Agenda Item	5.1
Report No	PLN/025/25

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: North Planning Applications Committee

Date: 23 April 2025

Report Title: 23/02998/S36: Renantis (formerly Falck Renewables Wind Limited)
Land 1800M NE of 12 Upper Feorlig Dunvegan – Continued Item

Report By: Area Planning Manager - North

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Ben Aketil Repowered and Extended Wind Farm – Decommissioning and removal of 12 turbines and related infrastructure, erection and operation of 9 turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 200m, up to 20MW Battery Storage System, anemometer mast, access tracks, up to two borrow pits and all associated infrastructure

Ward: 10 - Eilean a' Cheò

Development category: National Development (Application under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989)

Reason referred to Committee: National Development

All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal does not accord with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is not acceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations.

Recommendation

Members are asked to agree the recommendation maintain its objection (**Raise an Objection)** to the application as set out in section 11 of the report.

1. Introduction

1.1 Members will remember that the Highland Council raised a timeous objection on 11 June 2024 to the consultation request from the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU) for the repowering and extension of Ben Aketil Wind Farm. This objection was subsequently ratified at the following North Planning Applications Committee (NPAC) of 07 August 2024 following the presentation of the report on handling with Members agreeing to the officer recommendation to Raise an Objection on the grounds of: impacts on peat and peatland habitats; landscape and visual impacts including on the 'Dynamic Coastline' Special Quality of the North West Skye Special Landscape Area (SLA); and on ground of detrimental impact on the setting of Dunvegan Castle Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape. The report on handling was subsequently issued to the ECU on 14 October 2024.

1.2 The application was made under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 (as amended). In the event that the Planning Authority raises an objection to the application, and the objection is not withdraw, Scottish Ministers are to hold a public local inquiry. In this instance, a public local inquiry is scheduled to be held on Skye, the week commencing 23 June 2025 and both the applicant and planning officers are preparing their evidence to present to the Reporter appointed by Scottish Ministers.

1.3 Members are reminded that the application as submitted to the ECU includes the decommissioning and removal of the existing Ben Aketil Wind Farm which comprises 12 turbines measuring 99.5 m in height to blade tip. The wind farm is proposed to be replaced with 9 turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 200 m. The scheme also includes up to 20 MW of battery energy storage along with associated infrastructure including new turbine foundations and hardstanding areas, two substation compounds, two borrow pits, and 9 km of new access track. The proposal is anticipated to operate over a 35 year period. Due to the scheme's expected generating capacity of 59.4 MW plus up to 20 MW of energy storage, this proposal falls under the provisions of the Electricity Act and is classed as National Development by National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4).

1.4 At the pre-examination meeting (PEM) on 16 January 2025, the applicant proposed to provide Further Environmental Information (FEI) to include a landscape and visual assessment of the alternative of installing turbines with a maximum tip height of 180 m, rather than the proposed 200 m. The applicant has advised that the alternative is offered as potential mitigation for the scheme should the Reporter find in favour of the lower turbines.

1.5 While the Planning Service awaits the Reporter making a ruling on the admissibility of this FEI, Members should be aware that the Reporter has previously allowed the submission of similar evidence at inquiry based on legal precedent as set out in Walker v Aberdeen City Council [1998 SLT 427]. In his ruling on the admissibility of an alternative matter, Lord MacFadyen determined that *"If the amendment has the effect that substantial new planning issues not raised by the original application are raised, or that the proposal is open to*

substantial new grounds of planning objection which were not available against the original application, the amended application may … be said to be in substance different from the original one."

1.6 Although officers raised initial concerns with the applicant putting forward further mitigation at the inquiry stage, based on previous decisions and following a review of the material provided by the Reporter, the Council has not objected to the admissibility of the FEI and it is expected that the FEI evidence will be admissible to the inquiry. Nevertheless, under the Council's Scheme of Delegation and in accordance with the delegated powers agreed at NPAC on 07 August 2024, officers are required to report the findings of their appraisal of the landscape and visual assessment of the alternative 180 m maximum tip height turbines should the Reporter find in favour of this alternative. This appraisal is provided below and should be read in conjunction with the 07 August 2024 report on handling provided at Appendix 1.

1.7 In addition to the above, the applicant has provided assessments of impacts on the sensitive receptors included in the original EIAR based on a 'restored' baseline scenario alongside the 'comparative' baseline as per the original assessment. The additional assessment takes account of the proposal being a repowering of an existing development, with the 'comparative' baseline scenario assessing the impacts relative to the existing scheme, and the 'restored' baseline scenario assessing the impacts relative to an undeveloped site. These findings are summarised in the main body of this report below.

1.8 Furthermore, the applicant has added two new viewpoints at the Idrigill Core Path (VP20) and Oronsay (VP21). These have been assessed up to a consideration of scale of change in the FEI. The applicant has also provided an assessment of impacts on the Orbost to Idrigill Core Path SL28.04 (which corresponds to Core Path to Macleod's Maidens / Idrigill Point in the FEI) and Ullinish to Ullinish Point Core Pat SL26.01 (which corresponds to Core Path to Oronsay in the FEI), as well as the Walk to Macleod's Tables. The FEI also provides an update to the assessment of the cumulative landscape and visual effects.

1.10 Members are requested to note that other amendments included with the FEI relate to the realignment and/or construction method of track associated with the with the development and to the removal of borrow pit 2. These changes are supported and as a consequence, Members are now asked to agree to the removal of Reasons 1 and 2 for objection (impacts on peat and peatland habitats including applying the mitigation hierarchy along with inadequate proposals for peat and peatland restoration and enhancement) for the reasons explained in the main body of this report.

1.9 This report seeks Members agreement to continue to **Raise an Objection** to the application on the grounds of unacceptable landscape and visual impacts including impacts on the Dynamic Coastline Special Quality of the North West Skye Special Landscape Area, as well as on the grounds of adverse impact on the setting of the Category A Listed Dunvegan Castle and Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The proposal site extends over approximately 1,043ha, northwest of the highest point of Ben Aketil within the northwestern part of the Isle of Skye. The site is approximately 0.3km north of Caroy, 1.5km east of Roskhill, and 3.5km south of Edinbane while the closest residences are crofters' cottages located near, but outside, the southwest site boundary at Upper Feorlig. Access is from the A850 to the north. The site is not covered by any statutorily protected environmental or landscape designation although is in connectivity distance and proximity of SACs, SPAs, and SSSIs, as well as NSAs and SLA. The site is within Landscape Character Type (LCT) 359 Upland Sloping Moorland.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 Remains as per 07 August 2024 report on handling.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATIONS

4.1 Advertised: Section 36 Application (publications are the responsibility of the applicant for the ECU/DPEA)

Neither the Council nor the DPEA have received further public representations since the FEI was submitted however an objection and notice the Communities B4 Power Companies (CB4PC) was submitted to the Council and ECU on 14 August 2024. No new material planning issues were raised save for health, safety, and environmental concerns with relation to the proposed BESS.

5. Consultations

Highland Council Consultees

5.1 **Conservation Officer objects** to the proposal and advises that there the alternative 180 m turbines result in no significant change in the scale of effect at viewpoint 10 and that the Council's grounds for objection on the adverse impact on the setting of the Category A Listed Dunvegan Castle and Inventory Garden and Design Landscape therefore remain unchanged.

5.2 **Landscape Witness** agrees that the 180 m turbines would not change the scale of landscape and visual change at any viewpoint or change the significance of effects to landscape and visual receptors.

DPEA Requested Consultees

5.3 **Arquiva** does no object and has confirmed that the proposal will have no adverse impact on its operations.

5.4 **Health and Safety Executive** has confirmed that it has no further comments on the FEI.

5.5 **Historic Environment Scotland** has confirmed that it has no further comments on the FEI.

5.6 **Ironside Farrar** has not yet responded to the FEI, a verbal update will be provided to Members at the meeting.

5.7 **Met Office** has confirmed that it has no further comments on the FEI.

5.8 **Ministry of Defence** has confirmed that it has no further comments on the FEI.

5.9 **Mobile Broadband Network Limited** confirm that there are no infringement issues with the EE/3UK mobile microwave network from the proposal turbines.

5.10 **National Grid** confirms that its assets will not be affected by the proposal.

5.11 **NatureScot** has confirmed that it has no further comments on the FEI.

5.12 **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds** advises that it welcomes the additional peat depth surveys, the re-design of the tracks, and the removal of Borrow Pit 2 from the design and the proposal to use more floating tracks to minimise impacts on peat, blanket bog, and watercourses and reduce peat extraction volumes. However, RSPB notes that the recommendations for further surveys, assessment, and mitigation measures for White-tailed Eagle, Golden Eagle, and Hen Harrier in its consultation letter dated 21st August 2023 have not been addressed

5.13 **Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)** has withdrawn its initial objection on peat impact grounds following design modifications to access tracks and the removal of Borrow Pit 2 from the design while considering that further micrositing can reduce impacts further. SEPA requests conditions to secure its prior approval of a finalised Peat Management Plan, to secure mitigation in relation to peat through the use of floating track on areas of deep peat, along with its prior approval of detailed finalised plans for borrow pit management and restoration, a finalised Decommissioning and Restoration Plan with proposals in line with its Guidance on the life extension and decommissioning of onshore wind farms, and to secure that watercourse crossings are designed as outlined in the Drainage Impact and Watercourse Crossing Assessment Technical Appendix 9.4.

6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY AND OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Remain as per 07 August 2024 report on handling.

7. OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Remain as per 07 August 2024 report on handling.

8. PLANNING APPRAISAL

8.1 The key considerations in the assessment of this case have already been assessed in the original report on handling. The FEI however introduces a requirement for:

a) additional landscape and visual impact appraisal;

b) additional assessment on built environment; and
c) further consideration of impacts on peat.

Landscape and Visal Impacts of the alternative 180 m to Tip Turbines

8.2 In terms of the assessment of impacts on Landscape Character Type (LCT) receptors, the alternative 180 m turbines will not substantially change the EIAR assessment nor the appraisal provided in the report on handling at paragraphs 7.60 – 7.72. However, the applicant has provided a supplementary assessment of the effects against a 'restored' baseline scenario, that is, a consideration of the change brought about by the development on a hypothetical previously undeveloped site (which aligns the LVIA methodology with new wind farms). As would be expected, the level of landscape effect would generally be greater for a proposal at an underdeveloped site.

8.3 In this 'restored' scenario, the applicant considers that a moderate and significant level of landscape effect would occur within 5 km of the turbines to Landscape Character Type (LCT) LCT 359 Upland Sloping Moorland (the hosting LCT). The FEI has altered the conclusion for the comparative (EIAR) scenario as well as providing an assessment for the restored scenario for LCT 360 Stepped Moorland, which is now concluded to be a moderate and significant level of effect within 5 km of the turbines under both scenarios, which is true of the FEI assessment of impacts on LCT 357 Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Skye and Lochalsh.

8.4 The report on handling concluded that the proposal would result in significantly detrimental landscape effects on LCT 359 Upland Sloping Moorland (the hosting LCT), LCT 360 Stepped Moorland, and LCT 357 Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Skye and Lochalsh, which the FEI does not change. Indeed, as described at paragraph 7.72 of the report, 'it is the interaction of LCAs of Upland Sloping Moor, Stepped Moorland, and Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Sky and Lochalsh that is so important to creating the sense of place, particularly as experienced on the west of Skye, west of the development and when moving through the landscape.' And as such, the proposal is considered to have a detrimental effect on landscape composition and sense of place as well as significantly detrimental effect on the Dynamic Coast Special Quality of North West Skye SLA, which continues to be the case, although not assessed as such within the applicant's EIAR or the FEI. NatureScot has advised that its previous response on landscape impacts is not changed by the FEI.

8.5 In terms of visual impacts, officers agree with the applicant's assessment in the FEI that the 180 m turbine scheme will not substantively alter the scale of change resulting from the repowering and extension turbines at each representative viewpoint, including the two new viewpoints at Idrigill Core Path (VP20) and Oronsay (VP21). Consequently, the conclusions reached in Appendix 6 – Visual Assessment Appraisal of the report on handing on magnitude of change, level and significance of effect remain unaltered.

8.6 As with the applicant's viewpoint analysis contained in the EIAR, the FEI has only assessed the two new viewpoints at Idrigill Core Path (VP20) and Oronsay (VP21) up to a consideration of scale of change rather than a complete analysis

up to the significance of visual effect, as is the Council's preferred methodology. Nevertheless, officers find that the proposal would result in significant visual effects for receptors at both these locations.

8.7 In terms of effects on visual receptor groups, the FEI has corrected an error within Chapter 6 LVIA of the EIA Report, whereby the Summary Table 6.11 noted the moderate effect at the Roag visual receptor group as 'not significant' but should have read 'Significant' as stated in paragraph 6.7.78 of the EIAR. Based on this correction, the EIAR concluded significant visual effects on four place based receptor groups at: Upper Feorlig, Feorlig, Caroy, and Roag, all within 4.3 km and south of the turbines, and one outdoor access receptor group of informal routes across the site used by recreational users (which corrects the report on handling paragraph 7.99).

8.8 The FEI is also now reporting additional moderate and significant level of effects for the Harlosh, and the Colbost, Duirinish visual receptor groups, as well as at for recreational receptors at the Macleod's tables. A major / moderate and significant level of effect is now also concluded for the A863 Sligachan to Dunvegan route. In addition, the applicant has concluded greater levels of effect at several other receptor groups / specific viewpoints but with no change in overall significance.

8.9 Conversely, the officer appraisal, as set out in the report on handling at paragraph 7.98, found that the proposal would be likely to result in significant visual effects when experienced by receptors throughout the North West Skye SLA to the northwest, west, and southwest of the turbines up to a distance of around 11.4 km from the turbines, consistent with the appraisal of VPs 20 (Idrigill Core Path) and 21 (Oronsay). Additionally, officers find that additional significant visual effects would be experienced by receptors to the north and northeast of the development at up to a distance of around 5.9 km.

8.10 The FEI's assessment of impact on the amenity of the additional recreational routes have concluded:

- a moderate and not significant level of effect on the Core Path to Macleod's Maidens / Idrigill Point in the 'comparative' scenario but a moderate and significant level of effect in the 'restored' scenario;
- a moderate and not significant level of effect on the Core Path to Oronsay in the 'comparative' scenario but a moderate and significant level of effect in the 'restored' scenario; and
- a moderate and significant level of effect Walk to Macleod's Tables for both the comparative and restored scenarios.

8.11 The applicant has also undertaken updated cumulative landscape and visual impact assessments (CLVIA) through the FEI using the following scenarios:

- Scenario 2 – Consented baseline: all operational and consented proposals;
- Scenario 3 – Planning: all operational, consented and proposed developments with a submitted planning application; and

- Scenario 4 – Pre-planning: all operational, consented and selected scoping proposals with the potential for significant cumulative effects.

Scenario 1 remains unaltered, being operational wind farms (the existing Ben Aketil and Edinbane Wind Farms) as already assessed in the LVIA.

8.12 The FEI CLVIA content will be examined in detail through the inquiry proceedings, however, none of the content reviewed by officers materially changes officer's recommendation on the application.

8.13 The above summarises the applicant's updated LVIA. The Council has already stated its position to Scottish Ministers that it finds the landscape and visual impacts of the proposal to be unacceptable, which the information contained within the FEI reinforces. Provided Members agree to the officer recommendation to continue to raise an objection to the application, including the 180 m turbines as an alternative and mitigating proposal, the Council's witnesses will give evidence to the Reporter at the PLI on their view of the reasons for the unacceptability of such impacts. These reasons will consider the FEI and all other up to date supporting materials in more detail in support of the objection.

Impact on Built Environment

8.14 Paragraph 7.158 of the Report on Handling sets out the officer concerns regarding the proposal's impacts on the Category A Listed Dunvegan Castle and associated Inventory Garden and Designated Landscape, due to the development introducing larger and more prominent turbines appearing directly above the castle from across Loch Dunvegan (VP10). The response from the Conservation Officer has confirmed that the proposed alternative 180 m turbines would not mitigate the impact and as such Members are recommended to maintain this impact as a reason for objection (Reason 4).

Impacts on Peat

8.15 Members will recall that the majority of the site is underlain by Class 1 soils and peatland, defined as 'nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat' which are areas likely to be of high conservation value. The applicant's stage 1 peat depth surveys indicated extensive peat cover across the site with the majority being between 0.5 m - 1.5 m deep, although with greater variance across the site and the deepest peat depth values in the northwest.

8.16 As initially proposed, a total of 117,700m^3 of peat was expected to be extracted for construction with 49,400m^3 of the extracted peat anticipated for reuse in borrow pit restoration and a further 43,900m^3 for reuse in peatland reinstatement and restoration.

8.17 SEPA's initial concerns related to the location of tracks ('*particularly high volumes of catotelmic peat being excavated to support the track between T1 and T9, the new track to T5, the new track to T6, the track between T8 and T9 and new southern access track, as outlined in Table 9.2.1 of the PMP*') and borrow pit 2 in areas of greater peat depth, often over 1 m deep. This concern led SEPA

to advise that design modifications were required to tracks and the borrow pit location, with a complete repositioning of the borrow pit being required rather than micrositing in order to minimise peat impacts. SEPA further advised that this information was to inform a revised Peat Management Plan as well as a Borrow Pit Restoration Plan as the proposed reuse of disturbed peat for restoration of the borrow pit of depths of up to 2 m was not an acceptable reuse of this peat.

8.18 In response to SEPA's concerns, the applicant provided a revised layout in the FEI with new track routes proposed to Ts 5 and 8 as well as to the southernmost construction compound along with the complete removal of borrow pit 2. Furthermore, the applicant is now proposing use of floating track on areas previously considered for cut and fill track. New peat probing data also provides more accurate data for peat disturbance associated with turbine and crane pad installation, which reduces peat disturbance volumes further. The revised figures show that a total volume of 86,800m^3 of peat extraction will now be required as opposed to the initial volume 117,700m^3, a reduction of 30,900m^3. These revisions also remove infrastructure from within watercourse buffer zones.

8.19 In its response to the FEI, SEPA advises that there are still a number of locations where peat over 1 m will be impacted by the current layout but that, however, further revisions to layout, for this site-specific case, could be made post consent through the finalised Peat Management Plan and use of micrositing. Consequently, SEPA withdraws its objection.

8.20 Nevertheless, SEPA still requires conditions to secure:

- its prior approval of the finalised Peat Management Plan;
- the use of floating track on areas of deep peat as proposed in the FEI;
- its prior approval of detailed finalised plans for borrow pit management and restoration;
- a finalised Decommissioning and Restoration Plan with proposals in line with its Guidance on the life extension and decommissioning of onshore wind farms; and
- that watercourse crossings are designed as outlined in the Drainage Impact and Watercourse Crossing Assessment.

8.21 The finalised Peat Management Plan is also required to demonstrate how micro-siting (which should be limited to 50 m in areas of not deeper peat than shown for the relevant infrastructure) and other measures have been used to further minimise peat disturbance and impacts on any near natural peatland habitat. Members should note that all conditions will be subject to a hearing as part of the PLI process and will be for the Scottish Ministers to decide taking account the Reporter's conclusions.

8.22 It is noted that the Council's Ecology Team did not comment on the original application and have not, therefore, been consulted on the FEI. However, the Council's reasons for objection 1 (that the application had not adequately demonstrated the application of the mitigation hierarchy in the design of the wind farm) and 2 (that impacts on peat and peatland habitat had not been sufficiently mitigated through compensatory restoration and that peatland enhancement

measures were inadequate) were in support of the above consultee response. Given that SEPA has now withdrawn its objection, these reasons for objection can no longer be sustained and Members are asked to agree to their removal from the reasons for objection. Otherwise, it would be incumbent on the Council to solely defend its position in relation to peat and peatland habitats at the PLI without the support of SEPA or NatureScot.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Members are asked to agree to the recommendation to maintain its original reasons for objecting to the application (Reasons 3 and 4), which are not overcome by the alternative proposal for 180 m turbines. This is due to the development still resulting in unacceptable significant adverse landscape and visual, and built heritage effects, including cumulative effects with other existing, consented, and proposed wind farms that the alternative 180 m turbines will not mitigate.

9.2 In relation to peat and peatland, given that SEPA has withdrawn its objection, the Council's reasons for objection on these grounds can no longer be sustained and Members are asked to agree to their removal from the reasons for objection (Reasons 1 and 2).

10. IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Resource: Not applicable

10.2 Legal: If an objection is maintained, the application will continue to be the subject of an ongoing Public Local Inquiry.

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

10.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: The proposal can make a meaningful contribution toward the production of renewable energy.

10.5 Risk: Not applicable

10.6 Gaelic: Not applicable

11. RECOMMENDATION

Action required before decision issued: N

11.1 It is recommended that Members remove objections 1 and 2 regarding peat but continue to **Raise an Objection** to the application for the following reasons:

3 The development will result in unacceptable significant adverse effects on the environment, principally, but not limited or exclusive to, the landscape and visual effects, including cumulative impact with other existing, consented, as well as proposed wind farms, with the development being contrary to National Planning Framework 4 Policy 11 Energy, Highland-wide Local Development Plan Policies 28 Sustainable Design, and 67

Renewable Energy Developments, and the Council's Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance.

4 The application does not accord with the provisions of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 by virtue of not demonstrating sufficient regard to the desirability of, and failing to reasonably mitigate effects detrimental to, protecting a site and building of architectural and historic interest because the proposal would Significantly adversely impact important views to, and adversely effects the integrity of the setting of, Dunvegan Castle Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape. Consequently the application is contrary to NPF4 Policy 7 Part (i), NPF4 Policy 11 part (e) (vii), and Highland-wide Local Development Plan Policies 57 (Natural Built and Cultural Heritage), and 67 (Renewable Energy).

Signature:	Dafydd Jones
Designation:	Area Planning Manager – North
Author:	Mark Fitzpatrick
Background Papers:	Documents referred to in report and in case file.
Relevant Plans:	None

Appendix 1 - 07 August 2024 Report on Handling

Agenda Item	**6.10**
Report No	**PLN/065/24**

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: North Planning Applications Committee

Date: 7 August 2024

Report Title: 23/02998/S36: Renantis UK Ltd (formerly Falck Renewables Wind Ltd)
Land 1800M NE of 12 Upper Feorlig Dunvegan

Report By: Area Planning Manager - North

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Ben Aketil Repowered and Extended Wind Farm - Decommissioning and removal of 12 existing turbines and related infrastructure, erection and operation of 9 turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 200m, up to 20MW Battery Energy Storage System, anemometer mast, access tracks, up to two borrow pits, and all associated infrastructure

Ward: 10 - Eilean a' Cheò

Development category: National Development (Section 36 Application)

Reason referred to Committee: National Development (Section 36 Application)

All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal does not accord with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is unacceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations.

Recommendation

Members are asked to agree the recommendation to ratify the decision to **RAISE AN OBJECTION** to the application and update the reasons for the objection 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) for the repowering and extension of Ben Aketil Wind Farm. The application was previously reported to the 4 June 2024 North Planning Applications Committee where Members were minded to raise an objection, with this report on handling now being presented to the next available committee for ratification.

1.2 The application is to repower and extend the operational wind farm. Repowering is the process of replacing older first-generation turbines with more powerful models that use the latest technology and are capable of producing significantly more electricity. The process would comprise the decommissioning and removal of 12 turbines (99.5m ground to blade tip height) to be replaced with 9 turbines to be operated over a 35 year period, having a maximum ground to blade tip height of 200m. Works are proposed to be carried out within a timeframe that allows for the replacement of older turbines before they come to the end of their operational life. Once completed, the proposal is expected to generate approximately 59.4 MW of power depending on the turbine model chosen, plus up to 20 MW of battery energy storage. This proposal falls under the provisions of the Electricity Act and is classed as National Development by National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) due to the generating capacity being in excess of 50 MW.

1.3 Key elements of the development include:

- decommissioning and removal of 12 existing turbines and related infrastructure including hardstandings and the operational control building;
- erection of 9 new turbines of up to 200m ground to tip height with indicative hub heights of 122.5m and rotor diameters of approximately 155m and capable of generating between 5.6 and 6.6 MW each;
- crane hardstanding areas at the base of each turbine, each 3,820m^2 with a maximum total area of 34,380 m^2;
- external transformers located within housings 5.5m x 3m x 3m;
- a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with a 20 MW capacity;
- two substations (with buildings 23m x 7.5m x 6.5m) one for repowering turbines and one for extension turbines and associated compounds (40m x 50m) with parking and welfare facilities;
- approximately 9km of new track of which 1.5km will consist of floating track;
- approximately 2.3km of upgraded track;
- underground cabling linking the turbines with the substations;
- up to 6 construction compounds covering 10,500m^2 of which 4,000m^2 would be located on existing hardstandings;
- up to 2 borrow pits to provide rock for access tracks, turbine bases and hardstandings;
- 16 new watercourse crossings; and

- new and upgraded road junctions.

1.4 Grid connection from the on-site substations would be subject to a separate consent process under section 37of the Electricity Act. It is anticipated that the grid connection will be provided by Scottish and Southern Energy Networks (SSEN) with the connection to the most likely to be via the approved Edinbane substation.

1.5 A micrositing allowance of 50m has been proposed for the turbine locations, to accommodate unknown ground conditions. The micrositing will be used to avoid any areas of deeper peat, higher elevations of ground, watercourse buffers, Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems and cultural heritage assets.

1.6 The wind farm has an expected operational life of 35 years. The development would be decommissioned with above ground infrastructure being required to be removed and the ground reinstated.

1.7 The applicant is considering two alternative construction phasing scenarios:

- Scenario 1 constructs the extension and repowering turbines at the same time over approximately 18 months.
- Scenario 2 constructs the four extension turbines first in Phase 1 over a period of 12 months. Phase 2 would then start no more than five years later with the decommissioning of the existing turbines over a period of 12 months, and the construction of the remaining five turbines over 12 months. This means that 16 turbines (the first four extension turbines and the existing 12 turbines) could be operational for up to five years.

1.8 The EIAR states that the decision on which scenario would be implemented shall be informed by considerations such as economic factors, practicality of implementation, social responsibility, and legal aspects. All construction activities on site will be managed with a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

1.9 The applicant made use of the Council's Pre-Application Advice Service for major developments in August 2022 (22/02239/PREMAJ). Advice was sought on a repowering proposal comprising 10 turbines at up to 200m to blade tip. The applicant was advised that the proposal differed considerably in scale from the existing consented scheme and that the design of re-powered schemes is conceptually a change from the 'right development in the right place' approach for new development. Concerns were expressed regarding landscape impact, the relationship of the turbines to the underlying topography, the layout and composition, and incompatibility with the character of existing and emerging pattern of wind farm development.

1.10 Whilst public consultation for Section 36 applications is not mandatory, the applicant held public exhibitions on the 7 and 8 September 2022; and 25 and 26 January 2023 at the Dunvegan Community Hall, which sought the views of the community. Adverts were placed in the West Highland Free Press as well as postcard invitations sent to all residents and businesses within the five community council areas which fall within the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) of the proposed development. Feedback on the consultation events is contained within the submitted Pre-Application Consultation Report (PAC).

1.11 The applicant sought an EIA Scoping Opinion in July 2022. At scoping stage, the proposed development consisted of 10 turbines, which has since been reduced to nine. The design and layout were adapted and altered in response to environmental constraints and consultation feedback. Other variations were made to the southern borrow pit search area which was relocated closer to the southern access track and reduced in size. In addition, the junctions of the northern access track with the A850 and the southern track with the A863 were modified to a bell mouth to facilitate access for turbine component deliveries.

1.12 The application is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) which includes chapters on: EIA process; Planning Policy Context; Landscape and Visual Assessment; Ecology; Ornithology; Hydrology, Geology, Hydrogeology and Peat, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage, Traffic and Transport, Noise, Socio-economics, Land Use, Recreation and Tourism, Aviation, Climate Change Mitigation; and other considerations including Telecommunications and Shadow Flicker. The application is also accompanied by a Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement and Pre-Application Consultation Report.

1.13 No variations have been made to the application since submission. However, should the applicant wish to follow through with the application, it is anticipated that any amendments to the design and additional environmental in respect of consultee requirements, would require to be submitted as Further Environmental Information under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The site is located northwest of the highest point of Ben Aketil within the north western part of the Isle of Skye, 0.3km north of Caroy, 1.5km east of Roskhill, and 3.5km south of Edinbane. The circa 1,051ha site is relatively remote with the closest residences being crofters' cottages located near, but outside, the south west site boundary along a public road in Upper Feorlig with this property accessed from the A850 to the north.

2.2 The Port of Entry for turbine components has been identified as Kyle of Lochalsh with a route to site for all vehicles via the A87 and A850 or via the A87 and A863. Access to the site would be either via the A850 and the existing Ben Aketil Wind Farm access track to the north, or via a new southern access with the A863 and the U4876 Upper Feorlig road, or both. All options are being considered by the applicant.

2.3 The existing Ben Aketil Wind Farm is located north west of the peak of Ben Aketil. Access is currently gained via a track running south through forestry from the A850 in the north. The site sits within undulating upland moorland, gently sloping downwards from north east to south west. Elevations range from 20m above sea level near the crossing of the A863 over the Caroy River to the peak of Ben Aketil at 266m. The site is currently used by the existing wind farm and by crofters, predominantly for sheep grazing. Surrounding land uses include upland grazing, commercial forestry, and wind energy generation at Edinbane Wind Farm. A neighbouring site has been approved for the Ben Sca Wind Farm.

2.4 There are core paths in the local area including informal walking routes to the summit of Ben Aketil. Local tourist and recreational attractions include star gazing at the

Waternish Peninsula, the Uig to Lochmaddy Ferry, the Skye Trail, The Storr, Macleod's Tables, the Cuillins and Glen Brittle Forest at Moineach, and several coastline Core Paths around Loch Bracadale .

Environmental Designations and Habitats

2.5 The site does not form part of any statutory or non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation. There are two designated sites of international importance within 10km of the site. The Inner Hebrides and the Minches Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for porpoise is located to the south of the site. The Ascrib, Isay and Dunvegan SAC designated for harbour seals lies to the northwest. No Sites of Special Scientific Interest for nature conservation lie within 5km of the site. The An Cleireach Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Geological Conservation Review (GCR) (designated for tertiary igneous intrusion of significant petrogenetic importance) is located 1km south east of the site.

2.6 Two Shellfish Water Protected Areas (SWPA) lie within 5km of the site boundary. The Loch Caroy SWPA is located 0.8km south and the Loch Snizort SWPA is located 1.2km north east. The site lies across two river catchments, the Caroy River and Red Burn. Most of the site and the developable area are located within the Caroy River catchment. The Caroy River flows southwards through the site with several smaller tributaries. The Red Burn and its tributaries provide drainage for the north west of the site and the northern site access. They drain into Loch Greshornish and Loch Snizort. The Allt a' Choire and several associated tributaries drain northwest towards the River Burn. Eleven potential areas of Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTEs) have been identified within the site.

2.7 The site is underlain by basalt lavas from the Skye Lava group varying in composition from alkali basalt to hawaiite and mugearite all of Palaeogene age. A series of dykes is present across the site forming part of the North Britain Palaeogene Dyke Suite. The dykes all trend in a north west and south east direction and are associated with the Skye Central Complex that forms the Cuillin Hills.

2.8 NatureScot's Carbon and Peatland map 2016 shows that most of the site comprises Class 1 peatland (nationally important carbon rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat likely to be of high conservation value). Peat depth surveys have indicated that peat cover across the site is extensive. In the north of the site there are only small areas with soil depths of less than 0.5m, with some slightly larger areas towards the south. The majority of the site has peat between 0.5-1.5m deep although peat depths are generally variable. The deepest peat depth values are in the north west.

2.9 The dominant habitats present across the wind farm site are identified as blanket bog, dry dwarf shrub heath and wet dwarf shrub heath. The site has the potential to support protected species, including otters and bats. The study area, as a whole, supports a relatively diverse breeding bird assemblage reflecting the range of habitat types present. The bird species recorded are broadly representative of the region and the main habitat types within the survey area. The potential impacts on avian species are reported in the EIAR.

Landscape Designations, Wild Land and Landscape Character

2.10 The proposed development site does not lie within any landscape designation. Designated landscapes and Wild Land Areas within 25km of the site include:

Designated Landscape	**Distance and direction from the proposed development**
National Scenic Area	
Trotternish	20km east
Cuillin Hills	23km south
Wild Land Areas (WLA)	
Duirinish	8.5km west
Cuillins	20km south east
Special Landscape Areas (SLA)	
Northwest Skye	3.3km west
Greshornish	5km north
Trotternish and Tianavaig	14km north east

2.11 The site is situated within Landscape Character Type (LCT) 359 Upland Sloping Moorland. This is defined as an upland area of moderate elevation used for forestry and grazing with few structural elements such as occasional remote settlement and farm buildings, power lines and wind turbines. Neighbouring LCTs include LCT 360 Stepped Moorland to the west, LCT 357 Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Skye and Lochalsh to the west and 367 Smoothed Mountain Range to the north.

Built Heritage

2.12 There are no Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings within the application site and no part of the site falls within a Conservation Area, Inventory Garden, Designed Landscape or Inventory Historic Battlefield. There are 23 Scheduled Monuments within 10km of the site:

Site Name	**Scheduled Monument Number**	**Distance and direction from the site**
Barpannan, two chambered cairns, Vatten Duirinish	SM893	3.3 km south
Ullinish Lodge, chambered cairn, Bracadale	SM903	8.6 km south
Dun Fiadhairt, broch	SM905	7.5 km west

Dun Cruinn, fort, Kensaleyre	SM910	9.5 km northeast
Dun Flashader, broch, Skye	SM911	6.4 km north
Dun Garsin, broch, Bracadale	SM912	8.7 km southeast
Dun Mor, fort, Struanmore	SM918	7.7 km south
Dun Suladale, broch 800m SW of Suladale	SM921	7.1 km northeast
Ullinish, fort, Bracadale	SM930	9.1 km south
Clach Ard, symbol stone, Tot, Carbost	SM935	9.5 km northeast
Annait monastic settlement on W bank of Bay River	SM942	5 km northwest
Skeabost Island, St Columba's Church & other ecclesiastical remains	SM947	9 km east
Knock Ullinish, souterrain	SM2139	8.1 km south
Dun Osdale, broch 850m N of Osdale	SM3493	6.2 km west
Dun Feorlig, broch 230m NNE of Feorlig Farm	SM3494	4.7 km south
Ardmore chapel & burial ground 230m SW of	SM3884	6.7 km south
Dun Neill, dun 420m SW of Ardmore	SM3885	6.9 km south
Struanmore chambered cairn 800m SW of Struan Primary School	SM7929	9 km south
Dun Beag, cairn 100m SSW of Struan	SM7930	8.2 km south
St Marys Church and Burial Ground, Dunvegan	SM9249	4.7 km west
Dun Arkaig, broch	SM13662	4.9 km southeast

Abhainn Bhaile Mheadhonaich, broch and standing stone 145m SE of An Cairidh	SM13664	4 km south
Dun Beag, broch and surrounding structures, Struan, Skye	SM90325/PiC329	8.1 km south

2.13 There are 22 Listed Buildings within 10km of the site:

Site Name	Listed Building Number and Category	Distance and direction from the site
Dunvegan Parish Church	A LB498	5.2 west
Dunvegan Castle, approach causeway and bridges	A LB501	5.7 west
Dunvegan Castle The Laundry	A LB503	5.7 west
Lonmore Free Church	B LB473	3.7 west
Orbost House	B LB476	6.6 southwest
Stein, Macleod Terrace, Henderson's House	B LB478	8.6 north
Taigh-Tasgaidh Croit Chelleabost, 1 Chelleabost, An T-Eilean Sgitheanach/Colbost Croft Museum	B LB496	8.7km west
Dunvegan Castle Gatepiers	B LB 502	5.7km west
Dunvegan Castle Sundial and Walled Garden	B LB504	5.6km west
Dunvegan Castle Stables and Saw Mill	B LB505	5.9km west
Struan Free Church	B LB1784	8.7km south
Greshornish, The Orde of Greshornish	B LB6376	6.5km north

Struan Inn, Out Building	B LB6366	8.8km south
Lyndedale House	B LB13968	8.4km north
Lyndedale House Lodge and Gate Piers	B LB13969	8.1km north
Skeabost, Old Bridge	B LB13970	9.2km east
Skerinish House and Steading	B LB13975	9.4km northeast
Skeabost, Post House and Outbuilding	B LB18979	9.2km east
Fairy Bridge	C LB466	3.6km northwest
Lonmore Free Church Manse	C LB474	3.7km west
Former Free Church School and Schoolhouse Lonmore	C LB475	3.8km west
Dunvegan Burnbank	C LB497	4.7km west

2.14 There are 25 non-designated heritage assets within the application site. These include a degraded prehistoric burial cist, three hut-circles, a broch, farmsteads and shielings.

2.15 The Stein Village Conservation Area and Dunvegan Castle Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape are located within 10km of the site.

Cumulative Development

2.16 The cumulative assessment considers operational, consented / under construction, and in planning projects within 45km of the proposed development and considered in the landscape and visual assessment by the EIAR. A cut-off date of 5 December 2022 was applied by the applicant for the inclusion of developments. The proposals at Beinn Mheadhonach and Balmeanach which were still at scoping were anticipated by the applicant to be submitted at the same time as the proposed scheme so were included in the cumulative assessment but not Glen Ullinish II or Ben Sca Wind Farms, which are now submitted, while Breakish Wind Farm is still at the Scoping stage. This was reviewed and updated by Planning Officers and is summarised in Appendix 1.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1

Decision Date	Description	Decision
20.09.2022	22/03617/SCOP - Ben Aketil Wind Farm Repowering and Extension - Erection and Operation of a Wind Farm, comprising of up to 9 Wind Turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 200m, access tracks, borrow pits, substation, control building, and ancillary infrastructure	Scoping Response Issued
04.11.2020	20/04202/SCRE - Proposed operational life extension at Ben Aketil Wind Farm	Screening Opinion Issued - EIA Not Required
15.02.2023	20/04369/S42 - Ben Aketil Extension Wind Farm - Application to carry out development otherwise than in accordance with conditions 2, 16, 19, 20 and 21 attached to planning permission reference number: 09/00115/FULSL	Planning Permission Granted
21.06.2016	16/01793/SCOP - Proposed wind farm at Gleann Eoghainn, Upper Feorlig, Isle of Skye.	Scoping Response Issued
04.02.2010	09/00115/FULSL - Wind farm and ancillaries including two wind turbines and associated crane hardstandings, new access track, new borrow pit, laying cables, re-open temporary construction compound area. Turbines to be identical to existing 10 turbines at Ben Aketil Wind Farm.	Planning Permission Granted

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.1 Advertised: Section 36 Application

Date EIA Advertised: 16 June 2023 and 23 June 2023

Representation deadline: 23 July 2023

Representations Received by The Highland Council: 211 (210 objections, 1 in support)

Representations Received by The Energy Consents Unit: 172 (171 objections, 1 in support)

4.2 Material considerations raised are summarised as follows:

Objection comments:

- Landscape and visual impacts, including:
  - Cumulative impacts arising from other wind farm developments and other infrastructure including the SSEN Skye reinforcement overhead line project and associated substations;
  - affected areas include the Cuillin mountains, the mainland and the Outer Hebrides and from many sites of historical interest on Skye.
  - Impact upon residential amenity, resulting in an overbearing and disproportionate visual impact on rural communities.
- Inappropriate design and layout; fewer turbines but a significant change in scale.
- Impact on peat, including carbon storage capacity and inadequate carbon and net zero assessment.
- Impacts upon habitats, woodland, biodiversity and protected species.
- Impact upon ornithology, including Golden Eagles, Sea Eagles, merlin, and hen harriers.
- Impacts upon water environment, giving rise to flooding.
- Impact from light pollution and shadow flicker from anemometer mast and turbines.
- Inaccurate socio-economic assessment, including impact on tourism, which misrepresents local benefits, and employment.
- Impacts from increased fire risks, including contamination of water courses.
- Dangers of ice throw.
- Transport impacts, including significant traffic disruption from Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AILs) and Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs), negative impact on the key roads including on emergency vehicles.
- Detrimental effect on human health including noise pollution for local properties and electromagnetic radiation, contamination, and decrease in air quality.
- Increased air traffic safety risks, including flight path of the air ambulance.
- Disposal and decommissioning including turbine base removed not been adequately considered.
- Contrary to Development Plan policies.
- No strategic overview of power generation/wind farm and power line proposals for Skye.

Supportive comment:

- Ben Aketil Wind Farm has generated substantial amounts of renewable electricity, helping to meet its international climate goals.
- Visual impact could be less with fewer turbines and they will become part of the landscape.
- No evidence of detrimental effect on tourism; tourism has increased.
- Construction traffic impacts are short term.
- Employment opportunities, skilled jobs created which helps to reverse depopulation.
- Substantial community fund has been generated, funding community initiatives. A community stake in the Ben Aketil wind farm was offered locally via a share offer, and this was over-subscribed.

4.3 Non-Material considerations raised:

- Limited community benefits.
- No or limited benefits for local energy consumers.
- Sets a precedent for this size and scale of wind farm.
- Impact on property values.
- Damage to roads will give rise to additional cost for The Highland Council.
- The SSEN OHL Skye Reinforcement Project (which will increase capacity in grid transmission infrastructure and allow wind farms to supply more energy to the national grid) will cause huge environmental damage.
- The Portree and Braes Community Trust and the Portree and Braes Community Council jointly call for a public inquiry.
- A national policy level, industrial scale development of an island community by multinational corporations goes against the forthcoming Scottish 'Community Empowerment Act' and 'Community Wealth Building Act'.
- Questioning the adequacy and efficacy community consultation events.

4.4 All letters of representation received by the Council are available for inspection via the Council's eplanning portal which can be accessed through the internet www.wam.highland.gov.uk/wam. Those representations received by the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit can be accessed via www.energyconsents.scot using the application reference ECU00004552. It should be noted that some representations have been submitted to both The Highland Council and Energy Consents Unit.

5. CONSULTATIONS

Consultations undertaken by The Highland Council

5.1 **Dunvegan and District Host Community Council** does not object to the application. However, its response raises concerns regarding the cumulative effects of future wind farm developments. It raises the issue that people in the Highlands pay the highest price in the country for electrical power, and states that communities should be treated fairly in respect of community benefit and a much-reduced electricity costs.

5.2 **Struan Community Council objects** to the application and advises that Struan is a small fragile community with a lack of services. It advises of the potential for proposed upgrades, replacements, or new wind farms within northwest Skye to fundamentally change the look and feel of the area. It raises concerns regarding the cumulative impacts of multiple largescale construction projects on the local road network including from construction traffic and Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AIL). It raises the possibility of a comprehensive joint traffic management programme between all developers.

5.3 **Skeabost and District Community Council objects** to the application on the grounds that the increased height visibility of turbines will negatively impact tourism. It considers that there would be no real long term employment benefits to an area almost totally dependent on tourism and low financial community benefit. It advises that the local road network is inadequate for the transport of turbines and that there will be disruption caused by construction traffic including for ferry links to other islands. It considers that constructing new turbine bases is wasteful.

5.4 **Access Officer** does not object to the application subject to conditions and notes that the EIAR focusses on access for recreation rather than to uphold access rights for the general public. The Access Officer requests a condition for an access management plan to be developed in consultation with THC and other relevant stakeholder groups such as the neighbouring community councils, companies, and development trusts.

5.5 **Development Plans Team** response considers the applicable national and Highland Council policy documents and policies relevant for the application's assessment along with key considerations for the assessment and the potential for the Council to seek Developer Contributions in relation to the proposal, however no contributions have been identified or sought in respect of this scheme.

5.6 **Environmental Health** does not object to the application subject to conditions to restricts operational noise levels, to secure details of best practicable means will be implemented to reduce the impact of construction noise, and, details of a scheme for the suppression of dust.

5.7 **Flood Risk Management Team** does not object and has no specific comments on the application.

5.8 **Forestry Officer** does not object to the application. The proposed application does not appear to have a significant adverse impact on woodland, with the exception of the northern borrow pit which would involve the removal of a small area of conifers beside the track. In order to comply with the Scottish Government's policy on the Control of Woodland Removal and NPF4 Policy 6, details must be provided to show the reinstatement of this area with the woodland, or the provision of compensatory planting elsewhere within the site.

5.9 **Historic Environment Team –** Conservation have indicated verbally they will raise an objection over its impact on the integrity and the setting of, Dunvegan Castle which is a Category A Listed Building which is on the Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape. A written response will be forwarded before the committee setting out their reasons.

5.10 **Landscape Officer – objects** to the proposal as submitted on Landscape and Visual Impact grounds. The Landscape Officer's response is considered in detail in the body of the report.

5.11 **Transport Planning Team** do not object to the application subject to conditions to secure a finalised Construction Traffic Management Plan to include a detailed review of construction traffic routes and a programme of mitigation works, details of all road improvement/mitigation measures required for AIL, a Community Liaison Group, and, completion of a wear and tear agreement under Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 (As Amended).

Consultations Undertaken by the Energy Consents Unit

5.12 **Arquiva Limited** does not object to the application**.** The application will not affect its wireless broadcast network.

5.13 **British Telecom** does not object to the application as it is unlikely to cause interference with its current and planned radio network.

5.14 **Fisheries Management Scotland** does not object to the application and advises that the application falls under the area covered by the Skye and Lochalsh Rivers Trust and recommends that their guidance, developed with Marine Scotland Science, should be followed by the applicant.

5.15 **Highlands and Islands Airports Limited** do not object to the application. It requests further consultation if development parameters are varied (including location, dimensions, form and finishing materials).

5.16 **Historic Environment Scotland (HES)** do not object to the application. It notes that the proposed development will have some adverse effects on the setting of nearby heritage assets including Barpannan, two chambered cairns, and Vatten Duirinish. However, it states that there would not be significant adverse effects on the integrity of the setting of these monuments.

5.17 **HSE - Land Use Planning Support Team** does not object and advises that the application does not require hazardous substance consent under the Town and Country Planning (Hazardous Substances) (Scotland) 2015 Regulations.

5.18 **Ironside Farrar - Peat Landslide Hazard Risk Assessment (PLHRA) Advisers** state that some key elements of the assessment are insufficiently robust to support the PLHRA conclusions, advising that there is a relative lack of probing when compared to published guidance and requests minor revisions to the information.

5.19 **John Muir Trust objects** to the application on the grounds of adverse impacts on nationally important peatland resources, habitat management provision, and biodiversity enhancement measures not complying with the mitigation hierarchy and enhancement requirements of NPF4.

5.20 **Joint Radio Company** does not object to the application. It does not foresee any potential interference with its radio systems.

5.21 **Marine Scotland Science** does not object to the application subject to a condition to secure the proposed monitoring programme, which it requires to form part of an Integrated Water Quality and Fish Population Monitoring Programme to accord with Marine Directorate guidelines.

5.22 **Met Office** does not object to the application. It is outside the 20km consultation zone radius of any Met Office radar.

5.23 **Ministry of Defence - Defence Infrastructure Organisation** does not object subject to conditions to secure an aviation lighting scheme prior to the commencement of construction, and, notification of commencement and commissioning of turbines as well as the specific locations of turbines and anemometer masts for aviation charting and safety management purposes.

5.24 **National Air Traffic Control Services** do not object to the application. It initially objected on technical grounds; however, mitigation has now been agreed with the applicant.

5.25 **National Grid** does not object to the application. There are no National Grid Transmission assets affected in the area.

5.26 **NatureScot** does not object to the application. It considers that the proposal will not be significantly adverse on the Special Qualities and objectives of the Trotternish National Scenic Area (NSA) or the Cuillin Hills NSA. It considers there would be significant adverse effects on the Stepped Moorland and Farmed and Settled Lowland – Sky and Lochalsh Landscape Character Types, as well as on the regionally significant and distinctive sea- and land- scape of landscape of Loch Bracadale. It considers there will be significantly adverse visual impacts from several locations. NatureScot advises that proposed peatland restoration and biodiversity enhancement measures fall short of its guidance. It has considered the likely impacts on ornithology, in particular in relation to White-tailed and Golden Eagles, as well as potential impacts on protected species, in particular bats, and has provided advice accordingly.

5.27 **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds objects** to the application on the grounds of that there is insufficient survey work in relation to Golden Eagle, that impacts on White-tailed Eagle, Golden Eagle, and Hen Harrier may have been underestimated while, and on the grounds that more mitigation in relation to these species may be required. As such, it recommends that further survey and assessment work is undertaken to inform further proposals for mitigation for the above raptor species.

5.28 **Scottish Environment Protection Agency objects** to the application on peat impact grounds and advises that design modifications are required to tracks and a borrow pit location in order to minimise peat impacts to be accompanied by a revised Peat Management Plan. It requires confirmation of watercourse buffer zones and that further work should be undertaken to microsite infrastructure outwith ground water dependent terrestrial ecosystems.

5.29 **Scottish Forestry** does not object to the application and advises that woodland removal was scoped out of the EIA due to no impact on woodland cover and that the applicant has committed to compensatory planting if trees are felled. Scottish Forestry requests a condition secure that all proposals should be agreed with the Planning Authority in consultation with Scottish Forestry.

5.30 **Scottish Water** does not object to the application and advises that there are no Drinking Water Catchments or water abstraction sources that would be impacted by the proposal, and, that the applicant must ensure the proposal does not conflict with any Scottish Water assets.

5.31 **Skye & Lochalsh Rivers Trust (previously Skye Fisheries Trust and the Skye and Wester Ross Fisheries)** does not object to the application however sets out concerns that the proposal has potential for increased sediment and pollution in the water column as a direct result of site development, which would will lead to a decline in water quality throughout the impacted catchments. Additionally, it advises of potential for irreparable damage to historical spawning grounds and juvenile fish

habitat located in the headwaters of the impacted catchments, as well as potential for the development to create blockages within the water column that would prevent the natural migration of native fish species.

5.32 **Telefonica** does not object to the application. It has infrastructure approximately 5km from the proposal but it would not be affected.

5.33 **Transport Scotland** does not object to the application subject to conditions to secure information regarding abnormal loads including route and accommodation measures along the trunk road network, and, information regarding construction traffic and traffic management including construction materials, additional signage and temporary control measures in relation to the trunk road network. Transport Scotland's response remains as per submitted against the EIAR.

5.34 **Vodafone** does not object to the application. No Vodafone links will be affected by the proposed development.

6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY AND OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Appendix 3 of this report provides details of the documents that comprise the adopted Development Plan, including details of pertinent planning policies as well as adopted supplementary guidance and other material policy considerations relevant to the assessment of the application.

7. PLANNING APPRAISAL

7.1 This application has been submitted to the Scottish Government 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). Although not a planning application, the Council processes Section 36 applications in a similar manner given that planning permission may be deemed to be granted.

7.2 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 requires to:

- 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.

7.3 It should be noted that for applications under the Electricity Act 1989 that the Development Plan is just one of several considerations, and therefore 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. That said, the application

still 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. The proposal's overall compliance with the requirements of Section 36 of The Electricity Act 1989 and National and Local policy is considered in the conclusion and reasons for refusal in Sections 10 and 11 of this report.

Planning Considerations

7.4 The key considerations in this case are:

a) Compliance with the Development Plan / Other Planning Policy
b) Energy and Economic Benefits
c) Design, Landscape and Visual Impacts
d) Construction
e) Roads, Transport and Access
f) Water, Flood Risk, Drainage and Peat
g) Natural Heritage (including ornithology)
h) Built and Cultural Heritage
i) Noise and Shadow Flicker
j) Telecommunications
k) Aviation
l) Other Material Considerations

Development Plan / Other Planning Policy

7.5 The Development Plan comprises National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), the adopted Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP), the adopted West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (WestPlan), and all statutorily adopted supplementary guidance, including the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG). Appendix 4 of this report provides an overview of compliance with the Development Plan / Other Planning Policy.

7.6 In summary, the principle of wind farm development is established in national policy, with the proposed development being of national importance for the delivery of the national Spatial Strategy. NPF4 considers that Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure will assist in the delivery of the Spatial Strategy and Spatial Priorities for the north of Scotland, and that Highland can continue to make a strong contribution toward meeting Scotland's ambition for net zero. Alongside these ambitions, the strategy for Highland aims to protect environmental assets as well as to stimulate investment in natural and engineered solutions to address climate change. This aim is not new and will clearly require a balancing exercise to be undertaken, which is reflected throughout NPF4.

7.7 At the regional level, HwLDP also offers support for renewable development proposals where they are located, sited and designed such as they will not be significantly detrimental overall, individually or cumulatively with other developments.

To inform this assessment, the OWESG provides a methodology for a judgement to be made on the likely impact of a development on assessed "thresholds" to assist the application of HwLDP policy. Appendix 5 provides an assessment against Landscape and Visual Assessment Criteria contained within Section 4 of the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance.

Energy and Economic Benefit

7.8 The Council continues to respond positively to the Government's renewable energy agenda. Installed onshore wind energy developments in Highland account for around 30% of the national installed onshore wind energy capacity, with a substantial number of onshore wind farm applications pending consideration at present. While THC 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 widespread effects.

7.9 Notwithstanding any 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, UK and European energy targets, with the development having the potential to generate up to approximately 59.4 MW in addition to an indicative battery storage capacity of 20MW. Based on a typical capacity factor, the development is likely to generate approximately 175,910 MW hours per year per year equivalent to powering around 45,000 homes.

7.10 Wind turbines provide an important mechanism for the reduction of carbon dioxide (CO^2), and other greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions into the atmosphere by reducing the consumption of fossil fuel generated mains electricity. However, during their manufacture, construction and decommissioning, wind farms can result in the emissions of GHGs, particularly where natural carbon stores, such as peat, are present and potentially impacted by the development. Often termed "carbon balance", the assessment includes all GHGs, not just carbon dioxide. The EIAR uses carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO_2e) where equivalence means having the same warming effect as CO_2 over 100 years (see EIAR Volume 1: Main Report, Paragraph 15.1.4). Taking account of the predicted GHG emissions from the wind turbines alongside savings from the improvement of the site, in this case change in emissions due to removal of drainage from foundations and hardstanding, the EIAR estimates total net GHG emissions to be 60,838 tCO_2e (see EIAR Volume 1: Main Report, Table 15.6).

7.11 As a result, the anticipated carbon payback period for the development would be approximately 1.4 years based on the current grid mix (including both renewables and fossil fuels) with the proposed development reported by the applicant to have an overall beneficial effect on climate change mitigation. This is considered a relatively short payback period, in part due to this being in part a re-powering application.

7.12 The developer has proposed two construction phasing scenarios, with the anticipated construction period under Scenario 1 being approximately 18 months and three years for Scenario 2 (with a maximum 5-year gap between phases); and an operational period of 35 years. Such projects can offer investment/opportunities to

the local, Highland, and Scottish economy, including businesses ranging across the construction, haulage, electrical and service sectors.

7.13 The EIAR reports that there are likely to be some adverse effects caused by construction traffic and disruption, as well as some adverse economic impact on tourism. These adverse impacts are most likely to be during the construction phase when abnormal loads are being delivered to the site where there might be a minor restriction of access to, or availability of, tourism and visitor resources.

7.14 The assessment of socio-economic impact by the applicant reports a negligible beneficial effect on the local economy and THC area resulting from the construction. The development expenditure during the construction phase is estimated to be approximately £97.2 million, approximately £2.5 million of which would be spent in the local Eilean a 'Cheò economy, with £10.3 million spent in the Highland economy and approximately £23.3 million in Scotland as a whole.

7.15 For Scenario 1 the local Eilean a 'Cheò economy would be boosted by £2 million (net Gross Value Added-GVA) with the Highland economy boosted by £9.1 million and Scotland £20.5 million net GVA; and for Scenario 2 the local economy would be boosted by £2.7 million net GVA, the Highland economy by £12.1 million and the Scottish economy by £27.3 million.

7.16 A maximum of 50 people will be employed at any one time during construction.

7.17 For Scenario 1 the proposed development is expected to support directly and indirectly approximately 30 jobs in Eilean a 'Cheò, 119 jobs in Highland and 296 jobs nationally. For Scenario 2 the proposed development is expected to support directly and indirectly approximately 40 jobs in Eilean a 'Cheò, 159 jobs in The Highlands and 395 jobs in Scotland as a whole.

7.18 Operational and maintenance spend is estimated to be in the order of £3.6 million with £2.1 million accruing to Scotland, £1.5 million to the Highland region and £0.2 million to the local economy. The local economy would be expected to be boosted by a total of £3.2 million of net GVA during the operational phase. The Highland economy would benefit by £28.4 million net GVA and the Scottish economy would benefit by £41.2 million net GVA. During the operational phase the proposed development is expected to support 1.4 jobs directly and indirectly in Eilean a Cheo, 12.3 in the Highlands and 17 jobs in Scotland.

7.19 In relation to NPFA Policy 11 for Energy at part c) which requires proposals to maximise socio-economic benefit. In EIA terms the overall effect on the Highland economy is reported to be negligible beneficial and not significant during construction and operation. The socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities associated with this proposal would be consistent with NPF4 Policy 11c) with this being reflective of recent appeal decisions where Reporters have clarified that there are considerable supply chain benefits associated with onshore wind farms.

7.20 Additionally, NPF4 Policy 25 provides support for development that is consistent with local economic priorities and where they contribute to local and/or regional community wealth building strategies. The Council is currently in the process of

developing its priorities, along with partners, through the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan and the work on production of a community wealth building strategy that is under way. This work will set a strategic framework along with identifying many of the local priorities and projects to promote and encourage economic activity and retain wealth within the Highland area. The ongoing Local Place Plans initiative will likely identify other opportunities. While many opportunities are likely to be identified locally, there will be a need to consider the opportunities available from a strategic perspective to ensure that communities across all of Highland benefit.

7.21 With the absence of the Council having a Community Wealth Building Strategy in place, and no community ownership being proposed, the proposal cannot be given any additional support under NPF4 Policy 25. However, the applicant proposes to administer a fund into which annual community benefit payments will be made. The fund would be used by local community groups. The applicant has committed to pay £5,000 or equivalent per MW of installed capacity per annum into the fund. This equates to £297,000 of income per annum which would equate to £10.4 million for a 35-year operational life. The community benefit funds would be administered by a trust or similar body and spread equitably. In addition, the applicant is also exploring a direct electricity payment to properties closest to the development to help offset the increasing cost of living as well as whether any local users could utilise the project's proposed battery storage capabilities.

7.22 The Council has a separate remit to promote community benefit that is distinct and separate from planning. The Council's position with regard community benefits has recently been updated with the approval of a new 'Social Values Charter for Renewables Investment' (June 2024), which sets out The Council's expectations from developers wishing to invest in renewables in the Highland area and what the Highland partnership – public, private, and community – will do to support and enable this contribution, namely:

- embed an approach to community wealth building into Highland;
- maximise economic benefits from our natural environment and resources;
- engage and involve relevant stakeholders to understand how we can continually improve our impact; and,
- unlock economic opportunities for the area.

7.23 Should Scottish Ministers not insist in securing benefits as a precondition of any consent given, it is expected that at the very least the commitments made by the applicant are secured by other means, such as a Minute of Agreement, in agreement with The Highland Council.

Siting, Layout, and Design

7.24 The proposal is to replace and extend an existing wind farm with the stated aims of continuing to generate renewable electricity beyond the operational lifetime of the existing development in addition to increasing the generating capacity at the site.

7.25 The proposal comprises the removal of largescale turbines from the landscape and the installation of significantly larger turbines. As such, the design of repowering schemes, including those with extension schemes, is a conceptually different enterprise to designing the 'right wind farm in the right place' approach for new development. Given that the principle of repowering the existing site is already supported in land use policy terms, the challenge for the wind farm's designers is to create the 'best wind farm achievable for this place' in terms of scale, character, and fit.

7.26 It should also be noted that repowering schemes make existing infrastructure obsolete and while there are opportunities to make use of some ancillary infrastructure, the scheme also includes a new access route from the south along with new locations for turbines that require their own foundations and hardstanding areas. These new elements involve disturbing further peatland, habitats and additional watercourse crossings. Given that repowering sites may theoretically be repowered multiple times in the longer term, ground disturbance needs to be minimised in order to protect the long term environmental health of the site.

7.27 With that in mind, EIAR Volume 1 Chapter 2: Proposed Development sets out that the design process has incorporated design principles of minimising additional land take, watercourse crossings, impacts on sensitive receptors, applying the waste management hierarchy (re-use materials on site rather than removal and disposal), and identifying and incorporating opportunities for environmental enhancement. The designers have sought to follow a constraints based approach in order that mitigation on environmental effects is embedded within the design, with key constraints including: construction; landscape character and visual amenity; ground conditions, topography, and peat; watercourses; habitats, ecology, and ornithology; and, cultural heritage features.

7.28 EIAR Volume 1: Main Report at Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Assessment describes how the applicant has also sought to minimise effects on views from local settlements such as Dunvegan, the peninsulas to the east and west, key roads and routes, key views, and, avoid significant effects on nationally valued landscapes while minimising effects on regionally and locally valued landscapes. The scheme has, therefore, evolved through eight design and layout iterations including for ten turbines of 200m tip height at the Scoping stage of pre-application, which has been refined to the current proposal of nine turbines of 200m tip height. There have also been revisions to turbine, BESS, and ancillary equipment locations and their orientation, as well as access arrangements and track alignments. These revisions were made following pre-application discussions with consultees and THC Planning Officers and informed by further survey work.

7.29 A stated key design principle has been to maintain design continuity with the original wind farm scheme by reproducing its simple linear layout and 'dragon back' appearance. The original line of turbines follows a distinct rising edge in the landscape, the relationship of the line to the topography and the turbine size to the landscape scale allows the original development to highlight the ridge and present as a legible and even elegant feature within the landscape. To that end, the EIAR states that the four repowering turbines and five extension turbines are laid out in a

manner that attempts to create ‘two parallel gently curving arcs [that] will reflect existing topography and be read as a cohesive array’.

7.30 However, the proposal differs quite significantly from the existing wind farm in a number of ways; taller turbines require larger separation distances, while fewer turbines are required to produce a greater yield. In this instance the five repowering turbines are proposed over an extended linear distance that follow a different orientation to the original development. As such, these turbines do not follow the ridge as closely as the original development leading to greater variation in hub heights in relation to the landform when seen at distance.

7.31 The four extension turbines are proposed on lower undisturbed ground following different contours. The line formed by these turbines relates to no underlying topographic feature with Turbines 6, 7, and 8 running obliquely across the face of the west facing slope above Gleann Eoghann. Like Turbine 1 of the repowering scheme, Turbine 9 of the extension scheme is also positioned across the Caroy river on the east facing slopes of Gleann Eoghann with both Turbines 1 and 9 sited on higher contours than the westernmost turbine of the original scheme.

7.32 The wider turbine separation distances of the proposal scheme are equivalent to the distance between three or four of the existing turbines (between 0.6km and 0.8km compared to approximately 0.2km), while the two rows are approximately 1km apart. These wider spacings and fewer turbines in either line means that each line produced by the repowering and/or extension turbines is less cohesive in character and lacks the clear visual rhythm of the original development. The result is that neither the repowering nor extension schemes, in solus or together, are able to reproduce the legible linear curve of the original wind farm so that the submitted layout does not maintain design continuity or retain the design integrity of the original development. It stands to reason then that the nine 200m turbines will have a very different relationship with the receiving landscape than the current 12no. 99.5m turbines.

7.33 It is also important that siting, layout, and design principles consider the cumulative effects arising from a proposal’s relationships with other wind energy developments in its wider context given the ever increasing presence of turbines in the landscape. Individual wind farm design should therefore take into account the baseline and potential future baseline conditions of wind energy in its wider context. While consideration of how the siting, layout, and design of developments relate to each other and the cohesiveness of their relationship to their surroundings from fixed viewpoints important, it is also important to assess how wind farms relate to each other in terms of their frequency when moving through the landscape.

7.34 Such consideration includes understanding the visual separation between schemes, which is important in order to allow receptors to experience and appreciate the character of the landscape and any special natural, architectural, cultural, and historic features in between. Care and attention are therefore required regarding design, siting and location to avoid detrimental impacts. Indeed, NatureScot’s Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape Guidance notes that it can be particularly challenging to accommodate multiple wind farms in an area, and so advances wind farm design objectives of limiting visual confusion and reinforcing the appropriateness of each development for its location.

7.35 These considerations are of particular salience because Skye is experiencing high energy related development pressures and specifically wind farm development pressure in the northwest portion of Central Skye. While there are small scale individual turbines installed across the Isle of Skye, there are only two wind farms currently operational (Ben Aketil and Edinbane Wind Farms). As such, the removal of the very distinctive original Ben Aketil Wind Farm, a scheme that has helped inform other wind farm designs on Skye, along with the current application being one of the first of a new generation of 200m turbine proposals for Skye to be submitted, there is potential for very significant cumulative effects on the character of wind farm development, landscape character, and views in the wider area. It is noted here that the approved schemes at Ben Sca, Glen Ullinish, and Beinn Mheadhonach (further south of the Central Skye cluster) wind farms are all currently under consideration for taller turbines with Glen Ullinish II proposing over 40 turbines at 200m. Given this complex and shifting scenario, the future cumulative baseline is highly uncertain while the information included with the submission is now out of date.

7.36 The implications of the application proposal on the perceptual experience of the landscape and the visual experience of the receptor are considered in the respective Landscape Impact and Visual Impact sections below. Any such assessments must pay particular attention to the specific Landscape Character Area (LCA) of the receiving landscape, surrounding LCAs, any landscape designations in the wider area, susceptible receptors, and public views. The assessments that follow generally set out that due to the turbine layout and turbine scales, the proposal has resulted in a scheme with an unsympathetic relationship with the receiving and surrounding moorland landscapes, that appears over prominent in complex views with significantly detrimental effects on landscape character and the sense of place it imbues, and on views as experienced by local residents, users of the local roads network, and recreational users.

Ancillary Infrastructure

7.37 In terms of design of the infrastructure on the site including the BESS facility, control building, substation, and tracks, while these appear to have been located to reduce landscape, visual, and other environmental impacts, further revisions would be required for the location of borrow pit 2 and the length of access track to minimise peat impacts as required by SEPA.

7.38 Proposals for BESS facilities included with wind farm developments are effectively given planning permission in principal through wind farm consents. As such, conditions would be imposed to secure details of the siting, layout, access (for maintenance and emergency service vehicles), the design of all external components including compound and structure finishes, and grid connection. Details of the fire risk management system including fire suppression, water supply, drainage including containment and segregation of expended fire suppression agent and / or water from the water environment, as well as a Fire Risk Management Plan to include an Emergency Response Plan.

7.39 The design of other components require to be progressed as details of final design is not shown within the EIAR, which can be secured by condition in the event the scheme is approved. The applicant is aware of the Council's requirement for

associated buildings to be designed in a manner that reflects the Highland vernacular. The applicant is proposing to house external transformers within casing of 5.5m x 3m x 3m however the use of internal transformers is preferred as this is considered to reduce the visual clutter of additional infrastructure on the site and could be secured by condition.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

7.40 The applicant has presented a number of submissions to illustrate the landscape and visual impact of the development both singularly and cumulatively with existing and consented wind farm developments, although the cumulative information included with the submission is now out of date.

7.41 The EIAR includes a description of the design process, along with assessments against Landscape Character Types (LCT), National Scenic Areas (NSA), and Special Landscape Areas (SLA), as well as Wild Land Areas. A total of 19 viewpoints across a study area of 45km have also been assessed, however all viewpoints are within 30km of the development. These viewpoints are representative of a range of receptors including communities, recreational users of the outdoors, and road users. The expected bare earth visibility of the development can be appreciated from the EIAR Figure 6.5: Bare Ground ZTV to Tip and Hub height, which also shows the locations of Viewpoints, National Scenic Areas (NSA), and Wild Land designations. EIAR Figure 6.6: Screening ZTV to Tip and Hub shows where forestry would screen the development. Figure 6.7: Recreational Routes Screening ZTV to Tip and Hub shows the developments likely visibility along Core Paths, the Skye Trail, and the Lochmaddy Ferry Route (Uig to Isle of Harris). Figure 6.8: Night Time ZTV – Nacelle Lights shows the likely visibility of aviation lighting during the hours of darkness.

7.42 Excepting for cumulative landscape and visual impacts, the information submitted with the EIAR is considered sufficient to allow the Planning Authority to come to a reasoned conclusion on the likely landscape and visual effects of the completed development in solus. However, it is noted that no visualisations were submitted for Construction Scenario 2, and that the THC visualisation packs do not include all of the required images as set out in Sections 3 and 4 of THC's Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments (July 2016).

7.43 The methodology for the LVIA generally follows that set out in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3), which NatureScot points out generally considers the increase in effects; i.e., effects that would occur 'over and above' those already incurred by the existing Ben Aketil wind farm, rather than the overall effect. As set out in Para 3.32 of GLVIA 3 the "LVIA should always clearly distinguish between what are considered to be significant and non-significant effects". The applicant judges Significant Effects following the combination of judgements based on the Sensitivity of the Receptor against the Magnitude of Change.

7.44 The Sensitivity of the receptor (landscape or visual) is defined by the receptor's susceptibility to change against the importance (value) of the landscape/view. For landscape, 'susceptibility' is "the ability of the landscape receptor […] to accommodate the development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and

strategies' (GLVIA3, Page 88). For visual receptors, higher susceptibility to change are those whose attention or interest is focussed on their surroundings whereby the Council considers recreational users moving through the landscape at slower speeds such as cyclists as having a High Susceptibility to wind energy development. Receptor Sensitivity is defined as being High, High/Medium, Medium, Medium/Low, or Low in the applicant's methodology. EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.1: Methodology paragraphs 14-16 provides the applicant's explanation of landscape susceptibility, and paragraph 28 for visual susceptibility, while paragraph 13 provides the applicant's explanation of landscape value and paragraph 27 of value of views, which are given National, Regional, or Community Value. It should be noted that the Sensitivity of Community valued landscapes is not the same as Community valued views as experienced by High or Medium Susceptibility receptors. For Landscape judgments, the Sensitivity is Medum for High Susceptibility receptors and Medium/Low for Medium receptors, and for Views, the Sensitivity for High Susceptibility receptors is High/Medium, and Medium for Medium Susceptibility receptors.

7.45 Judgement of Magnitude of Change is based on an assessment of factors such as the scale of effect, which takes account of the Scale of Change (size or scale) against the geographical Extent of the development, and the duration (reversibility) of the development. For landscape, Scale of Change judged against the degree of loss or alteration to key landscape features/elements, characteristics, or special qualities of designations, as well as distance from the development, and the landscape context relative to the development. For visual receptors, the Scale of Change takes account of distance to development, relative screening, the angle of view in relation to main receptor activity or main focus of the view, and the vertical and horizontal field of view occupied by the development within the view. In the applicant's methodology, Extent for visual receptors means the geographical extent or the length of time the development is experienced for. Scale of Change can be Large, Medium, Small, or Negligible, or intermediary while the geographic Extent is described as Wide, Intermediate, Localised, or Limited. It is noted here that NPF4 Policy 11 e) also uses the word 'Localised' to describe effects, however it is not accepted that the term means the same thing in the assessment to determine Significant Effects using the applicant's methodology as the use of the term in the policy, which is an expression of the extent of significant effects.

7.46 The judgement of Scale of Effect is expressed as Substantial, Moderate, Slight, or Negligible, or an intermediary thereof. This score is then assessed against the Duration of effect to judge the Magnitude of Change; i.e., how long the effect will last. Paragraph 37 of EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.1: Methodology states that short term effects last less than 2 years, medium between 2 and 10 years, long term up to 25 years, and permanent effects would last beyond than 25 years. As with Scale of Effect, the Magnitude of Change is expressed as Substantial, Moderate, Slight, or Negligible,, or an intermediary thereof.

7.47 According to the definitions provided in the methodology, there are four main Levels of Effect; Major, Moderate, Minor, and Negligible while the methodology also allows for intermediary Levels of Effect. Major, Major/Moderate Levels of Effect correspond to Significant Effects as can Moderate Level Effect according to professional

judgement. Those effects classified as Moderate (in some circumstances), Moderate/Minor, Minor, and Negligible are considered to be Not Significant.

7.48 EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.3: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment provides a more detailed analysis of the Sensitivity of the hosting Landscape Character Type LCT-359: Upland Sloping Moorland, and it. This analysis is based largely on the description of the LCT provided by NatureScot rather than a focussed analysis of the specific unit, or Landscape Character Area (LCA), of LCT-359 that hosts the development. The applicant's assessment of effects on the LCA is provided in the main body of the text. Analyses of LCT-360: Stepped Moorland, LCT-357: Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Skye and Lochalsh, and LCT 358: Low Smooth Moorland are provided in the main body of the text.

7.49 EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.4: Viewpoint Analysis sets out the applicant's Viewpoint Assessment for each of the 19 Viewpoints for landscape and visual receptors, with the findings also summarised in Table 6.8 of EIAR Volume 1: Main Report. However, while an assessment of the Scale of Change is identified, the assessments do not provide the applicant's assessment of the Sensitivity of the Receptor or the Magnitude of Change, or Scale and therefore Significance of Effect. Instead, Sensitivity of Receptor and Scale and Significance of Effect are assessed for receptor groups both within the text of the Main Report and/or in various Technical Appendices. It is noted that placed based receptors may combine residential receptors spread over different crofting settlements with routes and paths. There are also receptor groups for specific routes, and for recreational receptors. A specific Viewpoint analysis is provided for VP15 (The Storr) only, presumably because the Viewpoint corresponds to a specific location that receptors visit to enjoy the view. The stated reason for not providing a judgement of Level and Significance of Effect for each Viewpoint is '[t]he wider extent of the effect and its duration are not captured in the viewpoint analysis (as a viewpoint cannot capture these factors for an entire route or area)'.

7.50 The applicant's approach makes it difficult to follow the judgement process clearly, meaning that the applicant's conclusions on the Sensitivity of Receptor, Magnitude of Change, and Significance of Effect for the majority of viewpoints requires to be extrapolated from the text of the Main Report or a Technical Appendix and inferred where possible. Furthermore, while some receptor groups appear on the map as discrete groupings of receptors such as the receptor groups of Edinbane, Flashader, and Greshornish, the grouping together of other receptors into single place based receptor groups appears more arbitrary. For example, due to the dispersed settlement patterns and distances between individual properties and paths around the settled fringes of Loch Bracadale, further explanation and justification should be provided for the final make-up of these receptor groups. It may have been more appropriate to separate Orbost and Harlosh in to distinct receptor groups for example, as the experiences of the turbines for receptors in each area are unlikely to match.

7.51 The approach taken in this assessment differs from the applicant's in that a judgement of the extent and the duration of the visual effects resulting from the development has been made according to the receptor type(s) of highest sensitivity that the Viewpoint is representing. In that way, a conclusion on the Significance of the visual Effect can be made for each of the Viewpoints, which is standard Highland

Council practice. Effects on receptor groups can then be extrapolated accordingly. Where receptor groups are not supported by evidence in the form of visualisations, such as for Edinbane and Harlosh for example, other LVIA material such as the ZTV together with street view and site visits (where possible) has been used to come to a view.

7.52 An appraisal of the applicant's visual assessment, which highlights the differences and any concerns with regard to visual impact, can be found in Appendix 6 to this report.

7.53 Paragraphs 41 through 50 of EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.1: Methodology explain the applicant's assessment methodology of Cumulative Effects with the assessments focussed on the following four scenarios:

- Scenario 1 = Existing Baseline (which includes an assessment of the removal of existing Ben Aketil wind farm in its existing form and it being replaced with the proposed development);
- Scenario 2 = Future known Baseline (S1 + consented);
- Scenario 3 = Planning (S2 + schemes at application stage); and,
- Scenario 4 = Pre-planning (S3 + schemes at scoping stage).

7.54 In reality, and as acknowledged in the applicant's Methodology, there is much uncertainty as to what the cumulative picture will look like moving forward with the applications currently in planning and with more pending. Nevertheless, Scenario 1 would be the cumulative effects experienced with the existing turbines of Edinbane only; although, the medium-term effects experienced with the Ben Aketil extension turbines and existing turbines to be removed under this application (as per Construction Phasing Scenario 2) would fall under Cumulative Scenario 1 as well.

7.55 Beinn Mheadhonach Wind Farm also now falls under Cumulative Scenario 2, although was Scenario 3 at the time of finalising the EIAR and although acknowledged in the EIAR, has not been included in any substantive assessment of Cumulative Effects. Moreover, the approved schemes at Ben Sca, Glen Ullinish, and Beinn Mheadhonach Wind Farms fall under Cumulative Scenario 2 at the time of the EIAR's finalising, there re, as mentioned, revised schemes currently in planning for each of these projects, which are now within Scenario 3 in the cumulative assessment but are not included in the EIAR. Glen Ullinish II wind farm is also now pending consideration and proposed to radically revised the approved scheme from which it sits almost completely apart, with the two layouts conceivably co-existing.

7.56 Breakish, the repowering and extension of Edinbane, and, Waternish Wind Farms are all at Scoping stage however the formal applications are pending submission. These schemes have not been considered in the applicant's assessment meaning that, in effect, there is no Scenario 4 at this stage.

7.57 The methodology advises that it has focussed on an assessment of the '*additional cumulative change which would be brought about by the proposed development*' as per NatureScot's guidance. For Landscape receptors, cumulative effects are considered to arise from combined direct and/or indirect effects on the same receptor, while for visual receptors, cumulative effects are considered to arise either from two (or more) developments both being visible from the same place or from

sequential views as people travel through the landscape. As with the singular assessment, the cumulative assessments are based on receptor groups and do not provide a judgement on the Magnitude of Change or Significance of Cumulative Effects for each Viewpoint. The applicant has used three approaches to the assessment, firstly grouping developments that are likely to result in similar effects. Secondly, the applicant has discounted consideration of cumulative effects where significant cumulative effects are likely to occur prior to the addition of the application proposal. Thirdly, the assessment focusses only on those receptors likely to experience significant effects within any given scenario.

7.58 No threshold for judging 'Significance' of cumulative effect is provided in the methodology whereby this may occur where the addition of the proposal would result in a perceptual change of landscape character and/or the character of the view such that it moves from being a landscape with occasional wind farms to a landscape with wind farms, or from a landscape with wind farms to a wind farm landscape. As with the LVIA, there are again four Levels of Effect. However, as set out above and given that the cumulative 'cut-off' date for the cumulative assessment was December 2022, the proposal's contribution to the future cumulative assessment cannot be judged with any certainty although some consideration is presented in Appendix 6.

7.59 In addition to the above, effects on the Special Landscape Qualities of both the Trotternish National Scenic Area (NSA), and the Cuillin Hills NSA are in EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.5: Less than Moderate Effects. The applicant has included detailed assessments of the effects of the development on the Special Qualities of the Northwest Skye Special Landscape Area (SLA), as well as the Greshornish SLA, and Trotternish and Tianavaig SLA in EIAR Volume 1: Main Report. Consideration of the proposal's effects on the Wild Land Qualities of both Duirinish Wild Land Area (WLA), WLA22, and the Cuillins WLA, WLA23, are provided in EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.6: Wild Land Assessment. The WLA assessments are noted and appreciated however, given the policy status of WLAs in NPF4 relative to energy developments, this report does not include a review of this aspect of the LVIA.

7.60 A key part of the of the Council's assessment of landscape and visual effects is a consideration of the proposal against the Criterion set out in Section 4 of the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG), with the assessment against the criterion and view as to whether the threshold set out in the guidance is met or not, contained in Appendix 6 to this report. As set out in Policy 11 (f) of NPF4, windfarm sites should be suitable in perpetuity, and it is therefore considered reasonable to assess the duration of all landscape and visual effects as non-reversible in that context.

Landscape Impacts

7.60 There are several aspects to consider in determining whether this development represents an acceptable degree of impact on landscape character, including:

- impacts on the Landscape Character Type (LCT) as a whole, as a unit (Landscape Character Area (LCA)), and on neighbouring LCTs;
- impacts on the local landscape composition closer to the development; and,
- direct and indirect impacts on landscape designations.

7.62 The proposal's specific effects on landscape character will result from the decommissioning and removal of the existing 12 turbines along with the subsequent ground reinstatement works as required for associated infrastructures, in addition to the reintroduction of nine larger moving man-made features into the landscape. The extent to which the new turbines and, to a lesser degree, the associated tracks and other infrastructure changes the existing colour and texture of the hosting slopes and moorland and its interaction with the colour and texture of the wider landscapes that the development is experienced within. The development's lower lying infrastructure components will have greater influence where they are more visible, which varies due to the topography of the site offering different levels of exposure and screening depending on the angle and elevation of the view.

7.63 In general terms, wind farm developments are experienced as locally dominant features within their hosting landscapes while the perception of their size and scale will generally decrease relative to the hosting landscape as one moves away from the turbines and crosses different landscape features against which the turbines are experienced as ever diminishing objects. However, in relatively small and contained landscapes such as islands like Skye, the coastline provides a natural barrier that limits the distance the majority of receptors can separate themselves from the development. Moreover, there is less likelihood of there being sufficient incidences of landscape features that would diminish the dominance and prominence of turbines, such as expansive landscapes such as sweeping moorland, or mountain massifs for example. Indeed, even when experienced from the seascape, the fact that onshore energy developments are landscape features may be even more pronounced depending on how the relationship of the turbines is perceived relative to intricate coastal sea- and land- scapes.

7.64 In this instance, the proposal is sited in the northwestern area of the central Skye unit of LCT 359 Upland Sloping Moorland, which describes the moorland covered gentle lower slopes of adjoining Stepped Moorland and intervening low rounded summits and weakly defined steps. The LCT is generally exposed and open with extensive views to surrounding landscape features while distance and scale are generally difficult to perceive due to the simplicity of the landform and ground cover, except where man-made features introduce scale. The LCT has already demonstrated its capacity to host wind farms given that the operational wind farms of Ben Aketil and Edinbane both lie within it, and it is the hosting LCT of the consented Ben Sca Wind Farm and its Extension Wind Farm. The applicant's assessment of the LCT's Sensitivity (EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.3: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment) assigns a Low Susceptibility and Medium/Low Sensitivity overall. This Sensitivity may be reasonable for the LCT as a whole based on NatureScot's general description of Upland Sloping Moorland. However, given the specific characteristics of the hosting LCA and the scale of turbines, the Council's Landscape Officer has assigned a higher Sensitivity for reasons explained below.

7.65 The specific unit/LCA of Upland Sloping Moorland incorporates commercial forestry to its north, and is largely (although not exclusively) on the inland side of the A836 to the west and the A850 to the north. This LCA is closely related to LCT360: Stepped Moorland, two LCAs of which it envelops while itself is enveloped in turn by further LCAs of Stepped Moorland. The LCA is further hemmed in from the coast by curvaceous strips of LCT357: Farmed and Settled Lowlands - Sky and Lochalsh,

which it contrasts in terms of its relatively simple composition, and LCT358: Low Smooth Moorland, to which it provides relief against its horizontal emphasis. Although the largest of the three units of LCT359 on Skye, the hosting LCA covers a relatively small area whereby Stepped Moorland, with which it merges, is by far the more dominant Landscape Character Type of Central Skye. The rounded summits of the hosting LCA and the summits of the surrounding Stepped Moorland LCAs are low, with the tallest being Cruachan-Glen Vic Askil east of Edinbane Wind Farm at 295m AOD. The low summits of these LCAs combined with the hosting LCA's relative size mean that it is sensitive to large scale structures reducing the perception of scale, distance, and expansiveness of the landscape and compromising the simplicity of the moorland landscape, particularly as experienced to the west of the development.

7.66 The EIAR states that the proposed development would increase the presence and influence of renewable energy generation within the host LCT, with turbines being noticeably larger than the existing Ben Aketil and Edinbane Wind Farms. The applicant considers that the scale difference will be less noticeable in comparison to Ben Sca turbines, and would be experienced as part of the evolution of turbine development throughout Scotland (EIAR Volume 1: Main Report, Paragraph 6.7.35). It is not clear how a single turbine development can be experienced as part of a national evolution of turbine development. In the Highland context, few 200m turbines have been approved so far and where they have, they have generally been either: diminutive relative to the surrounding mountains (such as Bunloinn Wind Farm) or expansive moorland, or sited in lower ridges or depressions to maximise screening (such as Lairg II).

7.67 The EIAR goes on to state that the 200m turbines would be positioned between the 100m and 210m AOD contours appearing above the nearby summits of Ben Aketil (266m AOD) and the adjacent Ben Sca (283m AOD). This positioning leads the applicant to state that the scheme accords with the exposed and open nature of the landscape and other wind turbine development in this part of Skye, presumably because the turbines are exposed in open sky above the low summits although the statement doesn't explicate why. The assessment does, however, acknowledge that the vertical aspect of the development would contrast with the more horizontal and smaller scale elements in adjacent LCAs, but justifies this by stating that there is already a sharp contrast between the scale of the Upland Sloping Moorland and the human scale of the adjoining settled landscapes. However, this description does not acknowledge that the turbines would radically change the relationship of the contrasting landform that currently provides backdrop to the human scaled settled LCTs, as referred to in NatureScot's description. The upscaled turbines would unsubtly shift the landscape focus upwards and away from the settled LCTs towards even larger-scaled man-made elements significantly diminishing the low rounded summits of the hosting LCA and stepped hills in the neighbouring LCAs, and adding further complication to a simple landscape.

7.68 The EIAR advises that there would be a distinct area of influence within 5km of the proposed turbines but that this is within an area already influenced by existing and consented wind energy development as well as large scale forestry, and that the larger turbines would strengthen the area's association with turbine development. The EIAR states that this influence would drop away quickly due to the landform.

The assessment goes on to explain that the receiving landscape would remain extensive with no change to the lower slopes or the hummocky undulations at the base of the slope, and would maintain views to external land- and sea- scapes and landscape features. Additionally, the proposed substation and energy storage would appear in the core of the array and would accord with the key characteristics of occasional isolated modern farms. The ground level infrastructure would not be perceived locally outwith Glen Heysdal at Feorllig. Consequently the applicant concludes that there would be a Medium scale of change over an intermediate extent of the LCT due to the proposed development. The EIAR sets out that the applicant considers these changes to be long-term resulting in a Moderate magnitude of change for the Upland Sloping Moorland LCT. For this landscape of Medium/Low sensitivity this would lead to a Moderate effect which would be Not Significant.

7.69 As stated however, the Landscape Officer considers that the applicant's Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal at Appendix 6.3 for Upland Sloping Moorland is over-reliant on interpretation from the text of the NatureScot's LCT description, which leads to overstatement of factors of expansiveness, simplicity and scale in the landscape. The introductory text to the appendix recognises that sensitivity is not absolute and can only be defined in relation to the development and its location, but it is not clear where the specific location and scale of the proposed development are captured in the assessment. The applicant's Sensitivity assessment only captures the host landscape of Upland Sloping Moorland, where it would have been appropriate to also include the Stepped Moorland LCT, which it merges with, in an assessment of the specific LCA as is given above; the two LCTs are closely related, and the turbines of the proposal come within 0.2km of the mapped boundary between the types.

7.70 The Council's Landscape Officer therefore advises that the applicant's approach has led to an under-assessment of the effects on the Landscape Characters of both Upland Sloping Moorland and Stepped Moorland. This is because the scale of the proposed development would more appropriately lead to a rating of Moderate sensitivity to the upscaling of turbines, as opposed to Moderate/Low, which would lead to Moderate and locally Major/Moderate Significant Landscape Effects on the receiving and adjoining LCAs.

7.71 A similar approach is taken in NatureScot's response, which more generally considers the receiving Upland Sloping Moorland LCT to have capacity to accommodate the upscaling of turbine development. However, in its view, it is the impacts on the sensitivities of the nearby Stepped Moorland, and, Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Skye and Lochalsh LCTs, as well as the regionally important sea- and land- scapes around Loch Bracadale, that will result in Significant landscape effects.

7.72 NatureScot's overwhelmingly negative response to the proposal goes on to state that: 'these effects would relate to the introduction of substantially larger turbines resulting in a greater contrast of scale with the more intricate, patterned and settled coastal fringes and the increased influence of large infrastructure on a seascape with a diverse and strongly natural character.' Whereby, 'the increase in turbine height proposed for Ben Aketil would somewhat reduce the expansiveness of [the Stepped Moorland LCT] through the intensification of development resulting in a more prominent backcloth of wind farm development to Loch Bracadale'. As described by the Landscape Officer and NatureScot then, it is the interaction of LCAs of Upland

Sloping Moor, Stepped Moorland, and Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Sky and Lochalsh that is so important to creating the sense of place, particularly as experienced on the west of Skye, west of the development and when moving through the landscape. The impact on this local landscape composition can in this case be best illustrated through consideration of the likely impacts on the Special Qualities of the North West Skye SLA, which encompasses the area referred to by NatureScot and which is provided below.

Designated Landscapes - National Scenic Areas

7.73 There are five National Scenic Areas (NSAs) within the 45km study area however the South Lewis, Harris and North Uist NSA, Wester Ross NSA, and The Small Isles NSA have been scoped out of the EIAR with the two Skye NSAs, Trotternish (20km to the northeast), and, The Cuillin Hills (23km to the southeast) included in the assessment. The applicant's findings are that the development will not result in Significant impacts on any of the Special Qualities of either NSA. NatureScot advises that the relatively small Trotternish NSA focusses on the spectacular landslip topography and basalt geology of the Quiraing and associated crofting landscapes on the eastern side of the Trotternish peninsula. Due to the development's location some 20km southwest of the NSA, visibility of the turbines would be limited to the high points on the Trotternish ridge at the western edge of the designation, including Beinn Edra (Viewpoint 17), with the proposal visible in the opposite direction of views of the Special Qualities as described. As such, the applicant's conclusions are agreed. Similarly, NatureScot advises that the focus of The Cuillin Hills NSA are the Black and Red Cuillin with the Special Qualities related to the character of the hills themselves and the surrounding wild landscape and crofting townships, which do not include the uplands where the proposal would be sited. As above, NatureScot has again agreed with the applicant's findings in relation to this NSA and the development's impact on both NSAs is considered to be within acceptable limits.

Designated Landscapes - Special Landscape Areas

7.74 In addition, the applicant has assessed the proposal's likely impacts on the Special Qualities of the three Skye regionally designated Special Landscape Areas (SLAs); North West Skye SLA, Greshornish SLA, and Trotternish and Tianavaig SLA. This assessment focusses on North West Skye SLA by virtue of the SLA having Special Qualities that are most likely to be significantly impacted by the proposal.

7.75 Given the presence of existing turbines and the siting of the consented Ben Sca turbines in the future baseline, this proposal is not likely to contribute significantly to the further deterioration of the Contrasting Geology, Enclosure and Exposure, or, Historic Landscape Special Qualities of Greshornish SLA.

7.76 The Trotternish and Tianavaig SLA's Special Qualities of Dynamic Landslip Character, Ridgeline Spine and Coastal Fringe, and Historic Landscape, generally describe the experience of the SLA from within its boundary, especially how it interacts with the NSA, wider peninsula, its coastline as well as the north and east coastline of Skye. Although it is accepted that the proposal would encroach on panoramic views and affect the perception of scale of the landscape, a stated

Sensitivity to Change of the SLA, its position away from the SLA's boundaries means it is not considered to significantly impact these qualities in solus.

North West Skye SLA

7.77 North West Skye SLA is located 3.3km west of the site and covers much of Skye's northwestern peninsulas of Waternish, Duirinish and Minginish extending from Waternish Point in the north to Loch Brittle in the south and including Lochs Dunvegan and Loch Bracadale. The SLA is represented by Viewpoints (VP) VP2 (A863 at Feorlig), VP5 (Roag), VP8 (A863 near Gearymore), VP9 (Macleod's Table North / Healabhal Mhor), VP10 (B884 Colbost, Duirinish), VP11 (Ardtreck, Minginish), and VP13 (Ardmore, Waternish), which are located within or at the edge of this SLA from a range of low level, coastal and elevated positions. Beyond these Viewpoints, the ZTV (EIAR Volume 3 Figure 6..5: Bare Ground ZTV to Tip and Hub) shows extensive coverage of the proposal throughout the SLA.

7.787 The designation covers varied and dynamic coastal scenes that contrast with the stepped moorland and distinctive hills of the interior. The SLA's description describes how the designation's complex interplay of land and sea provides an ever changing sequence of views that includes several sea lochs such as Lochs Dunvegan and Bracadale and their offshore islands, high dramatic sea cliffs such as those of Moonen Bay and Biod an Athair, and the prominent flat-topped hills of Macleod's Tables. The description underpins the designation's Special Qualities, which describe its Dynamic Coastline, Distinctive Terrain, and Crofting Landscapes.

7.79 Reinforcing these SLA qualities are the Physical Characteristics and Perceptual Qualities of Loch Bracadale, as set out in NatureScot's response which considers impacts on the regionally important character of the sea loch between Gesto Bay, south-west of Struan, and Idrigill Point, all of which are within the SLA. NatureScot contends that this area of the SLA makes a major contribution to the diverse coastal scenery of Skye by virtue of its distinctiveness complex pattern of intricate and settled coastal fringes, small scale bays, inlets, islands and coast. These coastal features markedly contrast with the larger scale open moorland of the island's interior, which provides visual containment and a simple unobtrusive backdrop to the more visually complex coast and fragmented island seascape.

7.80 These Special Qualities are sensitive to changes brought about by increased incidences of large scale structures intruding on coastal and mountain views, as well as additional prominent visual features within the moorland landscape that would compromise the simplicity of that landscape, and reduce the sense of wildness and remoteness along less accessible coastlines, amongst other sensitivities.

7.81 The applicant's assessment advises that the proposal will not result in adverse Significant effects on the Dynamic Coastline Special Quality because the development will only be experienced in combination with the coast from limited locations and that where it is, it would be clearly associated with moorland landscapes of Central Skye outwith the SLA. The EIAR cites VP10 (B884 Colbost, Duirinish) to support this position. However, the applicant's position is not agreed. Firstly, while the receiving Upland Sloping Moorland LCA and adjacent LCA units of Stepped Moorland are not within the SLA's boundary, they do form an important backdrop to the SLA, one that is at times wilder and simpler to the intricate coastal

patterns below. As is reinforced by NatureScot's response, these LCAs cannot be so readily disassociated with the SLA, particularly as experienced from the west and from more accessible locations on lower ground.

7.82 It is noted that these LCAs are experienced as a distinct landscape element from VP9 (Macleod's Table North / Healabhal Mhor), for example, where the turbines are notably separated from the coastline in the horizontal and vertical field of view. However, the proposal is experienced in combination with the intricate coast from VP10 (B884 Colbost, Duirinish), and also VP5 (Roag), VP11 (Ardtreck, Minginish), and VP13 (Ardmore, Waternish). It is also clear that the proposal would increasingly interact with the coastline as the receptor moves further south from VP2 (A863 at Feorlig) towards Harlosh, and VP5 (Roag).

7.83 The significance of the proposal's effect on the Dynamic Coastline Special Quality stems from the step change increase of turbine heights and the relative positioning and spacing of the repowered and extended turbines, the effects would be experienced as a result of the proposal being a new development; it is not considered instructive for this assessment to consider impacts on the SLA 'over and above' those already experienced in relation with the existing Ben Aketil Wind Farm. This is because the existing scheme has picked out and highlights a single topographic feature with turbines being of a scale that does not compete with nearby summits for prominence meaning it has limited impact on the coastal character from many views.

7.84 As NatureScot has stated in its response, 'Currently operational wind farms within this landscape (Upland Sloping Moorlands) do not intrude or dominate the smaller scale pockets of the coastal crofting communities which have a strong connection with the sea. They also don't interrupt the experience of the Loch Bracadale area when journeying through this coastal landscape or in views out across the seascape from coastal routes. This is due to these wind farms relating to the Upland Sloping Moorland landscape, their siting back from the coast and scale which doesn't overly detract from the experience of this distinctive coastal landscape'.

7.85 In contrast however, the heights and positioning of the proposed turbines mean that turbines appear far above the nearby summits of the receiving Upland Sloping Moorland and neighbouring Stepped Moorland LCAs, while the scheme's increased horizontal and vertical spread extends turbines over the east facing slopes of Gleann Eoghainn and places them on both sides of the horizon in some views, for example at VP2 (A863 at Feorlig) and VP5 (Roag). At VP11 (Ardtreck, Minginish), turbines appear to extend closer to the coastline.

7.86 The result is a scheme that does not sit well in its receiving landscape as it looms large over many natural and man-made physical elements within low-lying coastal scenes, including the moorland backdrop, with the turbines appearing out of scale with these features and appearing to reduce the sense of scale and distance in the landscape. As NatureScot highlights, the proposal turbines would appear as an overly prominent feature from the low-lying intricate coast and in views over the seascape from opposing coasts of Orbost/Idrigill and Fiskavaig, and Loch Bracadale. There would be Significant adverse effects on views from the promoted footpaths to Oronsay and to Idrigill Point, where visualisations have not been provided, in addition

to Significant effects experienced from further afield at MacLeod's Tables and Colbost.

7.87 The turbines would intensify the experience of wind energy development as experienced within the SLA by contributing to the formation of a new industrial backdrop of contrasting scale, colour, and texture to the existing moorland ground cover. The proposal would shift focus away from natural and small-scale traditional man-made features that contribute to the sense of place imbued by the SLA and therefore diminish the experience of the Dynamic Coastline Special Quality of the SLA. These effects would extend into the hours of darkness by virtue of aviation lighting, and are clearly demonstrated in visualisations for VP5 (Roag), VP10 (B884 Colbost, Duirinish), VP11 (Ardtreck, Minginish). This assessment of Significantly detrimental impacts on the Dynamic Coast Special Quality of North West Skye SLA is reinforced by the Visual Impact Assessment section below.

Visual Impacts

7.88 Chapter 6 of the EIAR Volume 1: Main Report 5 is supplemented by several Technical Appendices (EIAR Volume 3) including Technical Appendix 6.4, which provides a description of the visual change brought about by the development, while the applicant considers the Scale of Change brought by the proposal at each Viewpoint in Table 6.8 of the Main Report. As mentioned, this assessment falls well short of an assessment of the Significance of visual effects for receptors at each viewpoint. Even in considering Scale of Change however, there is, unsurprisingly, some difference between the applicant's assessment and the appraisal undertaken by officers, which is to be expected given the assessments are dependent on the application of professional judgement.

7.89 As mentioned, a Viewpoint Assessment Appraisal that includes the judgement of Significance is set out in Appendix 6 of this report. The appraisal considers the Scale of Change against the context of the existing Ben Aketil and Edinbane Wind Farms as well as the approved Ben Sca, and where relevant Glen Ullinish and Beinn Mheadhonach Wind Farms. Extent is considered against the context of the existing Ben Aketil Wind Farm as well as a consideration of the Scale of Change and Extent likely to be brought by the proposal once constructed as considered in the round. An analyses of the differences in judgement of Scale of Change is set out in the main text below. As a further note to this text, some contextual consideration of potential cumulative visual effects including the proposal's potential for Significant cumulative visual effects is provided in Appendix 6..

7.90 As also mentioned, the applicant's judgement on the Sensitivity of the Receptors at Viewpoints is inferred from the text of the Main Report and/or a relevant Technical Appendix. There is general accord between this and the applicant's assessments of Receptor Sensitivity across the Viewpoints with the exception of Viewpoints representative of road users; i.e., VP1 (A850 north of site), VP4 (A850 east of Dunvegan), and VP8 (A836 near Gearymore) whereby the applicant has assigned a lower Susceptibility and Value on the road receptor as a whole rather than to the people using it, leading to Medium/Low (VP1 and VP4) and Medium (VP8) Sensitivities. However, tourists and other recreational users of routes, including passengers in vehicles and cyclists, have a High Susceptibility to Wind Farm developments even if the routes are given Regional or Community Value using the

applicant's methodology. In other methodologies that give High, Medium, and Low value to landscapes and views there may be more variance in Receptor Sensitivity. However, using the applicant's methodology, Receptor Sensitivity is generally considered High/Medium for all Viewpoints with the exception of VP17 (Beinn Edra) and VP18 (Bruach na Frithe, Cuillin Hills) which are assigned High sensitivity by virtue of being within NSAs.

7.91 Appendix 6 sets out that the proposal is judged to result in Significant visual effects at all viewpoints between VP1 and VP11 inclusive, at a distance up to 11.4 km from the turbines. While no Major levels of effects are found using the applicant's methodology, the level of visual effect at VP3 (A863 south of Dunvegan) and VP5 (Roag) are considered to be in the Major/Moderate bracket, while the level of effect at all other viewpoints with Significant effects are considered to fall in the Moderate bracket, that is VP1 (A850 north of site), 2 (A863 at Feorlig), VP4 (A850 east of Dunvegan), VP6 (A850 Flashader), VP7 (Minor Road to Greshornish), VP8 (A836 near Gearymore), VP9 (Macleod's Table North / Healabhal Mhor), VP10 (B884 Colbost, Duirinish), and VP11 (Ardtreck, Minginish).

7.92 At VP3 (A863 south of Dunvegan), which is 3.5 km from the nearest turbine, the applicant's finding that the scale of change is Large/Medium is not agreed but is rather considered Medium. By contrast, the applicant's consideration that the scale of change at VP5 (Roag), which is 4.5 km from the development, is Medium, is considered to underplay the effect that the upscaling of turbine development will have at this location in diminishing the settled landscape and moorland features below. The scale of change is therefore considered to be in the Large/Medium bracket for VP5. The difference in the scales of change is explained by several factors including the influence of the existing Ben Aketil Wind Farm as well as the relative screening afforded by the landscape at each viewpoint. The extent of the array's spread would be perceived as wide at both viewpoints, placing the scale of effect and magnitude of change at VP3 (A863 south of Dunvegan) in the Substantial/Moderate bracket, and in the Substantial bracket at VP5, meaning the level of overall visual effect is greater at the slightly more distant VP5.

7.93 Indeed, the influence of the existing Ben Aketil Wind Farm is a complicating factor in the assessment of visual effects when compared to assessing new wind farm developments; not least because it can reduce the scale of change and/or assessment of extent of the array. In considering the change of impact in this manner, the scale of effect, magnitude of change, and subsequent level of effect are ultimately reduced, as has been the case at VP1 (A850 north of site) and VP2 (A863 at Feorlig) for example, both of which are closer to the turbines than VP3 and VP5 where the level of effect from the repowering and extension turbines could reasonably be expected to be greater on the whole as a result of proximity and the exposure of turbine towers at these locations.

7.94 The scale of change is agreed for VP1 (A850 north of site) as being Large/Medium. It is not however agreed for VP2 (A863 at Feorlig), where the text in EIAR Volume 3: Technical Appendix 6.4 provides no justification for the scale of change being smaller at this viewpoint. Although the viewpoint is further away from the development, similar to VP5, the effect of the turbines on the perception of landform scale, and the contrast with the smaller scale agricultural fields, is arguably greater. The findings in Appendix 6 for both viewpoints are that the proposal will result in

Moderate scale of effect and magnitudes of change, leading to Moderate but Significant levels of visual effect on receptors at both locations.

7.95 Similarly, the applicant has assigned a scale of change of Medium/Small to VP8 (A836 near Gearymore), VP9 (Macleod's Table North / Healabhal Mhor), VP10 (B884 Colbost, Duirinish), and VP11 (Ardtreck, Minginish) where this appraisal judges it to be Medium. As is the case for Viewpoints 1 and 2, the scale of effect and magnitude of change for each of these viewpoints is found to be Moderate, resulting in the Moderate levels of effects that tend towards the Major/Moderate side of the bracket, and are therefore Moderate and Significant visual effects. It is noted that all of these viewpoints, as well as VP2, are within the North West Skye SLA, while the same Moderate and Significant visual effect is found for receptors at VP4 (A850 east of Dunvegan), VP6 (A850 Flashader), and VP7 (Minor Road to Greshornish), all of which are outside of the SLA.

7.96 It should not be surprising that a scheme for 200m to tip height turbines should result in Significant visual effects, but nevertheless for the current application, these Significant effects are attributable to several factors. Firstly, the proposal would increase the horizontal spread in comparison with the existing Ben Aketil Wind Farm, at VP1 (A850 north of site), VP2 (A863 at Feorlig), VP3 (A863 south of Dunvegan), VP4 (A850 east of Dunvegan), VP5 (Roag), VP6 (A850 Flashader), VP7 (Minor Road to Greshornish), VP8 (A836 near Gearymore), VP9 (Macleod's Table North / Healabhal Mhor), VP10 (B884 Colbost, Duirinish), VP11 (Ardtreck, Minginish). This effect is exacerbated at those viewpoints where the large spacing between the proposal turbines amplify the horizontal spread, most notably where turbines and their towers and hubs are viewed against the sky which is the case from several of these viewpoints. Similarly, the proposal would increase the vertical spread of turbines either as a result of the interaction of the repowering and extension turbines, and/or in combination with Ben Sca Wind Farm turbines. This effect would be most noticeable where the turbines are experienced from higher ground such as at VP9 (Macleod's Table North / Healabhal Mhor).

7.97 Moreover, the stated mitigating factor of the turbines being legible as formed over two rows is not experienced from any viewpoint, whether viewed and experienced from lower ground or higher up. Rather, the turbines would be experienced as a loose grouping (see VPs 1 to 11) and while there may be some ‘rhythmic pairing’ at VP2 (A863 at Feorlig) and VP5 (Roag), it is not consistent across the array, and given that the distances between turbines almost matches that between rows, any such pairing of turbines will be short lived as the receptor moves through the landscape. Furthermore, the proposal does not display the same close and regular spacing or even descent/ascent of hub and tip heights as Ben Aketile Wind Farm. For example, when experienced from the northeast, VP6 (A850 Flashader) and VP7 (Minor Road to Greshornish), T1 appears as an outlier that encroaches on the visible summit of Macleod’s Tables, while the uneven hub and tip heights of the array are pronounced at VP1 (A850 north of site), VP8 (A836 near Gearymore), and VP10 (B884 Colbost, Duirinish). Consequently, the tight cohesiveness of the existing turbine development is lost in the proposed development.

7.98 As set out above, on the basis of the viewpoint analysis, the proposal is likely to result in Significant visual effects when experienced by receptors throughout the North West Skye SLA to the northwest, west, and southwest of the turbines up to a

distance of around 11.4 km from the turbines. Additional Significant visual effects would also be experienced by receptors to the north and northeast of the development at up to a distance of around 5.9 km.

7.99 These findings, which are largely agreed to by NatureScot, are largely contrary to the applicant's assessment. The LVIA concludes that the proposal will only result in Significant visual effects on three place based receptor groups, Upper Feorlig, Feorlig, and Caroy all within 3.2 km and south of the turbines, and one outdoor access receptor group of informal routes across the site used by recreational users. All other residential and recreational receptors, as well as all road receptors (as listed in Table 6.11 of the Main Report: Summary of Visual Effects – Daytime), would, in the applicant's view, not experience Significant visual effects, and in many cases less than Moderate levels of effect.

7.100 Given the issues described in paragraph 7.50 above with regards receptor group selection, the applicant's receptor group assessments read more as quantitative rather than qualitative assessments. Consequently, the assessments do not appear to go deeper than standard descriptions of the effects of the development on receptors as they might experience the development from the different receptor zones or as they move around the landscape following longer routes. As such, there is little discussion around the effects that the scale of the turbines and the character of the composition has on the quality of receptor experience.

7.101 So for example, the encroachment of turbines on distant landmarks would also be experienced from the north at VP13 (Ardmore, Waternish) in addition to VPs 6 and 7 as above. This viewpoint is also within the North West Skye SLA. The location may not be a key view of the Cuillins and the overall visual impact is not considered Significant from the Viewpoint Assessment, or indeed the applicant's analysis for the Waternish residential receptor group. However, it should be acknowledged that distant views to topographical landmark features can still retain value to local people who experience the landscape and visual environment in all weathers and seasons, and for whom the framed view of the distant Cuillin may be important.

7.102 While it is agreed the visual influence of the development is limited for receptors within Dunvegan itself, this would not be the case for other place based receptor groups. Where the applicant's LVIA considers Moderate but not Significant effects for the communities of Harlosh, Roag, and Colbost, these conclusion are largely reliant on fragmented and dispersed settlement patterns with different house orientations, as well as vegetation (which may be removed) as mitigating factors. Moreover, the change brought about by the proposal is mainly described in terms of larger turbines with no consideration of how factors such as composition, increased vertical and horizontal spread, or larger moving blades in views would be experienced. The applicant's assessment is not, therefore, considered sufficiently robust.

7.103 Although the descriptions do at times acknowledge that the experience of the turbines at one side of a receptor group are likely to be very different to the other, it is considered that rather than being a mitigating factor to the development's visual effects, this would be justification to separate the receptor groups. This is because properties across these areas will have different outlooks in relation to key views and the development, some experiencing relatively close range visibility of the proposal

when compared to others. People living and staying in these areas will experience the development in different ways when using routes in and out these settlements on their daily routines. It is considered that Significant visual effects would occur for these receptors, as represented by VP2 (B884 Colbost, Duirinish), VP5 (Roag) and VP10 (B884 Colbost, Duirinish).

7.104 NatureScot also points out that the applicant's assessment of effects on recreational routes does not fully consider all promoted walks lying in relative proximity to the proposal, such as those promoted by Walk Highlands and detailed in other guides to Skye. For example, no assessment has been undertaken of the well-used route to Oronsay Island in Loch Bracadale or the route to Idrigill Point. It is therefore considered that this aspect of the EIAR's LVIA is incomplete. Taken together, the overstating of mitigating factors along with the grouping of disparate receptor types into receptor groups and omission of other key routes, mean that the applicant's findings on the Significance of visual effects as stated in the EIAR can and should be disputed.

7.105 Further to the above, the applicant has generalised its assessment of impacts on key transport routes for road user receptors over larger distances in order to reach a conclusion on the significance of visual effects, rather than breaking the route down in to more appropriate sections. For the A850 for example, the applicant considers the proposal would not result in any Significant visual effect overall over a circa 27 km stretch. However, the proposal would result in Significant visual effects east of the Fairy Bridge and up to the location of VP1 (A850 north of site) for eastbound travellers, and between VP6 (A850 Flashader) and VP1 for westbound travellers, as agreed by NatureScot. Again, for the 37 km stretch of the A863 between Sligachan to Dunvegan, the applicant considers the proposal would not result in any Significant visual effect overall. In reality however, the proposal is likely to result in Significant visual effects along the route between VP8 (A863 near Gearymore) and VP3 (A863 south of Dunvegan) for northbound travellers. The impacts on the B884 for travellers leaving the Duirinish Peninsula have not been assessed in the LVIA and also have potential to be Significant in sections given the extensive visibility along this route and as represented by VP10 (B884 Colbost, Duirinish).

Design, Landscape, and Visual Effects Summary

7.106 It is clear from the assessment of the proposal's design, its effects on landscape character and composition, and its visual effects, that the development will result in Significant Landscape and Visual effects. The Significant effects lead to a conclusion that scheme's design objectives to minimise 'effects on views from local settlements, peninsulas to the east and west and from key views, routes' or 'minimising impacts on regionally or locally valued landscape' are not met. Moreover, the scheme's resultant Significantly detrimental effects will be mostly experienced by residential, recreational, and road user receptors from the western coastal fringes and peninsulas of the Isle of Skye. This area is largely covered by the regionally significant North West of Skye SLA designation. Landscape and Visual Impacts and Impacts on the Dynamic Coast Special Quality of the SLA are not considered acceptable overall as described above. The policy implications of this judgement is provided in the Conclusion Section of the report below.

Construction

7.107 The applicant is considering two alternative construction phasing scenarios:

- Scenario 1 - construction of the extension turbines and repowering turbines is undertaken at the same time with a construction period of approximately 18 months; and
- Scenario 2 – undertaking the work in two phases. Phase 1 being the construction of four extension turbines over a period of 12 months. Phase 2 being the decommissioning and removal of the existing turbines over another period of 12 months, construction of the five new repowering turbines over a further period of 12 months. There is a maximum delay of five years between Phase 1 and Phase 2. This means that 16 turbines (the four extension turbines and the existing 12 turbines) will be operating for a maximum of five years.

7.108 The EIAR sets out the environmental effects of both construction scenarios. It explains the main advantage of Scenario 1 is a shorter construction phase which may contribute to the mitigation of some predicted impacts. The advantage of Scenario 2 is the continuous, interrupted contribution of renewable energy to the national grid and uninterrupted community benefit payments, which is not a planning consideration. The applicant states that the decision will be informed by considerations such as economic factors, practicality of implementation, social responsibility and legal aspects. Ultimately, unless restricted by planning condition, it would be for the applicant to select which scenario is more suitable for their business. In assessing both these scenarios it is not considered that the delay of up to five years has been adequately captured within the EIAR, particularly with regard to the landscape and visual impacts associated with operating the existing and new turbines concurrently not being subject to any LVIA photomontages.

7.109 It is recognised that there may be advantages of the second scenario in terms of impacts on the local road network where it may ultimately be necessary to coordinate multiple largescale projects. It is considered, however, that the applicant's proposal would unacceptably extend the duration of adverse construction, landscape and visual effects (which have been discussed for each Viewpoint in Appendix 6) of the project into the medium term. As such, should Scottish Ministers be minded to consent the development, a planning condition should be imposed that restricts any delay between Scenario 2 Phase 1 and Phase 2, thereby removing the proposed delay of up five years between these phases. Provisions within this condition could however be made to allow for a restrictive delay of up to two or three years between phases if the applicant can satisfactorily demonstrate that such a delay would ease projected cumulative peak construction traffic impacts on the road network.

7.110 The application also proposes two access road options, one from the existing Ben Aketil access on the A850 to the north and an alternative from the A863 to the south, one or both may be used. These are explained in the Roads, Transport and Access section of this report below.

7.111 Construction will be scheduled from Monday to Friday 07:00 to 19:00 and Saturday 08:00 to 13:00. No working activities would be planned on Sundays or Bank Holidays. Any blasting on site shall only take place between the hours of 10:00 to

16:00 on Monday to Friday inclusive and 10:00 to 12:00 on Saturdays with no blasting taking place on Sunday or on National Public Holidays, unless otherwise approved in advance in writing by the Planning Authority. The applicant would be required to inform local residents of blasting activity, which could be secured by condition.

7.112 The Council's Environmental Health Team has explained that audible construction noise is unlikely to be acceptable outwith the aforementioned working hours unless a detailed construction noise assessment is submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority. This would include any proposal to run compound generators overnight for the purposes of lighting or drying of PPE etc. In any event it is expected that the developer/contractor will employ the best practicable means to reduce the impact of noise from construction activities. Regardless of whether a detailed noise assessment is required, the applicant will be required to submit a scheme demonstrating how best practice measures will be implemented.

7.113 Developers must also comply with reasonable operational practices regarding 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 and not Planning.

7.114 A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be required and will be finalised in association with the successful contractor engaged. This may be secured via planning condition and should include site specific environmental management procedures which can be finalised and agreed through appropriate planning conditions. Such submissions are expected to be 'plan based' highlighting the measures being deployed to safeguard specific local environmental resources and not simply restate best practise manuals. The CEMP would include a Site Waste Management Plan to manage waste onsite. Due to the scale of the development SEPA would control pollution prevention measures relating to surface water run-off via a Controlled Activities Regulations Construction Site Licence. Environmental Health have requested details of the proposed scheme for the suppression of dust during construction.

7.115 In addition to the requirement for submission and agreement of a CEMP, the Council will require the applicant to provide a financial bond regarding final site restoration (restoration bond) in the event of non-wind turbine operation and a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP).

7.115 The applicant has requested a micrositing allowance of up to 50m for wind turbines and associated infrastructure including tracks and other hardstanding. Micrositing is acceptable, within reason, to address unforeseen onsite constraints. Anything in excess of 50m may have a significant effect on the composition of a development. Matters have already been identified by SEPA that require the relocation and positioning of infrastructure including access tracks and borrow pit 1. It is considered that these revisions are best addressed during the application stage rather than relying on micrositing, which is the applicant's intention. Nevertheless, a micrositing limit of no more than 50m can be conditioned with micrositing to avoid any areas of deeper peat, higher elevations of ground (within reason), watercourse buffers, Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems and any encountered cultural

heritage assets. Any micrositing would be subject to approval by the Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW), which can also be secured by planning condition.

7.116 Should the development be granted consent, a Community Liaison Group (CLG) should be set up to ensure that the community council and other stakeholders are kept up to date and consulted before and during the construction period. The CLG can be secured by condition.

Roads, Transport and Access

7.117 The EIAR has assessed the impact of the proposed development on roads, transport and access including the two-construction phasing scenarios. Assessment of operational impact on traffic flows was scoped out, it was concluded that only light vans or similar vehicles would be required for maintenance which would not significantly impact traffic flows.

7.118 The preferred Port of Entry (PoE) for the turbine components has been identified as Port of Kyle of Lochalsh. From the PoE abnormal loads would be transported via the A87, crossing on to the Isle of Skye via the Skye Bridge. From this point all HGVs including abnormal loads would either continue on the A87 until the A850 at Borve and proceed to the existing Ben Aketil Wind Farm access track to the north or continue on the A87 then travel via the A863 until Feorlig entering the site via a new access junction to the south. Construction traffic would use either the existing northern access, the new southern access, or both. The EAIR does not provide any detailed rationale for the need to construct two accesses. It is however logistically an assist to have dual access to enable concurrent decommissioning and construction, as well as allowing for the circular flow of construction traffic to reduce traffic impacts on the road network. There is therefore merit in deferring the proposed access solution to the CTMP condition stage, providing consultee concerns, such as those regarding increased peat impacts, can be resolved.

7.119 The two-construction phasing scenarios have different programmes. Scenario 1 takes 18 months and Scenario 2 is a staggered three year construction with a maximum five year pause between years 1 and 2. The EIAR assessed the condensed 18-month programme as the worst-case scenario with the greatest impact on the local highway network. The staggered programme would have less impact with traffic movements spread over the longer timescales.

7.120 The traffic impacts of this 18-month programme were assessed for the northern access and the southern access. The assessment also took into consideration the need to bring in aggregate from off-site locations which would significantly increase HGV flows. Although preliminary investigations indicated that sourcing onsite is realistic, it assumed 100% of aggregate required would be sourced off-site as a worst-case scenario.

7.121 The combination of the northern and southern access routes and whether aggregate was brought in from off-site meant that the EIAR assessed four traffic options. These comprised:

- northern access route with, and without 100% import of offsite aggregate; and
- southern access route with, and without 100% import of offsite aggregate.

7.122 The applicant committed to using an IEMA threshold of 10% increase in traffic volume at the request of THC. The EIAR concludes that traffic volumes are significantly higher where aggregate is sourced from off-site for both access routes. Both routes showed peak flows for important of aggregate earlier in the programme at months 3-5 with 332 two-way movements daily; and sourcing onsite would peak at month 8 with 224 movements. Maximum daily trip generation would be 232 two-way HGV movements for important of aggregate and 124 for sourcing onsite. This would mean 26 HGVs per hour (maximum) / 1 HGV every four minutes in each direction on some roads for import of aggregate and 14 HGVs per hour (maximum), or 1 HGV every 8 minutes in each direction for sourcing aggregate onsite.

7.123 Traffic flows using the northern access route would be within the IEMA threshold of 10%, except along the A850 between the A87 and B836. In addition, along parts of the A87 and A850 between Sligachan and the site the maximum and average daily increases are significant for both aggregate sourcing options.

7.124 Traffic flows using the southern access route would be within the IEMA threshold of 10%, except along parts of the A863 between Sligachan and the southern access where the maximum and average daily increase is significant for both aggregate sourcing options. However, the EIAR states that the site maximum and average daily increases are only significant because HGVs traffic is a small proportion of recorded traffic flows. The EIAR concludes that due to the low baseline levels of HGV flows along the A863 to the south of the southern access, the proposed development would lead to a significant increase in HGV traffic movements if all vehicles approached the access and egressed the site in this direction.

7.125 The EIAR therefore proposes that loaded HGVs could approach the site from the south with empty vehicles leaving from the north to reduce the impact of construction traffic on the A863. This would mean no two-way HGV journeys on the A863, reducing the number of vehicles using this section of road at one time, and making more use of the A87 trunk road. A summary of the proposed HGV traffic flows is tabled below.

Access Route	**Aggregate Option**	**No. of loads**	**Daily flows (max two-way trips)**	**Absolute change in flows (max)**	**Impact – total traffic volumes within IEMA threshold of 10%**
Northern route	100% import (EIAR Option 1A)	12,829	232 108% increase on this section of A850	26 per hour 1 HGV every 4 minutes in each direction on the A87 between the A855 and A850	Within 10% increase except along the A850 between the A87 and B836 where it would be 22.9%. Along parts of the A87 and A850 between Sligachan and the site, maximum and average daily increases are significant because HGVs are only a small proportion of recorded traffic flows.
	No import (EIAR Option 1B)	4,195	124 58% increase on	14 per hour 1 HGV every 8 minutes in	Within 10% increase except along the A850 between

			this section of the A850	each direction on the A87 between the A855 and A850	the A87 and B836 where it would be 14.7%. Along parts of the A87 and A850 between Sligachan and the site, maximum and average daily increases are significant because HGVs are only a small proportion of recorded traffic flows.
Southern route	100% import (EIAR Option 2A)	12,829	232 1,534% increase on a section of the A863	26 per hour 1 HGV every 4 minutes in each direction, A863 between the C-road to Horneval and the B885	Exceeds the 10% increase in traffic volumes along the A863 where it would be up to 48%. Along parts of the A863 between Sligachan and the site, maximum and average daily are significant because HGV traffic is only a small proportion of recorded traffic flows.
	No import of aggregate (EIAR Option 2B)	4,554	124 820% increase on a section of the A863	14 per hour 1 HGV every 8 minutes in each direction on the A863 between the C-road to Horneval and the B885	Within the 10% increase to traffic volumes, except for sections along the A863 where it would be up to 32%. Along the A863 between Sligachan and the site, the maximum and average daily increases are significant because HGV traffic is only a small proportion of recorded traffic flows.

7.126 Abnormal loads consist of the wind turbines sections and a heavy lift crane transported to site in sectional loads. The access from Kyle of Lochalsh is constrained and will require a blade lifting trailer. An Abnormal Loads Route Assessment (ALRA) was submitted with the EIAR (Appendix 11.1). It explains that AIL would access the site from either the north, south or both routes and sets out the constraints.

7.127 Abnormal load movements are generally one way as the vehicles retract to the size of an HGV for their return journey. The EIAR predicts a moderate effect which is significant for the transport of abnormal loads. It proposes overnight deliveries to reduce disruption and delay depending on the type of vehicle. It concludes that if the loads were transported at night the impact would be minor and the effect slight adverse and not significant. It proposes mitigation through an Abnormal Loads Transport Management Plan (ALTMP). The EIAR did not include a cumulative impact of abnormal loads stating this would be controlled through the ATMP for each site and approved by Police Scotland.

7.128 Traffic volumes would decrease considerably outside the peak period of construction. The anticipated total traffic volumes are projected to be within the

capacity of the roads assessed and the environmental effect is considered not significant. The EIAR concludes that the likelihood for construction traffic to cause severance within a community; driver delay; pedestrian delay and amenity, accidents and safety and dust and diesel was minor and not significant with mitigation. Traffic during construction will be managed through a CTMP which would include the Abnormal Loads Transport Management Plan with trial runs and would be conditioned. It would include road condition surveys and provision of information to local residents and users of amenities. In addition, accommodation works might be required along the route, such as vegetation clipping and clearance of street furniture. Such details can be secured by condition.

7.129 The cumulative effects of construction traffic with other wind farms, housing sites, and the development of the SSEN Skye Reinforcement Project, would need to be managed through the CTMP. The applicant has included a cumulative assessment (EIAR Table 11.19) which includes the aforementioned planned grid upgrade and reflects progress with other wind farm developments at the time of preparing the EIAR. Whilst the cumulative position has since moved on and is continuously evolving, the snapshot provided in the applicant's assessment indicates the largest impacts would be on the A863 where total traffic flow increasing by 89%, and 1917% increase in peak HGV movements along part of this route.

7.130 Again, owing to the low baseline traffic flows the applicant still considers the impact not significant, however, Scottish Ministers should satisfy themselves if the EIAR's cumulative assessment is suitably robust and up to date given the concentration of wind farm application activity on Skye. It is therefore expected that this assessment will need be updated ahead of determination of the application. Managing the potential for concurrent major development construction projects would require careful scheduling of abnormal loads in close liaison with the THC, Transport Scotland, and Police Scotland through coordinated CTMPs. How this is best achieved may require the establishment of a technical working group.

7.131 The Transport Planning Team and Transport Scotland have confirmed that the development traffic can be accommodated on the road network, subject to conditions as well as the requirement for a legal agreement to address "wear and tear" provisions . These will be consistent with current best practice and need to highlight potential cumulative impacts arising with other major developments. They request the following conditions:

- approval of a proposed route for any abnormal loads on the trunk road network;
- approval of all accommodation measures required, including the removal of street furniture, junction widening, and traffic management prior to movement by abnormal load;
- approval of additional signing or temporary traffic control measures deemed necessary due to the size or length of any loads being transported prior to the movement of any components and/or construction materials;
- a Construction Traffic Management Plan to include a range of measures including protocols and a programme for abnormal loads;
- Community Liaison Group;

- a detailed review of the routes to site for construction traffic followed by a programme of mitigation works additional to any works needed to enable the local road network to accommodate abnormal load movements;
- following completion of the trial run and structural assessments, full details of all road improvement/mitigation measures needed to facilitate abnormal load movements; and
- all traffic management being undertaken by a quality assured contractor.

7.132 To ensure access is provided throughout the construction period and that enhanced recreational access opportunities are provided during the operational phase, an Outdoor Access Management Plan will be required by condition. This will also be required to include details of signage to be included on the site to warn users of the paths within the wind farm of any hazards such as maintenance or potential ice throw during winter.

Water, Flood Risk, Drainage and Peat

7.133 The site lies across two water catchment areas with low risk of flooding; the Caroy River and the Red Burn. Most of the site is located within the Caroy River catchment, while the northern site access is in the Red Burn catchment. A small area to the southeast is also located within the Allt nan Cat catchment. The Caroy River drains southwards into Loch Caroy, and then Loch Bracadale. The Red Burn drains northwards into Loch Greshornish. There are several boreholes located either side of the A850; and one well and one spring located within 2km of the site. There are no Drinking Water Protection Areas within 2km of the site boundary. However, there are seven Private Water Supplies within 2km. They are located within separate water catchments and so are not hydrologically connected to the site.

7.134 An Cleireach SSSI is located 0.95km southeast from the site and is designated for tertiary igneous rock 0.95km which has no hydrological link to the site; and Shellfish Water Protected Areas (SWPA) at Loch Caroy (0.8km south) and Loch Snizort (1.2km northeast) both of which have a hydrological link through drainage. The EIAR states that precautions would be taken during construction to ensure that any potentially contaminating materials would not be permitted to enter any project area watercourses, particularly those that drain into the Loch Caroy and Loch Snizort SWPAs.

7.135 The EIAR proposes a CEMP to control potentially polluting activities and to prevent adverse impact on river catchments, downstream persons, properties and the environment during construction. The EIAR sets out a range of mitigation commitments in Section 9.7. This includes sediment control measures, retention of vegetation where possible and monitoring before, during and post works. All drainage infrastructure would be designed with suitable capacity for a rainfall intensity of a 1 in 200-year storm event, plus allowance for climate change, as per SEPA and THC requirements.

7.136 The CEMP can be secured by condition to ensure the agreement of construction methodologies with statutory agencies following appointment of the wind farm contractor and prior to the start of development or works.

7.137 Any CEMP would be supported by a Drainage Management Plan and detailed design that follows Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) principles. The details of SUDS design should be secured by condition to allow final assessment by SEPA and the Council's Flood Risk Management Team. The design would be required to demonstrate natural drainage without significant alteration of the hydrological regime of the local site area. The Drainage Management Plan is expected to include a Water Quality Monitoring Plan prepared in consultation with SEPA and THC, and the appointment of a qualified Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW) to supervise operations during the construction period. This is to ensure that baseline water quality and quantity monitoring surveys will be conducted prior to, and during, construction.

7.138 Any construction activity relating to, or undertaken in, the vicinity of watercourses would need to be carried out in general accordance with relevant SEPA Pollution Prevention Guidelines, The Water Framework Directive (WFD), The Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003 (WEWS), and the Controlled Activities Regulations (CAR) 2011 (as amended). The watercourse crossings within the site will be regulated under SEPA's Controlled Activities Regulations (CAR) regime and will be designed to allow continuous flow.

7.139 SEPA do not have any significant concerns in relation to the impact on watercourses. However, they have requested further information to determine whether the infrastructure encroaches on the 10m buffer zone. This information is still outstanding.

7.140 The site is home to potential Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) with eleven identified within the application site. The EIAR has noted that they are not ground water dependant but reliant on a mix of surface water, shallow throughflow in surface vegetation and rainwater. The EIAR states that with appropriate mitigation the effect of construction will be minor and not significant. SEPA have advised that it has no significant concerns in relation to the impact on GWDTE, however, they recommend that micrositing should take place away from these habitats and where this is not possible, floating roads (where feasible) would be preferable. These matters can be conditioned.

7.141 For the operational phase the EIAR states that a Pollution Prevention Plan and a Monitoring and Maintenance Programme would be put in place. Again these plans can be conditioned.

7.142 In relation to peat, according to NatureScot's Carbon and Peatland Map (2016), the majority of the site is underlain by Class 1 soils and peatland, defined as 'nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat' which are areas likely to be of high conservation value. Class 0 soils are found around the Caroy River with some localised areas of Classes 2, 3 and 5 soils or peatland.

7.143 A Phase 1 peat depth survey of the site was undertaken in June 2022. A Phase 2 peat depth and condition survey was undertaken in August and November 2022 for areas of proposed infrastructure and access tracks. Peat depth surveys indicate that peat cover across the site is very extensive. In the north of the site there are only small areas with soil depths of less than 0.5m, with some slightly larger areas

towards the south of the site. The majority of peat across the site is between 0.5-1.5 m deep, although peat depths are variable. Surveys recorded the deepest peat depth values in the north west.

7.144 Overall, a total of 117,582m^3 of peat is expected to be extracted for turbine foundations, crane hardstandings, substation, platform, battery storage, mast, borrow pit and access tracks. An Outline Peat Management Plan was submitted with the application which can be finalised by condition (EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 9.2). It proposes to reuse all of the extracted peat onsite. SEPA notes that it will be reused for a combination of reinstatement and restoration – specifically 49,400m^3 in borrow pit restoration and 43,900m^3 in peatland restoration. It welcomes that the Outline Habitat Management Plan (HMP) has identified a peat bog restoration area of 73.5ha. However, SEPA have raised concerns regarding the volume of peat that will be used in borrow bit restoration. This concern is supported by NatureScot's response, which states that the proposed extent of peatland restoration falls short of their guidance, and they would encourage more ambitious proposals. SEPA also welcomes the use of existing tracks but is not clear that the best layout option for the track has been proposed, and requires that the total length of new track and associated peat excavation is minimised as far as possible.

7.145 SEPA's concerns also relate to peat depths, specifically as it relates to borrow pit 2, which it considers are significant enough to warrant the repositioning of the borrow pit rather than micrositing. Repositioning would be more likely to avoid areas where peat depths are greater than 1m. Finally, SEPA has also raised concern about the use of surplus peat for reinstatement of borrow pits with restoration depths of up to 2m, which is not acceptable. A borrow pit restoration plan is therefore required to demonstrate that the peat depths used in reinstatement are sustainable. It recommends further peat reuse options be explored in the event it is not possible to reinstate the borrow pits to mimic natural habitat and function like a peat bog.

7.146 A Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessment (PLHRA) has also been submitted as part of the EIAR and has helped to inform the proposals. The applicant's risk assessment identifies most of the site as having Negligible or low Potential risk of peat instability with several areas flagged as Moderate stability risk. Ironside Farrar state that some key elements of the assessment are insufficiently robust to support the PLHRA conclusions and therefore request minor revisions to the PLHRA report following further probing.

7.147 Given the watercourses across the site, water quality will require to be managed through the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the development, which can be secured by condition. The final scheme should be approved by The Council in consultation with SEPA and the Marine Directorate as per its response summarised in Paragraph 5.21 above. However, SEPA has submitted a holding objection. It requires modification to the site design to reduce impacts on peat, a revised Peat Management Plan and additional information regarding the proposed 10m buffer to watercourses to determine the potential impacts. SEPAs concerns over the peat impacts of the proposal are shared by Council officers, with amendments to the design and layout of the proposal, as well as enhanced peatland management being required.

Natural Heritage (including Ornithology)

7.148 The site does not form part of any statutory or non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation. The EIA assessed the impact on habitat and vegetation, freshwater ecology, terrestrial ornithology and terrestrial non-avian ecology. This included protected species surveys. The application included an Outline Habitat Management Plan (OHMP) at Technical Appendix 7.6.

7.149 All protected mammal species were scoped out due to the absence within the site and surrounding area with the exception of otters and bats. The EIAR records low levels of otter use of the site, however, it is likely that otters resident in Loch Caroy use the watercourses in the site for foraging. The highest value habitat for otter within the site is in the steep-sided vegetated gorges lining the Rageary and Aketil burns. Mitigation by way of pre-start surveys including provision of camera trapping on the Rageary Burn is therefore proposed, which could be conditioned.

7.150 In relation to bats, the layout proposed includes a 50m setback from watercourses, which bats use for foraging, along with a separation of greater than 97m from trees at Rageary Burn and the plantation to the north. Additional riparian planting is proposed, which would be beneficial for both bat and otter species, while feathering of the turbine blades when below cut-in speed for generation will be implemented to safeguard bats. Providing this mitigation is secured by condition, the bat collision risk remains low and is considered acceptable.

7.151 Pine marten, fish species, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates were also scoped out as the proposed development was unlikely to significantly affect population levels. The assessment also scoped out the Inner Hebrides and The Minches Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the Ascrib and Dunvegan SAC and the An Cleireach Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to spatial separation and an absence of any route to impact. This was agreed by NatureScot at scoping.

7.152 The RSPB does not think there would be an adverse impact on the Cullins SPA breeding Golden Eagle population due to the distance from the application site. However, the RSPB does raise concerns regarding the scale of the development, particularly with regards its potential impacts on raptors including the White-tailed Eagle, Golden Eagle, and Hen Harrier through collision risk, the assessment of which it believes has underestimated, both as a development in isolation and cumulatively with other wind farms across Skye. The RSPB's response sets out recommendations that include revision of the collision risk modelling, and identifies measures to reduce collision risk including a reduction in the number of turbines and provision of foraging habitats away from the turbine array. NatureScot has not shared these concerns, and Officers are content for Scottish Ministers determine the need for further information to satisfy themselves of the proposal's impacts on these species.

7.153 In terms of aquatic populations, Marine Scotland note that a monitoring programme has been proposed and advise that this should take the form of an Integrated Water Quality and Fish Monitoring Programme, which can be secured by condition. Fisheries Management Scotland advise that its guidance should be followed to mitigate impacts on migratory fish species and the fisheries they support. Although it hasn't objected, Skye and Lochalsh Rivers Trust's response points to the

development's potential to release sediment and pollution into watercourses, which would cause blockages in the water column as well as irreparable damage to historical spawning grounds and juvenile fish habitat without appropriate mitigation. This mitigation will be included in the Pollution Prevention and Drainage Management Plans of the CEMP and longer term in habitat management measures.

Habitat Loss

7.154 Permanent direct and indirect habitat loss as a result of the development is approximately 35ha. The most extensive habitat loss is blanket bog (16.37 ha) and wet bog (17.3 ha) totalling 33.7ha with comparatively small amounts of Fen (0.04 ha) and wet heath (1.3ha). It is proposed to restore 73.5ha of bog and a restoration area has been identified to the south of Rageary Burn. NatureScot advises that this falls short of its current guidance which recommends a compensation ratio of ten times the habitat lost and have suggested that the applicant should substantially increase the ratio of compensation and enhancement to account for loss of habitat continuity and potential restoration failures. Any restoration should be carried out in accordance with the Peatland Action Technical Compendium.

Forestry

7.155 THC Forestry Team note that the application does not appear to have any significant adverse impact on woodland although the northern borrow pit will involve the removal of a small area of conifers beside a section of access track. To comply with the Scottish Government's policy on the Control of Woodland Removal and NPF4 Policy 6, details must be provided to show the reinstatement of this area with the woodland, or the provision of compensatory planting elsewhere within the site. Again these details are expected to be provided at the application stage, but owing to the degree of loss could be conditioned.

Habitat Management Plan

7.156 The application submission include an outline Habitat Management Plan (HMP) but this requires strengthened. NatureScot sets out recommendations for finalising the plan, including biodiversity enhancement, and it is advised that this secures a minimum of 10% enhancement in addition to compensation, as advocated in the Council's Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance (May 2024). At present, the proposals are found to fall short of the requirements of NFP4 Policy 3b) as the site would not be left in a demonstrably better state than without intervention, with significant biodiversity enhancements being required. Council Officers share NatureScot's concerns and consider that, should any consent be forthcoming, the proposal's peatland restoration measures are substantially strengthened through an updated outline Habitat Management Plan (HMP). To that end, the HMP should be required to aim for a total area of compensatory peatland restoration and enhancement in the order of eleven times that of the area lost to the development to demonstrate compliance with NPF4 Policy 3b). The Council would expect that the HMPs delivery would be secured by way of condition and legal agreement (if required) to secure the long term land management and monitoring of the HMP area, with provision being made for a Fish Monitoring Plan.

Built and Cultural Heritage

7.157 There are no heritage assets within the site boundary. There are 23 scheduled monuments and 22 listed buildings within 10km of the site. The EIAR concludes there will be no residual significant effects on heritage resources, which is supported by HES who has not objected to the application. HES's response states that the application will have some adverse effects on the setting of nearby heritage assets including Barpannan, two chambered cairns and Vatten Duirinish. However, it does not consider these effects to be Significantly adverse on the setting of the monuments.

7.158 In relation to the Category A and B listed, Dunvegan Castle (and Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape), the EIAR confirms that there would be no visibility of the proposed development from the castle itself. The castle is, however, a key tourist attraction on Skye and the wind farm would be clearly seen in important views towards the castle from further west, such as from Colbost, represented by LVIA Viewpoint 10 (B884 Colbost, Duirinish). Neither the EIAR's Cultural Heritage chapter or HES have however provided any assessment of the development's impact on the setting of the castle, with the development introducing larger more prominent turbines appearing directly above the castle. Scottish Ministers are therefore advised to raise this with HES directly as views of the castle, and its setting would be Significantly adversely affected.

7.159 In terms of archaeology, THC's Historic Environment Team has confirmed that mitigation will reduce direct impacts on cultural heritage assets to an acceptable level. Mitigation includes marking out and avoidance with buffers, minimising disturbance, micrositing, discrete areas of watching briefs and inclusion of cultural heritage issues in the CEMP. It requests a condition securing the appointment of an Archaeological Clerk of Works, a Written Scheme of Investigation and programme of archaeological works.

Noise and Shadow Flicker

7.160 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. The EIAR states it is not anticipated that shadow flicker would be a significant issue either individually or cumulatively because no residential dwellings are located within the shadow flicker study area. This is not disputed.

7.161 Operational noise predictions were carried out for the two-construction phasing scenarios. Noise from the substations and battery storage was scoped out due to the distance from noise sensitive receptors. The EIAR shows that predicted operational noise levels for the existing development and each of the scenarios are below 35 dB LA90 which is lower than the simplified noise limit agreed with THC. This applies to it acting in isolation and is below the day and night-time noise limits applied to the originally consented Ben Aketil Wind Farm. It states that the operational noise impact of the repowering and extension scheme results in lower predicted noise levels at residential receptor locations than is currently generated by the existing Ben Aketil Wind Farm. The maximum increase under Scenario 2 (the

existing turbines remain, and the extension turbines become operational) is 2 dB which the EIAR states is negligible and not significant.

7.162 The Council's Environmental Health Officer agrees with the EIAR's findings however notes that if Scenario 2 of 16 turbines operating for up to 5 years was followed, the predicted levels would be up to 6dB higher than the final repowered and extended wind farm of 9 new turbines. Even so, the 16 turbine layout would still be below the currently consented limit of 38dB LA90 for the existing wind farm. Environmental Health concludes that it wouldn't be appropriate to set permanent higher limits for the development simply to allow for temporary higher levels during that interim circa 5 year period. As such it is therefore advised to condition the phases separately if the development proceeds in accordance with Scenario 2 to essentially maintain the existing wind farm's operational noise limit for a temporary period and thereafter, reduce the limit to 28dB LA90 once all of the turbines have been repowered.

7.163 Environmental Health requests a wind farm noise condition to be drafted that reflects the above and restricts noise levels to a maximum of 2dB above predicted levels. It is acknowledged that at low wind speeds, these restrictions may result in very low limits, which can present difficulties in terms of compliance monitoring. However, this issue can be addressed through the use of proxy monitoring locations. It is also possible that the developer may wish to use a different turbine that have a different noise profile to that of the candidate turbine. To allow some flexibility, Environmental Health are happy to discuss a suitable lower limit at low noise speeds. In summary, the predicted operation noise arising from the development is acceptable, regardless of which build out scenario is followed.

Telecommunications

7.167 There are no telecommunication links within, or in the vicinity of, the site which could experience interference from the proposed development. The initial T6 was removed from the design at scoping to eliminate the potential interference with two transmitter sites. No concerns have been raised in relation to potential interference with radio/television networks now that T6 has been removed. However, a condition will nonetheless be sought to secure a scheme of mitigation should an issue arise.

Aviation and Radar

7.168 There are no unresolved objections from aviation interests, with no outstanding concerns raised. Should the proposal be granted permission, a condition can be applied to secure suitable mitigation in terms of aviation lighting and notification to the appropriate bodies of the final turbine positions. Visible aviation lighting is anticipated to be required for cardinal turbines with their hubs to fitted with 2,000 candela lights capable of being dimmed to 10% intensity when visibility exceeds 5km in fair weather conditions.

Other Material Considerations

7.169 The applicant has sought permission to operate the wind farm for 35 years. As with any wind farm, the Planning Authority would request that any forthcoming permission includes a clear description of development which specifies the precise number of turbines to be developed, the maximum blade tip height, the rotor diameter and

includes details of all associated ancillary infrastructure with such matters not be left to planning conditions, which could lead to scope for further redesign or re-powering which could go beyond the parameters of the development applied for, the EIAR undertaken, and could be fundamental to the application's determination.

8. MATTERS TO BE SECURED BY LEGAL AGREEMENT / UPFRONT PAYMENT

8.1 A wear and tear agreement for the impact on the local road network, a decommissioning and restoration financial guarantee and a scheme for community benefit can be secured by condition. Therefore, no further legal agreements are required should consent be granted. This is subject to the applicant also being able to demonstrate adequate control for the land required for the delivery and implementation of all peatland management, habitat compensation and enhancement measure, and woodland management, which would form an integral part of any forthcoming consent.

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 be situated in appropriate locations to operate successfully. The project has the potential to contribute up to 59.4MW of renewable energy capacity, and 20MW of battery storage, towards Scottish Government targets and play a role in the route to a net zero Scotland. In addition, the development has potential to bring economic benefits to the area and to create new jobs.

9.2 However, as with all such proposals, the benefits of the scheme must be weighed against potential drawbacks and then considered in the round, taking account of the relevant policies of the Development Plan. In this instance, the applicant has so far not demonstrated that the development's impact on an area of national priority peatland resource is within acceptable limits in order to comply with the provisions of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Policy 5a) (Soils), and Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) Policies 28 (Sustainable Design) and 55 (Soils), as demonstrated by SEPA's holding objection. Nor has the applicant demonstrated appropriate compensation or enhancement measures in respect of peatland habitat losses pursuant to NPF4 Policy 3b) (Biodiversity) and HwLDP Policy 60 (Other Important Habitats).

9.3 Moreover, it is clear from the assessment of the proposal's design that its effects on landscape character and composition, and its visual effects, will result in Significant landscape effects on the hosting Landscape Character Area LCT 359 Upland Sloping Moorland, as well as the neighbouring Landscape Character Areas LCT 360 Stepped Moorland and LCT 357 Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Skye and Lochalsh. This appraisal has also judged that the proposal will lead to Significant visual effects at Viewpoints 1 through to 11, inclusive.

9.4 These residual Significant effects will mostly be experienced by receptors from the western coastal fringes and peninsulas of the Isle of Skye. This area is largely covered by the regionally significant North West of Skye Special Landscape Area designation. It is noted here that SLA citations do not distinguish between landscape and visual impacts but rather implicitly lay bare how landscape and visual effects

combine to produce the specific Special Qualities of the SLA. This is because scenic value arises from the combination of individual landscape characteristics including natural and semi-natural features, buildings, and structures. The Significant landscape and visual Impacts on the SLA, specifically on the Dynamic Coastline Special Quality of the SLA, which makes a major contribution to the diverse coastal scenery of Skye and is distinctive at the regional scale.

9.5 These impacts are demonstrated in VP2 (A863 at Feorlig), VP5 (Roag), VP8 (A863 near Gearymore), VP9 (Macleod's Table North / Healabhal Mhor), VP10 (B884 Colbost, Duirinish), 11 (Ardtreck, Minginish). From these Viewpoints, the substantially larger turbines would result in a greater contrast of scale with the more intricate, patterned and settled coastal fringes and significantly increase the influence of large infrastructure on a seascape with a diverse and strongly natural character. The proposal would be experienced as an overtly prominent feature that would pull focus away from the natural and semi-natural features, buildings, and structures that contribute to the SLA's Dynamic Coastline in a manner that would significantly detract from the experience and enjoyment of this scenic, popular, and well visited coastal landscape.

9.6 These Significant effects lead to the conclusion that the scheme's design objectives to minimise 'effects on views from local settlements, peninsulas to the east and west and from key views, routes' or 'minimising impacts on regionally or locally valued landscapes' are not met.

9.7 The introductory background text for The Council's Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (June 2011) is explicit in stating that The Council considers these designated areas to be at least regionally important for scenic quality and that these areas are significant to Highlands and are valued beyond their locale. The policy test in NPF4 in relation to regionally important designated landscapes is established in NPF4 Policy 4d), which seeks to protect the integrity and qualities of such designations while allowing for development with social, environmental, or economic impacts that **clearly** outweigh the significant effects on, in this case, the Special Qualities of the Special Landscape Area designation.

9.8 The use of the word 'clearly' means that the policy does not pit national development against regional designations in a logical or clinical hierarchical fashion. Rather, the policy requires the decision maker to make a weighted judgement on the benefits versus the disbenefits of the proposal relative to the designation, which is also pursuant to HwLDP Policy 67 (Renewable Energy Developments). In this instance it is not considered that the landscape and visual environmental impacts on the Dynamic Coastline Special Quality of the SLA are **clearly** outweighed by the proposal's contribution to social, environmental (by contributing to energy targets), or economic impacts and that, therefore, NPF4 Policy 4a) is triggered whereby the proposal is considered to result in unacceptable impacts on the natural environment by virtue of not adequately mitigating the scale of the development type for its location through the design process.

9.9 Due consideration has been given to the requirements of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989, and all the relevant policies of the Development Plan; principally NPF4, as well as Highland-wide Local Development Plan Policy 67 for Renewable Energy Developments with its eleven tests as expanded upon through the Onshore Wind

Energy Supplementary Guidance. This policy also reflects policy tests of other HwLDP policies in the plan, for example Policies 28, 50, 57, and 61, which draw on the range of subject specific policies as also contained within NPF4 and the HwLDP as listed in Appendix 3 of this report.

9.10 Given the above analysis, the application does not accord with the provisions of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 by virtue of not demonstrating sufficient regard to the desirability of, and failing to reasonably mitigate effects detrimental to, preserving natural beauty and conserving flora and physiographical features of special interest. The proposal fails to demonstrate that the mitigation hierarchy has been adequately applied in respect of national priority peatland habitats and therefore does not accord with the provisions NPF 4 Policy 5a) and HwLDP Policies 67 (Renewable Energy Developments), 28 (Sustainable Design) and 55 (Soils). Furthermore, insufficient mitigation and enhancement measures are proposed to compensate for priority peatland habitat losses such that the proposal does not accord with NPF 4 Policy 3b), HwLDP Policies 67 (Renewable Energy Developments), Policy 60 (Other Important Habitats), and 28 (Sustainable Design). The proposal would result in Significantly detrimental landscape effects on Landscape Character Areas LCT 359 Upland Sloping Moorland, LCT 360 Stepped Moorland and LCT 357 Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Skye and Lochalsh, Significantly detrimental visual effects at 11 Viewpoints, leading to Significantly detrimental visual effects for residential, recreational, and road user receptors at several locations to the northeast, northwest, west, southwest, and south of the proposal site, and, would result in Significantly detrimental effects on the Dynamic Coastline Special Quality of the North West Skye Special Landscape Area that are not clearly outweighed by social, environmental, or economic benefits. Consequently, the proposal does not accord with NPF4 Policy 11 (Energy) at d) and e), Policy 4 (Natural Places) at d) and engages the provisions of NPF4 Policy 4a) as well as HwLDP Policies 67 (Renewable Energy Developments), 28 (Sustainable Design), 57 (Natural, Cultural and Built Heritage), and 61 (Landscape).

9.11 All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal does not accord with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is unacceptable in terms of applicable material considerations.

10. IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Resource: Not applicable

10.2 Legal: If an objection is raised to the proposal, the application may be subject to a Public Local Inquiry.

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

10.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: The proposal can make a meaningful contribution toward the production of renewable energy.

10.5 Risk: Not applicable

10.6 Gaelic: Not applicable

11. RECOMMENDATION

Action required before consultation response being issued to Scottish Ministers: N

It is recommended that the decision to **RAISE AN OBJECTION** to the application is maintained subject to A. and for the amended reasons set out in B. below:

A. Members granting delegated authority to the Area Planning Manager – North to respond to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit / Scottish Minsters, regarding any future Further / Supplementary Environmental Information, where that information does not materially reduce the scale of the proposed development.

B. Reasons for Objection

1. The application does not accord with the provisions of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 by virtue of not demonstrating sufficient regard to the desirability of, and failing to reasonably mitigate effects detrimental to, conserving flora and physiographical features of special interest by virtue of failing to demonstrate that the mitigation hierarchy has been adequately applied in respect of national priority peatland habitats and therefore does not accord with the provisions NPF 4 Policy 5a) and HwLDP Policies 67 (Renewable Energy Developments), 28 (Sustainable Design) and 55 (Soils).

2. The application does not accord with the provisions of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 by virtue of not demonstrating sufficient regard to the desirability of, and failing to reasonably mitigate effects detrimental to, conserving flora and physiographical features of special interest by virtue of failing to demonstrate sufficient mitigation and enhancement measures to compensate for priority peatland habitat losses such that the proposal does not accord with NPF 4 Policy 3b), HwLDP Policies 67 (Renewable Energy Developments), Policy 60 (Other Important Habitats), and 28 (Sustainable Design).

3. The application does not accord with the provisions of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 by virtue of not demonstrating sufficient regard to the desirability of, and failing to reasonably mitigate effects detrimental to, preserving natural beauty and conserving physiographical features of special interest because the proposal would result in Significantly detrimental landscape effects on Landscape Character Areas LCT 359 Upland Sloping Moorland, LCT 360 Stepped Moorland and LCT 357 Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Skye and Lochalsh, Significantly detrimental visual effects at 11 Viewpoints, leading to Significantly detrimental visual effects for residential, recreational, and road user receptors at several locations to the northeast, northwest, west, southwest, and south of the proposal site. The proposal would result in Significantly detrimental effects on the Dynamic Coastline Special Quality of the North West Skye Special Landscape Area that are not clearly outweighed by social, environmental, or economic benefits. Consequently, the proposal does not accord with NPF4 Policy 11 (Energy) at d) and e), Policy 4 (Natural Places) at d) and engages the provisions of NPF4

Policy 4a) as well as HwLDP Policies 67 (Renewable Energy Developments) and Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance, 28 (Sustainable Design), 57 (Natural, Cultural and Built Heritage), and 61 (Landscape).

4. The application does not accord with the provisions of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 by virtue of not demonstrating sufficient regard to the desirability of, and failing to reasonably mitigate effects detrimental to, protecting a site and building of architectural and historic interest because the proposal would Significantly adversely impact important views to, and adversely effects the integrity of the setting of, Dunvegan Castle Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape. Consequently the application is contrary to NPF4 Policy 7 Part (i), NPF4 Policy 11 part (e) (vii), and Highland-wide Local Development Plan Policies 57 (Natural Built and Cultural Heritage), and 67 (Renewable Energy).

Signature:	Dafydd Jones
Designation:	Area Planning Manager – North
Author:	Mark Fitzpatrick
Background Papers:	Documents referred to in report and in case file.

Relevant Plans:	Plan 1 - Figure 2.1 Location Plan
	Plan 2 - Figure 2.3 Layout Plan
	Plan 3 - Figure 2.4 Typical Wind Turbine Design

Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Cumulative Wind Farm Developments
	Appendix 2 - Letters of Representation
	Appendix 3 - Development Plan and Other Material Policy Considerations
	Appendix 4 - Compliance with the Development Plan / Other Planning Policy
	Appendix 5 - Assessment against Landscape and Visual Assessment Criteria contained within Section 4 of the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance
	Appendix 6 - Visual Assessment Appraisal (Operational only)

Appendix 1 – Cumulative Wind Farm Developments

A1.1 Operational, consented / under construction, and in planning projects within 45km of the proposed development and considered in the landscape and visual assessment by the EIAR. A cut-off date of 5 December 2022 was applied by the applicant for the inclusion of developments. The proposals at Beinn Mheadhonach and Balmeanach were still at scoping but anticipated by the applicant to be submitted at the same time as the proposed scheme so were included in the cumulative assessment. However, Glen Ullinish II and Breakish Wind Farms were not included. The cumulative scenario was reviewed and updated by Planning Officers and is summarised in the table below. The distances in the table are the approximate distance between the outermost turbines of the proposed development and other wind farms.

A1.2 Ben Sca Redesign Wind Farm seeks to increase tip heights of the seven initially approved turbines from 135m to 149.9m in line with the two approved extension turbines and bring the scheme under a single permission. The scheme also involves increasing spacing for 7 turbines and the relocation of the approved substation. As well as the schemes added in red, Glen Ullinish II (in planning) and Breakish (scoping) have not been included in landscape/visual assessment. For Glen Ullinish II there would be 47 rather than 11 turbines at a height of 200m as opposed to 149.9m for the consented scheme.

A1.3

Name	Status	Distance/Direction	Number of Turbines	Tip height
Ben Aketil	Operational	0km	12	100m
Edinbane	Operational	2.3km E	18	100m
Ben Sca + Extension	Consented	1.2km NE	7 + 2	135m + 149.9m
Glen Ullinish (S42)	Consented	4.1km SE	11	149.9m
Beinn Mheadhonach (S42)	Consented	11.1km SE	4	120m
Balmeanach	Application	c. 1km E	10	149.9m
Beinn Mheadhonach (replacement)	Application	10 km SE	5	150
Glen Ullinish II (replacement)	Application	2.4 km E	59	200m
Ben Sca + Extension	Application	1.2km NE	9	149.9m

Breakish	Scoping	42km E	20	200m
Edinbane repowering and extension	Scoping	2.2km E	19	200
Waternish	Scoping	3km N	15	200

Appendix 3 – Development Plan and Other Material Policy Considerations

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

National Planning Framework 4 (2023)

A3.1 The NPF4 policies of most relevance to this proposal include:

National Development 3 (NAD3) - Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure
1 - Tackling the climate and nature crisis.

2 - Climate mitigation and adaptation

3 - Biodiversity

4 - Natural places

5 - Soils

6 - Forestry, Woodland and Trees

7 - Historic assets and places

11 - Energy

13 - Sustainable transport

22 - Flood risk and water management

23 - Health and safety

25 - Community wealth benefits

33 - Minerals

Highland Wide Local Development Plan 2012

A3.2 28 - Sustainable Design

29 - Design Quality and Place-making

30 - Physical Constraints

31 - Developer Contributions

51 - Trees and Development

52 - Principle of Development in Woodland

53 - Minerals

55 - Peat and Soils

56 - Travel

57 - Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage

58 - Protected Species

59 - Other important Species

60 - Other Importance Habitats

61 - Landscape

62 - Geodiversity

63 - Water Environment

64 - Flood Risk

66 - Surface Water Drainage

67 - Renewable Energy Developments

68 - Community Renewable Energy Developments

69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure

72 - Pollution

73 - Air Quality

74 - Green Networks

77 - Public Access

78 - Long Distance Routes

The West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan 2019 (WestPlan).

A3.3 WestPlan does not contain land allocations related to the proposed development. It emphasises the role of Edinbane (to the north of the site) as the largest centre serving the Skeabost District. It sets out policies to guide development and growth across the area.

Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance, Nov 2016 (OWESG)

A3.4 The Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG) provides additional guidance on the principles set out in HwLDP Policy 67 for renewable energy developments. The Guidance sets out the Council's agreed position on onshore wind energy matters, and, although reflective of Scottish Planning Policy at the time of its adoption prior to the adoption of NPF4, the document remains an extant part of the Development Plan and is therefore a material consideration in the determination of onshore wind energy planning applications. Nevertheless, the Spatial Framework included in the document is no longer relevant to the assessment of applications as in effect, the policies of NPF4, specifically Policy 11 Energy, removes Group 2 Areas of significant protection from consideration by effectively making all land in Scotland either Group 1 Areas where wind farms will not be acceptable, or Group 3, Areas with potential for wind farm development.

A3.5 The OWESG also contains the Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity Study, the Black Isle, Surrounding Hills and Moray Firth Coast Sensitivity Study, and, the Caithness Sensitivity Study. The proposal fall outwith these study areas.

Other Highland Council Supplementary Guidance

A3.6 Developer Contributions (Mar 2018)
Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)
Green Networks (Jan 2013)
Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)

Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (Mar 2013)
Highland Renewable Energy Strategy and Planning Guidelines (May 2006)
Physical Constraints (Mar 2013)
Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments (May 2013)
Special Landscape Area Citations (Jun 2011)
Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)

OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Emerging Highland Council Development Plan Documents and Planning Guidance

A3.7 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 post National Planning Framework 4.

A3.8 The Highland Council also has further advice on the delivery of major developments in several documents, which include the Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects; and The Highland Council Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments. The Council has also published Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance (non-statutory), May 2024 to assist with the implementation of NPF Policy 3 to deliver biodiversity enhancement.

Other National Guidance

A3.9 Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement (2022)
Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)
Draft Scottish Biodiversity strategy to 2045: tackling the nature emergency (2023)
Scottish Energy Strategy (2017)
2020 Route map for Renewable Energy (2011)
Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map, Scottish Government (2018)
Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape, SNH (2017)
Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas, Technical Guidance, NatureScot (2020)
Wind Farm Developments on Peat Lands, Scottish Government (2011)
Historic Environment Policy for Scotland, HES (2019)
PAN 1/2011 - Planning and Noise (2011)
PAN 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (2008)
Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (2017)

Appendix 4 - Compliance with the Development Plan / Other Planning Policy

National Policy

A4.1 NPF 4 forms part of the Development Plan and was adopted in February 2023. It comprises three parts:

- Part 1 – sets out an overarching spatial strategy for Scotland in the future. This includes spatial principles, national and regional spatial priorities, and action areas;
- Part 2 – sets out policies for the development and use of land to be applied in the preparation of local development plans; local place plans; masterplans and briefs; and for determining the range of planning consents. This part of the document should be taken as a whole in that all relevant policies should be applied to each application; and
- Part 3 – provides a series of annexes that give the rationale for the strategies and policies of NPF4, it outlines how the document should be used, and sets out how the Scottish Government will implement the strategies and policies.

A4.2 **Part 1 - the Spatial Strategy** explains the unprecedented national challenges and need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to future impacts of climate change. It sets out that that Scotland's environment is a national asset which supports the nation's economy, identity, health and wellbeing and explains that choices need to be made on sustainable use of natural assets in a way which benefits communities. The spatial strategy reflects legislation in setting out decisions required in the long-term public interest. However, in doing so it is clear that the right choices about where development should be located need to be made to ensure clarity over the types of infrastructure provided and the assets that should be protected to ensure they continue to benefit future generations. The Spatial Priorities support the planning and delivery of sustainable places to reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity; liveable places for better and healthier lives; and productive places where there is a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy.

A4.3 At the national level, NPF4 considers that strategic renewable electricity generation and transmission infrastructure will assist in the delivery of the Spatial Strategy and Spatial Priorities for the north of Scotland, and that Highland can continue to make a strong contribution toward meeting Scotland's ambition for net zero. Alongside these ambitions, the strategy for Highland aims to protect environmental assets as well as to stimulate investment in natural and engineered solutions to address climate change. This aim is not new and will clearly require a balancing exercise to be undertaken, which is reflected throughout NPF4.

A4.4 The proposed development is of national importance for the delivery of the national Spatial Strategy, whereby in principle support for this type of development is established. As the proposed development would be capable of generating over 50 MW, it is of a type and scale that constitutes NPF4 National Development 3 - Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure.

A4.5 **Part 2 – Policies**: NPF4 Policies 1, 2, and 3 now apply to all development proposals Scotland-wide, which means that significant weight must be given to the global

climate and nature crises when considering all development proposals, as required by NPF4 Policy 1. To that end, development proposals must be sited and designed to minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions as far as is practicably possible in accordance with NPF4 Policy 2, while contributing to the enhancement of biodiversity, as required by NPF4 Policy 3.

A4.6 Complementing those policies is NPF4 Policy 4 Natural Places, which sets out that development proposals by virtue of type, location, or scale that have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment will not be supported. The policy goes on to clarify what that means for different designations. It sets out that proposals with likely significant effects on European sites (SACs or SPAs) require appropriate assessment, and that development proposals that will affect a National Park, NSA or SSSI will only be supported where:

i) the objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the areas will not be compromised; or

ii) any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance.

A4.7 Similarly, sites designated in Development Plans for local nature conservation or Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) are protected in NPF4 Policy 4 unless the development will not result in significantly adverse effects on its qualities or its integrity, or these effects are clearly outweighed by social, environmental, or economic benefits of at least local importance. The most significant policy change for Natural Places brought about by NPF Policy 4 is with regard Wild Land Areas, which states that renewable energy developments that support national targets will be supported in Wild Land Areas (WLA) and that buffer zones around WLAs will not be applied, so that effects of development out with WLAs will not be a significant consideration.

A4.8 Policy 11 intent is to ‘encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore. This includes energy generation, storage, new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure and emerging low-carbon and zero emissions technologies including hydrogen and carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS)’. It specifies that the principle of all forms of renewable, low-carbon, and zero emission technologies is supported (with the exception of wind farm proposals located in National Parks or National Scenic Areas) including ‘enabling works, such as grid transmission and distribution infrastructure’ which encompasses this application.

A4.9 It states that development proposals should only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities. The policy goes on to say that significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, while identifying impacts, including cumulative impacts, that must be suitably addressed and mitigated against. Policy 11 e) i to xiii) sets out the criteria against which applications must be assessed.

A4.10 This includes a broad range of matters similar those to be assessed under HwLDP Policy 67 including landscape and visual impacts. It advises that where impacts are localised and / or appropriate design mitigation has been applied such effects will generally be considered acceptable. While the adopted NPF4 reflects a stronger presumption in favour of all national scale energy developments, judgment is still required at the project level to ensure proposals do not have unacceptable environmental, landscape and visual impacts even if the contribution to national renewable energy targets is considerable.

A4.11 On that point it is noted that both legislation and planning law indicate that where there may be incompatibility between NPF4 and the Local Development Plan (LDP) (HwLDP, WestPlan, and Highland Council Supplementary Guidance) published prior to NPF4, then the more recent document shall prevail. Notwithstanding however, in instances of incompatibility, this requirement may not eliminate the provisions of the LDP in their entirety whilst these documents remain an extant part of the adopted Development Plan. That means that the Council may wish to still give considerable weight to the provisions of its LDP over national policies where there is strong justification for doing so, such as where the Council feels that LDP policy is better equipped to respond to local matters of importance or site-specific conditions for example.

A4.12 **Part 3: Annex B – National Developments Statements of Need**. National developments are significant developments of national importance. Appendix B identifies eighteen types of national development which will support the delivery of the spatial strategy. The statements of need set out in the Appendix are a requirement of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997). Any project identified as national development is required to be considered at a project level to ensure all statutory tests are met. This project is classified as National Development under Annex B Section 3 which states National Development for renewable energy includes 'Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure' including:

'b) New and/or replacement upgraded on and offshore high voltage electricity transmission lines, cables and interconnectors of 132kv or more; and

c) New and/or upgraded Infrastructure directly supporting on and offshore high voltage electricity lines, cables and interconnectors including converter stations, switching stations and substations.

Highland wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP)

A4.13 The HwLDP identifies the site as of Local and Regional Importance under Policy 57: Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage. It states that 'all proposals will be assessed taking into account the level of importance and type of heritage features'. HwLDP Policy 67 - Renewable Energy sets out that 'renewable energy development should be well related to the source of the primary renewable resource needed for operation'. It states that 'The Council will consider 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.' 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 against eleven specified criteria (as listed in HwLDP Policy 67). Such an approach is consistent with the concept of Sustainable Design (HwLDP Policy 28) and the concept of supporting the right development in the right place at the right time.

A4.14 Although HwLDP Policy 67 is considered compatible with NPF4 Policy 11, NPF4 expresses greater support for renewable energy projects out with National Parks and NSAs and requires greater weight to be attributed to the twin climate and biodiversity crises in the decision making process, whilst still recognising that a balancing exercise must still be carried out.

Area Local Development Plan

A4.15 The West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan 2019 (WestPlan) does not contain land allocations related to the proposed development. It emphasises the role of Edinbane (to the north of the site) as the largest centre serving the Skeabost District. It sets out policies to guide development and growth across the area.

Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG)

A4.16 The Council's OWESG forms part of the Development Plan and remains a critical document in the determination of 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 takes towards the assessment of proposals, and thereby aids consideration of applications for onshore wind energy proposals.

A4.17 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" to assist the application of HwLDP Policy 67. The 10 criteria are particularly useful in considering visual impacts, including cumulative impacts. An appraisal of how the proposal relates to the thresholds set out in the criteria, is included in Appendix 5 of this report.

Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement (2022), Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023) and Onshore Wind Sector Deal for Scotland (2023)

A4.18 The Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement supersedes the previously adopted Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement which was published in 2017. The document sets out a clear ambition for onshore wind in Scotland and for the first time sets a national target for a minimum level of installed capacity for onshore wind energy, being 20 GW. This is set against a currently installed capacity of 9.4 GW (June 2023). Therefore, a further 10.6 GW of onshore wind requires to be installed to meet the target. It is however acknowledged that targets are not caps. In delivering such a target Scotland would play a significant role in meeting the requirement of 25-30 GW of installed capacity across the UK identified by the Climate Change Committee.

A4.19 Like the previous iteration of the Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement, the document recognises that balance is required and that no one technology can allow Scotland to reach its net zero targets. The document is clear that in achieving a

balance, environmental and socio-economic benefits to Scotland must be maximised. In taking this approach, this echoes Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy.

A4.20 Additionally, the document acknowledges that for Scotland to achieve its climate targets and the ambition for the minimum installed capacity of 20 GW by 2030, the landscape will change. However, the OWEPS also sets out that the right development should happen in the right place. Echoing NPF4, the document sets out that significant landscape and visual impacts are to be expected and that where the impacts are localised and / or appropriate mitigation has been applied the effects will be considered acceptable. The role of Landscape Sensitivity Appraisals in considering wind energy proposals is promoted through the document. This highlights the importance of applying those contained within the Council's OWESG when assessing applications.

A4.21 Benefits to rural areas, such as provision of jobs and opportunities to restore and protect natural habitats, are also highlighted in the document. It considers some of the wider benefits and challenges faced by in delivery of ambition and vision for onshore wind energy in Scotland. These include shared ownership, community benefit, supply chain benefits, skills development and financial mechanisms for delivery. The proposed development does lead to such benefits being delivered, however, in relation to maximising socio-economic benefits, there is no current guidance on what that should look like and evidence of a significant shift of requirements is yet to emerge, which Members may expect to see, from what was likely to be offered pre-adoption of NPF4. Finally, the document also highlights technical considerations, those relevant to this application have been considered and mitigation, where required could be secured by condition should the development receive consent.

A4.22 The Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan has been published for consultation. Ministers will likely give consideration to this document in their decision on the application, however, limited weight can be applied to the document given its draft status. Unsurprisingly, the material on onshore wind in the document reflects in large part that contained in NPF4 and the Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement 2022. A fundamental part of the Strategy is expanding the energy generation sector. Overall, the draft Energy Strategy forms part of the new policy approach alongside the OWEPS and NPF4 and confirms the Scottish Government's policy objectives and related targets reaffirming the crucial role that onshore wind and enabling transmission infrastructure will play in response to the climate crisis which is at the heart of all these policies.

A4.23 To deliver the ambition for onshore wind, the Onshore Wind Sector Deal for Scotland was introduced in September 2023. The document focuses on necessary high-level actions by Government and the Sector to support onshore wind delivery. Jointly, Government and the Sector are committed to working together to ensure a balance is struck between onshore wind and the impacts on land use and the environment. The document looks to expediate decision making and consent implementation to achieve 20 GW of installation by 2030, meaning we should be seeing faster decisions on applications that are already in the system, with more consents being built out. Again, the sector deal does not detail what the socio-economic commitments should be.

Appendix 5 - Assessment against Landscape and Visual Assessment Criteria contained within Section 4 of the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance

Review of Design against Criteria in THC Onshore Wind Energy SG		
1	Relationship between Settlements/Key locations and wider landscape respected.	Turbines are not visually prominent in the majority of views within or from settlements/Key Locations or from the majority of its access routes. ---------- The development would increase the prominence of turbines where they already exist in views from settlements, but would not significantly alter the proportion of view affected in most cases. Exception to this would be the coastal communities which are not defined settlements in the WestPlan. The threshold is met.
2	Key Gateway locations and routes are respected	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise detract from landscape characteristics which contribute the distinctive transitional experience found at key gateway locations and routes. ---------- THC has not pre-emptively identified Key Gateway Locations for Skye as the Landscape Sensitivity work for wind energy has yet to consider this area. Whilst there will be significant effects for sections of the A850, the threshold is met overall for this route. While the proposal would bring larger turbines closer to the A863 and the Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Skye and Lochalsh LCT, they are still readily associated with the island's interior when travelling along both routes. Turbines may be more problematic when experienced from the B884 for travellers leaving the Duirinish Peninsula, although it is recognised that views are open and extensive as the traveller approaches Central Skyer however no analysis of this route has been provided. Ferry routes and other roads are not considered to be significantly impacted by the proposal. Therefore, the threshold is generally considered to be met although impacts on the B884 may require further analysis.

3	Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected	The development does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting. ------ Extensive visibility of turbines throughout the North West Skye SLA. The proposal introduces substantially larger turbines of a greater contrast of scale with the more intricate, patterned and settled coastal fringes and increases influence of large infrastructure on a seascape with a diverse and strongly natural character. Turbines would loom large over Loch Bracadale in key views from its low-lying settled fringe, islands, as well as the eastern side of the Duirinish Peninsula including Macleod's Tables and Idrigill Point, and opposing coasts of the Minginish Peninsula at Fiskavaig, Ardtreck, and Portnalong. The setting and presence of Dunvegan Castle would be significantly diminished by the prominence of the turbines on the skyline directly above the castle in the views for receptors represented by Viewpoint 10. Threshold is not met.
4	The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected.	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways. ---- Several Core Paths along opposing coastlines of Loch Bracadale where an appreciation of the SLA's Dynamic Coast Special Quality is readily appreciated: • Extensive visibility along Orbost to Idrigill SL28.04; • Some impacts on Ullinish to Ullinish Point Core Path SL26.01; • Rhuba Ban to Ardtreck SL20.01 and Ardtreck Coastal Path SL20.02 as well as linking local roads at Ardtreck and Fiskavaig; and • the northern section of Fiskavaig to Talisker. Amenity of routes promoted by Walk Highlands across the site and in the interior of Central Skye likely to be significantly impacted. Threshold is not met across the site and on paths on SL28.04 facing slopes and coastlines of Loch Bracadale. Although while the landscape and visual impact of the proposed development would be more pronounced and more expansive than the impacts of the existing development, it is unlikely that the development would, of itself, significantly diminish the amenity of the remaining routes as a whole.

5	The amenity of transport routes is respected	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of transport routes -------- Despite significant visual impact on sections of the A850 and A863 the threshold is likely to be met in respect of these corridors by virtue of the roads largely separating community value landscapes of the interior from the regionally valued landscapes on their coastal sides. The impact on the amenity of the B884 from within the regionally important landscape may be more problematic but has not been assessed.
6	The existing pattern of Wind Energy Development is respected.	The degree to which the proposal fits with the existing pattern of nearby wind energy development, considerations include: • turbine height and proportions, • density and spacing of turbines within developments, • density and spacing of developments, • typical relationship of development to the landscape, • previously instituted mitigation measures, and • Planning Authority stated aims for development of area ---------- The existing Ben Aketil set the pattern of development for good wind farm design on Skye and has been emulated in terms of layout and positioning at Ben Sca and Beinn Meadhonach Wind Farms for example. The pattern is of a linear row of turbines of suitable height laid to follow a topographical feature. • The height of the proposed turbines doubles the heights of the existing scheme and introduces a new scale of energy development to Central Skye that would overwhelm not only the low rounded summits of Ben Aketil and Ben Sca but also the summits within the neighbouring Stepped Moorland LCAs and the low-lying features of the Farmed and Settled Lowlands. • Despite attempting to emulate the linear pattern layout, the line quality of both rows is not discernible due to there being fewer turbines with greater spacing between them creating a scheme of reduced density, which in turn has reduced the cohesion and legibility of the array in the landscape, weakening the perceived relationship to the underlying landform. • Turbines are sited across the face of two slopes rather than following a topographical feature. • Turbine heights mean that towers, as well as hubs and blades are skylined way above nearby summits. • Design objectives to minimise effects on key views from settlements, routes, and valued landscapes not met. Threshold not met.

7	The need for separation between developments and/or clusters is respected	The proposal maintains appropriate and effective separation between developments and/ or clusters ---------- The threshold is met in so far as from certain views the proposal could read as part of a single development with Ben Sca Wind Farm, however, the difference in turbine heights would disrupt the experience of this. The threshold is met in relation to other wind farms.
8	The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected	The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected --- The increased size of the proposed turbines over those of the existing development has a strong likelihood of reducing the perception of scale and distance in the landscape, this is likely to be a general and widespread effect, but may be most pronounced at locations such as: Viewpoint 11 Ardtreck, where the present development's relationship to the landform seems strong and proportionate and the more sprawling proposed development would have a much greater effect on perception of scale and distance in the landscape, and achieve less of the fine balance with the more intimate scale Farmed and Settled Lowlands landscape's fields and buildings and diminish the apparent scale of the Moorland Slopes between the development and the settled landscape. Viewpoint 14 Minor road above Uig, where the increase in turbine scale may affect the perception of scale and distance, having the effect of making that landscape appear less distant. There would also be a diminishing effect on the perception of the scale of the cliffs sheltering Uig Bay. Threshold is not met.
9	Landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is respected	Proposal relates well to the existing landscape setting and does not increase the perceived visual prominence of surrounding wind turbines. --- The reduced linear strength of the development in contrast to the existing development on the site will tend to combine less well in views with the consented and linear Ben Sca development. The increased size and wider footprint of the proposed two row design will also tend to appear more sprawling in the landscape and to occupy a wider horizontal portion of the view, which will, with the larger turbines, tend to be eye catching from a greater distance and increase perceived prominence of all turbines in the area. Threshold is not met.

10	Distinctiveness of Landscape character is respected	Integrity and variety of Landscape Character Areas are maintained. --- The local landscape composition that contributes to the sense of place of western Skye is expressed through the Special Qualities of the North West Skye SLA. The proposal would compromise these Special Qualities and therefore local landscape composition to large degree by virtue of their height and positioning. Threshold is not met

Appendix 6 – Visual Assessment Appraisal

			Proposed Development				**Cumulative**		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
VP1 A850 north of site	App	Medium/Low (A850 as a whole)							
	THC	High/Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	**Significant**			**Potentially Significant**
Distance: 1.6 km N	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP 1. From the VP, all of the existing BAWF's turbines are visible as a linear dragon back arrangement with the composition appearing to neatly follow the topography of the Ben Aketil slope. View is representative of views along the northern section of A850 for road user receptors. The applicant advises it is specifically representative of views between the Dunvegan and Edinbane. Table 6.8 of EIAR Volume 1: Main Report advices of a Large/Medium Scale of Change for the Viewpoint. The applicant's assessment of the effects at the VP is inferred from EAIR Volume 1 Main Report paragraph 6.7.85, and EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.5: Less Than Moderate Effects paragraph 41 where the effects on the A850 as a route are discussed. The road is an important link on the Isle of Skye, connecting Central and Trotternish areas with Edinbane, Greshornish, Waternish, Dunvegan and the Duirinish Peninsula. The VP is located on a stretch of road where the views open out to the east where receptors including tourists will be taking in views and the receptor susceptibility is considered High however the location of the turbines are not in the most valued section of the view, which is eastward to the Trotternish Hills. A Community level value of the view towards the turbines (and the A850 route) would give a sensitivity of High/Medium using the applicant's matrix. Turbines will occupy the same section of the view as BAWF but a wider portion appearing more expansive, with bases generally visible. Turbines are within the same hosting slope except for Ts 1 and 9, both of which are noticeably closer to the viewer and on the opposite and facing slope to the rest of the array. The arrangement introduces a noticeably wider lateral spread with the nearer repowered and further extension turbines appearing as a loose grouping and losing the coherence of the existing array. RPandExtBAWF turbines, at twice the height of the existing, appear very large compared to the rounded summits of Ben Aketil and Ben Sca to the left, which they will diminish even more dramatically than they already are. Turbines appear large in scale at close range and wide in the section of the view although the presence of two existing schemes (BAWF and Edinbane WF) reduces the Scale of Change at this Viewpoint in terms of the baseline and its association with WF development, but it is still Large/Medium Scale of Change over Localised sections of the view (from the baseline extending the width of turbines on either side of the current array). Given that the VP is more representative of road users, the duration is limited (in both directions) resulting in a Moderate Scale of Effect and Magnitude of Change (MoC). The Level of Effect tends more towards							

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Major/Moderate side of the Moderate bracket and is **Significant** therefore, which is not surprising given the scheme represents a step change in turbine scale, being double the height of those existing, at such proximity**.** According to the applicant's methodology, Construction Phasing Scenario 2 (CPS2) is an effect with medium-term duration. The wirelines provided are not helpful for assessing the landscape or visual effects however the jarring visual dissonance effect brought about by the more distant turbines appearing larger than those of the closer BAWF turbines will be apparent to the receptor from this view however turbines are not brought closer to the viewer. Medium/Small Scale of Change and Limited extent equal a Slight Scale of Effect, Medium Duration equates to a Slight Magnitude of Scale and Moderate/Minor Level of Effect which is Not Significant. There are potentially 16 cumulative scenarios to consider based on the current live applications, which include the consented and proposed Ben Sca WF with the consented Glen Ullinish WF and proposed Glen Ullinish II WF, the proposed Balmeanach WF, the proposed Beinn Mheadhonach WF, and existing Edinbane WF (with a repowered and extension scheme in the Scoping stage of planning). The cumulative information submitted with the application is not up to date enough to give a meaningful true and accurate assessment. If all schemes were built out as shown in the cumulative wirelines, Balmeanach WF would appear linearly behind the summits of Ben Aketil and Ben Sca, with the consented Ben Sca WF (now submitted as a redesign) radiating from the latter summit to the viewer's left and RPandExtBAWF occupying the Ben Aketil slopes in a less organised manner. Edinbane WF's turbines would appear distant behind the Ben Sca WF. The proposal scheme may contribute to a change from the perception of an area with wind farms to an area where wind farms are a key feature.							
VP2 A863 at Feorlig Distance: 3.3 km S	App	High/Medium							**Not Significant**
	THC	High/Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	**Significant**			**Unlikely to be Significant**
	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP 2. View is representative of views along the A863, the minor road from Harlosh and Balmore, and residents at Feorlig. Paragraph 6.7.66 of the Main Report refers to receptors at Upper Feorlig as High/Medium sensitivity, Large/Medium scale of Change, permanent Duration, Moderate MoC, Major/Moderate and Significant Level of Effect. Residents and visitors moving slowly through the landscape will have a high susceptibility to WF development, although the proposal is not in the most appealing portion of the view; receptor sensitivity is agreed.								

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	The current BAWF appears as an elegant sweep of turbines associated with a single ridge, which it follows (excepting the leftmost turbine), creating a simple skylined array. RPandExtBAWF will result in fewer hubs and towers, but these will be notably larger in scale while extending the width and visual envelope of turbine development overall, particularly up the slopes of Gleann Eoghainn to the viewer's left. Ts 6 and 9 of the extension scheme brings the development into the viewer's side of the horizon, and taken together, the proposal scheme removes the simplicity and elegance of the current view. Turbines would not appear as a double line with 7 of the 9 bases obscured, they appear as a single line with irregular spacing with turbine 6 reading as being out of line with the rest having stepped to the near side of the skyline. The 'stepping out' effect is less pronounced for T9 because of the localised backdropping. The relationship with the approved Ben Sca is not considered particularly problematic in this view however while not anticipated to be much changed, details of the redesigned Ben Sca WF scheme are not included in the current submission. The viewpoint is further away from the development, but the effect on the perception of landform scale and the contrast with the smaller scale agricultural fields, is arguably greater by virtue of the doubling of turbine heights even if there are fewer turbines in the view, which leads to a Large/Medium Scale of Change. For residents, the proposal will appear wide in extent as a whole with an 'localised' change of extent to the baseline BAWF, and is of permanent duration leading to a Moderate Scale of Effect overall and Moderate Magnitude of Change. The Level of Effect tends towards Major/Moderate bracket and is **Significant**. For CPS2, a Medium/Small Scale of Change with a Wide or Intermediate extent would lead to a Moderate Scale of Effect and Moderate Magnitude of Change for Medium-term duration. The Level of Effect is Moderate tending towards Major/Moderate given the residential receptor sensitivity and therefore Significant visual effects from this VP. Jarring visual dissonant effects will be exacerbated with the approved Ben Sca WF sitting behind BAWF and within the visual envelope by virtue of the turbines being notably larger in scale than those of BAWF. Cumulatively the proposal would potentially be experienced in combination with the redesigned Ben Sca and in combination with Balmeanach (with the summit of Ben Aketil separating the schemes), Glen Ullinish (I and or II), and Beinn Mheadhonach. It is not understood if the Scoping stage Repowered and Extended Edinbane WF (RPandExtEWF) would be visible. The applicant does not consider the proposal to result in a Significant cumulative effects in combination with Balmeanach or Beinn Mheadhonach although has not defined what the threshold of significance is. In this instance there is potential for wind energy development to become either a key characteristic or even a dominant characteristic in views of the landscape in this instance however, it is considered that while contributing to the effect, RPandExtBAWF is unlikely to be the main cause of it by virtue of occupying a section of view already occupied by WF development.								
VP3 A863 south of Dunvegan	App	High/Medium (residents of Dunvegan)							
	THC	High/Medium	Substantial/Moderate	Substantial/Moderate	Major/Moderate	**Significant**			**Potentially Significant**

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Distance: 3.5 km SW	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP 3. Views of the proposal wind farm are oblique from the road however the VP is located in a reasonably well used car park with generally 360° views (Macleod's Tables due west and more distant Cuillin Hills to the southeast). The VP is representative of Travellers leaving a main settlement of Skye and heading south, and residential receptors at Lonmore particularly those properties oriented in the direction of the proposal wind farm, although it is somewhat removed from these properties. EIAR Volume 1 Main Report Paragraph 6.7.86 ascribes Medium sensitivity to the A863 route overall due to Medium/Low susceptibility of receptor (the route) and regional value of scenery due to the route passing through and alongside the North West Skye SLA. The VP is included in the analysis for Dunvegan however, where at paragraph 6.7.81 a High/Medium sensitivity of residential receptor is ascribed, which is used here as a worst case scenario. Road users and tourists using the car park to appreciate their surroundings will have a High susceptibility to wind farm development, while again, the road is an important link on the island. However the location of the turbines are not in the most valued section of the view, which is at the Community level value, thus resulting in a sensitivity of High/Medium receptors using the applicant's matrix. There is currently limited visibility BAWF turbines, which are visible in a contained section of the view they appear to sit comfortably in the landscape between ridgelines. RPandExtBAWF turbines are notably more visible and exert a greater influence in the view by virtue of all but one of the hubs being visible, with T6 extending spread of turbines to the viewers right, and the blade of the leftmost turbine extending the spread over the plateau of Ben Vic Askill, which when experienced with the array as a whole is likely to diminish the sense of scale and distance in the landscape from this location. The composition appears more of a loose grouping than a two legible lines or even a single line. There are no specific concerns with the relationship with Ben Sca WF behind however the relationship with the redesigned Ben Sca WF cannot be assessed from the submission. Step change in turbine development when experienced from this location moving from perceptual having very limited influence in the view to being prominent. Nevertheless, the Scale of Change would be less than that of VPs 1 and 2 due to relative screening and distance at Medium. Turbines are perceived as wide however, being visible against different features of the landscape with the effect increased by their relative separation leading to a Substantial/Moderate Scale of Effect and Magnitude of Change due to their permanence. The Level of Effect therefore tends towards Major/Moderate and is **Significant**. The presence of BAWF along with the extension turbines of the proposal scheme during CPS2 draws attention to what will be lost in terms of positive WF contribution to the landscape and views once the original scheme is removed. In this instance however the extension turbines are the nearer to the viewer so the change in scale is less dissonant. The Scale of Change is Medium/Small, width is Intermediate given the proximity to the turbines, therefore a Moderate SoE and MoC, with a Moderate Not Significant Level of Effect overall. However it is clear that the visual effect will be significantly adverse for receptors during the period of CPS2. From this VP the RPandExtBAWF's contribution to increasing the perception of landscape as one which turbines are a feature of the view is likely to be greater than at VPs 1 and 2 due to the scale change in turbines as already noted.								

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
VP4 A850 east of Dunvegan	App	Medium/Low							
	THC	High/Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	**Significant**			**Potentially Significant**
Distance: 3.7 km, W	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP 4. Small scale OHL on wooden poles follow the contours of the stepped hills The view is representative of road user receptors having left the settlement of Dunvegan but is not considered a reliable VP for residential receptors given the distance from the settlement and lack of residential properties nearby. Paragraph 40 of EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.5: Less Than Moderate Effects states 'there would be no views whilst within the settlement, but just as you leave the village views open out as illustrated in Viewpoint 4, where partially screened views of the Proposed Development would be available for a short section of the route before turning a corner and being screened by Ben Horneval'. The next paragraph assigns Medium/Low sensitivity to receptors using the A850, with a Moderate MoC and Moderate/Minor, Not Significant, Level of Effect. As with VP1, the road is used by tourists (including passengers in vehicles) and cyclist moving slower through the landscape and occasional walkers with a High Susceptibility to wind farm development. However there are no official stopping places so the view is transient for a short section, while the focus of the view for westbound travellers is the Cuillin Hills to the viewer's right at a distance. The section of the view where the turbines are proposed would have Community level value, resulting in a High/Medium Sensitivity according to the applicant's matrix. Proposal turbines are visible in forward views OHL acts as a scale indicator showing the development's monumental scale in comparison to the stepped Ben Vic Askill, which it diminishes and reduces the sense of scale in the landscape overall, even if its blades that are visible for the most part. While the Cuillin Hills are to the viewer's right, they are not so separated in the view from Ben Vic Askill that the stepped hill doesn't influence the experience of the distant National Scenic Area hills by framing them such that the turbines wouldn't compete for prominence with the Cuillins and likely win. The existing BAWF are barely discernible in the view while the wooden pole type of OHL is characteristically rural in scale and outlook so neither would have sufficient influence in the view to reduce the scale of change experienced by the viewer along this section of road, the turbines are notably large and represent a step change in energy development in the view, but are screened which reduces the starkness and Scale of Change. The applicant's assessment of a Medium/Small Scale of Change is reasonable. The extent of the array is intermediate given that not all turbines are visible, resulting in a Substantial/Moderate Scale of Effect and MoC resulting in a higher Moderate Level of Effect, which is **Significant**. The visual impact of CPS2 on receptors from this location and section of road is considered Not Significant. based on the information submitted with this application, the proposal would be experienced in combination with Balmeanach and successively with Glen Ullinish and Beinn Mheadhonach. The potential interaction with Glen Ullinish II is unknown from the submission. The baseline view is of a landscape with negligible								

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	association wind energy development, and from this location, the RPandExtBAWF would make an immediate and highly notable contribution to any change in the character of the view. It is reasonable to assume that the cumulative impact from this development is potentially significant even without certainty of the future baseline at this stage.								
VP5 Roag	App	High/Medium	Infer Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	**Significant**			
	THC	High/Medium	Substantial	Substantial	Major/ Moderate	**Significant**			**Potentially Significant**
Distance: 4.3 km, SW	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP 5. This is a complex panoramic scene looking from and across Farmed and Settled Lowlands - Skye & Lochalsh upwards to the less settled Low Smooth Moorland and the nearer sides of the hosting Upland Sloping Moorland with a rich and intricate interplay of tidal coastline with small crofts, fields, dispersed housing and other manmade elements including wooden pole OHL and telegraph wires, woodland, and undifferentiated moorland. The dragon back array of BAWF appears as an unimposing though taller feature in forward views, which draws the eye to the otherwise less discernible Edinbane WF. and while the hub heights do not follow the skyline as seen from this location, their closer and more regular spacing and even descent indicate that they are following a hidden part of the topography which nestles them in to the landscape and reduces their influence on the intricate land- and sea- scape. The Viewpoint is representative of residents of Roag and Orbost as well as road users of the minor road that connects with the B884 and A836 at both Lonmore and Heribost that loops southwards through Orbost and Roag. Susceptibility to WF development is High, while its location within the SLA puts it at the Regional value even if the view towards the turbines is looking outwards of the SLA. Agree that the receptors here are of High/Medium sensitivity (EIAR Volume 1 Main Report paragraph 6.7.78). Turbines are generally within the visual envelope of the existing scheme however introduce depth to the WF development where currently it is a linear and wide array. Compositionally, while 'rhythmic pairings' are experienced across the array from this viewpoint, it doesn't automatically read as two distinctive lines of turbines due to the larger spacings between the pairs whereby these spacings appear to increase the sense of scale and width of the scheme. The RPandExtBAWF looms large over the scene, appearing around a low summit, but diminishes other more nuanced landscape features and diminish the sense of scale and distance in the landscape with 8 of the 9 hubs now appearing well clear of the horizon with the extension turbines in line with, if not higher than, the summit of Ben Aketil to the viewer's right. Additionally, the visible turbine base and hardstanding area of T6 adds horizontal emphasis to the scene. The step change in wind farm development is obvious from this VP, the Scale of Change is Large/Medium, only slightly reduced due to the proposal scheme occupying the same section of the view as the existing BAWF. The horizontal emphasis is increased due to the spacings between turbines and pairings and is wide,								

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	the Scale of Effect is Substantial as is the MoC. The Level of Effect tends to Major in the Major/Moderate bracket and Significant. The applicant's assessment is for the receptor group as a whole. The scale differences between existing and extension turbines will be stark during CPS2 leading to a Scale of Change of Medium, while the change in turbine extent is Localised (although the interim scheme will be visibly wide overall) leading to a Moderate Scale of Effect and MoC with a Moderate Level of Effect that is Significant. As shown in the submission, the proposal scheme would not site comfortably in combination with the approved Ben Sca as a linear array in the backdrop. Should the wider panorama be developed with turbine development, the resultant character of the view will change however to what degree, and to what degree the current proposal would contribute to this change is unclear at this time. However, the RPandExtBAWF could potentially contribute significantly by virtue of changing the current unimposing character of turbine development at that location by bringing wind energy development more sharply in to the viewer's focus.								
VP6 A850 Flashader Distance: 5.7 km, NE	App	High/Medium				**Not Significant**			
	THC	High/Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	**Significant**			**Unlikely to be Significant**
	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP 6. Consented Ben Sca in forward views ahead on the near side the proposal development. While to the receptor's right are views across Loch Greshornish and Greshornish SLA, the view is funnelled ahead by the road and verges. The Viewpoint is representative of residents of Flashader north of Edinbane and road user receptors heading south on the A850. EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.5: Less Than Moderate Effects ascribes a High/Medium sensitivity to receptors which is agreed given the community value . In solus the proposal would represent a stark Scale of Change in comparison with the existing BAWF by introducing tower sections into the skyline. T1 interferes with views of the Macleod's tables summit, while as a standalone development the composition is disjointed and far less cohesive than the existing BAWF due to the separation distance required by larger turbines. Nevertheless, the consented Ben Sca WF, which forms a part of the current future baseline, means that The Council has accepted that this view can accommodate skylined towers and hubs. However, as consented, Ben Sca WF reproduces the simple linear 'dragon back' effect of the existing BAWF being readily associated with a single ridgeline as experienced by receptors from this location. In contrast, the proposal scheme would double the number of turbines in combination with Ben Sca WF, adding depth, density, and complexity to the consented baseline view through visual dissonance with larger turbines being more distant than smaller turbines, and by creating stacking effects whereby blades rotate at different rates. These effects are to the								

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	detriment of the approved Ben Sca WF's composition. The text appears to downplay the effect of the encroachment towards MacLeod's Tables and overstates the evenness of the array's appearance. However, the effect of Ben Sca turbines in acknowledged and on the basis of that interaction, although the combination of the two developments would mean that the design mitigation of Ben Sca is somewhat undermined. Nonetheless, the Scale of Change is Medium/Small, as agreed with the applicant, which would be experienced over an intermediate extent for a permanent duration (in considering a stationary VP, reduced for those travelling), leading to a Moderate Scale of Effect and MoC, and a Moderate and Significant Level of Effect. The information submitted does not include a visual of CPS2 with the consented Ben Sca WF. Cumulatively, the proposal would contribute to a step change in the character and association of wider landscape views with wind energy development but is unlikely to be the cause.								
VP7 Minor Road to Greshornish Distance: 5.9 km, N	App	High/Medium				**Infer Not Significant**			
	THC	High/Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	**Significant**			**Unlikely to be Significant**
	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP 7. The view is of an idyllic sparsely populated sea inlet and bay with signs of settlement (scattered housing, pastures and small crofting fields, and forestry for example), appearing cheek by jowl with wilder moorland covered sea cliffs incised by riparian woodland covered gullies, and backdropped by low lying stepped moorland hills to the southeast, giving way to the more distant stepped Trotternish Hills (Trotternish and Tianavaig SLA). As described, while inland views may appear deceptively simple, as the viewer pans left a more nuanced and complex sea- and land- scape becomes apparent to the receptor. This quiet nook of Skye is emblematic of the intricate complex coastal scenery that is such an important and defining feature of the island. The view is taken from within the small Greshornish SLA and is representative of tourist and resident receptors staying at local accommodation and using the minor road. The regional landscape designation places a High/Medium sensitivity on the receptor here using the applicant's matrix.. From this viewpoint, the distinctiveness of the design and layout principles between the existing Edinbane WF and BAWF, as well as the settings of the two wind farms is highly apparent in part due to the low rounded summit providing ample separation between the two schemes. Due to towers being visible to base and what is a poor composition from this viewpoint, Edinbane WF is the most conspicuous in the view. While successively these schemes add complexity to the comparatively simpler inland views, their scale and separation, as well as their containment by landform to specific sections of the view, mean that the landscape is not dominated								

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	by turbine development. In that context the solus proposal would represent a stark upscaling of turbine dimensions in comparison to existing schemes, shifting focus to the viewer's right. Similar to VP6 above, the RPandExtBAWF is experienced more as a loose grouping and loses the tight cohesiveness of the existing BAWF while tower sections are again skylined with T1 appearing as an outlier encroaching on the visible summit of Macleod's Tables. Again, the approved Ben Sca WF means that that effect has been accepted at this location. However as at VP6, the proposal scheme doubles the number of turbines in combination with Ben Sca WF, adds depth, density, and further complexity to the consented baseline view; creates visual dissonance with larger turbines being more distant than the smaller turbines, and more incidences of stacking with blades rotating at different rates. These effects are once more to the detriment of the approved Ben Sca WF's composition. As with VP6, the Scale of Change is Medium/Small, which would be experienced over an intermediate extent for a permanent duration (in considering a stationary VP), leading to a Moderate Scale of Effect and MoC, and a Moderate and Significant Level of Effect. The change to CPS2 is not significant from this viewpoint given that the four extension turbines appear lower in the view, with the exception of T9) and behind BAWF. There is potential for inland views to be dominated by a mass of turbines across the southern horizon with the character of that (substantial) section of the view changing to its detriment with larger turbines vastly reducing the sense of scale and distance in this intricate sea- and land- scape. The proposal would contribute to but would be unlikely to be the main cause of this effect by virtue of occupying a location of turbine development in a position behind the turbines of Ben Sca WF.								
VP8 A863 near Gearymore	App	Medium							
	THC	High/Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	**Significant**			**Potentially Significant**
Distance: 6.6 km, S	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP8. Since the baseline photography was produced an agricultural building has been erected (on a substantial platform) effectively screening public views across the plain from the VP location. However, the proposal is visible for the sections of the road either side of the building. The VP is representative of road users travelling along the A836 where there is little opportunity to stop, as well as recreational walkers using the footpath on the inland side of the public road. EIAR Volume 1: Main Report at paragraph 6.7.86 considers the A836 to be of Medium Sensitivity overall, with the proposal to result in a Moderate MoC and Moderate Not Significant Level of Effect on the route however this is not meaningful in terms of the specific viewpoint assessment. Given the High Susceptibility of road users of this important link in west central Skye, as well as recreational users of footpaths, the Sensitivity is considered High/Medium. From the location, BAWF appears as a linear array that follows the sloping ridgeline behind the horizon though skylined. RPandExtBAWF noticeably loses the simplicity and coherence of the baseline view due to the wider spacing between turbines and looser grouping whereby wind energy development will become much								

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	more prominent along the ridge and skyline. As a result, the towers of RPandExtBAWF are much more conspicuous even than the rounded summits and plateau below them, which currently separates the existing BAWF and Edinbane WF into legibly distinct settings and schemes. These original schemes protect the perceived landscape scale and distance, in contrast to the proposal turbines, which will diminish this important landscape feature with T5 of the RPandExtBAWF appearing over the cone that bookends the left of the plateau (its removal would reduce the scheme's poor relationship to landform from this location). Nevertheless, three turbines of Ben Sca WF will be visible over the central plateau, which increases the value of clear summits. The proposal represents an upscaling of turbine development from the location with the RPandExtBAWF appreciably increasing the extent of turbines laterally, which are read against several landscape features. The Scale of Change is Medium but potentially reducing to Medium/Small in combination with Ben Sca, the extent is Intermediate and the Scale of Effect and Magnitude of Change Moderate, with the Level of Effect tending toward Major/Moderate and therefore **Significant**. This upscaling of turbines will be highly notable during the CPS2, Medium/Small tending towards Small Scale of Change over an intermediate extent, Moderate Scale of Effect and MoC, Moderate/Minor side of Moderate and not Significant Level of Effect. Collectively there is potential for a wide horizontal spread of turbines. RPandExtBAWF's contribution to the change in the character of the view will be two-fold: 1) it will extend the cluster even further to the viewer's left than the current BAWF; and 2) the step change in turbine size. The significance of that contribution cannot be readily understood based on the information submitted however it is potentially significant.							
VP9 Macleod's Table North / Healabhal Mhor Distance: 8.6 km, SW	App	High/Medium							
	THC	High/Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	**Significant**			**Potentially Significant**
	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP 9. 360° panoramic view that, along with the takes in the taller Munros of the mainland, especially of Wester Ross. These mountains backdrop eastward views as experienced by the receptor. The VP is representative of recreational users at possibly North West Skye's most important natural landmarks. The EIAR is not specific about the VP however it falls under the analysis of recreational routes in EIAR Volume 3: Technical Appendix 6.5: Less Than Moderate Effects. The applicant assigns a High/Medium Sensitivity of receptors experiencing Macleod's Tables (Table 6.8: Viewpoint Analysis Summary of EIAR Volume 1: Main Report) due to being within the regional designation Northwest Skye SLA. However, recreational users may not be expected to be attuned to differences in regional and national landscape designations, especially where they've undertaken difficult treks to remote areas where more rewarding views are expected so the sensitivity for recreational receptors from this location would in reality be High. That said, the summit is not as frequented as much as others on the island or in the Highlands than may be expected with the feature more often looked at than viewed from. RPandExtBAWF turbines would largely occupy the same section of the view as BAWF although the increase in turbine scale from BAWF is stark, while the horizontal and vertical extents of turbines are increased, and more so in combination with the approved of Ben Sca WF. The proposal's more problematic relationship to the								

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	receiving landscape is clear from this viewpoint with only three of the five repowering turbines appearing to follow a ridge (Ts 3, 4, and 5), while Ts 1, and 9 appear to be on the near slope of Gleann Eoghainn and the remainder turbines on the opposite. It is difficult to discern two lines of turbines, which instead appear as a single loose grouping and would be unlikely to sit comfortably with Ben Sca turbines due to noticeable differences in turbine heights and spacings. The Scale of Change is Medium over an Intermediate extent resulting in a Moderate Scale of Effect and Magnitude of Change. The Level of Effect tends towards Major/Moderate in the Moderate band and is Significant. Under CPS2, the four extension turbines appear on the near side of the 12 existing BAWF turbines making the scale increase stark however it would appear as a different scheme given separation distances. The Scale of Change is reduced to Small over a localised extent making a Slight Scale of Effect and MoC. The Level of Effect is Moderate Not Significant If all proposals were built out there is potential for the character of a section of the panoramic view to change from a landscape with occasional wind farms to one where wind farms are a key characteristic of the landscape. The location of the RPandExtBAWF nearer to the receptor from this VP along with its turbine heights mean that it has potential to contribute significantly to this change and therefore has potential to result in significant cumulative effects in combination as well as in succession with other wind farms.							
VP10 B884 Colbost, Duirinish Distance: 9.7 km, W	App	High/Medium							
	THC	High/Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	**Significant**			**Potentially Significant**
	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP 10. Dunvegan Castle is also a major focal point in the section of view where the turbines would be installed. Viewpoint is representative of users of the B884 road and residential receptors at Colbost. Paragraphs 6.7.82-84 of EIAR Volume 1: Main Report assigns a High/Medium sensitivity to the residential receptor group, which is agreed, and a Moderate Scale of Effect, MoC, and Not Significant Level of Effect. The viewpoint encompasses intricate and complex coastal scenery with multiple horizontal bands of landscape elements including very low lying islets and islands, crofts, forestry and woodland. The turbines represent a considerable step change in turbine scale even if towers are partially screened, with the impact being that the scheme will be more eye catching in the view, and would diminish landscape features and the sense of scale and distance in the landscape especially when experienced in combination with and relative to the grand Dunvegan Castle. The applicant's text does not appear to consider the interaction with Dunvegan Castle in the view, it seems fair to assume that they have not considered it as an important attractor of visual receptors to this part of Skye. The composition of the scheme is problematic from this VP due to different hub and tip heights across the array. The turbines of Ben Sca will be in the view with which the Ts 2and 3 will overlap.								

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	The Scale of Change is Medium, even from this distance, over an intermediate extent creating a Moderate SoE and MoC tending the LoE towards the Major/Moderate side of Moderate, which is Significant. Three hubs of the four extension turbines will be visible above the ridgeline during CPS2 including much of T6's tower, which reduces the gap between BAWF and Edinbane WF. The upscaling is noticeable and turbine development will be more prominent in the scene. The SoC is reduced however to Small over a localised extent making the SoE and MoC slight and placing the CPS2 development in the Moderate/Minor bracket. As for VP9, the proposal has potential to contribute significantly to a change in the character of the view by virtue of being nearer to the receptor combined with its larger turbines and general prominence. The RPandExtBAWF therefore has potential to result in significant cumulative effects in combination as well as in succession with other wind farms.								
VP11 Ardtreck, Minginish	App	High/Medium							
	THC	High/Medium	Substantial/Moderate	Substantial/Moderate	Moderate	**Significant**			**Potentially Significant**
Distance: 11.4 km, S	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP11. This is a transitional roadside view across low lying undulating rounded hills, mix of agricultural fields, moorland and forestry. Not a particularly sensitive location. VP is representative of the residential area of Ardtreck on Minginish, also the location of Dun Ardtreck Scheduled Ancient Monument and the Ardtreck Point lighthouse. Table 6.8 advises of a Medium/Small Scale of Change for the Viewpoint. EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.5: Less Than Moderate Effects at paragraphs 28–30 describes the effects for the cluster of settlements at North as High/medium sensitivity, Medium/Small Scale of Change, over a Localised extent of the group, resulting in a Slight magnitude of change leading to a Moderate/Minor Level of Effect which would be Not Significant. However, in terms of a VP analysis, there is no meaningful comparison. Current BAWF turbines relate to the slope with the VP clearly showing how the original development has picked out and highlighted one topographic feature and appears in scale with the landscape. The siting, layout, and scale of BAWF, therefore, means that it has limited impact on the coastal character of this wider view. Again, the RPandExtBAWF turbines would represent a step change to turbine scale and extent at this location by more than doubling turbine heights and extending turbines both to the viewer's left and right in comparison to BAWF. Compositional issues of different hub and tip heights, stacking and irregular spacing are highly notable from VP11. Moreover, while there is some visual overlapping with Ben Sca WF turbines, the RPandExtBAWF interacts with that scheme to significantly extend the influence of large scale turbines in the scene with the turbines being viewed against several landscape features. The consequence is that the RPandExtBAWF turbines would appear to dominate the sea- and land- scape while diminishing the features and distracting from the nuances of the terrain below.								

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	The applicant's text relies on the fact of there already being development present in the moorland, but that is the case across the board with this application and is not more mitigative from this viewpoint than for elsewhere. The Scale of Change is only slightly reduced by the presence of BAWF and Edinbane WF to and is more reasonably considered Medium with extent of the array being intermediate given that the proposal spreads over several summits and slopes . The SoE is therefore Moderate, as is the MoC, with the Level of Effect tending toward the Major/Moderate side of the Moderate bracket, which is Significant. During CPS2 the scale difference of turbines is highly noticeable with the Scale of Change being Medium/Small and turbine development extended to the viewers left over an intermediary/localised extent. The SoE and MoC are Moderate/Slight placing the LoE in the Moderate Not Significant bracket. A larger portion of the view could potentially be occupied with turbine development changing the character of the scene from a landscape with occasional wind farms to one where wind farms are a key characteristic, given the location and prominence of the RPandExtBAWF its contribution to this is potentially Significant.								
VP12 A87 at Borve Distance: 11.6 km, E	App	High/ Medium	Slight	Slight	Moderate/Minor	**Not Significant**			
	THC	High/Medium	Slight	Slight	Moderate/Minor	**Not Significant**			**Unlikely to be Significant**
	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP12. VP is representative of residential receptors at Borve and road users of the A87 and A850, which includes tourists. This is a transitional roadside view across low lying undulating rounded hills with a mix of agricultural fields, moorland, and forestry ground cover but is not a particularly sensitive location on Skye. Nevertheless, the receptor Sensitivity of residential receptors as High/Medium is agreed. Tips and limited hubs of Edinbane WF visible over the horizon at a distance while the proposal scheme would add additional tips and limited hubs in combination with the approved turbines of Ben Sca WF. Turbines bring wind farm development into more prominent focus and signpost that the area beyond the skyline may be a wind farm landscape but otherwise as a standalone development the RPandExtBAWF is unlikely to be an issue from this location. For Borve receptors, EIAR Volume 3: Technical Appendix 6.5: Less than Moderate Effects paragraphs 22-24 describes the proposal as representing a Small Scale of Change, with an Intermediate extent of the group with these Permanent changes resulting in a Slight Magnitude of Change, leading to a Moderate/Minor Not Significant Level of Effect, which is not disputed. There are no issues re the CPS2 and the cumulative impact is considered likely to be Not Significant also.								
	App	High/Medium							

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
VP13 Ardmore, Waternish Distance: 14 km, NW	THC	High/Medium	Slight	Slight	Moderate/Minor	**Not Significant**			**N/A**
	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP13. The VP is representative of the Ardmore community and road users along the minor Trumpan Road within the SLA. The larger part of the community are at Halistra and Hallin, which are further south along the peninsula with intermittent visibility. The High/Medium sensitivity of receptors is agreed. The applicant has again aggregated an assessment of impacts over the Waternish peninsula so a comparison with this VP assessment is not meaningful. The proposal will introduce five turbine tips and four hubs into views of the distant Cuillin Hills where they effectively obscure the peaks by outcompeting for prominence. The turbines appear large behind the ridgeline reducing the sense of scale and distance of Loch Bay. The peaks of the Cuillins would only be obscured on clear days however and the turbines are well contained by the landform of the interior stepped moorland while other sections of the wider view also contain interest, especially within the SLA across to Macleod's tables, and, further across open sea to Lewis and Harris. Do not agree that the Scale of Change goes as far as negligible because distant views to landmark topographical features can still retain value to local people who experience the landscape and visual environment in all weathers and seasons, and for whom the framed view of the distant Cuillin may be important. The Scale of Change is therefore Small over a localised extent of the view leading to a Slight SoE and MoC and Moderate/Minor Not Significant LoE but is adverse. CPS2 would not be experienced in combination with BAWF turbines and there are no predicted cumulative effects,.							
VP14 Minor road above Uig Distance: 17.7 km, N	App	High/Medium							
	THC	High/Medium	Small	Moderate/Slight	Moderate/Minor	**Not Significant**			**Requires up to date information and further assessment**
	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP14. The Viewpoint is representative of the Idrigill Viewpoint and of travellers entering Uig from the A855 and Quiraing Road (between Uig and the A855 on the east at Brogaig near Staffin Bay). There are no properties in the immediate vicinity that the VP could reasonably be representative of. The VP is from within the SLA looking across Loch Snizort and is therefore designated regionally while travellers are of High Susceptibility; the Sensitivity is High/Medium.							

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Both BAWF and Edinbane WF are visible on the distant horizon and plateau and there would be overlap with the turbines of the approved Ben Sca WF. Turbines are viewed above the small industrial functions of Uig Harbour and appear appropriate in the context of this view. Nevertheless, turbines will be backlit and experienced in silhouette over parts of the day and appear as a loose grouping with irregular hub and tip heights rather than a single or two lines of turbines. The doubling of turbine heights means that the taller towers loom much larger over the bay with the scheme appearing perceptually wider in the receiving landscape thus reducing the sense of scale and distance in the sea- and land- scape meaning that part of Skye may appear closer to the viewer. The description of the Tables as being 'Marginally visible' is very weather dependent, and their distinctive form allows them to be easily identified on the horizon, although distant. The SoC is Small over an intermediate portion of the view (although perceptibly wide) leading to a SoE and MoC are in the Moderate/Minor bracket, which is Not Significant. During CPS2, turbines 6, 7, and 8 are positioned lower in the landscape with only T9 being visibly and noticeably taller than the existing BAWF. The SoC is Small/Negligible over an Intermediate/Localised section of the view, the SoE and MoC are Slight/Negligible with a Minor Level of Effect. Cumulatively, there is potential for the proposal to contribute to an excessive spread of turbines over the distant central moorland plateau changing the character of the view to a distant wind farm landscape. The RPandExtBAWF would largely occupy the same location as the existing BAWF and overlapping with several Ben Sca WF turbines so its contribution to the change in character of the view would in larger part be due to turbine size. Given the uncertainty of the cumulative picture on Skye at this stage, it is not considered safe to speculate on the significance of the RPandExtBAWF's contribution to this cumulative effect.								
VP15 The Storr Distance: 18 km, E	App	High/Medium	Slight	Slight	Moderate/Minor	**Not Significant**			
	THC	High/Medium	Slight	Slight	Moderate	**Not Significant**			**Unlikely to be Significant**
	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP15. Open 360° panorama (although VP position is a little down from the top of the slope to the east where views of the mainland would otherwise open up). The Storr summit is less frequented than the more famous Old Man of Storr to the east (where the development is not visible) with the VP located within the Trotternish and Tianavaig SLA leading to a High/Medium recreational receptor Sensitivity according to the applicant's methodology. The applicant has included an assessment of the specific VP in EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.5: Less Than Moderate Effects paragraphs 48-51 as reproduced in this table. Turbines occupy the same portion of the view as BAWF and overlap with several of the Edinbane WF and approved Ben Sca WF turbines, both of which are smaller and nearer to the viewer. The schemes are likely to create a dissonant in combination visual effect with the upscaling of turbines being noticeable. While Macleod's								

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Tables remain the dominant features of this portion of the view, the larger scale turbine development will compete for prominence and shift the receptor's focus with the effect of reducing the sense of scale and distance as experienced by the receptor from this elevated viewpoint. As such, the Scale of Change occasioned by the RPandExtBAWF is agreed with the applicant at Small. The array will appear perceptibly wide in spread given heights and spacings, but over an Intermediary/Localised extent in the view. The SoE and MoC are Slight leading to a Moderate, Moderate/Minor Level of Effect, which is Not Significant. Four taller turbines will be introduced to the BAWF array during CPS2, which will not be significant overall while the contribution to the cumulative picture will be restricted by their placement behind the approved turbines of Ben Sca WF so unlikely to be significant.								
VP16 Moineach Mararaulin	App	High/Medium							
	THC	High/Medium	Slight	Slight	Moderate/Minor	**Not Significant**			**Potentially Significant**
Distance: 21.1 km, SE	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP16. Although forward views are less dramatic in comparison with the Cuillins to the receptor's rear, the simple moorland majority ground cover belies a complex scene of varied but nuanced landscape features including 'shelves' of stepped hills, low lying undulating plateau, and the steep incised slopes of Loch Harport, while forestry and distant settlements are also visible. The VP is representative of road user receptors with High/Medium sensitivity of the C1237 heading north away from the Cuillin Hills to the south. The applicant's assessment focuses on the Moineach, Glen Brittle Forest Receptor Group as a whole at EIAR Volume 3 Technical Appendix 6.5: Less Than Moderate Effects paragraphs 31-33. The array appears as a loose grouping rather than a single line or double lines of turbines with irregular hub and tip heights as well irregular alignment. Turbine 5 to the right of the array appears to sit on the horizon and is not screened by the stepped hill that sits above the slopes of Loch Harport, which is the main feature of the forward view from this location. As such, this turbine reveals the true scale and distance of the scheme to the receptor and makes it appear perceptibly wide in the landscape. Ben Sca WF and Edinbane WF are to the right of the proposal scheme, both with limited influence in the view, whereby the RPandExtBAWF would extend the spread of turbines left in the view with noticeably larger turbines in a manner likely to reduce the sense of scale and distance in the landscape. Notwithstanding that BAWF has negligible influence in the view, the Scale of Change is Small over an intermediate extent of the forward view. The SoE and MoC are Moderate/Slight leading to a Moderate / Moderate/Minor Level of Effect, which is Not Significant. CPS2 adds four largescale turbines to the view as opposed to nine over a narrower extent, which would reduce the Level of Effect to Not Significant. Cumulatively the proposal has potential to contribute significant effects by virtue of the extending the overall spread of wind energy development in a manner that changes the								

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	character of the view to a greater association with turbine development. However, the actual contribution to the cumulative picture would be dependent on the future baseline, which cannot be known with reasonable certainty at this stage.								
VP17 Beinn Edra	App	High				**Not Significant**			
	THC	High	Slight	Slight	Moderate/Moderate	**Not Significant**			**Unlikely to be Significant**
Distance: 20 km, NE	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP17. Open 360° panorama from summit (although VP position is a little down from the actual summit). VP is representative of recreational receptors in the nationally designated Trotternish NSA with a High sensitivity to turbine development. Despite the 9.5 km distance between VPs, and additional 2 km from the nearest turbine, the effects are similar to those experienced from the Storr summit with turbines occupying the same portion of the view as BAWF and viewed behind the approved Ben Sca WF, which may create a dissonant in combination visual effect. Again, Macleod's Tables remain the dominant features of this portion of the view, the larger scale turbines are likely to compete for prominence and shift the receptor's focus with the effect of reducing the sense of scale and distance as experienced by the receptor from this elevated viewpoint. Like VP15, the Scale of Change is Small. The array will also appear perceptibly wide in spread from here given heights and spacings, but over an Intermediary/Localised extent in the view. The SoE and MoC are Slight leading to a Moderate/Minor / Minor Level of Effect, which, while adverse, is not significant. Four taller turbines will be introduced to the BAWF array during CPS2, which will not be significant overall while the contribution to the cumulative picture will be restricted by their placement behind the approved turbines of Ben Sca WF so unlikely to be significant.								
VP18 Bruach na Frithe, Cuillin Hills	App	High				**Not Significant**			
	THC	High	Slight	Slight	Moderate	**Not Significant**			**Unlikely to be Significant.**
	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP18.								

			Proposed Development				Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Scale of Effect (Scale of Change / Extent) Table 1	Magnitude of change (Scale of Effect / Duration) Table 2	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) Table 3	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Change (Scale / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Distance: 25.5 km, SE	VP is representative of recreational receptors in the nationally designated Cuillin Hills NSA with a High sensitivity to turbine development. Turbines would be likely to appear large in comparison with existing and consented development while the array is experienced relative to different undulations in the landscape making its spread perceptibly wide but in a small section of the view of less interest. The SoC is Small, the SoE and MoC are Slight leading to a Moderate Not Significant Level of Effect.								
VP19 Uig to Lochmaddy Ferry	App								
	THC					**Not Significant**			**Not Significant**
Distance: 24.7 km	Baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 3 Chapter 6 Appendix 6.4 Viewpoint Analysis VP 19. Turbines form a part of a distant cluster contained within landform. Significant impacts are not expected.								

120000

130000

140000

850000

840000

Legend:

The Site

Coordinate System: British National Grid
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: OSGB 1936
Units: Meter

Rev	Date	Description	Drn	Chk	App
02	27/04/2023	Revised Logo	DL	DB	DB
01	01/03/2023	Revised template	DL	DB	DB
00	14/12/2022	Site Location	DL	DB	DB

Ben Aketil Wind Farm

RSK Renantis Part of the Falck Renewables

TITLE: Figure 2.1: Site Location

ID:P663617_EIA_663617_SiteLocation_A3_L

0 1.5 3
Kilometres

Scale: 1:75,000 @ A3

REV 02

Path: P:\660000 - EPD Projects\663617 - Ben Aketil\01 - GIS\P663617_EIA.aprx\663617_SiteLocation

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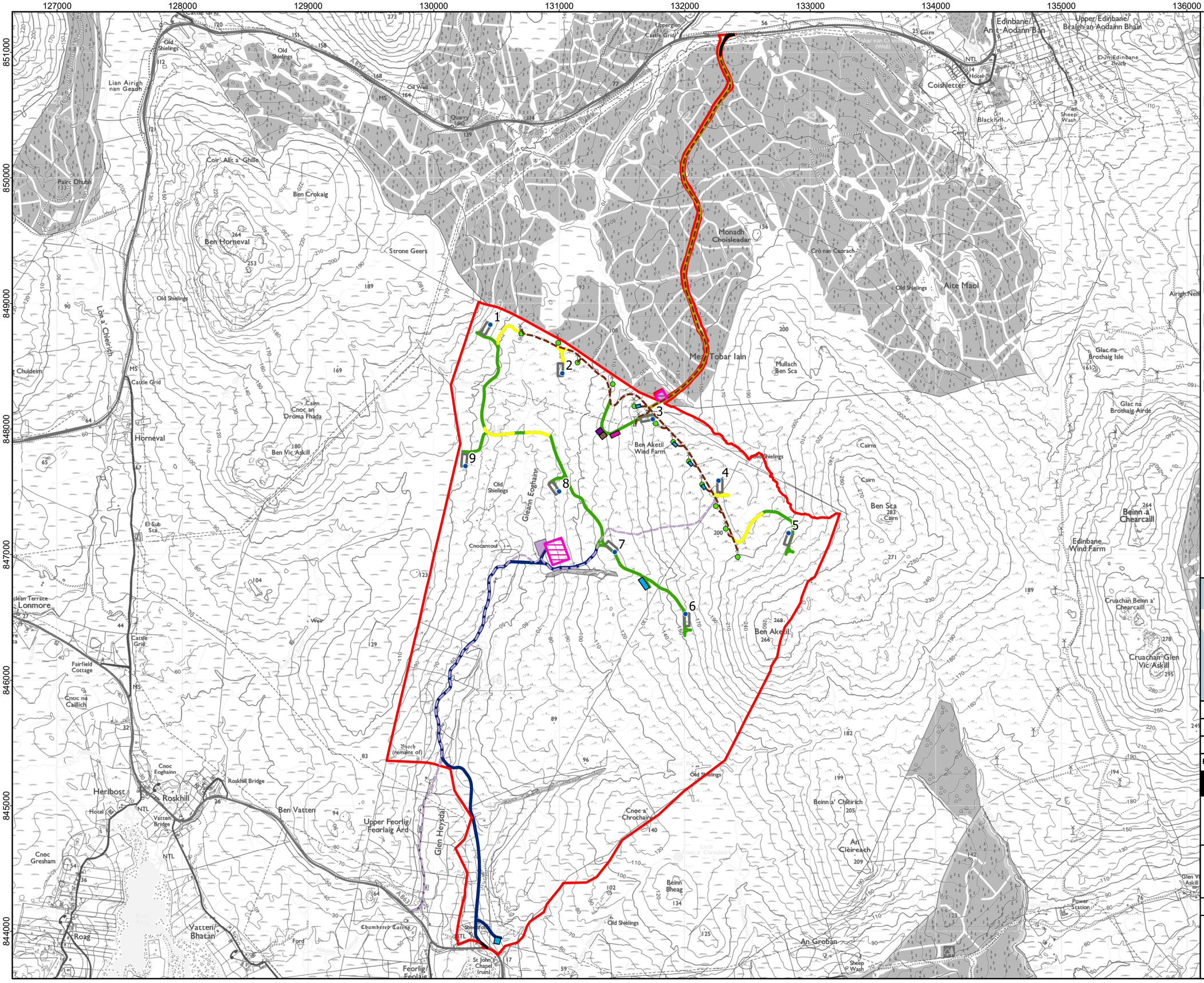
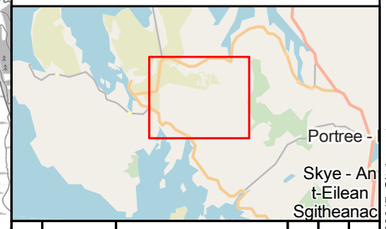
851000 850000 849000 848000 847000 846000 845000 844000



Legend:

- The Site
- Proposed New Turbine Locations
- Existing Turbine Layout
- Hardstanding
- Existing Access Track
- Existing Crofters' Track
- Bell mouth junction modification
- Floating Access Track
- Wind Farm Access Track
- Northern Access Track
- Southern Access Track
- Construction Compound
- Substation and Compound Area (Repower)
- Substation and Compound Area (Extension)
- Borrow Pit
- Storage Bund
- Battery storage

Coordinate System: British National Grid
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: OSGB 1936
Units: Meter



Rev	Date	Description	Drn	Chk	App
07	27/04/2023	Revised Logo	DL	SA	RB
06	17/04/2023	Revised Borrow Pit	DL	SA	RB
05	15/03/2023	Met Mast removed	DL	SA	RB

Ben Aketil Wind Farm

RSK Renantis Falck Renewables

TITLE: Figure 2.3: Site Layout

ID:P663617_EIA_663617_SiteLayout_A3_L

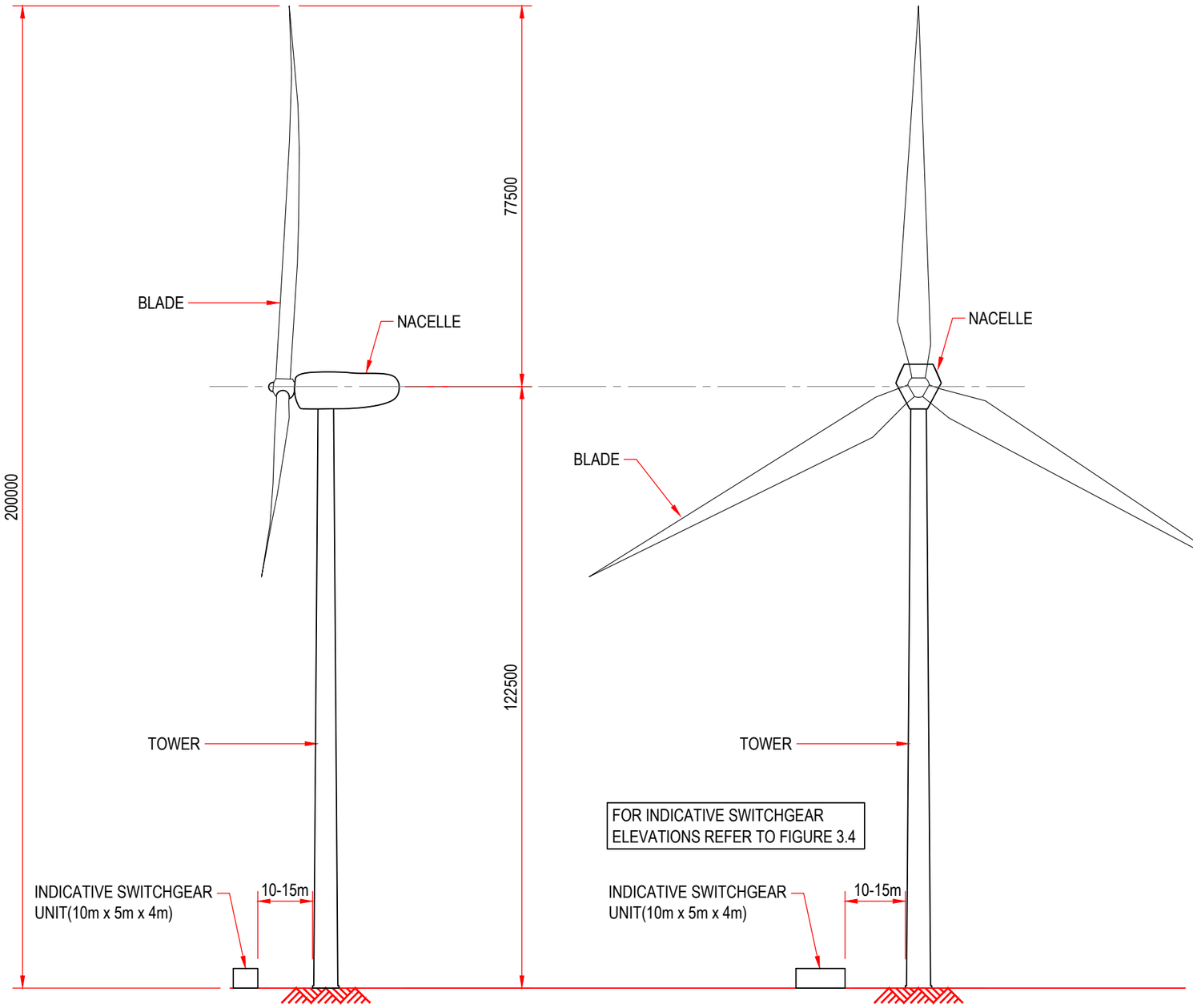
0 0.5 1
Kilometres

Scale: 1:28,000 @ A3

N W E S

REV 07

Path: P:\660000 - EPD Projects\663617 - Ben Aketil\01 - GIS\P663617_EIA.aprx\663617_SiteLayout



SIDE ELEVATION

SCALE 1:1000

FRONT ELEVATION

SCALE 1:1000

Rev	Description	Drawn	Chk'd	App'd.	Date
OB	LOGO UPDATED	RGG	RGG	GE	20/03/23
OA	FOR INFORMATION	MW	RGG	AMc	18/11/22

Originated By: MW	Date: 18/11/22		
Drawn By: MW	Date: 18/11/22		
Checked By: RGG	Date: 18/11/22		
Approved By: AMc	Date: 18/11/22		

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RSK

Project Title: The Repowered and Extended Ben Aketil Wind Farm

Drawing Title: Indicative Wind Turbines

Status: Planning

Scale: 1:1000

Drawing No.: Figure 2.4