events occurring was Very Low to Low over most of the site.

8.48 The EIAR anticipates that a total of 138,570m3 of peat shall be excavated during construction and that 162,040m3 shall be used for reinstatement purposes, demonstrating an overall deficit of -23,470m3. Restoration depths of acrotelm and catotelm will be adjusted to account for the surplus of acrotelm peat which is available for restoration. A Peat Management Plan will be developed and implemented to assess the quantities of peat likely to be excavated during construction and identify suitable reuse and management options. This will include methods and timing involved in excavating, handling and storing peat for use in reinstatement. SEPA have no objection but in order to minimise impacts on peat and carbon loss it requires that the finalised Peat Management Plan which should demonstrate how micro-siting and other measures have been used to further minimise peat and high-quality habitat disturbance. SEPA accept the requested micro-siting allowance of up to 50m but require that the re-sting is not onto peat deeper than currently shown in the submission. In addition, a Habitat Management Plan controlling peatland restoration is proposed – see 'Natural Heritage' section below.

8.49 To minimise the volume of imported material brought onto the site, and any associated environmental impact, borrow pits located will be used to source stone for infrastructure construction including access tracks and hardstanding. Eight potential borrow pits areas have been identified however the Borrow Pit Assessment Report has identified that it is likely only six of the eight borrow pit search areas will be required. The three extant borrow pit search areas identified to the south of the site are former borrow pits utilised for the construction of the Levishie hydroelectric scheme and these will be reopened for sourcing aggregate. To ensure that reinstatement and decommission works are carried out in a way that is sensitive to the environment, SEPA has requested that further details of the borrow pit restoration be secured by a planning condition. In addition, SEPA require a finalised Decommissioning and Restoration Plan with proposals in line with their Guidance on the life extension and decommissioning of onshore wind farms.

Natural Heritage (including Ornithology)

8.50 The EIAR has identified and assessed impacts on protected species, ornithology, ecology and designated sites. The results of the applicant's assessment are outlined in EIAR Chapters 5 and 6 and a summary of the mitigation measures are outlined in Chapter 16. The application is also supported by a Phase 1 Habitat Survey, National Vegetation Classification Survey, protected species surveys, peat condition survey, bird surveys, a GWDTE assessment and aquatic ecology and

freshwater fish assessments. A deer management plan, a draft Peat Management Plan, a draft CEMP and an Outline Habitat Management (HMP) have also been submitted. A fish monitoring and remediation are also recommended, and construction practices will be in line with best practise guidance. In addition, the EIAR states that all works will be overseen by an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW).

8.51 No statutory designated nature conservation sites for ecological or ornithological interests/features occur within the site boundary of the Proposed Development. The closest are the Levishie Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which is located approximately 1.4km to the south of the proposed turbines. Levishie Wood SSSI has been designated as a SSSI for its upland birch woodland. The EIAR states that this is separated from the proposed development by a range of hills and open moorland, therefore there will be no direct impacts on the qualifying feature. Indirect impacts may be possible from the displacement of deer, as such a Deer Management Plan is recommended and should be secured by a planning condition. The Forestry Commission and the Councils Forestry Team have assessed the application and have no objection to the development.

8.52 As detailed above, the River Moriston Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is designated for fresh pearl mussels and Atlantic Salmon, this is located 2.51km to the south of the main turbines. NatureScot offer no objection subject to conditions to control and mitigate the potential for construction-related pollution to affect the qualifying interests of the SAC. However, the site's status means that the requirements of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 as amended (the "Habitats Regulations") apply or, for reserved matters, The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Consequently, Scottish Government is required to consider the effect of the proposal on the SAC before it approves any application (commonly known as Habitats Regulations Appraisal).

8.53 A Habitat Management Plan (HMP) will be implemented as part of the proposed development to compensate for the loss of blanket bog habitat as a result of the proposal. A draft HMP has been submitted with the application (see EIAR Vol 4, Appendix 5.7). The central aim of the submitted draft habitat management plan is to restore and enhance a minimum of 6.93ha of peatland habitat in the field study area within five years of commissioning of the development. This area (6.93ha) includes the amount of blanket bog being permanently lost or degraded as a result of the development (4.88ha) and, as a good practice measure, it also includes the amount of blanket bog being temporarily lost or degraded as a result of the development (2.05ha). The restoration and enhancement of a comparable area is intended to offset both the permanent and temporary loss or degradation and, where possible, a larger area of peatland will be restored than the area lost or degraded. No trees would be felled as part of the development; therefore, no compensatory tree planting is required. However, montane scrub and riparian planting have been included as enhancement proposals in the submitted Outline Habitat Management Plan (OHMP).

8.54 SEPA has no objection, subject to a condition securing the final HMP, however it actively encourages the developer to try and delivery significantly more than will be directly and indirectly lost. NatureScot again offer no objection, however, advise that the permanent loss of habitat cannot be offset, but improving the condition of other areas does go some way to mitigating that permanent loss. It is also the case that

it takes many years for restored peatland to deliver all the services of the original habitat and that at least some restoration failures should be anticipated. NatureScot therefore welcome the tentative offer to restore a larger area of peatland, would encourage the applicant to be more ambitious in this regard and are willing to discuss and/or advise accordingly. Consequentially, NatureScot recommend that an updated OHMP, to taking this into account, is provided prior to any consent and secured by condition.

8.55 In addition, due to the climate and biodiversity emergency and the provisions of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, the Council are seeking to ensure that developments will deliver a positive effect for biodiversity. As a result, this project is expected to make a contribution toward the delivery of biodiversity enhancements in vicinity of the site. A scheme to ensure delivery can be secured by condition and either delivered via direct provision or a financial contribution.

8.56 In relation to the Loch Ruthven, West Inverness-shire Lochs and Loch Knockie and Nearby Lochs SPAs. All three of the SPAs are designated for Slavonian Grebe and are located between 6.7km and 7.9km from the site. The EIAR states that there has been one record in the last ten years of a breeding pair of Slavonian Grebe in the loch located west of the proposed wind farm. However, NatureScot has advised that due to the distance from the SPAs disturbance and displacement during construction and operation is unlikely, collision risk is likely to be very low and the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPAs. However, the site's status means that the Scottish Government is required to consider the effect of the proposal on the SAC before it approves any application (commonly known as Habitats Regulations Appraisal).

8.57 In relation to golden eagles the EIAR includes collision and population modelling. The calculated collision risk is for one fatality every 5.6 years. The population model shows that this will not result in a decline in the NHZ7 population of golden eagles. Although NatureScot has no objection it statesthat the model shows it will slow the already low rate of recruitment and delay the NHZ reaching the 66% occupancy required for it to reach favourable conservation status. In addition, NatureScot consider that the habitat management plan is limited in its ambition and likely effectiveness for eagles. For example, no attempt has been made to improve pray abundancy for eagles or remove deer carcasses/gralloch from the wind farm site. NatureScot note there would scope for an improved HMP or regional scale conservation management plan for eagles, similar to that in place at NHZ10 which could mitigate against the negative effects of the proposed development. In line with other projects in the Great Glen, it is proposed that mitigation in the form of a financial contribution is secured toward the delivery of the Regional Golden Eagle Conservation Management Plan. This will help to undertake research, provide infrastructure for eagles and provide education to landowners and local people about Golden Eagles.

8.58 Other mitigation measures are identified. Pre-construction surveys and the implementation of BBPP will be carried out for black grouse to examine for ground leks and nest sites, Slavonian grebe, golden eagle, greenshank, golden plover and black and red divers. In terms of mitigation during the operational phases, NatureScot note the intention to mitigate any effects on divers by creating artificial rafts and this would likely result in overall positive effects for the species in the

locality. As part of the Habitat Management Plan additional native tree and scrub planting is proposed to assist black grouse and golden eagles. A pre-construction survey is also proposed for otter, water and bat species.

Built and Cultural Heritage

8.59 The results of the applicant's assessment are outlined in EIAR, Chapter 7. The potential for direct physical effects upon archaeological remains was scoped out of this assessment with agreement of consultees during the EIA scoping stage. Therefore, the EIAR assessment focuses on the potential for operational and cumulative setting effects upon the designated heritage assets.

8.50 Two Study Areas were identified:

- A 5km Study Area for assessment of potential effects on the settings of all designated heritage assets – this identified one Scheduled Monument, a prehistoric fort 1.19km north-east of Levishie Cottage, one Category A Listed Building, Invermoriston Home Farm and former barn, seven Category B Listed Buildings and two Category C Listed Buildings.

- A 10km Study Area for the assessment of potential effects on the settings of all nationally important designated heritage assets. Between 5km and 10km from the Site, there are a further seven Scheduled Monuments, which include prehistoric dwellings and burial monuments, a medieval motte, and a post-medieval illicit whisky still. There are also five Category A Listed Buildings.
- Further to a request from Historic Environment Scotland (HES) at the EIA Scoping Stage, the potential for effects upon the setting of Urquhart Castle located approx. 13.8km from the application site have also been considered.

8.51 Levishie Cottage, fort and earthworks (SM 4567) is the closest scheduled monument which is located on south-facing slopes on the northern side of Strath Moriston, about 1.5km south of the development site. It comprises a fort of likely Iron Age date which is likely to have been carefully sited in a defensible location within a landscape over which it exerted control, so a key element of its setting are views towards it made when moving through the strath. HES consider that whilst the topography may mean that turbines would be unlikely to dominate outward views from the fort, it is possible that both the fort and turbines would be present in the same view at various points whilst moving through the strath and there would be the potential for an impact on its setting. The submitted wireframe (CH VP1 Vol 3a Figs 7.4a-c and 7.5) show that three blade tips (T8, 9 and 16) will be visible from part but not all of the monument alongside the tips of two operational Bhlaraidh turbines that are already visible. HES consider that whilst the turbines would change the character of the setting of the monument and would likely be visible in some inward views of the fort, this would not have a significant adverse impact on the way that the monument is understood and appreciated and are content that the integrity of its setting is unlikely to be significantly diminished by the proposed turbines.

8.52 Urquhart Castle (SM 90309) is a scheduled monument which comprises the remains of a complex medieval castle of multiple phases, situated on a promontory on the shore of Loch Ness. HES note that whilst the castle itself lies outwith the ZTV

of the proposed development, the potential impact of the proposed turbines on the setting of the monument is derived from inward views towards the castle from the north and north east looking south and south west. The EIAR includes a wireframe from (CH VP2 – Vol 3a Figs 7.6 and 7.7) the centre of Loch Ness (to represent views from the water) which shows that three blade tips from the existing operational Bhlaraidh turbines are visible plus one from the proposed scheme (T6). HES consider that whilst a limited number of blade tips would be visible, these are at a sufficient distance that they would not be likely to dominate or distract from the prominence or positioning of Urquhart Castle. Therefore, the integrity of its setting is unlikely to be significantly diminished by the proposed turbines.

8.53 Overall, the EIAR considers that there will be no significant effects upon the setting of the identified assets. The possibility of cumulative effects has been considered and again no significant cumulative effects are expected. The Historic Environment Team has offered no objection to the application. Historic Environment Scotland is content with the contents and methodology used in the EIAR assessment. It offers no objection and are content for the above reasons that the development would not affect the integrity of the setting of scheduled monuments in the surrounding area.

Design, Landscape and Visual Impact (including Wild Land Areas)

8.54 The applicant has presented a number of submissions to illustrate the impact of the development upon the surrounding landscape and visual receptors. The results of the applicant's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) are outlined in Chapter 8 of the EIAR. The submission also includes a cumulative assessment with other renewable energy developments.

8.55 A 45km study area radius from the site boundary has been used. This is accompanied by a smaller and more detailed assessment within a 25km study area (see EIAR Figure 8.1.1 for study area boundaries). In addition, a total of 26 viewpoints across the wider 45km study area have been submitted. The viewpoints are representative of a range of receptors including residents, recreational users of the outdoors and road users. The expected bare earth visibility of the development can be appreciated from the ZTV to Blade Tip with Viewpoint Locations (see EIAR Figure 8.5.1) in the EIAR. Sufficient information has been provided to undertake an assessment of landscape and visual impact and the quality of the visual information provided is acceptable.

8.56 The methodology for the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment follows that set out in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA). As set out at GLVIA Para 3.32 "LVIA should always clearly distinguish clearly between what are considered to be significant and non-significant effects." The EIAR states that the threshold for both landscape and visual impact is for a negligible or minor level of effect this is generally taken as not significant, and a moderate or major level of effect is generally taken as significant. This is in line with the approach taken by Highland Council in the identification of significant effects. NatureScot have also confirmed that the LVIA has been carried out in accordance with good practice outlined in the GLVIA.

8.57 EIAR Technical Appendix 8.1 also included the methodology used in visual representation. In the assessment of each viewpoint, the applicant has come to a

judgement as to whether the effect is significant or not. In assessing visual impacts in particular, it is important to consider that the viewpoint is representative of particular receptors i.e. people who would be at that point and experiencing that view of the landscape not just in that single view but in taking in their entire surroundings.

Design and Layout Evolution

8.58 In line with the EIA and OWESG requirements, the applicant has illustrated and explained the steps, rationale, and influences for the evolution and design of the site. Chapter 2 of the EIAR and the Design and Access Statement provides an overview of how the design of the scheme has evolved, in terms of turbine numbers and layouts. The potential landscape and visual impacts on receptors and how the development would relate to the existing landscape character and wind farms together with ecological matters were key elements in the evolution of the turbine layout.

- The initial scheme presented at the pre-application stage was for a 41-turbine layout. Following feedback this was reduced to a 20-turbine scheme which was presented through the Scoping Report.
- Following further environmental, engineering review and a further landscape and visual impact review led to the re-siting and reduction in number of turbines down to 18. The removal of two turbines was to reduce potential effects from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh and from Suidhe.
- A final further refinement in the siting of the turbines was to reduce impacts upon peat, the avoidance of watercourse crossing and the visual clustering of turbines from views.

The EIAR contends that the resulting layout which is presented in the current submission is the best viable option with respect to environmental constraints and civil engineering feasibility.

8.59 It is noted through the NatureScot Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape Guidance, that it can be particularly challenging to accommodate multiple wind farms in an area but design objectives for this scheme have centred on reducing the impact upon the Glen Affric NSA and Wild Land Areas as requested by NatureScot at the pre-application stage. From the perspective of officers it is equally important for the design and layout to limit visual confusion, reinforce the appropriateness of each development for its location and present a balanced and rationale composition. Key considerations in coming to a judgement on the shcmee are also derived from The Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity study which recommends that wind turbines should -

- Be set back from Key Routes such as the Great Glen Way.
- Preserve mitigation established by current schemes
- Maintain the landscape setting of each existing scheme.
- Respect spacing and scale of existing development pattern and
- Minimise visual confusion from higher ground to the west and north and with Meall Fuar-mhonaidh

8.60 In this regard officers sought further clarification on the rationale for the scale of turbines and whether turbines with a lower tip height would result in a substantive improvement in the transition/composition between the existing and proposed turbines. In response the applicant has clarified the following:

- That a range of tip heights between 150m-180m were considered during early feasibility studies prior to the pre-application meeting. These reviews included looking at engineering constraints, high-level landscape and visual appraisals and an energy return analysis.
- Key LVIA constraints considered during the early feasibility studies included visibility from within the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA; elevated edges of the Great Glen (such as from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh) along the B862 (such as from Suidhe Viewpoint); Loch Ness and its shoreline; settled areas such as Glen Urquhart, Invermoriston and Drumnadrochit, and views from NSAs and WLAs, in particular from Glen Affric. As a result of these early LVIA appraisals it was determined that the 180m tip turbines would achieve a viable and successful scheme with minimal significant LVIA effects.
- The 180m high turbines were considered a suitable fit with the operational Bhlaraidh Wind Farm turbines and other cumulative schemes and although scale differences may be perceptible from a small number of locations, these are situated within a localised area where the proposed development would not alter the perceived pattern of wind development in the landscape and visual context.
- The potential for lighting effects was also a key consideration within the design and assessment process for 180m tip turbines. While the tip heights may be higher than the operational development, the topography at the proposed development is lower and therefore the height above sea level is lower. This allowed options for mitigation to be explored as a priority to minimise any significant effects on wild land, and it was agreed with aviation consultees that visible turbine lighting would not be required for this scheme.
- The 180m tip height turbines were considered the most viable option given the relatively localised and limited potential for significant effects, and this was subsequently demonstrated in the findings of the EIAR LVIA. In general, the perceived difference between 150m tip and 180m tip heights was considered unlikely to make a material difference to the potential significance of LVIA effects.
- Procurement predictions for future turbine supply market indicate that very soon 125m turbines will no longer be available from manufacturers, with 150m turbines increasingly following suit and 180m turbines becoming the minimum size available on the global market at the time turbine procurement would be required for this project. By selecting turbines that are likely to be available on the market, this ensures that a deliverable consent might be achieved and therefore limits the potential risk of future planning variations being required if consented turbines are no longer available.

8.61 In addition, related to scale, officers raised concerns in relation to a number of specific turbines, which were likely to be dominant in the view. Either by virtue of their location or due to the elevation of the landform on which they would be positioned. Whilst acknowledging the positive work that the applicants had

undertaken in relation to impact upon the Glen Affric NSA and aviation lighting, the remaining areas of concern and focus were on reducing the residual impacts from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh (VP 3), Suidhe (VPs 5 and 6) and the Forres area (VP 7).

8.62 To mitigate these matters officers held discussions with the applicant and sought the removal of turbines 13, 14, 17 and 18 and associated infrastructure from the scheme. In doing so it was considered that the design of the development would be enhanced and there would be a reduction in visual impact. The removal of these four turbines would particularly improve the composition at viewpoint VP 3 Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, Suidhe VP 5 and VP 6 and the area around Foyers VP 7. In response, the applicant highlighted the work and constraints factored into the current 18 turbine submission (as indicated in EIAR chapter 2), potential viability issues in reducing the scheme and that any changes to the scheme would not change the findings of the landscape and visual assessment or the level of significance. However, officers still considered that a more appropriate design composition could and should be delivered on the site given the identified significant effects and the location of the proposed development.

8.63 These discussions has resulted in the applicants agreeing in principle to the removal of turbines 13, 14 and 18 from the scheme. The applicant has not however agreed to remove turbine 17. Whilst officers considered that the removal of all four turbines would be of benefit to the overall design and composition of the scheme, it is considered on balance that the greatest overall benefit would be achieved through the removal of T13, 14 and 18.

8.65 In addition, the submission also proposes the following design mitigation measures which are supported by the Councils OEWSG.

- Access Tracks - the overall requirements for these have been reduced by the use of the existing tracks to Bhlaraidh Wind Farm. If the identified design mitigation is accepted (removal of T13, T14 and T18) then this will remove additional tracks and avoid the need for a watercourse crossing to T14.
- Up to 8 borrow pit search areas are included in the application, however, the submission states that three have been previously used to construct the Levishie hydroelectric scheme.
- Turbine Design - the colour/finish on the turbines will be managed by a planning condition.
- Building Design (indicative elevation plan EIAR Figure 2.11)– the indicative scale and design for the substation building is commensurate with an agricultural building and the final details and finish will be controlled by a planning condition.
- Other infrastructure – the majority of the cables to the substation will be grounded apart from two cross country cable routes. However, if the recommended mitigation is accepted then this may negate the need for one of the overland routes between T14 and T15. Transformers for the individual turbines will be enclosed within the turbine mast.

Landscape Impacts

8.66 Twelve individual Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are identified within the study area, with nine taken forward for detailed assessment (EIAR Figure 8.4.3 identified

the LCTS with the proposed ZTV). The EIAR assessment of the significance of effect is summarised in the following table.

Landscape Character Types (LCT)	Distance to nearest turbine	EIAR Assessment – Significance of effect
LCT 220: Rugged Massif – Inverness	3.1 km	Negligible - not significant
LCT 221: Rolling Uplands – Inverness	10.7 km	Locally minor for open, elevated and often north-west facing slopes within the ZTV, elsewhere negligible (not significant).
LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness	Site is located within this LCT	Around the Proposed Development site itself due to construction activities locally minor-moderate (not significant). Once operational, turbines on the skyline would become more prominent, typically to the north-east of the site. However, elsewhere and in general, the landscape effect is likely to be minor (not significant) across this LCT during construction and operation.
LCT 224: Farmed and Wooded Foothills	7 km	The landscape effect would be locally negligible-minor (not significant) and negligible elsewhere
LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen	1.8 km	Locally minor for elevated areas of the eastern shore, south of Dores and negligible (not significant)
LCT 226: Wooded Glen – Inverness	1.7km	Locally negligible-minor in Glen Moriston and elsewhere will be negligible (not significant).
LCT 227: Farmed Strath – Inverness		Locally minor for parts of the Stratherrick LCT area and negligible elsewhere, during construction and operation.
LCT 230: Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Inverness		negligible (not significant).
LCT 236: Smooth Moorland Ridges	17.9 km	minor (not significant).

8.67 As detailed above, the LVIA concludes that there would be no significant adverse effects on landscape character affecting any of the LCTs considered in the assessment. The LVIA identifies a locally minor-moderate (not significant) landscape effect for the LCT 222 (Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness), in which the development is located.

8.68 Localised effects are anticipated as being for the area containing, and immediately surrounding, the site itself, as well as areas typically to its north and north-east. From these directions the proposed turbines would be a noticeable addition to the landscape and would increase the prominence of this feature in the landscape which may have some potential to alter the perception of scale and distance within parts of this LCT. NatureScot have no objection to the development and confirm that they are in agreement with the findings of the LVIA with regard to effects on landscape character. NatureScot agree that the sensitivity and the magnitude of change of this LCT to the proposed development is reduced due to the presence of the existing Bhlaraidh wind farm which is already a key characteristic of the part of this LCT lying between Glen Moriston and Glen Urquhart. The Planning Authority agree with this assessment.

National Scenic Areas (NSAs)

8.69 Glen Affric NSA is located approx. 11.6km from the proposed development. As detailed in the EIAR this NSA comprises a range of high conical peaks enclosing a long, narrow and steep-sided valley. The NatureScot (formerly SNH) guidance, 2010, outlines the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQ) of the NSA as these are summarised as follows;

1) One of the most beautiful glens in Scotland;
2) A glen of transition, from dense forest to exposed moorland;
3) A journey into wildness;
4) The prominence of water;
5) A glen for all seasons;
6) A historic and popular route through the Highlands;
7) Venerable pine forest;
8) Beautiful Loch Affric; and
9) The baronial Affric Lodge.

The LVIA concludes that there would be no significant effects arising on the Glen Affric NSA. The EIAR indicates that this proposal would be largely seen together with the operational Bhlaraidh wind farm in views from the upper slopes, ridges and peaks of this NSA. EIAR Viewpoints 11, 12, 13, 19, 20 and 21 are located within this NSA.

8.70 Concerns regarding the effects upon the NSA have been raised by Community Councils and third parties. Throughout the pre-application process a key layout consideration by the applicant has been to reduce impacts upon the Glen Affric NSA, and in particular mitigate impacts from the circular walk around Glen Affric. The proposal would not introduce new visibility of wind turbines to any part of the

NSA and it would not be visible from the circular walk around Loch Affric. NatureScot has no objection to the scheme and consider that, in the main, this design objective has been achieved. It further contends that in many of the representative views from the NSA, looking south-east towards the proposal, the bases of the proposed turbines would be partially screened by landform which would additionally reduce the magnitude of change and minimise contrasts of scale with the adjacent operational Bhlaraidh wind turbines. NatureScot agree with the LVIA findings that effects on this NSA would not be significant.

Wild Land Areas (WLA)

8.71 The proposed development is not located within a WLA and therefore Paragraph 215 of Scottish Planning Policy does not apply. The general test considering the effects on wild land as set out in Paragraph 169 of SPP and reflected in Policy 67 of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan and the Onshore-Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance is considered relevant. This policy requires consideration of the impacts on the wild land area, with regards to:

- Introduction of turbines and other infrastructure into views from the wild land area; and
- Introduction of a dominant contemporary land use visible from the wild land area affecting the perceptual qualities of wildness.

There are six WLAs within the wider study area and the EIAR has provided further detailed assessment for WLA; WLA 24 Central Highlands and WLA 19: Braeroy – Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh. NatureScot published descriptors for each of the 42 Wild Land Areas across Scotland in January 2017. These descriptors set out wild land qualities for each of the Wild Land Areas and are based on the particular combinations of the wild land attributes and influence when experienced. Appendix 8.4 of the EIAR contains a wild land assessment and considers overall that the development would not have a significant adverse impact upon the key qualities and attributes of the WLAs.

8.72 The potential impacts from aviation lighting were highlighted as a key consideration during the pre-application stage and the potential impact from areas of Wild Land. This matter has also been raised in Community Council comments. However, an agreement with the Civil Aviation Authority has been reached which will allow infra-red turbine lights which are not visible to the human eye. As such further assessment of this has been scoped out of the EIAR. This agreement is welcomed by officers and NatureScot. A planning condition to secure this is recommended.

8.73 The closest WLA is the Central Highlands WLA 24, which is located between 10km and 45km to the west of the proposed development and contains a mix of large mountains, peatlands and glens. The EIAR states that wind farm development is a notable feature of the eastern landscape context, seen from upland areas and ridges within 10km of the WLA boundary. The operational development and sites at Corrimony, Millennium, Beinneun and Fairburn are all within 10km of the WLA to the east. Sites on the eastern site of the Great Glen are also seen more distantly within this context from upland areas towards the east of the WLA. The Key Qualities of this WLA are described by NatureScot as:

- An extensive and awe-inspiring range of large scale, high and rugged mountains.
- An extensive, remote mountain interior with strong qualities of sanctuary and solitude.
- Deep glens that have steep, arresting side slopes as well as rivers and waterfalls, with some containing lochs and some revealing human land use.
- Small and extensive areas of native woodland that contribute to the sense of naturalness and highlight some arresting landscape features.

8.74 The EIAR assessment details that the proposed turbines would affect relatively limited areas of the WLA and would almost always be seen within the context of the existing Bhlaraidh Wind Farm. Minor (not significant) effects are anticipated to be localised to areas north of Glen Cannich. The applicant further contends that the proposed turbine would lead to no greater influence on the relationship with the mountainous core area than the existing wind farms and would be unlikely to affect the glen areas, so no perceptible effect is anticipated to any of the Key Qualities. Consequentially, the integrity of the WLA would remain unaffected. NatureScot has no objection and state that views from this WLA would be restricted to the higher hill summits immediately north of Loch Mullardoch and north of upper Strathfarrar and Loch Monar. In views south-eastwards to the proposal from this WLA the turbines would be seen together with the operational Bhlaraidh wind farm, as demonstrated by Viewpoints 11, 21 and 22. There would be similar effects on views to those experienced within the Glen Affric NSA in that the proposed turbines would be partially screened by landform reducing the additional effect on wild land qualities to some degree.

8.75 WLA 19: Braeroy – Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh is located between 17km and 37km to the south of the proposed development. This WLA comprises a range of hills and sweeping uplands to the south of the Corrieyairack Pass, east of the Great Glen. The EIAR details that wind turbines already influence the context of some parts of the WLA. Summits and higher north facing slopes share intervisibility with turbines of the Stronelairg wind farm whilst north-west facing slopes and summits share intervisibility with the Millennium and Beinneun wind farms. The Key Qualities identified by NatureScot for this WLA 19 are summarised as

- Rounded hills and plateaux that are awe-inspiring in their massive scale and simplicity, whilst geological features and rivers contribute strongly to the sense of naturalness.
- A strong contrast of experience between the hills and plateaux with the straths, glens and corries, varying in their accessibility, exposure and visibility of human elements.
- A hidden interior that is simple in landform and land cover, contributing to a perceived ‘emptiness’ and a strong sense of remoteness and sanctuary.
- Access and recreation focused around the margins, with an interior that is visited by few and possesses a sense of solitude, physical challenge and risk.
- Long, remote glens that penetrate far into the hills and plateaux: some

arresting by virtue of their narrowness and steep side-slopes, and some because of their openness against a surrounding backcloth of towering mountains.

8.76 The EIAR explains that proposal would affect only very small parts of the WLA. There would be limited intervisibility of the proposed development within the WLA and when available this will be contained to an area of slopes facing the development in the north-west corner of the WLA at a distance of 17 - 22km and a few higher summit areas to either side of Glen Roy and around Creag Meagaidh towards the south of the WLA, but these views would generally be at a distance greater than 25km. The EIAR considers that the effect on the WLA as a whole is anticipated to be negligible. There would be no perceptual degree of effect to any of the WLA Key Qualities, so the integrity of this WLA would not be affected. NatureScot has no objection to the scheme and state that visibility would be fairly limited across the WLA with no significant new areas of visibility of wind turbines introduced by the proposal. The proposal would be seen in the context of the Beinneun and Millennium operational wind farms which lie closer to this WLA and this would reduce effects on wild land qualities as demonstrated by Viewpoint 15. NatureScot have offered no objection.

8.77 In terms of local designations two out of six Special Landscape Areas (SLA) within the wider study area were identified for inclusion within the assessment. Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA is located approximately 1.9km to the east of the proposed development, covers that part of the Great Glen which encloses Loch Ness. As detailed in the EIAR this SLA includes the bounding hill slopes on the loch's western and eastern shores, the prominent hill Meall Fuar-mhonaidh on the loch's western side and the elevated interior moorland and agricultural plateau to the east of Loch Ness which contains Lochs Ashie, Duntelchaig, and Ruthven. The applicant's assessment is contained within EIAR Appendix 8.4. The EIAR sets out that there no perceptible effects on the SLA is anticipated in relation to intervisibility with lower slopes and shoreline areas of Loch Ness due to the limited ZTV coverage and wooded context. However, the proposed development would be relatively noticeable from some higher areas east and west of Loch Ness, including the Suidhe viewpoint and nearby summit (VPs 5 and 6), and elevated areas south of Dores (VP 17). The EIAR states that from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh (VP 3) would be affected but this would have a small effect on "the role of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh as a vantage point", as the scheme would not intrude on key views down the Great Glen. It is considered that there will be effects on the SLA but overall the integrity and the special qualities of this local landscape will not be significant undermined due to the location of the wind farm being set back from the edge of the hills surrounding Loch Ness and due to the turbines not being in ones direct view when appreciating the linear feature of Loch Ness and the Great Glen, which are the defining features of the SLA.

8.78 Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA is located to the north-east of the Great Glen, approximately 10.7km from the site and comprises a range of large, remote hills, cut by long winding glens. The LVIA states that for much of the SLA there would be no intervisibility with the proposed turbines, but it would be relatively noticeable from summits and ridgelines in the south-east of the SLA (e.g., VPs 11, 21 and 22) as well as some interior elevated areas. From these localised elevated

locations, there may be a slight increase in perception of turbines. However, these are small, localised changes and will not significantly compromise the special qualities or integrity of this SLA. The Planning Authority agree with the applicant's conclusion.

Visual Impact

8.79 As summarised by NatureScot, the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) demonstrates that the proposal would be principally visible from the uplands lying close to the site, from the elevated platform of hills and lochs south of Loch Ness, in long views south-west down Loch Ness in the Dores area and from the higher hill tops in the Glen Affric, Glen Cannich and Strathfarrar area. Visibility would be generally restricted from roads and settlement which tends to be located within valleys due to a combination of landform and often dense woodland. However, it must be noted that the ZTV presents a worst-case scenario and does not include elements such as trees and buildings which would reduce visibility in some locations. Beyond 25km distant views of the proposal is theoretically possible to the north-east around the Black Isle and east of Inverness.

8.80 In response to the ZTV analysis and in consultation with officers and other relevant parties, a range of visual receptors for the development have been assessed in the EIAR. The submission includes photomontages/ wireframes from 26 viewpoints and have been submitted in various angles of view, this is in order to comply with both The Highland Councils visualisation standards and NatureScot's guidance.

8.70 The EIAR states that receptors at 2 of the 26 viewpoints would have the potential to be significantly affected by the proposed development VP 5 – Suidhe Viewpoint and VP 7 – B862 south of Foyers. These are approximately contained within 11km of the proposed development on the eastern side of Loch Ness. The views from the remaining viewpoints have not been assessed as significant by the applicant and are summarised below:

Minor-moderate (not significant) visual effects are anticipated for receptors at three VPs	VP 3 – Meall Fuar-mhonaidh VP 6 – Summit by Suidhe Viewpoint, B862 VP 17 – B862 south of Dores.
Minor (not significant) visual effects are anticipated for receptors at five VPs.	VP 1 – Track to Loch Liath VP 2 – Old Bridge, Invermoriston, VP 10 – Great Glen way near Carn a' Bhodaich VP 15 – Poll-gormack Hill VP 26 – A87 Bun Loyne.
Negligible-minor (not significant) visual effects are anticipated for receptors at seven VPs.	VP 4 – Achtuie Road near Creag Nay VP 9 – Carn na Saobhaidhe VP 11 – Meall Mor, Glen Affric VP 14 – Meall Dubh VP 18 – Track near Dun Fhamhair Fort

	VP 21 – Toll Creagach VP 22 – Sgurr na Ruadhe.
Negligible (not significant) visual effects are anticipated for receptors at nine VPs.	VP 8 – Lochside picnic layby on B852 VP 12 – Creag Dhubh VP 13 – Sgurr nan Conbhairean VP 16 – Geal Charn VP 19 – Path north of Lodge Affric VP 20 – Path north of Affric Lodge VP 23 – An Cabar (Ben Wyvis) VP 24 – NCN1 Between Dingwall and Evanton VP 25 – Minor road near Tore

These viewpoints range in their proximity to the site and in most cases a new element is not introduced into the view and the cumulative impact with the existing wind farm is taken into consideration. The intervening distance between the viewpoint and the scheme, the more limited magnitude of change due to the baseline containing a range of wind energy developments are the most common reason for these viewpoints not being assessed as significant by the applicant.

8.71 NatureScot has confirmed that it agrees with the findings of the LVIA on the significance of impact from all representative viewpoints with the exception of Viewpoint 3: Meall Fuar-mhonaidh where it considers, as do officers, that effects would be significant. The Council considers visual impact using the criterion set out in Section 4 of the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance. The officer assessment against this criterion is contained in Appendix 2 to this Report and comes to a view as to whether the threshold set out in the guidance is met or not. To support this, a viewpoint appraisal has also been undertaken. This has utilised the applicant's methodology and is contained within Appendix 3 of this report.

8.72 It is considered that there is general agreement with the EIAR assessment and the overall significance attributed to the majority of the viewpoints, including the two VPs that the applicants identified as having significant effects (VP 5 and VP 7). However, there is some divergence which is summarised below:

- In particular, VP 3 Meall Fuar-mhonaidh. The applicants LVIA considers that the effects will be minor-moderate (not significant), however, the residual effect is considered to be significant.
- The sensitivity of the receptor is downplayed from a number of the mountain top viewpoints. Generally, all hill walkers would be considered to have a higher susceptibility to development given the nature and activity of hill walking is focussed on an appreciation of the visual setting.

8.73 As indicated in 'Design and Evolution' section above, throughout the visual assessment undertaken by Officers, turbines 13, 14, 17 and 18 were considered the main source of effects from the most prominent number of viewpoints. As part of the feedback process officers asked the applicant to investigate the removal of these four turbines. Following negotiation, the applicants have agreed in principle

to remove three turbines – T13, T14 and T18 from the scheme and retain T17.

8.74 The removal of T13, T14 and T18 would not alter the significance rating in EIA terms, with significant visual impacts still remaining at 3 of the 26 VPs. The removal of these turbines would result in perceptible improvements to the horizontal spread and composition of the wind farm from the majority of viewpoints. These are summarised in the following table.

Summary of Improvements	Improvements noted at VPs
Containment in the horizontal spread of the turbines, improved relationship with topography/landform.	5, 6, 7, 10, 15, 16, 18, 22, 23, 25
Removal of most prominent/ perceptible turbines	3, 9, 10
Improved the stacking or density of turbines	7, 11, 13, 14, 21, 23, 26

However, as with any development of this nature and scale significant visual impacts will remain. The mitigation secured seeks to make the significant effects at key viewpoints more acceptable. Utilising the applicant's methodology for assessment, officers have found that there would be significant effects, in EIA terms, at the following three viewpoints.

- VP 3 – Meall Fuar-mhonaidh;
- VP 5 – Suidhe Viewpoint;
- VP 7 – B862 south of Foyers.

VP 3 – Meall Fuar-mhonaidh

8.75 This is a very popular hill with local people and visitors and as summarised by NatureScot offers spectacular views from the approach route and summit. The deep trench of the Great Glen appreciated across Loch Ness to the south-east and in long views channelled by sheer side slopes to the south-west is the most dramatic aspect of the view although the rocky upland plateau to the west and distant mountains seen north and west also form part of the panoramic views gained from this isolated hill. The importance of this viewpoint was acknowledged as part of the operational consent, in which mitigation was secured for the existing operational scheme, in the form of removal of turbines, to try and limit the 'spill of the turbines over the natural buffer of Carn Tarsuinn'. The current scheme does undermine this mitigation.

8.76 Whilst it is recognised that the proposed turbines would be seen in the context of the operational scheme (approx. 7.8km from the summit), the proposal brings the development closer to the VP (4.9km from the summit). Although the scheme would not intrude on key views down the Great Glen (which is an important view highlighted in The Loch Ness Sensitivity Study) and there would be no visibility of the proposal from the principal access route up this hill from the north-east. The proposed turbines would appear more prominent than the operational turbines seen behind due to their closer proximity to the view and increased size and would detract from longer views west to distant mountains. Consequentially, both officers and

NatureScot consider that the overall effect to be moderate and significant.

8.77 In order to mitigate the impact from this VP, the removal of the identified turbines is considered beneficial as its help to draw back the turbines from this VP. The removal of T14 would also remove a very visible access track from the scheme. However, it is acknowledged that this will not change the overall effect at this VP which is still considered to be moderate (significant).

VP5 Suidhe

8.78 This VP is a roadside vantage point located on the B862 on the south-eastern side of Loch Ness and provides open, elevated and panoramic views. The EIAR consider that the main views are towards the north-east over Loch Ness, forested wide glens and the B862 continuing into the distance. This north-easterly view is also the visual focus on an information board at this viewpoint, that labels key features within the view, including Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, the Great Glen and Loch Ness, Inverness and the Moray Firth, Loch Knockie, Tom na Crioch, Loch Mhor and Beinn Sgurrach. Existing Wind Farms are visible to the north-east and the operational development turbines are also visible in views to the northwest on the skyline.

8.79 Officers generally agree with the EIAR assessment in terms of the overall effect being moderate (significant). However, it is considered that the sensitivity of the receptor is slightly downplayed. This is a very popular vantage point and the primary reason for visitors is to stop and take in their surroundings. As such it is considered to have a high sensitivity rating but is reduced to a medium-high rating due to the presence of the existing operational wind farm. However, the proposed turbines will be more intrusive than the operational Bhalairdh turbines which are partially screened.

8.80 To mitigate the impact, the recommended removal of T14 would pull the turbines back from descending down the slope. The removal of T13 and 18 would limit the horizontal spread of the turbines. In addition, the removal of these turbines would substantially limit the visibility of the scheme from the summit at Suidhe (VP6) and potentially lower the visual effect from minor-moderate to minor.

VP 7 B862 south of Foyers

8.81 This VP is representative of receptors travelling along this road. It affords open views over moorland and farmland across nearby areas of woodland and hills to the east. Turbine tips of Corriegarth and Dunmaglass Wind Farms perceptible to the north-east and east and the operational development turbines to the north-east on the skyline. The EIAR considers that the proposed turbines would be noticeable in views on skyline, seen adjacent to the operational development turbines, extending the vertical and horizontal field of view occupied by turbines, whereby the larger scale turbines and wind farm extent would be noticeable. The EIAR assessment seems reasonable in that the overall effect will be moderate (significant). NatureScot also concur with the assessment and highlight potential significant cumulative effects on views from the B862 south of Foyers and from nearby settlement as represented where this proposal would be seen with the proposed Corriegarth 2 wind farm.

8.82 The removal of T13 would limit the horizontal spread of the scheme. The removal of T14 and T18 will reduce the amount of turbine stacking. It is noted that the removal of T17 would also assist, but removal of this turbine was not accepted by the applicant. The mitigation measures improve the composition of the wind farm but is unlikely to reduce the overall effect in EIA terms.

8.83 In terms of cumulative landscape and visual impacts the LVIA considers that no significant cumulative landscape and visual effects would arise with consented and application-stage wind farms apart from representative Viewpoint 7 (and nearby residential properties) where the proposal would be seen with the Corriegarth 2 application-stage wind farm resulting in a moderate and significant cumulative effect. NatureScot is in agreement with the findings of the LVIA on cumulative effects.

8.84 The applicant has also undertaken an assessment on settlements and routes, a number of the VPs are representative of these views, but the EIAR presented an assessment of 15 residential receptor locations. As described in EIAR Appendix 8.6, visual effects have been identified as being not significant for the majority of receptors in these locations, but localised moderate (significant) effects have been identified for a small number of receptors in one residential grouping, along the B862. Eighteen routes / route groupings within the wider study area have been included in the EIAR assessment this comprised roads and recreational routes such as core paths, long distance routes and Scottish Hill Tracks. The visual assessment did not identify any significant visual effects upon receptors along routes although there may be some short, local minor-moderate effects on two parts of Core Path IN12.04).

8.85 The presented scheme is considered to respond positively to the recommendations in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study in that development is kept back when viewed from Loch Ness (e.g. VP 8) and will not have an adverse impact on Urquhart Castle. Key routes along the Great Glen Way will not be significantly affected although there may be some local minor-moderate effects on two parts of Core Path IN12.04). The scheme has substantially mitigated impacts upon Glen Affric NSA and NatureScot confirm and welcome this. The efforts that the applicant has went to in order to secure a non-visible aviation lighting scheme has further reduced the impacts of the scheme, ensuring the effects do not extend into hours of darkness. However, as indicated above, as with any development of this nature and scale there will be significant visual impacts will remain. In this case there will be significant effects at 3 out of the 26 VPs. These significant effects are within approx. 11km of the site. Given the scale of the development this is unusually limited but it is considered that this is as a result of the appropriate siting and design of the development. The recommended mitigation will improve the horizontal spread and composition of the design, albeit not to an extent which would alter the level of significance in EIA terms. However, in coming to an opinion on the acceptability of this development, the recommended design mitigation has played an important factor in determining the visual acceptability of the scheme. On balance, and subject to the removal of turbines 13, 14 and 18, it is considered that the landscape and visual impact of the scheme can be seen as acceptable.

Noise and Shadow Flicker

8.86 The applicant has submitted a noise impact assessment in support of the application, this is contained within Chapter 11 of the EIAR. The nearest residential property is located approximately 2.4km from the closest turbine. As detailed previously above, Environmental Health is content that construction noise is not likely to be a significant issue for this development.

8.87 In terms of operational noise, the noise assessment includes a total of three Noise Assessment Locations (NALs) were chosen to be representative of the noise sensitive receptors surrounding the Proposed Development. These were located at Bhlaraidh, Levishie and Achnaconeran, which include residential properties. The predicted levels from the proposed development alone are below the simplified ETSU criteria of 35dB LA90 for all three properties. The assessment has also considered the cumulative impact of Bhlaraidh and Corrimony wind farms. The cumulative assessment has identified that noise levels at the three noise sensitive locations will still meet the simplified ETSU limit of 35dB LA90. Environmental Health has assessed the report and do not anticipate that operational noise will be a significant issue both individually and in combination with the existing operational wind farm. This is due to the distance between the development and noise sensitive properties. Environmental Health has requested a condition to ensure that individual and cumulative noise can be monitored and enforced should an issue arise.

8.88 Shadow flicker may occur under certain combinations of geographical position and time of day when the sun passes behind the rotors of a wind turbine and casts a shadow over neighbouring properties. As the blades rotate, the shadow flicks on and off, an effect known as shadow flicker. The effect can only occur inside buildings, where the flicker appears through a window opening. The maximum rotor diameter of the proposed turbines would not exceed 158m, so the area where shadow flicker could be a problem extends to a maximum of 1.58km (1.63km if you include the requested 50m micro-siting allowance). The nearest residential property is located 2.4km from the nearest turbine, so shadow flicker is not considered to be an issue for this development.

Telecommunications

8.89 No concerns have been raised in relation to potential interference with radio / television reception in the locality. The Council has a standard practice of recommending that developers address adverse impacts that may emerge during construction and over the initial year of operation when problems may be detected and/or experienced. It is recommended that a planning condition is attached to secure a scheme of mitigation should an issue arise.

Aviation

8.90 Chapter 15 of the EIAR addresses potential effects of the proposed development on aeronautical radar and radio navigation aids, meteorological radars and low flying aircraft. The assessment found that the proposal will not be within line of sight of any radars and that it will not have a significant effect on the obstacle hazard to low flying aircraft. In addition, the assessment confirmed that an aviation obstruction lighting scheme, consisting of infra-red lights to mark the perimeter of the

development, has been approved by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). There are no unresolved objections with regards to aviation interests, with no outstanding concerns being raised by the Ministry of Defence or National Air Traffic Services. Should the proposal be granted permission, a condition can be applied to secure suitable mitigation in terms of infra-red aviation lighting and notification to the appropriate bodies of the final turbine positions.

Decommissioning

8.91 The applicant has advised that at the end of their operational life, if the decision is made to decommission the wind farm rather than apply to extend the lifetime or repower the site, then all turbines would be removed and the concrete foundations would be ground down to below the surface level. Hard standings will be removed and/or grassed over, however it is likely that the access junction and sections of access track may be left in situ to assist with recreational access. EIAR chapter 5 (Ecology) states that the access tracks and underground electrical cabling may be left in-situ to also minimise habitat disturbance. However, this is yet to be agreed. The expectation would normally be for all new tracks and laydown areas constructed during development of the wind farm to be reinstated to the approximate pre-wind farm condition. The Construction Environmental Management Plan will be updated prior to decommissioning by the applicant to reflect current legislation and policy and be agreed with the Council, NatureScot and SEPA. All material arising from demolition will need to be disposed of responsibly and in accordance with relevant waste management regulations prevailing at the time. Similarly, re-instatement of all land affected will be carried out in accordance with best practice at the time. The applicant anticipates decommissioning would take up to 12 months to complete.

8.92 The final aspects of these matters will not be confirmed until the submission of the Decommissioning and Restoration Plan (DRP).

Other material considerations

8.93 Given the complexity of major developments, and to assist in the discharge of conditions, the Council seek that the developer employs a Planning Monitoring Officer (PMO). The role of the PMO, amongst other things, will include the monitoring of, and enforcement of compliance with, all conditions, agreements and obligations related to this permission (or any superseding or related permissions) and shall include the provision of a bi-monthly compliance report.

Non-material considerations

8.94 The issue of community benefit is not a material planning consideration. In line with Council policy and practice, community benefit considerations are undertaken as a separate exercise and generally parallel to the planning process.

Matters to be secured by Section 75 Agreement

8.95 As is standard practice in relation to applications progressed under the Electricity Act, matters related to decommissioning, restoration and roads wear and tear are, in the first instance secured by condition. Other financial contributions including

those which may be secured toward delivery of the Regional Golden Eagle Conservation Management Plan and biodiversity enhancement could be secured by condition.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The Scottish Government gives considerable commitment to renewable energy and encourages planning authorities to support the development of wind farms where they can operate successfully and situated in appropriate locations. The project has the potential to contribute up to 100.8MW of renewable energy capacity towards Scottish Government targets, although this will be reduced by 16.8MW if the recommended removal of three turbines is accepted. However, as with all applications, the benefits of the proposal must be weighed against potential drawbacks and then considered in the round, taking account of the relevant policies of the Development Plan.

9.2 Whilst officers recognise and acknowledge the potential significant impacts (namely in relation to landscape and visual impacts) these are considered on balance to be acceptable when all matters are taken into account. The design iterations made during the pre-application stage by the applicants are considered to have significantly improved the scheme. This is further improved by the recommended design mitigation measures that have been outlined. Further mitigation of the impacts can be secured by the recommended planning conditions, which includes peatland habitat restoration.

9.3 The scheme has attracted a limited number of representations from members of the public. While there is some repetition between the representations to the Council and the Energy Consents Unit, there appears more general public support than in objection to the proposal. However, there are objections from Glen Urquhart, Strathglass and Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Councils. No objections have been received from any statutory consultees subject to recommended planning conditions. No objection has been received from SEPA in relation to peat and the water environment subject to planning conditions. No objection has been received from NatureScot in relation to natural heritage matters (including peat and ornithology) and it considers that the integrity of the identified SPA and SACs will not be subject to likely significant effects. However, more ambitious mitigation measures are recommended in relation to habitat restoration and golden eagles. NatureScot has also raised no objection to the application on landscape and visual impact and designated landscapes will not be significantly affected by the proposal. No objections from consultees have been made in relation to cultural heritage, noise, aviation or road network impacts.

9.4 The Council has determined its response to this application against the policies set out in the Development Plan, principally Policy 67 of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan with its eleven tests which are expanded upon with the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance. This policy also reflects policy tests of other policies in the plan, for example Policy 28 and those contained within Scottish Planning Policy. Given the above analysis, the application is, on balance, considered acceptable in terms of the Development Plan, national policy and is acceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations subject to the

removal of turbines 13, 14 and 18 and associated infrastructure.

9.5 All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal accords with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan, Scottish Planning Policy, Scottish Energy policy and UK energy policy and is acceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations.

10. IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Resource: Not applicable

10.2 Legal: If the committee determine that an objection should be raised to the application, the application will be subject to a Public Local Inquiry prior to determination by Scottish Ministers.

10.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): Not applicable

10.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: The proposed development will generate a total of 100.8MW of renewable energy, reduced by 16.8 MW if the proposed mitigation is accepted. Furthermore, the scheme will deliver a comprehensive peatland restoration plan.

10.5 Risk: Not applicable

10.6 Gaelic: Not applicable

11. RECOMMENDATION

Action required before decision issued: N

Subject to the above actions, it is recommended to **RAISE NO OBJECTION** to the application subject to:

A. The removal of Turbines 13, 14 and 18 and all associated infrastructure;

B. the following conditions and reasons; and

C. Members grant delegated authority to the Area Planning Manager - South to respond to any Further / Supplementary Environmental Information related to the removal of Turbines 13, 14 and 18, and any consequential site layout modifications, if consulted by the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit.

Conditions to be attached to any Section 36 consent which may be approved:

1. **Duration of the Consent**

The consent is for a period of 50 years from the date of Final Commissioning.

Written confirmation of both the Date of First Commissioning and the Date of Final Commissioning shall be provided to the Planning Authority and Scottish Ministers no later than one calendar month after those dates.

Reason: To define the duration of the consent.

2 **Commencement of Development**

There shall be no further development pursuant to this consent until written confirmation of the intended date of further works being begun has been provided to the Planning Authority and Scottish Ministers, which shall be no later than one calendar month before that date.

Reason: To ensure that the consent is implemented within a reasonable period. And to allow the Planning Authority and Scottish Ministers to monitor compliance with obligations attached to this consent and deemed planning permission as appropriate.

3 **Non-Assignation**

This consent may not be assigned without the prior written authorisation of the Scottish Ministers. The Scottish Ministers may authorise the assignation of the consent (with or without conditions) or refuse assignation as they may, in their own discretion, see fit. The consent shall not be capable of being assigned, alienated or transferred otherwise than in accordance with the foregoing procedure. The Company shall notify the local planning authority in writing of the name of the assignee, principal named contact and contact details within 14 days of written confirmation from the Scottish Ministers of an assignation having been granted.

Reason: To safeguard the obligations of the consent if transferred to another company.

4 **Serious Incident Reporting**

In the event of any breach of health and safety or environmental obligations relating to the development during the period of this consent, the Company will provide written notification of the nature and timing of the incident to the Scottish Ministers, including confirmation of remedial measures taken and/or to be taken to rectify the breach, within 24 hours of the incident occurring.

Reason: To keep the Scottish Ministers informed of any such incidents which may be in the public interest.

Conditions to be attached to deemed planning permission

5 **Implementation in accordance with approved plans.**

The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the Application and Environmental Statement Impact Assessment Report submitted August 2021, except in so far as amended by the terms of this consent.

Reason: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the

application documentation.

6 **Turbine design Design and Operation of Wind Turbines**

No turbine shall be erected until full details of the proposed wind turbines hereby permitted, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. These details shall include:

a) the make, model, design, direction of rotation (all wind turbine blades shall rotate in the same direction), power rating, sound power level and dimensions of the turbines to be installed, and
b) the external colour and/or finish of the wind turbines to be used (including towers, nacelles and blades) which shall be non-reflective, pale grey semi-matte.
c) No text, sign or logo shall be displayed on any external surface of the wind turbines, save those required by law under other legislation.
d) Thereafter, the wind turbines shall be installed and operate in accordance with these approved details and, with reference to part (b) above, the wind turbines shall be maintained in the approved colour, free from rust, staining or dis-colouration until such time as the wind farm is decommissioned.
e) All wind turbine blades shall rotate in the same direction.

Reason: To ensure the Planning Authority is aware of the wind turbine details and to protect the visual amenity of the area.

7 **Signage**

No anemometer, power performance mast, switching station, transformer building, or enclosure, ancillary building or above ground fixed plant shall display any name, logo, sign or advertisement (other than health and safety signage) unless and until otherwise approved in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: in the interests of the visual amenity of the area.

8 **Design of Sub-station, Ancillary Buildings and other Ancillary Development**

1) No development shall commence on the sub-station unless and until final details of the external appearance, dimensions, and surface materials of the substation building, associated compounds, construction compound boundary fencing, external lighting and parking areas have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority.
2) The substation building, associated compounds, fencing, external lighting and parking areas shall be constructed in accordance with the details approved under paragraph (1).

Reason: To safeguard the visual amenity of the area.

9 **Micro-siting**

All wind turbines, buildings, masts, areas of hardstanding and tracks shall be constructed in the location shown on plan reference Site Layout Plan (Figure 3.1) Wind turbines, buildings, masts, areas of hardstanding and tracks may be adjusted

by micro-siting within the site. However, unless otherwise approved in advance in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot, SEPA and the ECoW, micrositing is subject to the following restrictions:

a) the wind turbines and other infrastructure hereby permitted may be microsited within 50 metres;
b) No wind turbine foundation shall be positioned higher, when measured in metres Above Ordinance Datum (AOD), than the position shown Site Layout Plan (Figure 1.3).
c) No micro-siting shall take place within areas of peat deeper than currently shown for the relevant infrastructure on Figure 10.2.
d) All micro-siting permissible under this condition must be approved in advance in writing by the Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW).

A plan showing the final position of all wind turbines buildings, masts, areas of hardstanding, tracks and associated infrastructure forming part of the development shall be submitted to the Planning Authority within one month of the completion of the development works. The plan shall also specify areas where micrositing has taken place and, for each instance, be accompanied by copies of the Environmental Clerk of Works ("ECoW") or Planning Authority's approval, as applicable.

Reason: To enable necessary minor adjustments to the position of the wind turbines and other infrastructure to allow for site-specific conditions while maintaining control of environmental impacts and taking account of local ground conditions.

10 **Borrow Pit – Blasting**

Blasting shall only take place on the site between the hours of 07.00 to 19.00 on Monday to Friday inclusive and 07.00 to 13.00 on Saturdays, with no blasting taking place on a Sunday or on a Public Holiday.

Reason: To ensure that blasting activity is carried out within defined timescales to control impact on amenity.

11 **Planning Monitoring Officer**

No development shall commence until the Planning Authority has approved in writing the terms of appointment by the Company of an independent and suitably qualified environmental consultant to assist the Planning Authority in monitoring compliance with the terms of the deemed planning permission and conditions attached to this consent ("PMO"). The terms of appointment shall;

a) Impose a duty to monitor compliance with the terms of the deemed planning permission and conditions attached to this consent;
b) Require the PMO to submit a monthly report to the Planning Authority summarising works undertaken on site; and
c) Require the PMO to report to the Planning Authority any incidences of non-compliance with the terms of the terms of the deemed planning permission and conditions attached to this consent at the earliest practical opportunity.
d) The PMO shall be appointed on the approved terms throughout the period from Commencement of Development to completion of post construction

restoration works.

Reason: To enable the development to be suitably monitored to ensure compliance with the consent issued.

12 **ECoW Ecological Clerk of Works**

1) No further development shall take place unless and until the terms of appointment of an independent Ecological Clerk of Works ("ECoW") by the Company have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority (in consultation with NatureScot and SEPA). The terms of appointment shall:

a) Impose a duty to monitor compliance with the ecological, ornithological and hydrological commitments provided in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report received August 2021 and the Construction Environmental Management Plan, Peat Management Plan, Habitat Management Plan, any Species Surveys and Species and Bird Protection Plans, Water Quality Management Plan and other plans approved in terms of the conditions of this permission ("the ECoW Works");
b) Advise on micrositing proposals issued pursuant to Condition 9;
c) Require the ECoW to report to the nominated construction project manager any incidences of non-compliance with the ECoW Works at the earliest practical opportunity and stop the job where any breach has been identified until the time that it has been reviewed by the construction project manager; and
d) Require the ECoW to report to the Planning Authority any incidences of non-compliance with the ECoW Works at the earliest practical opportunity

2) The ECoW shall be appointed on the approved terms during the establishment of the Habitat Management Plan and throughout the period from Commencement of Development to completion of post construction restoration works".
3) No later than eighteen months prior to decommissioning of the Development or the expiry of the section 36 consent (whichever is the earlier), details of the terms of appointment of an ECoW by the Company throughout the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development shall be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority.

4) The ECoW shall be appointed on the approved terms throughout the construction, decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development.

Reason: To secure effective monitoring of and compliance with the environmental mitigation and management measures associated with the Development during the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases.

13 **Construction Environment Management Plan**

No development shall commence until a Construction Environmental Management Plan ("CEMP") outlining site specific details of all on-site construction works, post-

construction reinstatement, drainage and mitigation, together with details of their timetabling, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.

The CEMP shall include:

a) adherence to the mitigation outlined in the Schedule of Mitigation (Table 16.1).
b) confirmation that all works to be carried following the Outline Environmental Management Plan (Appendix 2.1).
c) a peat management plan including peat slide hazard and risk assessment and emergency plans for peat slide,
d) any species protection plans (as required by condition 30);
e) Private Water Supply Protection Plan – including a scheme for monitoring water quality with regard to private water supplies and a contingency plan in the event of an adverse impact occurring.
f) a water quality management plan.
g) Any temporary drainage during construction should be designed to accommodate a 1:200 year storm event.

The Development shall be implemented thereafter in accordance with the approved CEMP unless otherwise approved in advance in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that all construction operations are carried out in a manner that minimises their impact on road safety, amenity and the environment, and that the mitigation measures contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report which accompanied the application, or as otherwise agreed, are fully implemented.

14 **Watercourse Design**

All new watercourse crossings shall be designed following the recommendations in the Watercourse Crossing Schedule (Appendix 9.1) with single span bridges designed to pass the 1 in 200-year flood plus an allowance for climate built for WXC01, 07 and 08. All existing watercourse crossings which require to be replaced shall be designed following recognised best practice guidance.

Reason: In the interests of protecting the water environment.

15 **Access Standard**

Visibility splays shall be provided and maintained on each side of the access to the A887 trunk road, to the satisfaction of the local Planning Authority, after consultation with Transport Scotland, as the Trunk Roads Authority. These splays are the triangles of ground bounded on 2 sides by the first 4.5 metres of the centreline of the access driveway (the set back dimension) and the nearside trunk road carriageway measured 215 metres (the y dimension) in both directions from the intersection of the access with the trunk road, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority. In a vertical plane, nothing shall obscure visibility measured from a driver's eye height of between 1.05 metres and 2.00 metres positioned at the set back dimension to an object height of between 0.26 metres and 1.05 metres anywhere along the y dimension.

Reason: To ensure that vehicles entering or exiting the access can undertake the manoeuvre safely and with minimum interference to the safety and free flow of traffic on the trunk road and to ensure that the standard of access layout complies with the current standards and that the safety of the traffic on the A887 trunk road is not diminished.

16 **Construction Traffic Management Plan ("CTMP")**

No development shall commence until a Construction Traffic Management Plan ("CTMP") has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with the Trunk and Local Roads Authorities, Police and appropriate community representatives. The CTMP shall be submitted no later than six months prior to commencement. The approved CTMP shall be carried out as approved in accordance with the timetable specified within the approved CTMP. The CTMP shall include proposals for:

- A risk assessment for transportation during daylight and hours of darkness.
- Proposed traffic management and mitigation measures within any settlements along the access routes, as required. Measure such as temporary speed limits, suitable temporary signage, road markings and the use of speed activated signs should be considered.
- A contingency plan prepared by the abnormal load haulier. The plan shall be adopted only after consultation and agreement with the Police and the respective Roads Authorities. It shall include measures to deal with any haulage incidents that may result in public roads becoming temporarily closed or restricted.
- A procedure for the regular monitoring of road conditions and the implementation of any remedial works required during the construction period.
- A detailed protocol for the delivery of abnormal loads / vehicles, prepared in consultation and agreement with interested parties. The protocol shall identify any requirement for convoy working and / or escorting of vehicles and include arrangements to provide advance notice of abnormal load movements in the local media. Temporary signage, in the form of demountable signs or similar approved, shall be established, when required, to alert road users and local residents of expected abnormal load movements. Any accommodation measures required including the removal of street furniture, junction widening, traffic management must similarly be approved. All such movements on roads shall take place out with peak times on the network, including school travel times and shall avoid local community events.
- During the delivery period of the wind turbine construction materials any additional signing or temporary traffic control measures deemed necessary due to the size or length of any loads being delivered or removed must be undertaken by a recognised QA traffic management consultant, to be approved by Transport Scotland before delivery commences.

- Wheel washing facilities shall be provided at an appropriate point within the site adjacent to the access from the A887 trunk road so as to prevent vehicles depositing debris on the trunk road.
- The provision for setting up an 'Access Liaison Group' before construction starts. The group should include representatives of the local communities directly affected by the works. During the construction phase of the development the applicant should meet at regular intervals with this group to review the impact of the works and agree measures to address any issues that arise.
- During the operational stage of the development, advance written notification and approval of the Planning Authority in consultation with the respective Roads Authorities, and community councils is required for any significant HGV or Abnormal Load movement required during this period.

Reason: To ensure that the construction of the windfarm is carried out appropriately and does not have an adverse effect on the environment, and to protect road safety and the amenity of other users of the public road and rights of way.

17 **Finalised Peat Management Plan**

No development shall commence until a finalised Peat Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot, and SEPA. The details shall include

a) the mitigation measures described within the Environmental Impact Assessment Report submitted August 2021.
b) The implementation of the design changes and further actions outlined in Table 5.5.4 of Appendix 5.5 to limit impact on high quality habitat
c) a demonstration of how micrositing and other measures have been used to further minimise peat and good quality peat habitat disturbance

The development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details

Reason: To ensure that a plan is in place to deal with the storage and reuse of peat within the application site, including peat stability and slide risks.

18 **Habitat Management Plan**

No development shall commence until a Finalised Habitat Management Plan ("HMP"), has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot, and SEPA. The information shall include

a) the mitigation measures described within the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) received August 2021 and be based upon the Outline Plan provided (EIAR, Appendix 5.7).
b) the proposed habitat management of the site during the period of construction, operation, decommissioning, restoration and aftercare, and shall provide for the maintenance, monitoring and reporting of habitat on site;
c) confirmation that the M11 mire habitat identified in Target Note 2 on Figure 5.6 shall be physically marked on site so that it can be suitably protected

from disturbance during construction.

d) the final details of the peat restoration works outlined in the Peat Management Plan and as required by condition 17; This shall deliver no less than 6.93ha of peatland improvements works. However, in view of the quality of some of the habitat that will be lost it is encouraged that significantly more than will be directly and indirectly lost is delivered.
e) a suitable area to leave deer stalking grallochs or carcasses outwith the windfarm development area is identified.
f) the provision for regular monitoring and review to be undertaken to consider whether amendments are needed to better meet the habitat plan objectives. In particular, the approved habitat management plan shall be updated to reflect ground condition surveys undertaken following construction and prior to the date of Final Commissioning and submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot and SEPA.

Unless and until otherwise agreed in advance in writing with the Planning Authority, the approved HMP (as amended from time to time) shall be implemented in full.

Reason: In the interests of protecting ecological features.

19 **Borrow Pit Restoration**

No development shall commence unless and until a scheme for the working and restoration of each borrow pit has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority (in consultation with SEPA). The scheme shall include:

a) A cross section capturing the restoration profile should be submitted demonstrating the different types of materials (overburden, peat, turves etc) used and at what specified depths.
b) If peat is being utilised in the restoration of the borrow pit, it should be clearly demonstrated how catotelmic peat will remain stable, and whether any impermeable aggregate bunds need to be constructed within the base of the borrow pit (such as series of cells) to ensure stability and allow progressive restoration to contain the peat and maintain hydrological conditions.
c) Any cut of drains around the borrow pits should be shown on a site plan, clearly demonstrating that clean water will be captured before entering the site, and directed away from the working area and access tracks. This clean water should not be mixed with dirty water construction SuDS.

Thereafter, the approved scheme shall be implemented in full.

Reason: To secure the restoration of borrow pits at the end of the construction period.

20 **Deer Management Plan**

No development shall commence until a Deer Management Plan ("DMP") has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot. The deer management statement shall set out proposed long term management of deer using the wind farm site and shall provide for the monitoring of deer numbers on site from the period from Commencement of Development until the date of completion of restoration. The approved deer management statement

shall thereafter be implemented in full.

Reason: To protect ecological interests.

21 **Television Reception**

No development shall commence until a Television Reception Mitigation Plan has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The Television Reception Mitigation Plan shall provide for a baseline television reception survey to be carried out prior to the installation of any turbine forming part of the Development, the results of which shall be submitted to the Planning Authority. For the avoidance of doubt the scheme shall include, but not be limited to:

- Details of publication and publicity for the scheme;
- Timescale for investigation of any claims within a reasonable timescale;
- details for reporting mechanism to the planning authority the number of complaints / claims;
- details of the length of the operation of the mitigation scheme. This shall be no less than 18 months of the first export of electricity from the site; and
- details of the bond to be placed with the planning authority to ensure funds are available to deliver the mitigation plan.
- The approved Television Reception Mitigation Plan shall thereafter be implemented in full.

Any claim by any individual person regarding television picture loss or interference at their house, business premises or other building, made during the period from installation of any turbine forming part of the Development to the date falling twelve months after the date of Final Commissioning, shall be investigated by a qualified engineer appointed by the Company and the results shall be submitted to the Planning Authority. Should any impairment to the television signal be attributable to the Development, the Company shall remedy such impairment so that the standard of reception at the affected property is equivalent to the baseline television reception.

Reason: To ensure local television services are sustained during the construction and operation of this development.

22 **Redundant Turbines**

In the event that any wind turbine installed and commissioned fails to produce electricity on a commercial basis to the public network for a continuous period of 6 months, then unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority, after consultation with the Scottish Ministers and NatureScot, such wind turbine will be deemed to have ceased to be required. If deemed to have ceased to be required, the wind turbine and its ancillary equipment will be dismantled and removed from the site by the Partnership within the following 6-month period, and the ground reinstated to the specification and satisfaction of the Planning Authority after consultation with the Scottish Ministers and NatureScot.

Reason: To ensure that any redundant wind turbine is removed from Site, in the interests of safety, amenity and environmental protection.

23 **Failure of Development to Generate Electricity**

In the event of the Development, not generating electricity on a commercial basis to the grid network for a continuous period of 12 months from 50% or more turbines installed and commissioned from time to time, the Company must immediately notify the Planning Authority in writing of that situation and shall, if the Planning Authority, in consultation with the Scottish Ministers, direct, decommission the Development and reinstate the site to the specification and satisfaction of the Planning Authority . The Planning Authority shall have due regard to the circumstances surrounding the failure to generate and shall take the decision on decommissioning following discussions with the Scottish Ministers and other such parties as the Planning Authority consider appropriate.

Reason: To ensure the decommissioning and removal of the development in an appropriate and environmentally acceptable manner and the restoration of the site. In the interests of safety, amenity and environmental protection

24 **Aviation Safety**

No turbine shall be erected until a scheme for aviation lighting for the wind farm consisting of Ministry of Defence accredited infra-red aviation lighting has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with the MoD. The turbines shall be erected with the approved lighting installed and the lighting shall remain operational throughout the duration of the permission.

Reason: In the interests of aviation safety.

25 **Aviation Safety**

At least 14 days prior to the commencement of the erection of the turbines the Company has provided the Planning Authority, Ministry of Defence, Defence Geographic Centre and National Air Traffic Services ("NATS") with the following information and has provided evidence to the Planning Authority of having done so.

a) the date of the commencement of the erection of wind turbine generators;

b) the maximum height of any construction equipment to be used in the erection of the wind turbines;

c) the date any wind turbine generators are brought into use;

d) the latitude and longitude and maximum heights of each wind turbine generator, and any anemometer mast(s).

Reason: In the interests of aviation safety.

26 **Site Decommissioning, Restoration and Aftercare**

1) The Development will be decommissioned and will cease to generate electricity by no later than the date forty years from the date of Final Commissioning. The total period for restoration of the Site in accordance with this condition shall not exceed three years from the date of Final Decommissioning without prior written approval of the Scottish Ministers in consultation with the Planning Authority.

2) No development shall commence unless and until a decommissioning, restoration and aftercare strategy has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority (in consultation with NatureScot and SEPA). The strategy shall outline measures for the decommissioning of the Development and restoration and aftercare of the site and shall include proposals for the removal of the Development, the treatment of ground surfaces, the management and timing of the works and environmental management provisions.

3) Not later than 3 years before decommissioning of the Development or the expiration of this consent (whichever is the earlier), a detailed decommissioning, restoration and aftercare plan, based upon the principles of the approved decommissioning, restoration and aftercare strategy, shall be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot and SEPA. The detailed decommissioning, restoration and aftercare plan shall provide updated and detailed proposals, in accordance with relevant guidance at that time, for the removal of the Development, the treatment of ground surfaces, the management and timing of the works and environment management provisions which shall include (but is not limited to):

a) site waste management plan (dealing with all aspects of waste produced during the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases);
b) details of the formation of the construction compound, welfare facilities, any areas of hardstanding, turning areas, internal access tracks, car parking, material stockpiles, oil storage, lighting columns, and any construction compound boundary fencing;
c) a dust management plan;
d) details of measures to be taken to prevent loose or deleterious material being deposited on the local road network, including wheel cleaning and lorry sheeting facilities, and measures to clean the site entrances and the adjacent local road network;
e) details of anticipated impacts on the road networks and vehicle types and movements;
f) a pollution prevention and control method statement, including arrangements for the storage and management of oil and fuel on the site;
g) details of measures for soil storage and management;
h) a surface water and groundwater management and treatment plan, including details of the separation of clean and dirty water drains, and location of settlement lagoons for silt laden water;
i) details of measures for sewage disposal and treatment;
j) temporary site illumination;
k) the construction of any temporary access into the site and the creation and maintenance of associated visibility splays;
l) details of watercourse crossings; and
m) a species protection plan based on surveys for protected species (including birds) carried out no longer than eighteen months prior to submission of the plan.

4) The Development shall be decommissioned, site restored and aftercare

thereafter undertaken in accordance with the approved plan, unless otherwise agreed in writing in advance with the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot and SEPA.

Reason: To ensure the decommissioning and removal of the Development in an appropriate and environmentally acceptable manner and the restoration and aftercare of the site, in the interests of safety, amenity and environmental protection.

27 **Financial Guarantee**

1) No further development shall take place unless and until a bond or other form of financial guarantee in terms reasonably acceptable to the Planning Authority which secures the cost of performance of all decommissioning, restoration and aftercare obligation s referred to in condition 26 is submitted to the Planning Authority.
2) The value of the financial guarantee shall be agreed between the Company and the Planning Authority or, failing agreement, determined (on application by either party) by a suitably qualified independent professional as being sufficient to meet the costs of all decommissioning, restoration and aftercare obligations referred to in condition 26.
3) The financial guarantee shall be maintained in favour of the Planning Authority until the date of completion of all decommissioning, restoration and aftercare obligations referred to in condition 26.

The value of the financial guarantee shall be reviewed by agreement between the Company and the Planning Authority or, failing agreement, determined (on application by either party) by a suitably qualified independent professional no less than every five years and increased or decreased to take account of any variation in costs of compliance with decommissioning, restoration and aftercare obligations and best practice prevailing at the time of each review.

Reason: to ensure that there are sufficient funds to secure performance of the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare conditions attached to this deemed planning permission in the event of default by the Company.

28 **Biodiversity Enhancement**

No development shall commence until a scheme for the delivery of biodiversity enhancement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. This shall include a suitable financial mechanism for the delivery of the scheme. Thereafter the scheme shall be implemented prior to first export of electricity from the site and maintained throughout the operation and decommissioning of the development.

Reason: To ensure that the development secures positive effects for biodiversity.

29 **Outdoor Access**

No development shall commence until a finalised and detailed Outdoor Access Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The purpose of the plan shall be to site tracks and paths to maintain public access routes

during construction, and to enhance public outdoor access in the long-term. The Outdoor Access Plan shall include details showing:

1) All existing access points, paths, core paths, tracks, rights of way and other routes (whether on land or inland water), and any areas currently outwith or excluded from statutory access rights under Part One of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, within and adjacent to the application site.
2) Any areas proposed for exclusion from statutory access rights, for reasons of privacy, disturbance or effect on curtilage related to buildings or structures.
3) All proposed paths, tracks and other alternative routes for use by walkers, riders, cyclists, canoeists, all-abilities users, etc. and any other relevant outdoor access enhancement (including construction specifications, signage, information leaflets, proposals for on-going maintenance etc.).
4) Any diversion of paths, tracks or other routes (whether on land or inland water), temporary or permanent, proposed as part of the Development (including details of mitigation measures, diversion works, duration and signage).
5) The location, design and specification for a pass gate at locked gate at NH395172 this and other gate locations which, in this case, should be installed before construction starts.

The approved Outdoor Access Plan, and any associated works, shall be implemented in full prior to the commencement of development or as otherwise may be agreed within the approved plan.

Reason: In the interests of securing public access rights.

30 **Species Specific Surveys and Protection Plans**

No development shall commence unless and until surveys and Protection Plans have been carried out at an appropriate time of year for the species concerned, by a suitably qualified person. The surveys shall cover

- black grouse, slavonian grebe, golden eagle, greenshank, golden plover, black and red divers, otter, water vole and bats.

The survey results and any mitigation measures required for these species on site shall be set out in a species mitigation and management plan, which shall inform construction activities. No development shall commence unless and until the plan is submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority and the approved plan shall then be implemented in full.

Reason: In the interests of nature conservation

31 **Golden Eagles**

No development shall commence on site until a reasonable financial contribution to the NHZ10 Regional Eagle Management Plan has been agreed with the Council and paid.

Reason: To safeguard the eagle population in the area.

32 **Community Liaison Group**

No development shall commence unless and until a Community Liaison Plan has been approved in writing by the Planning Authority after consultation with the relevant local community councils. This plan shall include the arrangements for establishing a Community Liaison Group to act as a vehicle for the community to be kept in formed of project progress by the Company. The terms and condition of these arrangement must include that the Community Liaison Group will have timely dialogue in advance on the provision of all transport-related mitigation measures and keep under review the timing of the delivery of turbine components. The terms and conditions shall detail the continuation of the Community Liaison Group until the wind farm has been completed and is fully operational. The approved Community Liaison Plan shall be implemented in full.

Reason: To assist with the provision of mitigation measures to minimise potential hazards to road users including pedestrians, travelling on the road networks.

33 **Noise**

The rating level of noise imissions from the combined effects of the wind turbines hereby permitted (including the application of any tonal penalty), when determined in accordance with the attached Guidance Notes, shall not exceed more than 2dB above the predicted levels within EIAR Chapter 11 Tables 11.9 and 11.10.

Table 11.9 - Compliance Table – Comparison of predicted noise levels from the Proposed Development against the SSNL at each receptor - Daytime

Receptor		Wind Speed (ms^{-1}) as standardised to 10m height											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
NAL1 – Bhlaraidh	Site Specific Noise Limit	37.0	37.0	37.4	38.1	39.2	39.9	41.3	43.5	46.3	48.6	51.2	51.2
	Predicted Wind Turbine Noise L_{A90}	-	-	15.2	18.9	23.2	26.2	26.8	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5
	Exceedance Level L_{A90}	-	-	-22.2	-19.2	-16.0	-13.7	-14.5	-16.0	-18.8	-21.1	-23.7	-23.7
NAL2 – Levishie	Site Specific Noise Limit	41.0	41.0	41.1	41.7	42.8	44.2	45.8	47.6	49.4	51.2	52.8	52.8
	Predicted Wind Turbine Noise L_{A90}	-	-	19.0	22.7	27.0	30.0	30.6	31.3	31.3	31.3	31.3	31.3
	Exceedance Level L_{A90}	-	-	-22.1	-19.0	-15.8	-14.2	-15.2	-16.3	-18.1	-19.9	-21.5	-21.5
NAL3 - Achnaconeran	Site Specific Noise Limit	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	33.8	32.9	32.7	32.7	32.7	32.7	32.7
	Predicted Wind Turbine Noise L_{A90}	-	-	18.0	21.7	26.0	29.0	29.6	30.3	30.3	30.3	30.3	30.3
	Exceedance Level L_{A90}	-	-	-17	-13.3	-9.0	-4.8	-3.3	-2.4	-2.4	-2.4	-2.4	-2.4

Table 11.10 - Compliance Table – Comparison of predicted noise levels from the Proposed Development against the SSNL at each receptor – Night time

Receptor		Wind Speed (ms^{-1}) as standardised to 10m height											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
NAL1 – Bhlaraidh	Site Specific Noise Limit	43.0	43.0	43.0	43.0	43.0	43.0	42.3	42.3	42.3	43.8	43.8	43.8
	Predicted Wind Turbine Noise L_{A90}	-	-	15.2	18.9	23.2	26.2	26.8	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5
	Exceedance Level L_{A90}	-	-	-27.8	-24.1	-19.8	-16.8	-15.5	-14.8	-14.8	-16.3	-16.3	-16.3
NAL2 – Levishie	Site Specific Noise Limit	43.0	43.0	43.0	43.0	43.0	43.0	42.6	44.2	46.5	48.8	48.8	48.8
	Predicted Wind Turbine Noise L_{A90}	-	-	19.0	22.7	27.0	30.0	30.6	31.3	31.3	31.3	31.3	31.3
	Exceedance Level L_{A90}	-	-	-24	-20.3	-16.0	-13.0	-12.0	-12.9	-15.2	-17.5	-17.5	-17.5
NAL3 - Achnaconeran	Site Specific Noise Limit	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	33.8	32.9	32.7	32.7	32.7	32.7	32.7
	Predicted Wind Turbine Noise L_{A90}	-	-	18.0	21.7	26.0	29.0	29.6	30.3	30.3	30.3	30.3	30.3
	Exceedance Level L_{A90}	-	-	-17.0	-13.3	-9.0	-4.8	-3.3	-2.4	-2.4	-2.4	-2.4	-2.4

A) Prior to the First Export Date, the wind farm operator shall submit to the Local Authority for written approval a list of proposed independent consultants who may undertake compliance measurements in accordance with this condition. Amendments to the list of approved consultants shall be made only with the prior written approval of the Local Authority.

B) Within 21 days from receipt of a written request of the Local Authority, following a complaint to it alleging noise disturbance at a dwelling, the wind farm operator shall, at its expense, employ an independent consultant approved by the Local Authority to assess the level of noise imissions from the wind farm at the complainant's property (or a suitable alternative location agreed in writing with the Local Authority) in accordance with the procedures described in the attached Guidance Notes.

The written request from the Local Authority shall set out at least the date, time and location that the complaint relates to. Within 14 days of receipt of the written request of the Local Authority made under this paragraph (B), the wind farm operator shall provide the information relevant to the complaint to the Local Authority in the format set out in Guidance Note 1(e).

C) Prior to the commencement of any measurements by the independent consultant to be undertaken in accordance with these conditions, the wind farm operator shall submit to the Local Authority for written approval the proposed measurement location identified in accordance with the Guidance Notes where measurements for compliance checking purposes shall be undertaken.

Where the proposed measurement location is close to the wind turbines, rather than at the complainants property (to improve the signal to noise ratio), then the operators submission shall include a method to calculate the noise level from the wind turbines at the complainants property based on the noise levels measured at the agreed location (the alternative method). Details of the alternative method together with any associated guidance notes deemed necessary, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Authority prior to the commencement of any measurements.

Measurements to assess compliance with the noise limits of this condition shall be undertaken at the measurement location approved in writing by the Local Authority

D) Prior to the commencement of any measurements by the independent consultant to be undertaken in accordance with these conditions, the wind farm operator shall submit to the Local Authority for written approval a proposed assessment protocol setting out the following:

i. the range of meteorological and operational conditions (the range of wind speeds, wind directions, power generation and times of day) to determine the assessment of rating level of noise imissions.

ii. a reasoned assessment as to whether the noise giving rise to the complaint contains or is likely to contain a tonal component.

The proposed range of conditions shall be those which prevailed during times when the complainant alleges there was disturbance due to noise, having regard to the information provided in the written request of the Local Authority under paragraph (B), and such others as the independent consultant considers necessary to fully assess the noise at the complainant's property. The assessment of the rating level of noise imissions shall be undertaken in accordance with the assessment protocol approved in writing by the Local Authority and the attached Guidance Notes.

E) The wind farm operator shall provide to the Local Authority the independent consultant's assessment of the rating level of noise imissions undertaken in accordance with the Guidance Notes within 2 months of the date of the written request of the Local Authority made under paragraph (B) of this condition unless the time limit is extended in writing by the Local Authority. The assessment shall include all data collected for the purposes of undertaking the compliance measurements, such data to be provided in the format set out in Guidance Note 1(e) of the Guidance Notes. The instrumentation used to undertake the measurements shall be calibrated in accordance with Guidance Note 1(a) and certificates of calibration shall be submitted to the Local Authority with the independent consultant's assessment of the rating level of noise emissions.

F) Where a further assessment of the rating level of noise imissions from the wind farm is required pursuant to Guidance Note 4(c) of the attached Guidance Notes, the wind farm operator shall submit a copy of the further assessment within 21 days of submission of the independent consultant's assessment pursuant to paragraph (E) above unless the time limit for the submission of the further assessment has been extended in writing by the Local Authority.

G) The wind farm operator shall continuously log power production, wind speed and wind direction, all in accordance with Guidance Note 1(d) of the attached Guidance Notes. The data from each wind turbine shall be retained for a period of not less than 24 months. The wind farm operator shall provide this information in the format set out in Guidance Note 1(e) of the attached Guidance Notes to the Local Authority on its request within 14 days of receipt in writing of such a request.

H) Where it is proposed to operate any turbine in a reduced running mode in order to meet the limits, no turbine shall be erected until a curtailment plan for the turbines has been submitted and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The curtailment plan shall demonstrate how the limits will be complied with and shall include the following:

i. Definition of each noise reduced running mode including sound power data;

ii. The wind conditions (speed & direction) at which any noise reduced running mode will be implemented;

iii. Details of the manner in which the running modes will be defined in the SCADA data or how the implementation of the curtailment plan can be otherwise monitored and evidenced.

iv. The Curtailment Plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details

I) Prior to the First Export Date, the wind farm operator shall submit to the Local Authority for written approval, a scheme of mitigation to be implemented in the event that the rating level, after adjustment for background noise contribution and any tonal penalty, is found to exceed the conditioned limits. The scheme shall define any reduced noise running modes to be used in the mitigation together with sound power levels in these modes and the manner in which the running modes will be defined in the SCADA data.

J) The scheme referred to in paragraph I above should include a framework of immediate and long-term mitigation measures. The immediate mitigation measures must ensure the rating level will comply with the conditioned limits and must be implemented within seven days of the further assessment described in paragraph

F being received by the Local Authority. These measures must remain in place, except during field trials to optimise mitigation, until a long-term mitigation strategy is ready to be implemented.

Guidance Notes for Noise Condition

These notes are to be read with and form part of the noise condition. They further explain the condition and specify the methods to be employed in the assessment of complaints about noise imissions from the wind farm. The rating level at each integer wind speed is the arithmetic sum of the wind farm noise level as determined from the best-fit curve described in Note 2 of these Guidance Notes and any tonal penalty applied in accordance with Note 3 with any necessary correction for residual background noise levels in accordance with Note 4. Reference to ETSU-R-97 refers to the publication entitled "The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms" (1997) published by the Energy Technology Support unit (ETSU) for the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

Note 1

a) Values of the LA90,10-minute noise statistic should be measured at the complainant's property (or an approved alternative representative location as detailed in Note 1(b)), using a sound level meter of EN 60651/BS EN 60804 Type 1, or BS EN 61672 Class 1 quality (or the equivalent UK adopted standard in force at the time of the measurements) set to measure using the fast time weighted response as specified in BS EN 60651/BS EN 60804 or BS EN 61672-1 (or the equivalent UK adopted standard in force at the time of the measurements). This should be calibrated before and after each set of measurements, using a calibrator meeting BS EN 60945:2003 "Electroacoustics - sound calibrators" Class 1 with PTB Type Approval (or the equivalent UK adopted standard in force at the time of the measurements) and the results shall be recorded. Measurements shall be undertaken in such a manner to enable a tonal penalty to be calculated and applied in accordance with Guidance Note 3.

b) The microphone shall be mounted at 1.2 - 1.5 metres above ground level, fitted with a two-layer windshield or suitable equivalent approved in writing by the Local Authority, and placed outside the complainant's dwelling. Measurements should be made in "free field" conditions. To achieve this, the microphone shall be placed at least 3.5 metres away from the building facade or any reflecting surface except the ground at the approved measurement location. In the event that the consent of the complainant for access to his or her property to undertake compliance measurements is withheld, the wind farm operator shall submit for the written approval of the Local Authority details of the proposed alternative representative measurement location prior to the commencement of measurements and the measurements shall be undertaken at the approved

alternative representative measurement location.

c) The LA90,10-minute measurements should be synchronised with measurements of the 10-minute arithmetic mean wind speed and wind direction data and with operational data logged in accordance with Guidance Note 1(d) and rain data logged in accordance with Note 1(f).

d) To enable compliance with the conditions to be evaluated, the wind farm operator shall continuously log arithmetic mean wind speed in metres per second and wind direction in degrees from north at hub height for each turbine, arithmetic mean power generated by each turbine and any data necessary to define the running mode as set out in the Curtailment Plan, all in successive 10-minute periods. Unless an alternative procedure is previously agreed in writing with the Planning Authority, this hub height wind speed, averaged across all operating wind turbines, shall be used as the basis for the analysis. Each 10 minute arithmetic average mean wind speed data as measured at turbine hub height shall be 'standardised' to a reference height of 10 metres as described in ETSU-R-97 at page 120 using a reference roughness length of 0.05 metres. It is this standardised 10 metre height wind speed data which is correlated with the noise measurements determined as valid in accordance with Note 2(b), such correlation to be undertaken in the manner described in Note 2(c). All 10 minute periods shall commence on the hour and in 10 minute increments thereafter synchronised with Greenwich Mean Time and adjusted to British Summer Time where necessary.

e) Data provided to the Local Authority shall be provided in comma separated values in electronic format with the exception of data collected to asses tonal noise (if required) which shall be provided in a format to be agreed in writing with the Local Authority.

f) A data logging rain gauge shall be installed in the course of the independent consultant undertaking an assessment of the level of noise imissions. The gauge shall record over successive 10 minute periods synchronised with the periods of data recorded in accordance with Note 1(d). The wind farm operator shall submit details of the proposed location of the data logging rain gauge to the Local Authority prior to the commencement of measurements.

Note 2

a) The noise measurements should be made so as to provide not less than 20 valid data points as defined in Note 2 paragraph (b).

b) Valid data points are those measured during the conditions set out in the

assessment protocol approved by the Local Authority but excluding any periods of rainfall measured in accordance with Note 1(f).

c) Values of the LA90,10-minute noise measurements and corresponding values of the 10-minute standardised ten metre height wind speed for those data points considered valid in accordance with Note 2(b) shall be plotted on an XY chart with noise level on the Y-axis and wind speed on the X-axis. A least squares, "best fit" curve of an order deemed appropriate by the independent consultant (but which may not be higher than a fourth order) shall be fitted to the data points to define the wind farm noise level at each integer speed.

Note 3

a) Where, in accordance with the approved assessment protocol noise imissions at the location or locations where compliance measurements are being undertaken contain or are likely to contain a tonal component, a tonal penalty shall be calculated and applied using the following rating procedure.

b) For each 10-minute interval for which LA90,10-minute data have been determined as valid in accordance with Note 2, a tonal assessment shall be performed on noise imissions during 2 minutes of each 10-minute period. The 2-minute periods should be spaced at 10-minute intervals provided that uninterrupted uncorrupted data are available ("the standard procedure"). Where uncorrupted data are not available, the first available uninterrupted clean 2-minute period out of the affected overall 10-minute period shall be selected. Any such deviations from the standard procedure shall be reported.

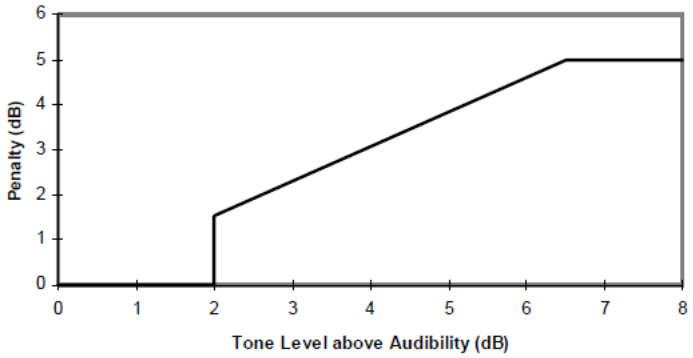
c) For each of the 2-minute samples the tone level above audibility shall be calculated by comparison with the audibility criterion given in Section 2.1 on pages 104 -109 of ETSU-R-97.

d) The tone level above audibility shall be plotted against wind speed for each of the 2-minute samples. Samples for which the tones were below the audibility criterion or no tone was identified, a value of zero audibility shall be substituted.

e) A least squares "best fit" linear regression shall then be performed to establish the average tone level above audibility for each integer wind speed derived from the value of the "best fit" line fitted to values within ± 0.5m/s of each integer wind speed. If there is no apparent trend with wind speed then a simple arithmetic mean shall be used. This process shall be repeated for each integer wind speed for which there is an assessment of overall levels in Note 2.

f) The tonal penalty is derived from the margin above audibility of the tone according to the figure below derived from the average tone level above

audibility for each integer wind speed.



Note 4

a) If a tonal penalty is to be applied in accordance with Note 3 the rating level of the turbine noise at each wind speed is the arithmetic sum of the measured noise level as determined from the best fit curve described in Note 2 and the penalty for tonal noise as derived in accordance with Note 3 at each integer wind speed within the range set out in the approved assessment protocol.

b) If no tonal penalty is to be applied then the rating level of the turbine noise at each wind speed is equal to the measured noise level as determined from the best fit curve described in Note 2.

c) If the rating level lies at or below the noise limits approved by the Local Authority then no further action is necessary. In the event that the rating level is above the noise limits, the independent consultant shall undertake a further assessment of the rating level to correct for background noise so that the rating level relates to wind turbine noise imission only.

d) The wind farm operator shall ensure that all the wind turbines in the development are turned off for such period as the independent consultant requires to undertake the further assessment. The further assessment shall be undertaken in accordance with the following steps:

i. Repeating the steps in Note 2, with the wind farm switched off, and determining the background noise (L3) at each integer wind speed within the range set out in the approved noise assessment protocol.

ii. The wind farm noise (L1) at this speed shall then be calculated as follows where L2 is the measured level with turbines running but without the addition of any tonal penalty:

$$L_1 = 10\log\left[10^{L_2/10} - 10^{L_3/10}\right]$$

iii. The rating level shall be re-calculated by adding the tonal penalty (if any is applied in accordance with Note 3) to the derived wind farm noise L1 at that integer wind speed.

iv. If the rating level after adjustment for background noise contribution and adjustment for tonal penalty lies at or below the noise limits approved by the Local Authority, then no further action is necessary. If the rating level at any integer wind speed exceeds the noise limits approved by the Local Authority, then the development fails to comply with the conditions.

Reason: To protect amenity and to ensure that noise limits are not exceeded and to enable prompt investigation of complaints.

Signature:	David Mudie	
Designation:	Area Planning Manager – South Area Planning Manager	
Author:	Alison Harvey	
Background Papers:	Documents referred to in report and in case file.	
Relevant Plans:	Site Location Plan	Figure 1.1
	Site Layout Plan	Figure 1.3
	Designated Sites - Ecological	Figure 5.1
	Designated Sites – Landscape	Figure 8.2.1

Appendix 2 – Assessment against Landscape and Visual Assessment Criteria contained within Section 4 of the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance.

Criterion 1 is related to relationships between settlements/key locations and the wider landscape.

As demonstrated by the ZTV and the visual impact assessment contained within Chapter 8 of the EIAR, the proposal would not be visible from the majority of the main settlements within the study area. Where visible, from residential areas, it is considered unlikely to lead to many significant visual effects, although some significant visual effects are anticipated for a small number of visual receptors in scattered properties to the east of Loch Ness along the B862 as noted by VP 7.

In terms of Key Views noted by the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study, the ZTV indicated that there would be no view of the Proposed Development from Loch End, Aldourie Castle Designed Landscape and An Torr. In terms of 'End-to-end Views over Loch ness looking Northeast', the ZTV again shows that there would be no view of the Proposed Development from locations where this view can be obtained. The ZTV shows that there would be no view of the Proposed Development from Urquhart Castle or visitor centre. Views from the Loch Ness would be similar to views illustrated from VP 8 and are not significant. Although effects from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh are considered to be moderate (significant), the scheme would not intrude on key views down the Great Glen.

The proposed development is considered to meet the threshold of Criterion 1, however there will be localised sections where it is not met.

Criteria 2, 4 and 5 are related to the amenity and visual appeal of key recreational routes and ways and transport routes.

The majority of Key Gateway locations and routes would not be affected by the Proposed Development. Moderate (Significant) visual effects would be anticipated for receptors at points on the B862 Stratherrick (at VP 5 and 7), but these would be specific to these localised points and effects on the overall visual experience of the entire route has not been classed as significant and would not "overwhelm or otherwise detract from landscape characteristics which contribute the distinctive transitional experience found at key gateway locations and routes". Impacts upon Glen Affric circular walk and the Great Glen are not considered to be significant.

The proposed development is considered to meet the threshold of Criterions 2, 4 and 5.

Criterion 3 is related to the extent to which the proposal affects the fabric and setting of valued natural and cultural landmarks.

This is considered to include the Great Glen, Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, Loch Ness and cultural landmarks such as Urquhart Castle.

Views from the Loch Ness would be similar to views illustrated from VP 8 and are not significant. Although effects from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh are considered to be moderate (significant), the scheme would not intrude on key views down the Great Glen. One of the key aims of the proposal has been to limit NSA impacts and to avoid visibility from

the circular walk around Loch Affric. NatureScot consider that, in the main, these design objectives have been achieved.

In terms of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, the removal of the identified turbines is considered beneficial as its help to draw back the turbines from this VP. The removal of T14 would also remove a very visible access track from the scheme. However, it is acknowledged that this will not change the overall effect at this VP which is still considered to be moderate (significant).

The ZTV shows that there would be no view of the Proposed Development from Urquhart Castle or visitor centre. The potential impact of the proposed turbines on the setting of the monument is derived from inward views towards the castle from the north and north east looking south and south west. HES consider that whilst a limited number of blade tips would be visible, these are at a sufficient distance that they would not be likely to dominate or distract from the prominence or positioning of Urquhart Castle.

The proposed development meets the threshold of Criterion albeit there will be significant adverse effects and it is not considered the criterion is met from Meall Fuar-Mhonaidh.

Criteria 6, 7 and 9 are related to the pattern of development, separation between development/and or clusters both in visual and landscape terms.

The Proposed Development would be located adjacent to the Operational Development, whilst is groups the turbines together, the larger scale of turbines are evident in a number of viewpoints. However, in most views from elevated positions the scheme does sit within its own layer in the landform when seen in the context of the cumulative wind energy picture. The existing pattern of development clusters and open spaces would therefore be maintained, particularly when seen from the Great Glen area, as well as other parts of the landscape. The design iterations made during the pre-application stage by the applicants and the recommended removal of the three turbines is considered to have significantly improved the composition and design both when looking in isolation and within a wider cumulative context.

Criteria 6, 7 and 9 are considered to be met.

Criterion 8 is related to perception of landscape scale and distance.

The Proposed Development would be formed of larger turbines than those used on the operational site. The rationale for this has been addressed by the applicants and is detailed in this report. However, in some views were the turbines sit in front of the operational turbines or site side by side this does raise compositional issues such seen in VP 12. The recommended mitigation has improved the composition of the scheme in terms of horizontal spread of the turbines and turbine stacking. This also assists in avoiding encroachment down slopes in the landform (VP5).

However, overall, the proposal is considered to meet the threshold for Criterion 9.

Criterion 10 is related to distinctiveness of landscape character.

The LVIA concludes that there would be no significant adverse effects on landscape character affecting any of the LCTs considered in the assessment. Localised effects are anticipated as being for the area containing, and immediately surrounding, the site

itself, as well as areas typically to its north and north-east. From these directions the proposed turbines would be a noticeable addition to the landscape and would increase the prominence of this feature in the landscape which may have some potential to alter the perception of scale and distance within parts of this LCT.

The proposal is considered to meet the threshold for Criterion 10.

Appendix Three Viewpoint Assessment Appraisal – Visual Impact

Viewpoint (VP)		Receptor/ Reason for VP Selection	Sensitivity of Visual Receptor	Magnitude of Impact	Residual Effect on Visual Amenity at Viewpoint	Notes
VP 1: Track to Loch Liath 4.16km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 9 Turbine Tips - 17	APP	Representative of open, very close-proximity view, from track on the site.	Low	Low	Minor Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** The Proposed Development turbines would be visible in close proximity in main views behind the Operational Development turbines, seen on the skyline as hubs and blades, partially screened by landform. The Proposed Development would slightly increase the horizontal field of view occupied by turbines but would appear in scale and not appear taller than the Operational Development turbines. **THC agree with the EIAR assessment**. The proposal would not expand the spread of turbines but would increase the number of turbines in view, thus presenting a more intense view. However, this is not considered to sensitive VP and the overall visual effect is considered to be perceptible but not a detracting feature. The proposed turbines sit to the rear of the operational turbines so the difference in the scale of turbines in not an obvious feature. **Recommended Mitigation:** Removal of T13, 14 and 18 would have a small effect from this VP as the tips of these turbines are only visible beyond the horizon.
	THC		Low	Low	Minor Not significant	
VP 2: **Old Bridge, Invermoriston**	APP	Representative of close-proximity views from	High	Negligible-Low	Minor Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Main views east over river, framed by trees along riverbank, looking towards hills with forestry in mid-ground and craggy moorland on higher

4.14km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 0 Turbine Tips - 3	THC	Invermoriston, taken from Old Bridge.	High	Negligible-Low	Minor Not significant	ground. Some turbine tips would be perceptible on the skyline in main views, partially screened by trees and landform. Proposed Development is anticipated to be associated with a small deterioration to the existing view. **THC agree with the EIAR assessment**. **Recommended Mitigation:** No impact as the turbines T13, 14 and 18 are not visible from the VP.
VP 3: **Meall Fuar-mhonaidh** 4.95km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 18 Turbine Tips - 18	APP	Representative of elevated views from popular local hill summit on the north-western side of Loch Ness, within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	Low- Medium	Medium	Minor to moderate Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Elevated and panoramic views. Views across the Great Glen to the east, over Loch Ness, low-lying farmland and forested slopes. Operational Development visible in close proximity to the south-west, and several wind farm clusters visible on the distant skyline to the north, north-east and southwest. The Proposed Development turbines would be visible in panoramic views in front of the Operational Development turbines, appearing closer and slightly increasing the horizontal field of view. The Proposed Development substation and tracks would also be perceptible, seen in the context of the proposed turbines. Construction would be noticeable but seen in the context of the Operational Development turbines. This may include excavation and reinstatement of borrow pits. **THC do not agree with the EIAR assessment.** Meall Fuar-mhonaidh is a popular route for tourists and local walkers, so is considered to have a high sensitivity rating but is reduced to a medium-high rating due to the presence of the existing operational wind farm. While the proposal would not intrude on views of the Great Glen, which is a key focus in views from this hill, it
	THC		Medium-High	Medium	**Moderate Significant**	

						would be much more prominent than the operational Bhlaraidh wind farm. As such it is considered to have an overall visual effect as moderate (significant) as the development would be likely to significantly diminish views to the west and the sense of drama experienced from the summit of this hill. **Recommended Mitigation:** Part of the mitigation secured through the existing operational scheme with the removal of turbines was to try and limit the 'spill of the turbines over the natural buffer of Carn Tarsuinn'. Working with the landform better resulted in a relatively thin band of turbines. The current scheme undermines this mitigation. The removal of the identified turbines would help to draw back the turbines from this VP. The removal of T14 would also remove a very visible access track from the scheme.
VP4: **Achtuie Road near Creag Nay** 14.54km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 0 Turbine Tips - 3	APP	Representative of elevated views from public road and several elevated properties above Drumnadrochit	Medium	Negligible - Low	Negligible – Minor Not Significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Main views east over river, framed by trees along river-bank, looking towards hills with forestry in mid-ground and craggy moorland on higher ground. Some Proposed Development turbine tips would be perceptible on the skyline in main views, partially screened by trees and landform. **THC agree with the EIAR assessment.** **Recommended Mitigation:** Removal of T13 would reduce the number of tips visible from three down to two.
	THC		Medium	Negligible - Low	Negligible – Minor Not Significant	
VP5: **Suidhe Viewpoint, B862**	APP	Elevated view from roadside Viewpoint marked on OS maps, on General	Medium	Medium	**Moderate Significant**	**EIAR Assessment:** Open, elevated views, panoramic but with main views towards north-east over Loch Ness, forested wide glens and the B862 continuing into the distance. This north-easterly view is also the visual

10.86km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 18 Turbine Tips - 18	THC	Wade's military road, within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	Medium – High	Medium	**Moderate Significant**	focus on an information board at this viewpoint, that labels key features within the view, including Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, the Great Glen and Loch Ness, Inverness and the Moray Firth, Loch Knockie, Tom na Crioch, Loch Mhor and Beinn Sgurrach. Wind Farms are visible to the north-east and the Operational Development turbines are also visible in side views to the northwest on the skyline. To the eastnorth-east the landform is more craggy and rocky in contrast to the expansive broad valley of Stratherrick and the Great Glen. The Proposed Development turbines would be noticeable in side views on the skyline to the north-west, adjacent to the Operational Development, extending the horizontal and vertical field of view occupied by turbines, whereby the larger scale turbines and wind farm extent would be noticeable. **THC generally agree with the EIAR assessment** in terms of overall significance rating; however, the sensitivity of the receptor is slightly downplayed. This is a very popular vantage point and the primary reason for visitors is to stop and take in their surroundings. As such it is considered to have a high sensitivity rating but is reduced to a medium-high rating due to the presence of the existing operational wind farm. However, the proposed turbines will be more intrusive than the operational Bhalairdh turbines which are partially screened. **Recommended Mitigation:** The removal T14 would pull the turbines back from descending down the slope. The removal of T13 and 18 would limit the horizontal spread of the turbines. The removal of T17 would further help this aspect, but removal of this turbine was not accepted by the applicants.

VP6: Summit by Suidhe Viewpoint, B862 10.70km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 4 Turbine Tips - 6	APP	Elevated view from popular summit near Suidhe Viewpoint carpark.	Medium	Low	Minor-Moderate Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Some Proposed Development turbines would be visible on skyline to the north-west in panoramic views but majority screened by landform. Walking along the path to this VP from B862, visibility of the Operational and Proposed Development decreases as you travel west, whereby the Operational Development is screened when you reach the VP. **THC generally agree with the EIAR assessment** in terms of the overall significance rating. However, this is a recreational route in which the changed aspect is an important element. However, is considered to be a medium-high sensitivity as the operational turbines are detracting features on the way to the VP but are not currently visible at the summit. The presence of the proposed turbines from the VP is considered to cause a low-medium magnitude of change but would be classed as low for the route up to the VP. **Recommended Mitigation:** The removal of T13 and 18 would limit the horizontal spread of the turbines. The removal of T17 would further help this aspect, but removal of this turbine was not accepted by the applicants. The removal of T14 will reduce the number of turbines visible from this VP. Overall, the mitigation measures would substantially limit the visibility of the scheme from the summit at Suidhe and potentially lower the visual effect from minor-moderate to minor.
	THC		Medium- High	Low-Medium	Minor-Moderate Not significant	
VP 7: B862 south of Foyers	APP	Representative of views from the B862 road opposite the site.	Low	Medium-High	Moderate Significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Open views over moorland and farmland across nearby areas of woodland and hills to the east. Turbine tips of Corriegarth and Dunmaglass Wind Farms perceptible to the north-east and east and

9.63km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 14 Turbine Tips - 18	THC		Low	Medium-High	Moderate Significant	the Operational Development turbines to the north-east on the skyline. For receptors travelling along this road, the Operational Development features in side views. The Proposed Development turbines would be noticeable in side views on skyline, seen adjacent to the Operational Development turbines, extending the vertical and horizontal field of view occupied by turbines, whereby the larger scale turbines and wind farm extent would be noticeable. **THC agree with the EIAR assessment** **Recommended Mitigation:** The removal of T13 would limit the horizontal spread of the scheme. The removal of T14 and T18 will reduce the amount of turbine stacking. It is noted that the removal of T17 would also assist, but removal of this turbine was not accepted by the applicants.
VP 8: Lochside picnic layby on B852 21.10km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 1 Turbine Tips - 3	APP	Representative of worst-case low-level views from shores of Loch Ness, on B-road, within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	Medium-High	Negligible	Negligible Not significant	**EIAR Assessment**: Some Proposed Development turbine tips would be barely perceptible on skyline in main views in a dip in the landform, seen adjacent and in front of the Operational Development turbines. Although proposed turbines would be perceptible, the change to this view would be barely perceptible considering the existing turbines. Focal features of Urquhart Castle and Meal Fuar-mhonaidh would not be affected and the Proposed Development would be contained in a landform dip **THC agree with the EIAR assessment**. **Recommended Mitigation:** No impact as turbines 13, 14 and 18 are not visible from the VP.
	THC		Medium-High	Negligible	Negligible Not significant	

VP 9: Carn na Saobhaidhe 20.15km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 18 Turbine Tips - 18	APP	Elevated views from popular Corbett summit on southern side of Loch Ness.	Low	Low	Negligible – Minor Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Elevated panoramic views across uplands to distant mountains, with several wind turbines visible in different directions. Turbines of Corriegarth Wind Farm notable in the foreground to the west, Dunmaglass Wind Farm to the north-east and in the distance, turbines of Stronelairg, Millennium, Beinneun (and Extension), Corrimony and the Operational Development. The Proposed Development turbines would be visible in the distance in panoramic views, seen adjacent and in front of the Operational Development turbines, extending the horizontal field of view occupied by turbines, and appearing slightly larger in scale and being perceived as closer to the viewer. This change would affect a small proportion of the panoramic view where visual focus is dominated by nearby wind turbines of Corriegarth Wind Farm. **THC generally agree with the EIAR assessment.** The difference in the scale of turbines is noticeable, with a minor but not significant overall rating, **Recommended Mitigation:** The removal of the turbines will lighten up the scheme, with the removal of T14 helping to push the development back from this VP.
	THC		Medium	Low	Minor Not significant	
VP 10: Great Glen Way near Carn a' Bhodaich 23.28km to the nearest turbine Visibility:	APP	Illustrative of elevated views from the Great Glen Way.	Medium	Low	Minor Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Elevated open views west – north-west over moorland and fields towards forested hills and mountains with two wind farm clusters visible to north-west and north in far distance (Fairburn, Corriemoillie and Lochluichart Wind Farms). Views to southwest extend to distant upland with turbines of the Operational Development on the skyline. Local wood pole line in foreground.
	THC		Medium	Low	Minor Not significant	

Turbines Hubs – 7 Turbine Tips - 18						The Proposed Development turbines would be visible on the skyline in the distance, seen in front of the Operational Development turbines, extending vertical and horizontal field of view occupied by turbines. **THC agree with the EIAR assessment.** **Recommended Mitigation:** Removal of T13, 14 and 18 will limit the spread of the turbines on the horizon, with T13 being the most prominent in this VP.
VP 11: **Meall Mor, Glen Affric** 14.61km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 9 Turbine Tips - 16	APP	Illustrative of elevated views from local high point within Central Highlands WLA, on northern boundary of the GlenAffric NSA and southern boundary of the Monar and Mullardoch SLA.	Low	Negligible - Low	Negligible – Minor Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Elevated open views across moorland and forested glen towards distant hills. Several turbine clusters are visible, including Corrimony and the Operational Development in the mid-ground to the south-east, and others further away on skyline to the Farr Wind Farm to the north, Dunmaglass and Corriegarth Wind Farms to the south-east and Millennium Wind Farm to the south. The Proposed Development turbines would be visible in panoramic views, seen adjacent and behind the Operational Development and in front of distant wind turbines of Corriegarth Wind Farm, whereby it would extend the horizontal field of view occupied by turbines. Landform would separate the Operational and Proposed Development into two clusters, but all turbines would be back-clothed against landform and would appear similar in scale. **THC generally agree with the EIAR assessment**, in terms of the overall effect being not significant. However, the sensitivity rating is considered to be low-medium. The scheme adds to a potentially complex cumulative picture, but is considered to have an overall minor rather than a negligible-minor effect.
	THC		Low-Medium	Low-Medium	Minor Not significant	

						Recommended Mitigation: Removal of T13 and T18 would improve turbine stacking and lightens up the density of turbines, although this does leave T5 now as an outlier.
VP 12: **Creag Dhubh** 15.63km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 2 Turbine Tips - 17	APP	Elevated view from hilltop within WLA, with views north across Glen Affric NSA.	Low-Medium	Negligible	Negligible Not Significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Elevated views across Glen Affric to the north-west, across valley floor and wooded slopes, and across another glen to the eastsouth-east, across upland moorland and hill slopes covered with scattered woodland and areas of forestry, and valley floor with occasional buildings and a road running in the direction of the glen. The Operational Development is visible on the skyline to the east, in front of Dunmaglass Wind Farm turbines on the distant skyline. Corrimony Wind Farm turbines are visible to the east, backclothed, while Beinneun (and Extension) Wind Farm turbines can be seen to the south in a dip in the landform. The Proposed Development turbines (tips and a few hubs) would be barely perceptible in panoramic views, behind the Operational Development turbines, partially screened by landform. They would not extend the horizontal or vertical field of view and would be perceived as a more intense cluster of turbines in this small part of the overall panoramic view. **THC generally agree with the EIAR assessment**, in terms of the overall effect being not significant. However, the sensitivity rating is considered to be medium. Presents a more congested view as the proposal is sat to the rear of the existing operational turbines. **Recommended Mitigation:** T13 and T18 would remove the number of tips visible from the VP.
	THC		Medium	Low	Negligible Not Significant	

VP 13: **Sgurr nan Conbhairean** 26.56km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 18 Turbine Tips - 18	APP	An elevated view from popular Munro summit within Moidart, Morar and Glenshiel SLA and Central Highlands WLA; and on the edge of the Glen Affric NSA	Medium	Negligible	Negligible Not Significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Elevated panoramic views with large mountains to the west, south-west and north-west , the forested slopes and farmed valley floor of Glen Moriston visible to the south-east and Loch Cluanie visible immediately to the south. Several wind farms are visible. The Proposed Development turbines would be barely perceptible in distant panoramic views behind the Operational Development and in front of several distant wind turbines, with some proposed turbines breaking the skyline, but the majority appearing backclothed. They would slightly increase the vertical field of view occupied by turbines but would not increase the horizontal spread. **THC generally agree with the EIAR assessment.** Position in relation to existing operational turbines makes the difference in turbine scale more noticeable, overall minor but not significant effect. **Recommended Mitigation:** The removal of T13, 14 and 18 would reduce the number of turbines visible and may lighten up the density of turbines within the middle of the scheme.
	THC		Medium	Negligible	Minor Not Significant	
VP 14: **Meall Dubh** 18.87km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 18 Turbine Tips - 18	APP	Representative of an elevated view from Corbett path, by Millennium Wind Farm.	Low	Low	Negligible – Minor Not Significant	**EIAR Assessment:** The proposed turbines would be perceptible in panoramic views, behind and adjacent to the Operational Development turbines, extending the horizontal field of view to the east and appearing relatively similar in scale. **THC generally agree with the EIAR assessment** but consider that the sensitivity of the recreational user to be medium. Position in relation to existing operational turbines makes the difference in turbine scale more noticeable. Relatively poor composition with the
	THC		Medium	Low	Minor Not Significant	

						existing scheme. Minor, but not significant overall effect. **Recommended Mitigation:** The removal of T13, 14 and T18 reduces turbine stacking from this VP. The removal of T17 would have further assisted in this regard.
VP 15: **Poll-gormack Hill** 22.10km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 18 Turbine Tips - 18	APP	Representative of elevated mid-range views from summit within Braeroy-Glenshirra-Creag Meagadh WLA, with views across the Corrieyarrick Pass.	Low	Medium	Minor Not Significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Elevated panoramic views across moorland upland to the east-north-east and across the forested slopes of the Great Glen to the west. Turbines of nearby Millennium and Beinneun (and Extension) Wind Farms are prominent on hill slopes in the midground to the north-west, while the Operational Development, Corrimony and Fairburn Wind Farm turbines can be seen in an adjacent upland area to the north, back-clothed. Corriegarth and Dunmaglass. The Proposed Development turbines would be visible to the north, in distant panoramic views, adjacent to the Operational Development and in front of Fairburn Wind Farm. The Proposed Development would extend the horizontal field of view occupied by turbines and would appear slightly larger than the Operational Development turbines. **THC generally agree with the EIAR assessment but** consider that the sensitivity of the recreational user to be medium. **Recommended Mitigation:** Removal of T13, 14 and 18 will reduce the horizontal spread of the turbines. The removal of T17 would have helped further in this regard.
	THC		Medium	Medium	Minor Not Significant	
VP 16: **Geal Charn**	APP	Representative of elevated views	Low	Negligible	Negligible Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Elevated, expansive views over rolling upland moorland towards distant valleys and

26.86km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 18 Turbine Tips - 18	THC	from Munro summit, on western boundary of CNP and near the boundary of the Monadhliath WLA.	Low	Negligible	Negligible Not significant	hills, with views towards the Great Glen and the wooded slopes surrounding Loch Lochy to the west. Stronelairg Wind Farm turbines and tracks are visible in the foreground to the northwest, and behind it the Operational Development can be seen further in the distance. Several other wind farms are also visible in multiple directions. The Proposed Development turbines would be visible to the north-west, in distant panoramic views, adjacent to the Operational Development and to the rear of Stronelairg Wind Farm. The Proposed Development would extend the horizontal field of view occupied by turbines and would appear slightly larger than the Operational Development turbines, but this change would be largely imperceptible in the context of foreground turbines in the foreground. **THC agree with the EIAR assessment** **Recommended Mitigation:** Removal of T13, 14 and 18 will reduce the horizontal spread of the turbines. The removal of T17 would have helped further in this regard.
VP 17: **B862 south of Dores** 22.32km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 4 Turbine Tips - 8	APP	Representative of elevated view across Loch Ness from minor Broad, within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.	Medium	Low-Medium	Minor – Moderate Not Significant	**EIAR Assessment:** The Proposed Development turbines would be noticeable on the skyline in main views in front of the Operational Development turbines, extending the vertical and horizontal field of view occupied by turbines. Focal features of Urquhart Castle and Meal Fuar-mhonaidh would not be affected and the Proposed Development would be contained in a landform dip **THC agree with the EIAR assessment.**
	THC		Medium	Low-Medium	Minor – Moderate Not Significant	

						Recommended Mitigation: No impact as turbines 13, 14 and 18 are not visible from the VP.
VP 18: **Track near Dun Fhamhair fort** 25.80km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 8 Turbine Tips - 16	APP	Representative of longer-range views from walking route near Beauly.	Medium	Negligible - low	Negligible – minor Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** The Proposed Development would appear in the distance beside the Operational Development on the skyline, partially screened by landform, extending the horizontal field of view and appearing slightly larger in scale, although this may not be perceptible given distance. The Proposed and Operational Developments would still together occupy a small part of the overall view. **THC generally agree with the EIAR assessment** but with a minor, not significant overall effect **Recommended Mitigation:** Removal of T13, 14 and 18 will reduce the horizontal spread of the turbines. The removal of T17 would have helped further in this regard.
	THC		Medium	Low	Minor Not significant	
VP 19: **Path north of Loch Affric** 23.48km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 0 Turbine Tips - 3	APP	Representative of worst-case low-level views from mountain track to the north of Loch Affric, near junction with core path, situated within Glen Affric NSA and Central Highlands WLA. No views from circular Core Path around Loch Affric, but very small area of theoretical	Medium-High	Negligible	Negligible Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Elevated views across grassy track and heather-clad hill slopes down to valley and Loch Affric and scattered conifer trees lining the loch sides, towards steep hills on the other side of the loch with patches of woodland lining some of the slopes. Views are drawn south-west where the sweeping hill sides meet the valley floor, with a backdrop of steep hills. View's north are contained by landform but some turbines of the Operational Development are visible on the skyline in the distance. The Proposed Development turbine tips would be barely perceptible in the distance in views to the north, seen adjacent to the Operational Development turbines. Focal views across Glen Affric to the south-east would not be affected.
	THC		Medium-High	Negligible	Negligible Not significant	

		visibility on this nearby route.				**THC agree with the EIAR assessment.** **Recommended Mitigation:** No impact as turbines 13, 14 and 18 are not visible from the VP.
VP 20: Path north of Affric Lodge 23.48km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 1 Turbine Tips - 9	APP	Representative of elevated point on path north of Affric Lodge, on slopes of Am Meallan hill, within the Central Highlands WLA and Glen Affric NSA.	Medium	Negligible	Negligible Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Elevated views down valley towards Loch Affric and Loch Beinn a' Mheadhoin and across moorland and forested slopes. Views north are contained by landform. Wind turbines are visible in views to the east, seen above Loch Beinn a' Mheadhoin, where the Operational Development is visible on the skyline, and Corrimony Wind Farm turbines backclothed on the hillside below skyline, and Moy Wind Farm turbines barely visible in the distance. The Proposed Development turbines would be visible behind the Operational Development turbines on the skyline, adding a few more tips and one hub, and would appear smaller/lower down than the Operational Development turbines. **THC agree with the EIAR assessment.** **Recommended Mitigation:** No impact as turbines 13, 14 and 18 are not visible from the VP.
	THC		Medium	Negligible	Negligible Not significant	
VP 21: Toll Creagach 19.8km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 16 Turbine Tips - 18	APP	Illustrative of elevated views from a Munro on the edge of the Glen Affric NSA and Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA, within the Central Highlands WLA.	Low- medium	Low	Negligible- minor Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Elevated panoramic views across mountains tops to the north; and along valleys to River Cannich to the north-east, and Loch Mullardoch. The Proposed Development turbines would be visible behind the Operational Development, extending the horizontal field of view occupied by turbines. The turbines would appear similar in scale to the Operational Development. **THC generally agree with the EIAR assessment** but consider that the sensitivity of the recreational user to be medium, with a minor, not significant overall effect
	THC		Medium	Low	Minor Not significant	

						Recommended Mitigation: Removal of T14 and 18 would reduce the amount of stacking, the removal of T17 would have further helped in this regard.
VP 22: **Sgurr na Ruaidhe** 22.49km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 17 Turbine Tips - 18	APP	Representative of elevated views from a Munro within the Glen Strathfarrar group of hills and views over the Glen Strathfarrar NSA. It is also located within the Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA and Central Highlands WLA	Low-Medium	Low	Negligible - minor Not significant	**EIAR Assessment**: Elevated panoramic views of mountains to the west, southwest and north-west, and over more low-lying farmland and patches of forestry and woodland east, towards the Great Glen. A number of wind farms are visible. The Proposed Development turbines would be visible adjacent to the Operational Development, extending the horizontal field of view and appearing slightly larger. **THC generally agree with the EIAR assessment** but consider that the sensitivity of the recreational user to be medium, with a minor, not significant overall effect **Recommended Mitigation:** Removal of T13 and 18 will reduce the horizontal spread of the turbines, the removal of T17 would have further helped in this regard. The removal of T14 will help to reduce the number of turbines in view.
	THC		Medium	Low	Minor Not significant	
VP 23: **An Cabar (Ben Wyvis)** 44.85km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 14 Turbine Tips - 18	APP	Representative of distant elevated views from hill top located in Rhiddoroch-Beinn Dearg-Ben Wyvis WLA and Ben Wyvis SLA	Low	Negligible	Negligible Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Elevated panoramic views across upland moorland to the west over lochs and forestry blocks situated on lower slopes, towards distant hill tops. The Proposed Development turbines would be barely perceptible in the far distance, adjacent to the Operational Development turbines and in the context of several other wind developments. It would increase the horizontal extent occupied by turbines, but the change would affect a very small part of the panoramic view.
	THC		Low- Medium	Negligible	Negligible Not significant	

						THC generally agree with the EIAR assessment but consider that the sensitivity of the recreational user to be higher. **Recommended Mitigation:** Removal of T13 and 18 will reduce the horizontal spread of the turbines, the removal of T17 would have further helped in this regard. The removal of T14 will help to reduce stacking.
VP 24: **NCN1 Between Dingwall and Evanton** 42.98km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 11 Turbine Tips - 18	APP	Representative of distant views from national cycle route in coastal location.	Low-medium	Negligible	Negligible Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** The Proposed Development turbines would be perceptible in far distance on skyline in part of main view, adjacent to barely perceptible tips of the Operational Development. **THC agree with the EIAR assessment.** **Recommended Mitigation:** Removal of T13, 14 and 18 will reduce the horizontal spread of the turbines, the removal of T17 would have further helped in this regard.
	THC		Low-medium	Negligible	Negligible Not significant	
VP 25: **Minor road near Tore** 38.28km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 5 Turbine Tips - 15	APP	Representative of distant views from rural settlement area.	Low-Medium	Negligible	Negligible Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** Relatively open views to south over elevated fields and large areas of woodland. The Proposed Development turbines would be perceptible in far distance on skyline in part of main view, adjacent to barely perceptible tips of the Operational Development. **THC agree with the EIAR assessment.** **Recommended Mitigation:** Removal of T13 and 18 will reduce the horizontal spread of the turbines.
	THC		Low-Medium	Negligible	Negligible Not significant	
VP 26: **A87 Bun Loyne**	APP	Representative of elevated views from layby by A road near Bun	Low	Low-Medium	Minor Not significant	**EIAR Assessment:** The Proposed Development turbines would be visible on the skyline in main views behind the Operational Development, slightly

20.37km to the nearest turbine Visibility: Turbines Hubs – 3 Turbine Tips - 14	THC	Loyne, Glen Moriston	Low	Low-Medium	Minor Not significant	extending the horizontal field of view and appearing slightly bigger. **THC agree with the EIAR assessment.** **Recommended Mitigation:** Removal of T13 will reduce stacking.

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Key

Site Boundary

Proposed Development

Scale 1:50,000 @ A3

0 1 2 km

N

Figure 1.1

Site Location Plan

Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension EIA Report

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Key

- Turbine Development Area (Centroid = X:239512 Y:820991)
- Site Boundary
- Proposed Development Turbine (Symbol does not indicate tower dimension just its location)
- Operational Development Turbine (Symbol does not indicate tower dimension just its location)
- LiDAR (does not indicate footprint)
- Indicative Cross Country Cable Route
- Access route via existing wind farm track
- Access route via existing Livishie Hydro track (track to be upgraded)
- New Track
- Substation
- Batching Plant Search Area
- Borrow Pit Search Area
- Hydro Borrow Pits Search Area
- Turning Heads
- Permanent Hardstanding Area
- Temporary Hardstanding Area
- Satellite Construction Compound (temporary)
- Primary Construction Compound.. Existing permanent hardstanding (to be retained)
- Primary Construction Compound.. Temporary hardstanding (to be re-instated)

Scale 1:20,000 @ A3

0 500 m

N

Figure 1.3

Site Layout Plan

Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension EIA Report

Strathglass Complex SAC
Glen Affric SSSI & NNR
Levishie Wood SSSI
River Moriston SAC
Temporary Construction Compound in River Moriston catchment
Ness Woods SAC
Easter Ness Forest SSSI
Loch Bran SSSI
BALMACAAN FOREST
GUISACHAN FOREST
LEVISHIE FOREST
DUNDREGGAN FOREST
LOCH NESS

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RAMBOLL

Key

- Site Boundary
- Bhlaraidh Extension Turbine
- Access Route Via Existing Wind Farm Track
- Access Route Via Existing Livishie Hydro Track (Track to be Upgraded)
- New Track
- Bhlaraidh Extension Substation
- 10km Desk Study Area
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- National Nature Reserve (NNR)
- Semi-natural Woodland
- Ancient Woodland

Scale 1:83,000 @ A3

0 1.5 3 Kilometers

N

Figure 5.1

Designated Sites

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ash

Key

- Site Boundary
- Proposed Development 180m Tip Height Turbine
- 45km Study Area
- 25km Detailed Study Area
- 5km Offset

Designated and Protected Landscapes

- Cairngorms National Park (CNP)
- National Scenic Area (NSA)
- Highlands Special Landscape Area (SLA)
- Wild Land Area
- Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDL)

GDLs within 45 km

1. Castle Leod
2. The Spa Gardens, Strathpeffer
3. Brahan
4. Fairburn
5. Beaufort Castle
6. Dochfour
7. Aldourie Castle
8. Tomnahurich Cemetery
9. Leys Castle
10. Culloden House
11. Rosehaugh
12. Achnacarry

Scale 1:350,000@ A3

0 5 10 15 Km

N

Figure 8.2.1
Designated and Protected Landscapes

Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension
EIA Report

Drawing No.:119009-D-8.2.1-1.0.0 **Date:**03/08/21