

Agenda Item	8.2
Report No	PLN/051/26

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: North Planning Applications Committee

Date: 30 September 2026

Report Title: 24/02641/FUL: Constantine Wind Energy
Land 600M NE of 10 Lochend Holding, Barrock

Report By: Area Planning Manager – North

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Lochend Wind Farm Extension - Erection and operation of a wind farm for a period of 40 years, comprising 5 Wind Turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 149.9m, Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), access tracks and ancillary infrastructure.

Ward: 02 - Thurso and North West Caithness

Development Category: Major Development

Reason referred to Committee: Major Development

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

Recommendation

Members are asked to agree the recommendation to **GRANT** the application as set out in section 11 of the report.

1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.1 Planning permission is sought for the construction and operation of the Lochend Extension Windfarm with Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure. The indicative generating capacity of the wind farm is 21MW while the indicative storage capacity of the BESS facility is 10 MW. The application site is located directly to the west of the existing Lochend Wind Farm, comprising 4 wind turbines with a blade tip height of 99.5m and associated infrastructure. The existing wind farm received planning permission on appeal in December 2014, reference 13/02682/FUL (PPA-270-2108).
- 1.2 The proposed development comprises:
- 5 turbines up to 149.9m to blade tip;
 - Battery energy storage system (BESS) measuring 25m x 25m;
 - Turbine foundations, laydown areas, and permanent and temporary crane hardstanding areas. The largest elements are the crushed stone crane pads measuring 60m x 45m wide;
 - 1.8km of new access tracks, with a typical running width of 5m with localised widening for passing places;
 - Electrical and communication underground cables running along sections of the access track; and
 - Temporary construction compound and laydown area.
- 1.3 The proposals will link to the grid via the existing Lochend Wind Farm substation and connection route, with no additional works required to the existing export line. The proposal would also utilise portions of the existing wind farm's access tracks and junction onto the U 1707 public road.
- 1.4 A micro-siting allowance of 25m is requested for turbines and ancillary infrastructure, which would be used to avoid or minimise environmental, or engineering constraints identified during pre-construction ground investigation or construction phase excavation works. These constraints may include any areas of deeper peat, watercourse buffers and cultural heritage assets.
- 1.5 The final design of the turbine (colour and finish), aviation lighting, ancillary electrical equipment, landscaping and fencing etc. would also be agreed with the Planning Authority at the time of project procurement, which can be secured by condition. While indicative drawings for these elements are set out in the application, turbine manufacturers regularly update the designs that are available, thereby necessitating the need for some flexibility in the approved design details.

- 1.6 Permission is sought to operate the wind farm for 40 years, with the turbines to be decommissioned thereafter with components and above ground infrastructure removed.
- 1.7 The applicant has held three rounds of public consultation events at the Northern Sands Hotel in Dunnet in September and November 2023, with consultation material also being made available online through a dedicated webpage. Feedback including the applicant's response to the feedback provided through the consultation period is contained within the submitted Pre-Application Consultation Report (PAC).
- 1.8 The applicant utilised the Council's Pre-application Advice Service for Major Developments in February 2022 (21/05707/PREMAJ), with the proposal remaining largely as per the proposed in the application. The pre-application advice noted concerns regarding the scale of the turbines in relation to those of the existing Lochend Wind Farm, as well as impacts on peat and cultural heritage assets, most specifically the setting of the Category - A Listed Castle of Mey and its associated Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape.
- 1.9 The application is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), dated June 2024, the contents of which was informed through EIA Scoping. The EIAR contains environmental chapters covering: Site Selection and Design Evolution; Landscape and Visual Impacts; Ecology; Ornithology; Cultural Heritage; Hydrology, Geology and Peat; Noise; Traffic and Transport; and Socio Economics. The application is also accompanied by Figures and Visualisations, Technical Appendices, a Pre-Application Consultation Report, an EIA Non-Technical Summary (NTS), a Design and Access Statement, and a Planning Statement.
- 1.10 No variations have been made to the application since it was made. The applicant has however provided: confirmation on the form of financial agreements between the applicant and financially involved residents; confirmation of the grid connection works; and clarification regarding matters raised in the consultation responses from the Council's Transport Planning and Ecology teams. The applicant has also provided revised visualisations to Historic Environment Scotland (HES), in relation to concerns over the impact of the proposals on the Schedule Monument, Earl's Cairn SM 449

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The site is linear in form, extending northeast to southwest. It is located to the southeast of the small and dispersed settlement of Barrock and some 7.4km northeast of Castletown, accessed from the unclassified U1707 public road, in Caithness. The 18.25ha site is primarily marshy grassland, with agricultural fields supporting grazing and enclosed by post and wire fencing.

- 2.2 The topography of the site is generally level, forming a slight topographic depression located between the 50 and 40m contours Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The Hill of Slickly forms a localised high point in the area at around 73m AOD, being located some 2km to the northeast of the nearest turbine.
- 2.3 Loch Heilen is located some 1.6km to the west of the site. Several field drains and ditches are present within the site, draining to the Link Burn which flows from the east to the northwest some 280m north of the site, connecting with the Burn of Rattar, which discharges into the Pentland Firth 5.2km north of the site.
- 2.4 There are no residential properties within the site boundary; however, properties are present in the vicinity with the closest being within the Lochend Holdings some 600m west of the northern part of the site and at 500m west of the southern part.

Environmental Designations and Habitats

- 2.5 The application site does not form part of any natural heritage designation. The site is located some 15km to the northeast of the Flow Country World Heritage Site (WHS) and lacks hydrological connectivity to this. The applicant's assessment covers designated sites in the wider area as tabled:

Designation	Distance to Site Boundary	Qualifying Interests
Loch Heilen Site of Scientific Special Interest (SSSI)	1 km west	Greenland white-fronted goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>), greylag goose (<i>Anser anser</i>), whooper swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) non-breeding
Stroupster Peatlands SSSI	2 km east	Blanket bog and freshwater habitats (Oligotrophic loch)
Dunnet Links SSSI	2.2 km west	Coastal geomorphology and sand dune habitats.
Phillips Mains Mire SSSI	2.2 km northeast	Blanket bog habitats
Loch of Mey SSSI	3 km north	Transition grassland habitats, breeding bird assemblage and non-breeding Greenland white-fronted goose.
Caithness Lochs Special Protection Area (SPA)	Nearest 1 km west	Greenland white-fronted goose, greylag goose and whooper swan non-breeding.

Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA	Nearest 1 km east	Annex 1 species: red-throated diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>), black-throated diver (<i>Gavia arctica</i>), hen harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>), golden eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>), merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>), golden plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>), wood sandpiper (<i>Tringa glareola</i>), short-eared owl (<i>Asio flammeus</i>), dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina schinzii</i>). Along with migratory populations of common scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>), greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>) and wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>).
Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar	2 km east	Blanket bog, depressions on peat substrates, otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>), acid peat-stained lakes and ponds, wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, clearwater, marsh saxifrage (<i>Saxifraga hirculus</i>) and very wet “quaking” mires.
Caithness Lochs Ramsar	Nearest 1 km west	Greenland white-fronted goose, greylag goose and whooper swan non-breeding.

- 2.6 The application site is mainly agricultural land, predominantly comprising marshy grassland. Other habitats present include improved grassland and dry modified bog, although no evidence of peat has been recorded. The applicant's peat survey did however identify the presence of peat depths in excess of 0.5m beyond the northern and southern site boundaries.
- 2.7 Evidence of otter and water vole has been recorded within the site. Additionally, the site and surrounds have been surveyed for ornithological interests with several sensitive species recorded on or near the site, including: greylag goose, pink footed goose, Greenland white fronted goose, barnacle goose, whooper swan, golden plover, curlew, lapwing, hen harrier, short eared owl, barn owl, merlin, peregrine and white-tailed eagle. Collision risk modelling has also been undertaken for, whooper swan, Greenland white fronted goose, greylag goose, pink footed goose, hen harrier and curlew.

Landscape Designation, Wild Land, and Landscape Character

- 2.8 The proposed development does not form part of any landscape designation or Wild Land Area (WLA). The nearest of the latter is located in excess of 20km from the site. Landscape designations scoped in for assessment within the EIA's 45km study area tabled:

Designated Landscape	Distance / Direction from the Proposed Development
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	
SLA4: Dunnet Head.	6.5km northwest
SLA5: Duncansby Head.	11.5km northeast

- 2.9 In terms of the site's host Landscape Character Types (LCT) these comprise the Sweeping Moorland and Flows - Caithness and Sutherland LCT134 and Farmed Lowland Plain LCT 143. Surrounding LCTs within range of influence and turbine visibility include:

- 140 Sandy Beaches and Dunes LCT;
- 141 High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays LCT; and
- 144 Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT.

Built Heritage

- 2.10 No designated heritage assets are located within the site. The nearest designated heritage asset is the Earl's Cairn Scheduled Monument (SM449), 1km to the northwest. More widely, the 5km study area includes further 13 designated heritage assets. These include: Scheduled Monuments - an Iron Age broch, ecclesiastic settlement, church site and a 20th century coastal battery; One Category - A Listed Building - the Castle of Mey; and the Castle of Mey's Garden Designed Landscape.

Cumulative Development

- 2.11 Appendix 2 of this report provides details of operational, consented and under construction, and in planning wind farm projects within the 40km landscape and visual impact assessment study. The cut-off date for the applicant's LVIA was 10 August 2023; the status of several schemes in the cumulative study have therefore moved on and have been updated in this appendix.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1	30.03.2022	22/00437/SCOP: Lochend Extension Wind Farm - Erection and operation of a wind farm comprising 5 wind turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 150m and a total capacity of up to 21MW and ancillary infrastructure	EIA Scoping Response Issued
3.2	06.12.2023	23/04748/PAN: Extension of existing wind farm at Lochend to encompass a further 21 MW of wind generation capacity through 5 wind turbines each of up to 149.9 m to tip height, plus battery energy storage. Related infrastructure including circa 1.5 km od access track and turbine foundations.	PAN Reported to Committee
3.3	11.12.2014	Erection of 4 no 2300kw wind turbines with a height to tip of 99.5m, height to hub of 64m, rotor diameter of 71m and associated infrastructure.	Planning Permission Granted on Appeal by DPEA

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- 4.1 Advertised: EIA Development and Schedule 3 Development
Date Advertised: John O Groat Journal and Edinburgh Gazette, 9 August 2024
Representation Deadline: 8 September 2024
Representations: 9 objections (8 of which raise material considerations)
- 4.2 Material considerations raised are summarised:
- a) Siting, layout, and design considerations;
 - b) Residential and community amenity impact; noise and shadow flicker; risk to community health and safety from the proposed BESS;
 - c) Traffic impact on the local road network; capacity and condition;
 - d) Landscape and visual impact, including cumulative effects;
 - e) Ecological impact, including cumulative effects on ornithological: Greenland white-fronted geese, invertebrates including bee populations, biodiversity, habitats, and habitat management;
 - f) Pollution, notably light pollution during construction;
 - g) Socio-economic impact, including effects on employment, tourism and recreation;
 - h) Omissions / errata within the EIA report;

- i) Claimed inconformity with the Electricity Act, the Development Plan, and other related national energy policy documents; and
- j) Pre-application and consultation process concerns for nearby residences and workplaces.

4.3 Non-material considerations raised are summarised:

- a) The need for the development / wind farm development;
- b) Preference for other types of energy generation;
- c) Energy generation curtailment; and
- d) Level of community benefit funding.

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 <https://www.highland.gov.uk/planning/view-comment-planning-applications>.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 **Dunnet and Canisbay Community Council (host)** did not respond to the consultation request.

5.2 **Bower Community Council** did not respond to the consultation request.

5.3 **Castletown Community Council** did not respond to the consultation request.

5.4 **Sinclair Bay Community Council** did not respond to the consultation request.

5.5 **Watten Community Council** did not respond to the consultation request.

5.6 **Access Officer** does not object subject to pre-start condition for an outdoor access statement detailing any access control infrastructure proposed, with indicative layouts to show public recreational use of the area will not be affected.

5.7 **Ecology Officer** does not object subject to species protection plans being secured via condition in respect of: otter, water vole and bats, plus provision of a bird protection plan. An updated Habitat Management Plan is required outlining finalised biodiversity enhancement measures. A pre-construction survey, Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and employment of an Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW) will also be required via condition.

5.8 **Environmental Health Officer** does not object, subject to conditions being imposed to: secure operational noise to maintain appropriate levels at financially involved, and non-financially involved, properties; a construction noise mitigation scheme; and an updated Private Water Supply (PWS) risk assessment.

- 5.9 **Flood Risk Management Team** does not object and has no specific comments.
- 5.10 **Forestry Officer** does not object and has no specific comments.
- 5.11 **Historic Environment Team (Archaeology)** does not object, subject to a standard condition to secure an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI).
- 5.12 **Historic Environment Team (Conservation)** does not object to the application. In terms of the impacts of the proposals on the local heritage assets within their remit, these appear to be of a distance from the proposals that they would be minimally impacted by the development.
- 5.13 **Landscape Officer** does not object. The conclusions on landscape and visual impacts arrived at through the applicant's EIAR are generally agreed.
- 5.14 **Transport Planning Team** do not object, but raised comments related to the level of detail provided in the applicant's Transport Assessment. Conditions are recommended to include: a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), Abnormal Loads Plan; an assessment of road conditions and structures; a Road Mitigation Scheme on the C1010, C1033 and U1701; and a Section 96 Wear and Tear Agreement.
- 5.15 **Civil Aviation Authority** did not respond to the consultation request.
- 5.16 **Defence Infrastructure Organisation** does not object subject to conditions to secure its prior approval of an appropriate aviation lighting scheme as well as details of turbine locations and height, construction equipment heights, and the dates of development commencing and the first operation of the development for aviation charting purposes in the interests of aviation safety.
- 5.17 **Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd.** does not object as the development would not infringe the safeguarding criteria and operation of Wick Airport.
- 5.18 **Historic Environment Scotland** does not object. Following the submission of additional visualisations and a site visit with the applicant in April 2025. While it is considered that the proposals would result in a significant adverse impact on the setting of the Earl's Cairn SM 449, these setting impacts do not raise issues of national importance.
- 5.19 **National Air Traffic Services** does not object. The proposals do not conflict with the NATS safeguarding criteria.
- 5.20 **NatureScot** does not object subject to conditions. It has considered the proposal's impacts in relation to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and SPA and Caithness Lochs SPA. The Highland Council, as competent authority, is required to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of these site's conservation objectives

for their qualifying interests. In relation to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and the qualifying interest of otter, it is considered appropriate to condition the requirement for a finalised otter Species Protection Plan, adopting the applicant's good practice mitigation measures. Otherwise, Nature Scot's appraisal concludes that the proposals will not adversely affect the integrity of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and SPA and the Caithness Lochs SPA.

- 5.21 **RSPB objects** as they do not agree that it can be concluded that there would be no adverse effects on the site integrity of the Caithness Lochs SPA, due to potential impacts on Greenland White-fronted Goose and Whooper Swan. These impacts include loss of feeding habitat and displacement of feeding birds, barrier effects and collision risk.
- 5.22 **Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)** does not object, subject to conditions to ensure that works are carried out in line with the measures outlined in the Schedule of Mitigation / Environmental Commitments.
- 5.23 **Scottish Forestry** does not object given the proposals do not appear to impact the adjacent plantations. It provides further information from their records in relation to planting schemes in the area.
- 5.24 **Scottish Water** does not object. There are no Scottish Water drinking water catchments or water abstraction sources in the area that may be affected by the development.
- 5.25 **Transport Scotland** does not object, subject to conditions to secure a CTMP, confirmation of the route for abnormal loads, together with any accommodation measures, and any additional signage and temporary construction traffic control measures.

6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY AND OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

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

7. PLANNING APPRAISAL

- 7.1 Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This means that the application requires to be assessed against all policies of the Development Plan relevant to the

application, all national and local policy guidance and all other material considerations relevant to the application.

Planning Considerations

7. The key considerations in this case are:
- a) Development Plan / Other Planning Policy
 - b) Energy and Economic Impacts
 - c) Construction Impacts
 - d) Siting, Layout, and Design
 - e) Landscape and Visual Impacts
 - f) Natural Heritage (including ornithology)
 - g) Built and Cultural Heritage
 - h) Roads, Transport and Access
 - i) Water, Flood Risk, Drainage and Peat
 - j) Noise and Shadow Flicker
 - k) Other Material Considerations

Development Plan and Other Planning Policy

- 7.2 Appendix 4 of this report provides an assessment of compliance with the Development Plan / Other Material Policy Considerations. In summary, the Development Plan comprises National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), the adopted Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP), The Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan), and all statutorily adopted supplementary guidance, including the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG).
- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 The above is also reflected within other material policy considerations, with Government policy giving significant weight to the importance of achieving net zero through the deployment of onshore wind at pace. Government legislation and policy maintain the commitment to attaining net zero by 2045, with the Onshore Wind Policy Statement requirement for 20GW of onshore wind to be deployed by 2030, and the Climate Change Committee Report to UK Parliament (July 2024) explaining

that onshore wind installations will need to double by 2030. The UK Government Clean Power Action Plan has also recently set a more ambitious target of 27-29 GW of onshore wind by 2030. When determining renewable energy proposals, the ability to meet these targets therefore demands substantial weight when undertaking the planning balance exercise.

- 7.5 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” listed in its 10 criteria, which are designed to assist the application of HwLDP policy in judging the final balance of benefits versus disbenefits of any given scheme. Appendix 7 of this report provides an assessment against the ten Landscape and Visual Assessment Criteria contained within Section 4 of the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance.

Energy and Economic Impacts

- 7.6 The Council continues to respond positively to the Government’s renewable energy agenda. Installed onshore wind energy developments within 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.
- 7.7 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. The proposed development would provide 21MW of installed capacity in addition to 10MW of battery energy storage capacity.
- 7.8 Wind turbines provide an important mechanism for the reduction of carbon dioxide (CO₂), 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 forestry or peat, are present and potentially impacted by the development, often termed “carbon balance”. The applicant’s assessment of the carbon losses and gains in this respect, estimates a total displacement of 35,584 tonnes of CO₂ emissions.
- 7.9 The proposed development anticipates a construction period of 10 months and an operational lifetime of 40 years. There are likely to be some adverse effects caused by construction traffic and disruption, particularly when abnormal loads are being delivered to site. However, such projects can offer investment/opportunities to the

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

7.10 As detailed in their Socio-Economic Statement in EIAR Chapter 13, the applicant has estimated that the construction cost of the development will be up to £27 million. The applicant calculates that the development will result in the following socio-economic benefits:

- Construction Phase: £530,710 Gross Valued Added (GVA) and 10.6 job years in Scotland;
- Operational Phase: £1,923,300 GVA and 44.6 job years in Scotland.

These economic contributions are positive and beneficial and are considered by the applicant to be significantly beneficial in terms of regional economic growth in Highland, although not in EIA terms as, even with the addition of cumulative effects with other wind farms, they would be considered unlikely to lead to a fundamental change in economic and employment activity within Highlands over a longer operational phase time period.

7.11 Potential negative socio-economic effects relate to tourism and recreational users of the surrounding area. The application includes an assessment on recreational receptors surrounding the site, including but not limited to users of the A836 and A99 roads (NC500), the Far North Way nationally recognised cycle route, and people visiting Dunnet Head SLA. The assessment considers that whilst there will be some adverse effects, these will be localised and not significant.

7.12 The Council published the Social Value Charter for Renewables Investment in June 2024, which has been brought to the applicant's attention. The Council's Community Wealth Building Team has been notified of the proposal who will liaise with the applicant directly to maximise community wealth building opportunities as established under NPF4 Policy 25. However, as Members are aware, community benefits are not material to this assessment. A condition is however recommended to secure details of a local employment scheme; this is in order to ensure compliance with NPF4 Policy 11c) and to maximise the local socio-economic benefits of the development to the wider community.

Construction Impacts

7.13 The applicant anticipates that the wind farm construction period will be 10 months. There are likely to be some adverse impacts caused by construction traffic and disruption, particularly when abnormal loads are being delivered to site. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) can be secured by condition to manage the impacts upon the local road network throughout the construction period. EIAR Chapter 12 on Traffic and Transport outlines the mitigation measures that would be included with the finalised CTMP, with this document to be reviewed throughout the construction works, informed by feedback from ongoing engagement

with the community through a Community Liaison Group to ensure that affected community councils and other stakeholders are kept up to date and consulted before and during the construction period.

- 7.14 A finalised Construction and Environment Management Plan (CEMP) would be in place during the construction phase; an outline CEMP has been provided. The CEMP would control potentially polluting activities and prevent adverse impacts on river catchments, water supply catchments, and the environment during construction. The Principal Contractor would implement measures outlined within the CEMP, as agreed with consultees including SEPA and NatureScot. The CEMP will also be amended to incorporate information obtained during detailed ground investigations which will be undertaken post consent and prior to construction activities.
- 7.15 Along with the CEMP, construction must also comply with finalised and agreed plans and strategies for pollution prevention; construction methods; peat and soil management; site waste management; construction dust management; water quality management and fish monitoring; species protection; breeding bird protection; construction traffic management; biodiversity enhancement and habitat management; historic environment enhancement; and site restoration and aftercare. Compliance with the CEMP and other plans and strategies will be overseen by a suitably qualified and experienced Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW) and any other qualified Clerks of Work or consultants as required, which should be secured by condition.
- 7.16 The applicant's desired construction hours would be from 07:00 - 19:00 Monday to Friday and Saturday 07:00 to 13:00. No working is proposed on Sundays and public holidays although the applicant proposes exceptions for works that would not result in noise at sensitive properties while delivery of AIL may require flexibility due to logistical factors outwith the applicant's control (scheduling controls imposed by Police Scotland and weather constraints for example). The Council also acknowledges that foundation pours and turbine erection, where both activities need to be continuous, may also be required to be undertaken outwith normal construction hours.
- 7.17 In any case, developers must 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. Environmental Health has raised no objection subject to a Construction Noise Management Plan (CNMP) being secured via condition. It is expected that the developer/contractor will employ the best practicable means to minimise construction noise, which should be included as part of the CEMP and CNMP.

- 7.18 The applicant has requested a micrositing allowance of up to 25m for wind turbines and associated infrastructure including tracks and other hardstanding. Micrositing is acceptable within reason to address unforeseen onsite constraints. A wider, 50m limit is considered standard for turbines to ensure that the final installation does not deviate substantially to what has been assessed, in particular with regard to landscape and visual impacts, meaning that turbines should also not be micro-sited on to noticeably higher elevations of ground (no more than 5m AOD). The proposed refined 25m micrositing allowance proposed is therefore welcomed and enables a higher degree of certainty regarding the proposal's environmental effects.
- 7.19 Once the turbines have been installed, the access tracks, substation and hardstanding areas around the turbines would remain in place for the operational lifetime of the development. Restoration of the temporary construction compound areas, verges and turbine base edges can be secured through the CEMP. In addition, the Council will require the applicant to provide a financial bond regarding final site restoration (restoration bond) in the event of non-operation.
- 7.20 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.

Siting, Layout and Design

- 7.21 Chapter 3 of the EIAR describes the factors that led to selection of the site. In this respect, key considerations were the higher-than-average windspeeds on site and the proximity of the operational Lochend Wind Farm and the ability to connect into this development's infrastructure. Further factors included, but were not limited to, the site's location outwith national and international statutory designations for landscape and nature conservation and distance from larger settlements.
- 7.22 Chapter 4 of the EIAR sets out the design principles that underpin the applicant's finalised layout. In this respect, the finalised layout seeks to maintain a linear turbine array and make best use of existing infrastructure on the adjacent, operational wind farm.
- 7.23 In addition to the above, the proposal's fit with existing, approved, and proposed wind energy development in the surrounding area is also a key consideration. Wind farm siting, layout, and design principles should consider the proposal's relationship with other wind energy developments in its wider context given the ever-increasing presence of turbines in the landscape. In that regard, the design principles should take into account the baseline and potential additional changes to the current baseline.
- 7.24 With the above in mind, factors such as the degree to which nearby developments follow similar 'development patterns' in terms of siting, layout, and design can

determine the degree to which schemes sit harmoniously or discordantly together in the landscape. Therefore, similarities and differences between receiving landscapes and Landscape Character Types; the degree to which the size and scale differences between the schemes and individual components, especially turbine proportions, such as relative tip and hub heights, are experienced by receptors and what effects these factors have on landscape resources and receptors' enjoyment of landscape and view qualities, amongst other things, are key in the assessment of landscape and visual effects.

- 7.25 Not only is consideration of how the siting and design of multiple developments relate to each other, and the cohesiveness of their relationship to their surroundings from fixed viewpoints important, but also how wind farms relate to each other in terms of their frequency when moving through the landscape. Such consideration includes understanding the visual separation between schemes, which is important 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 sequential impacts on important routes in the wider area.
- 7.26 As with all wind farm development, there remains potential for significant residual landscape and visual effects that require further consideration even though mitigation is, or should be, embedded into the design. Any assessment must pay particular attention to the specific hosting and neighbouring LCTs along with the landscape composition, as well as any landscape designations in the wider area, susceptible receptors, public views and the amenity of residents, recreational, and road user receptors.
- 7.27 For landscape and visual receptors, the design of the development and its relationship with the surrounding landscape and features is best demonstrated by visuals from:
- North – VP2 (Barrock, 2.1km distant from the nearest proposed turbine). This viewpoint is located on the C1010 Barrock Road within the dispersed settlement and represents views experienced by residents and road users. All the proposed turbines would be visible to hub height from this location, viewed in the context of the Lochend Wind Farm.
 - East – VP1 (Slickly, 1.8km distant from the nearest proposed turbine). This viewpoint provides an expansive, panoramic view from the C1037 public road looking northwest, representing views experienced by residents and road users. All proposed turbines would again be visible advancing the influence of wind turbines into the foreground of the view, seen against Lochend Wind Farm.

- South – VP4 (Lyth Memorial, 3.9km distant from the nearest turbine). This viewpoint looks north from the crossroads of the C1006 and C1037 and represents views experienced by residents and visitors to the Lyth War Memorial. All proposed turbines would again be visible, extending either side of the Lochend Wind Farm, which reads as a tight liner group of turbines viewed head on in the central part of the view.
- West – VP3 (Lochend, 2.5km distant from nearest turbine). This viewpoint looks northeast from the U1707 public road and primarily represents views experienced by road users. All proposed turbines will again be visible, spread evenly across the central part of the view.

7.28 The implications of the application proposal on the physical and perceptual experience of the landscape and the visual experience of the receptor are considered in the respective Landscape Impact and Visual Impact section below.

Ancillary Infrastructure

7.29 The proposed BESS facility is estimated by the applicant to be relatively small scale, comprising 10 battery storage containers, each with dimensions of 3m high, 12m long and 2.5m wide. In this case, a condition may be imposed to secure the detailed BESS layout demonstrates compliance with Health and Safety Guidance for Grid Scale Electrical Energy Storage Systems, National Fire Chiefs Council's Guidance - Guidance on Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System Planning, and Draft Guidance approved for publication December 2025 and/or any or any superseding guidance prevailing at the time. Water supply, drainage including segregation, containment, and safe disposal of expended fire suppression agents and / or water from the water environment are relevant to the consideration of the BESS facilities and as such, details of these matters may also be secured by condition. Similarly, the final layout, component designs, and external material finishes, together with the compounds and perimeter fencing can be secured by condition.

7.30 The final colour/finish of the turbines is also to be secured by a planning condition which is standard practice. The EIAR also advises that turbine transformers will be located within the turbine towers so there would be no requirement for additional external buildings at turbine locations. The development will also require high voltage electrical and fibre optic communications cabling across the site, which should be so installed so as the cabling trenches follow the course of the access tracks from each turbine to the on-site substation, to minimise ground disturbance. Owing to the connection being proposed to Lochend Wind Farm, there will be no further grid cabling / connection works required beyond the application site boundary.

7.31 Once the wind farm has been commissioned, the site restoration would involve landscaping and replanting disturbed areas that are not required for the ongoing

operational phase of the development. This will include the landscaping and re-profiling of the access track verges and reinstatement of disturbed areas adjacent to the substation, the temporary construction areas and around the crane hardstandings and turbine foundations. A programme of reinstatement monitoring will be implemented in the first few years of operation to document the success of revegetation of these areas.

Landscape and Visual Impacts

- 7.32 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 and on neighbouring LCTs; direct impacts on landscape designations; and impacts on surrounding landscape designations.
- 7.33 The applicant's assessment of landscape and visual impact is set out in Chapter 4 of the EIAR. A total of 21 viewpoints (VPs) within a 40km study area have been assessed in relation to landscape and visual effects. Appendix 5 of this report provides a further appraisal of the applicant's assessment methodology.

Landscape Character

- 7.34 The site lies within two landscape character types; LCT134 - Sweeping Moorland and Flows and LCT143, Farmed Lowland Plain.
- 7.35 LCT134 is an extensive type covering much of the land to the north, south and east of the proposed development site and consisting of gently sloping or undulating landforms that generally lie below 350m AOD with occasional isolated hills of limited height forming landmark features. The LCT is punctuated by lochs and mature, meandering rivers and is noted for its distinct flora, dominated by sphagnum mosses. The sensitivity of this LCT to change is medium as there are already several large operational or consented wind farms within it.
- 7.36 LCT143 covers much of the inland area to the west of the application site and consists of an open, low-lying plain, gently undulating to form shallow broad valleys, which are often filled with lochs and subtle low ridges. The sensitivity of the LCT to change is medium, considering in part, the presence of in the northern part, between Spittal and Thurso, of larger scale electricity infrastructure, including overhead lines and pylons and substation development.
- 7.37 The proposals would lead to an increase in the influence of wind energy development upon landscape character, with significant, although localised effects incurred in this regard on the western part of LCT134, between Rattar and Lyth and the eastern part of LCT143. The proposed development is located in the agricultural and moorland landscape of northeast Caithness, now characterised by the

presence of a series of operational wind farms. Although the proposed turbines would be higher than those of the closest neighbouring developments, and despite significant localised landscape character impacts, it is considered that the underlying characteristics of the landscape, namely its large scale and large skies, would remain.

- 7.38 The applicant has not identified significant effects on any other surrounding LCT. This is accepted given the intervening distance. NatureScot do not object to the proposals on landscape grounds and the proposals impact on landscape character are acceptable with significant effects being sufficiently localised.

Landscape Designations

- 7.39 The proposed development is not situated within any landscape designation. The closest is Special Landscape Area (SLA) 4 Dunnet Head, 5km west at its closest point. This area includes the most northerly point on mainland Britain. The peninsula is characterised by its prominent headland, vertical cliffs and expanse of isolated moorland. Dunnet Head juts out into the Pentland Firth. To the south, settled farmland and a sandy beach and dune system provide a contrasting landscape experience. Extensive views are available over land and sea to the Orkney Isles to the north, Strathy Point to the west, Duncansby Head to the east and the hills of the Flow Country, including the peaks of Morvern, Maiden Pap and Scaraben to the south. These expansive views contribute to the “edge of the world feeling” expressed in the SLA citation.
- 7.40 An onshore wind farm in proximity, but outside of the SLA would be expected to affect this special quality of “Panoramic Views from Prominent Headland and Striking Cliffs” that is noted within the citation. In this respect, the proposed extension wind farm acts to intercept views in the middle distance inland from the SLA, as is most apparent at Viewpoint 12 (Dunnet Head). It is noted however, that the proposals will in this respect, be seen in the context of a part of the large-scale view that has been altered by wind farms, most notably the existing Lochend Wind Farm and the more distant Stroupster.
- 7.41 The applicant’s assessment notes significant visual effects in the southwestern part of the SLA, as identified at Viewpoint 7 (West Dunnet), set in the context of dispersed settlement and rolling agricultural land and considered outwith the “Isolated Moorland and Lochans” special quality. No significant impacts are identified as distance from the proposals increases within the SLA itself, at Viewpoints 9 (A836 Castletown) and 12 (Dunnet Head). Therefore, the relationship with the sea apparent in the special SLA qualities “Panoramic Views from Prominent Headland and Striking Cliffs” and “Contrasting Bay and Cliff Landscapes” will remain unaltered and as such, significant landscape impacts would not be incurred on the integrity and character of the designation. This is not contested, with these findings reflecting the conclusions drawn by the Reporter for the recently approved

Hollandmey Wind Farm; notably referred to in paragraphs 126-133 of the DPEA Report (WIN-270-19), with that proposal being for a larger wind farm comprising ten turbines at the same maximum tip height of 150m located approximately 5.6km to the southeast of the SLA boundary, at its closest point.

- 7.42 The applicant's assessment also addresses potential effects on the Duncansby Head SLA (5), located some 12km to the northeast of the application site at its closest point. However, the special qualities of this SLA are based on commanding views out to sea and of the coast, rather than inland where the proposals would be located. Significant landscape impacts would not therefore be incurred on the integrity and character of the designation which is agreed.
- 7.43 In relation to Wild Land, no element of the proposed development is within a WLA. The nearest is beyond 20km from the proposal site and as such, the applicant's assessment considers that the proposals would not adversely impact the integrity of any WLA. This is not disputed and aligns with NatureScot's consultation response on the application.

Visual Impact

- 7.44 The Council considers visual impact using the criterion set out in Section 4 of the OWESG. Appendix 7 of this report provides an appraisal against the criterion and view as to whether the threshold set out in the guidance is met or not. Unsurprisingly, as visual impact assessment combines objective and subjective aspects through the application of professional judgement, there are differences between the applicant's assessment and the appraisal undertaken.
- 7.45 The applicant's assessment draws upon the supportive elements of how the proposal could be viewed within the landscape. The ZTV demonstrates that the scheme will be extensively visible in most directions out to a distance of 20km. Beyond this distance, there will be more intermittent visibility, with significant visual effects confined to an approximately 7.5km radius around the application site.
- 7.46 Whilst any large-scale wind energy scheme is expected to result in significant visual effects, the Council, through the OWESG, also acknowledges that significant effects does not automatically translate to unacceptable effects. Following a review of the applicant's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), there are areas of difference between Council Officers and the applicant in respect to the assessment of the magnitude of change and level of effect from: Viewpoints 10 (A99 North of Tofts), 12 (Dunnet Head) and 13 (A99 north of Quoys of Reiss). These differences relate to the applicant's assessment understating the magnitude of change and level of effect by one bracket below Officer's assessment. In all instances however, the applicant and Council Officers do not disagree on the significance of the visual effects for people at these viewpoints.

- 7.47 Appendix 6 of this report provides a visual appraisal of each LVIA viewpoint based on the applicant's methodology. This includes a summary of the applicant's assessment and the Council Officer's appraisal of the assessment, highlighting where there is agreement or disputes, observations or concerns.
- 7.48 Most viewpoints are considered by Officers, to be used by receptors of high sensitivity and susceptibility to wind energy development, although it is acknowledged that not all receptors experiencing the development from all viewpoints would have a high sensitivity to the development. The proceeding sections set out the predicted visual impacts split by residential receptors, road users, and for visitors / recreational users of the outdoors.

Impact on Residential Receptors

- 7.49 The settlement pattern across the applicant's LVIA study area is generally sparse and characterised by dispersed crofts and farms. Residential properties close to the proposals are clustered around Lochend Farm, Inkstack and Barrock to the west and Slickly to the east, with the closest being '2 Lochend Holding', some 300m from the nearest proposed Turbine (T) 1.
- 7.50 Appendix 6.2 of the EIAR provides a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA). 27 residential properties are assessed within a 2km study area, encompassing the dispersed settlements of Lochend, Inkstack and Slickly, respectively to the west, northwest and southeast of the site. The methodology of this assessment is based on the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 2/19 RVAA. The final step of the process is to conclude whether the 'residential visual amenity threshold' is reached or exceeded for those properties that incur the highest magnitude of visual impacts from proposed developments. The threshold is the point at which the visual amenity of a residential property is adversely affected to the extent it may become a matter of residential amenity. The threshold relates not to whether adverse visual effects may make a property a less attractive place to live, in terms of the private interest of the occupiers, rather would the property occupier experience unsatisfactory living conditions because of the development, which the planning system should protect for the public interest.
- 7.51 Proceeding from this standpoint, and consistent with the relatively recent Reporters' findings which examined this matter in depth for the proposed Strath Oykel Wind Farm also located in Highland (WIN-270-18), the acceptability of visual effects should be regarded as part of the overall planning balance. Factors to be weighed include, but are not necessarily limited to, A) the number of affected properties and B) the nature / magnitude of change and resultant level of effect on individual properties. In addition, any effects on residential visual amenity must also be considered alongside all other effects on residential amenity including noise, dust and shadow flicker, to make an overall assessment. Should the RVAA threshold be

breached, this may be critical determining factor, capable of tipping the balance in favour of refusal.

7.52 In the case of the applicant's assessment, visual effects are judged to breach the RVA threshold for three financially involved residential properties:

- Property P3 – 'South Lochend', due to the viewing distance and open nature of secondary views and views from garden areas; and
- Property Group 1 (G1), consisting of '10, Lochend' and 'Whitehouse', due to the viewing distance and open nature of views to the north and when accessing the properties.

The RVA threshold is reported not considered to be breached at any other properties assessed, which is not disputed.

7.53 Property P3 – South Lochend, constitutes a detached one storey property, fronting to the west and backing to the east, across open farmland, towards the Lochend Wind Farm and the proposed development. All of the proposed turbine hubs and blades will be visible to the east of the property, at a distance of around 600m to the closest turbine T2, in views from the rear elevation and garden area. In cumulative views, the proposed turbines will be the closest to the property, with those of the Lochend Wind Farm in the middle distance and the consented Hollandmey Wind Farm in the background.

7.54 Property group G1 is located some 500m from the closest turbine T4 and consists of one detached 1.5 storey property (Whitehouse) and one detached single storey property (10 Lochend). These properties face in a north – south direction. Similarly to the effects incurred at Property P3, the proposals will bring large turbines closer with those of the Lochend Wind Farm in the middle distance and the consented Hollandmey Wind Farm in the background to the east.

7.55 In respect of both Property P3 and Property Group G1, the significant effects on RVA highlighted in the applicant's assessment are agreed. It is not considered that effective mitigation, in the form of screening planting at these properties may be implemented. This is due to the relatively level and open nature of the intervening landform in views towards the proposed turbines. Owing to the scale of the proposed turbines not exceeding 150m, these will not require visible aviation lighting meaning assessment of significant visual effects does not need to also consider hours of darkness.

7.56 Critical to determining the acceptability of these breaches, is the property occupiers' financial interest in the proposed development. This may be given weight within the planning balance which is consistent with previous findings by several DPEA Reporters on appeal cases, as discussed in more detail in the later 'Residential Amenity and Financial Involvement' section of this report. In this respect, it might be expected that residents would be able to accept a reduction in their residential

amenity because of the financial benefits gained which can be considered to somewhat offset, or potentially be positive to their overall health and wellbeing, meaning these impacts could be regarded as the affected residential occupiers' personal choices, where there is not overriding reason for the Planning Authority to intervene; subject to further consideration of all other aforementioned residential amenity aspects.

- 7.57 Arguably, the visual impact for the affected non-financially involved properties demands greater weight in the determination process. In that regard, there are a further 10 properties reported to be financially involved elsewhere within the 2km RVAA study area, none of which where their residential amenity threshold has been reportedly breached. Similarly, of the 27 properties assessed within the RVAA, this is also reported to be the case for the remaining 14 residences. Impacts on residential visual amenity in these cases are generally mitigated by increasing distance from the proposed turbines as well as the outlook of the specific properties with respect to room and window placement and the additional screening provided by intervening vegetation and buildings, including outbuildings within the property curtilage. Having reviewed these findings and through Officer site visits, the RVAA findings are agreed, with no further breaches identified.
- 7.58 More generally, major and significant visual effects are contained to a 2.5km radius around the site. Beyond the RVAA's 2km study area, residential properties are dispersed along the minor road network, with the largest concentration directly outside the RVAA study area, present at Barrock to the west. As apparent from Viewpoint 2 (Barrock), properties within this settlement have varying orientations and outlooks toward the proposals, with varying degrees of intervening screening, as also discussed above, in relation to closer range views of the site. The proposals will be viewed in close association with the existing Lochend and consented Hollandmey wind energy schemes, with the lower lying elements of the development, including the BESS and turbine bases, screened by intervening forestry. As such, the proposals here, will not unduly disrupt the pattern of consented development in the area and the residential visual amenity impacts of the proposals overall, are consequently, considered suitably localised as a result.

Impact on Road Users

- 7.59 The OWESG's Caithness Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal identifies key routes within the area that may be affected. Sections of the A99, between Helmsdale, Wick and John o' Groats, will have theoretical visibility. There is disagreement between Officers and applicant on the magnitude of change or level of effect from two viewpoints on this route, within around 10km of the application site. However, it is agreed that these will not translate to significant sequential visual impacts on this route, as evidenced by Viewpoints 10 (A99 North of Tofts) east and 13 (A99 North of Quoys of Reiss) southeast. When visible, the proposed turbines will most likely

be seen in longer distance and oblique views from the A99 with the route passing some 9km to the southeast at its closest point. The applicants contend that most views from receptors on this route will favour facing out to sea, and that can also be supported in this respect. Owing to the setback from this route and its favourable seaward outlook, overall, it is agreed that the wind farm would have significant sequential effects for the route.

7.60 The A836 between John O' Groats and Thurso, which also form part of the NC 500 tourist route, passes some 2.8km to the north of the application site at its closest point. Significant sequential visual impacts are predicted along a 7km section of this route. This represents approximately 6 minutes of driving time between the settlements of Dunnet and Mey but would be considerably longer for cyclists. These impacts are best represented by Viewpoint 5 (Rattar), which is located on a local road to the north of the junction with the A836. Over this section of the A836, all of the proposed turbines will be visible to the west of those of the Lochend Wind Farm, to hub height. The difference in scale between the proposed turbines and those of the Lochend Wind Farm would be notable, most so for Turbines T1 to T3 in the northern part of the site closest to receptors. The proposal would however still read clearly as an extension to the operational development. Both the operational and proposed developments will also be viewed obliquely, rather than directly for road bound receptors. As such, whilst the distance and duration do result in a significant visual effect, this is along a stretch where there are already wind turbines in the baseline view and where significant effects would also arise from the consented Hollandmey Wind Farm. The proposals therefore represent a lateral extension to the consented cluster of wind farm development experienced from this route, with the additionality of the proposed development being limited over and above the consented cumulative position. It can therefore be agreed the visual effects arising from this proposal do not translate into unacceptable significant sequential effects for the overall route.

7.61 The applicant has assessed the visual impacts for passengers on the Gill's Bay Ferry route, which connects to St Margaret's Hope on South Ronaldsay, Orkney. As evidenced by the wirelines provided from Viewpoint 14 (Gills Bay Ferry), the proposed turbines will be seen on the horizon, and in the context of inland views that have been altered by several operational wind farms and would read well as an extension to the operational Lochend development. As such, it is agreed that significant visual impacts will not be incurred on the crossing.

Impact on Visitors and Recreational Users of the Outdoors

7.62 The applicant's assessment includes valued landmarks for visitors at Viewpoint 12 (Dunnet Head), Viewpoint 16 (Duncansby Head), Viewpoint 17 (Noss Head) and elevated locations that may be of interest for walkers Viewpoint 20 (Ben Dorrery) and Viewpoint 21 (Coire na Beinne). Significant visual effects are not predicted at

any of these locations, although the Council Officers and applicant disagree on the magnitude of change and level of effect at Viewpoint 12, considering the aspect at which views from this location are directed towards the proposed turbines and the relatively high cliffs of Dunnet Head, at some 127m AOD. Visibility from core paths CA05.15, Barrock to A836 via Rosegill and CA05.16, Mey link, will be limited by landform and forestry cover and as such, it is agreed that significant visual impacts would not result.

- 7.63 The Far North Way is a mainly on road cycle route from Inverness to John o' Groats and at its closest point to the proposed development, runs on the C1033 public road 1.9km northwest of the nearest turbine. Significant visual effects will be incurred along sections of the route between Thurso and John o' Groats, over some 7km distance, or approximately 30 minutes cycle time, as represented by Viewpoints 9 (A863 Castletown) and 2 (Barrock). Visibility of the proposed turbines, where incurred, will generally only be direct for receptors travelling east, with others viewing the turbines obliquely to the south of the route. Similarly to the effects on users of the parallel A836 (NC500) route to the north, as discussed above, this is along a stretch where there are already wind turbines in the baseline view and where significant effects would also arise from the consented Hollandmey Wind Farm, the proposals therefore representing a relatively limited lateral extension to the consented cluster of wind farm development experienced from this route. As such, given the relatively localised impacts, it is agreed that these do not translate into significant sequential effects overall.
- 7.64 The John o' Groats Long Distance Trail is a walking trail that runs along the eastern coastline of Caithness southward from John o' Groats. At its closest point, the Trail runs approximately 9.7km from the application site. Due to the complex coastal landform, visibility is only likely on a section to the south of Sinclair's Bay, as represented by Viewpoint 17 (Noss Head) at over 15km distance and as such, significant visual impacts will not occur.

Summary and Cumulative Visual Impact

- 7.65 When considering visual impact, it is important to consider the cumulative impact with other consented and proposed (application stage) developments. The applicants LVIA is based on three scenarios, Scenario 1 considering the cumulative impacts of the proposals in association with operational and consented developments, Scenario 2 including these impacts and the additional impacts of those schemes in the planning system.
- 7.66 Considering both the in solus and cumulative effects as detailed in Appendix 6 of this report, the proposals would read well as an immediate extension to the Lochend Wind Farm. Lochend would form a definable cluster of wind energy development along with the existing Stroupster and consented Slickly and Hollandmey wind farms to the north and east, should these proceed. In combination with this

emerging cluster, the proposed development would lead to an intensification of cumulative landscape and visual effects across the study area. However, these effects would take place in the context of a large-scale open landscape and would be largely contained to areas where the consented cluster of wind farm development would be experienced.

- 7.67 Considering the proposals read well as an extension to the Lochend Wind Farm from most viewpoints, and the applicant's overall assessment of significant effects being agreed, it is accepted that the proposals would not give rise to detrimental visual effects in solus, or curatively with other consented wind farm developments. The exception to this is the three properties where the RVAA threshold has been breached and are finically involved.

Natural Heritage (including ornithology)

Designated Sites

- 7.68 The application site does not form part of any designated site for nature conservation, with the nearest being the Loch Heilen SSSI some 1km west. The application site is also located in proximity to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatland SPA, SAC and Ramsar, and the Caithness Lochs SPA and Ramsar.
- 7.69 The Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA is protected for its peatland breeding birds. NatureScot advises that the proposals are likely to have significant effects on Hen Harrier, with roosts recorded to the northeast of the proposal. NatureScot do not consider that the proposals will adversely affect the integrity of the site, due to the low altitude of recorded hen harrier flights within the study area, the limited part the proposal site forms of the wintering range for this species and the abundance of other foraging habitat nearby.
- 7.70 The Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC is protected for its peatland habitats, otter and marsh saxifrage. NatureScot advises that the proposals are likely to have significant effects on otter, who use watercourses close to the application site. NatureScot do not consider that the proposals will adversely affect the integrity of the site, provided the proposal is carried out with the mitigation measures listed in the applicant's Otter Survey, as noted in Technical Appendix 7.4 of the EIAR, including a pre-construction otter survey, otter protection plan and covering of trenches, pits and pipe ends when unattended during construction, with escape ramps provided.
- 7.71 The Caithness Lochs SPA is protected for wintering populations of Greenland white-fronted geese, greylag geese and whooper swan. NatureScot advises that the proposals are likely to have significant effects on Greenland white-fronted geese, greylag geese and whooper swans, through disturbance by construction traffic and potential for collision mortality. NatureScot do not consider that the

proposals will adversely affect the integrity of the site, due to the presence of alternative feeding sites outwith the locus of the application site, habituation to disturbance of greylag goose and whooper swan populations and low predicted collision mortality.

- 7.72 The status of these sites, in this respect, means that the requirements of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, and c.) Regulations 1994 as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations') apply. Consequently, the Highland Council is required to consider the effect of the proposal on SPAs and SACs before it can be consented (commonly known as Habitats Regulations Appraisal) and, the Highland Council, as competent authority, is required to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of the sites' conservation objectives for their respective qualifying interests. While the responsibility to carry out the Appropriate Assessment rests with the Council, advice contained within Circular 6/1995 is that the assessment can be based on the information submitted from other agencies. In this case, the Appropriate Assessment is informed by information supplied by NatureScot, the applicant and various published information.
- 7.73 The appropriate assessment is included as Appendix 8 in this report. In relation to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and the qualifying interest of otter, it is considered appropriate to condition the requirement for a finalised otter Species Protection Plan, adopting the applicant's good practice mitigation measures. Otherwise, Nature Scot's appraisal concludes that the proposals will not adversely affect the integrity of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and SPA and the Caithness Lochs SPA and this is agreed by Officers.

Protected Species

- 7.74 The application site was subject to protected species surveys, undertaken in June and August 2021 and January 2024. Field surveys found evidence of otter and water vole within the site, with spraints, resting places and burrows present. Species Protection Plans (SPPs) will be required for both species via condition, building on the general mitigation tabled within the applicant's EIAR.
- 7.75 Bat flights were recorded across the site area, but it generally lacks favourable roosting features. The Ecology Officer considers the applicant's bat survey data is generally robust. An SPP for bats will be required via condition to any planning permission forthcoming due to the location of the turbine array with respect to adjacent plantation woodland that could otherwise provide bat habitat.
- 7.76 In relation to ornithology, the applicant's assessment focussed on whooper swan, Icelandic greylag goose, Greenland white-fronted goose, hen harrier and curlew, all species that are considered at high nature conservation importance, with the exception of curlew, considered as of moderate conservation importance. Chapter 8 of the applicant's EIAR considers the residual significance level of identified

effects on bird species during construction, operation, and decommissioning, either individually or cumulatively, would not be significant.

- 7.77 Public representations raised potential ornithological impacts of the proposals, particularly in relation to the cumulative impacts of wind farms in North Caithness on Greenland white fronted geese that are a feature of the Caithness Lochs SPA, in addition to hen harrier, which are a feature of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA, and curlew. While these representations and the objection form RPSB are acknowledged, NatureScot as the government's technical advisor, has not raised an objection to the proposals in this respect. The Ecology Officer also suggests a Bird Protection Plan be secured via condition, particularly in respect of hen harrier, with a cluster of winter roosts for these species located between 0.5km and 1km from the northernmost of the proposed turbines.

Habitats and Biodiversity Enhancement

- 7.78 The site is agricultural in nature, mainly comprising marshy and improved grassland. Other habitats present include improved grassland and dry modified bog. The applicant has submitted an Outline Biodiversity Enhancement Plan, as Technical Appendix 7.8, to guide the commencement of practical habitat creation and restoration techniques during construction of the proposed windfarm and to inform on-going habitat management throughout operation. The applicant has proposed mitigation for the potential impacts, including proposals for 7ha of rush pasture habitat in an area adjacent the proposed turbine array, the creation of a new mixed woodland block and 100m of new hedgerow.
- 7.79 The Ecology Officer is satisfied with the applicant's suggested biodiversity enhancement measures, which will benefit bats, waders and other bird species. The enhancement proposed is considered to accord overall with NPF 4 Policy 3 (b). Following comments from the Ecology Officer, the applicant has provided clarification to the habitat mapping based on comments made by the Ecology Officer. The applicant has not included a metric assessment of biodiversity enhancement, on the basis that "applications may demonstrate significant biodiversity enhancement in alternative ways such as the inclusion of enhancements which 'cannot be accurately taken into consideration through a metric'. Nevertheless, the Ecology Officer is satisfied that the applicant commits to enhancing an area of rush pasture habitat which is approximately 400% larger than the 1.16 ha of habitat temporarily lost during construction and the proposal therefore is considered compliant with the standards of the Council's Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance. The Ecology Officer, otherwise, provided further advice on the scope of the finalised Habitat Management Plan required to secure the biodiversity enhancement and noted additional measures that might be included, such as the creation or enhancement of foraging habitat for the geese known to use the site and creation of a wildlife pond. The applicant has responded

in this respect, with a commitment to the creation of a new wetland area and further enhancements for invertebrates.

Built and Cultural Heritage

- 7.80 The application red line site area does not contain any designated cultural heritage features, although there are features of national importance in the surrounding area. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) had initially objected to the proposals on the basis of impacts to the setting of the Earl's Cairn Scheduled Monument 449, located 1km to the northwest of the site. The monument is an Orkney-Cromarty type round cairn with a Camster type chamber and occupies the crest of a hill at Inkstack to the northwest of the Site, and likely dates to the Neolithic period. Northwest and southeast facing views, extending along the spine of the ridge are of significant value to understanding the asset's setting, based on the description of the cairn's passage also being oriented on this alignment, with wider landscape views to the surrounds in the remaining directions also considered important. The cairn's location along the ridge of the hill, affords a vantage point for longer ranging views to the southeast overlooking Loch Heilen.
- 7.81 While initially raising concern regarding the expansion of large turbines closer to the monument, possibly aligning with its axis and views out of the chamber, following the submission of additional visualisations and a site visit with the applicant in April 2025, HES's holding objection was subsequently withdrawn. HES still considers that the proposals would result in a significant adverse impact on the setting of the monument, which constitutes a prehistoric ritual and funerary chambered cairn, particularly in relation to views out from the cairn's entrance to the southeast. Modern infrastructure, including the Lochend Windfarm and this proposed extension, do impact on these key outward looking views, it would however, remain possible following development to continue to appreciate both views out from the chamber and the cairn's presence in the landscape.
- 7.82 HES's consultation response also included an assessment of impacts on the setting of and views from the Castle of Mey, a Category A listed building some 5km to the northeast of the proposals, important for its architecture, associated garden and designed landscape and connection with Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. HES considered views to, from and across or beyond the Castle of Mey; key vistas; the prominence of the castle and its garden and designed landscape in the surrounding Caithness landscape; the character of the surrounding landscape; general and specific views including foregrounds and backdrops; views from within the castle and the designed landscape outwards over key elements in the surrounding landscape; views from the principal rooms of the castle; relationships with other features, both built and natural; and finally, the 'sense of place': the overall experience of Castle of Mey.

- 7.83 HES noted that the proposals would be largely screened by existing vegetation in important views from the entrance forecourt and principal rooms on the 1st floor of the Castle, as illustrated by the applicant's cultural heritage visualisations. HES are, therefore, content that significant impacts on the setting of the Castle and Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape are unlikely. Beyond these nationally recognised assets, Highland Council's Historic Environment Team (Conservation) raised no further concerns in terms of the impacts of the proposals on the local heritage assets within their remit.
- 7.84 The Historic Environment Team (Archaeology), otherwise, has no objections to the proposed development, subject to the submission of a detailed archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation which can be secured by condition. It is therefore, concluded that the built and cultural heritage impacts of the proposed development are within acceptable limits, and whilst a HES have raised a concern in relation to one scheduled monument, they have not objected to the proposal or suggested that any further mitigation such as turbine deletions would be merited.

Roads, Transport and Access

- 7.85 The applicant has highlighted, in Chapter 12 of the EIAR, the expected traffic and transportation impacts of this development, particularly through the construction phase. The Port of Entry for turbine components is to be either Wick or Scrabster, with these then being routed to the site via the A9 and A836 and thereafter within the local road network on the C1010, C1033 and U2893, with the A99 also being used to access the A9 at Latheron if Wick is used as the port of entry.
- 7.86 The EIAR reports that the proposed development would lead to a temporary increase in traffic volumes on the road network during the construction phase. It is anticipated in EIAR Table 12.7 that the maximum total additional daily vehicle movements, including HGV's, during the entire construction period would average 50 two-way movements during month 4 of the construction phase. Traffic volumes would decrease considerably outside the peak period of construction. The applicant proposes a range of mitigation such as the formation of a Community Liaison Group and the delivery of a CTMP. In principle this type of mitigation is accepted subject to detailed consideration of the plan.
- 7.87 Transport Scotland raised no objections to the proposals, subject to conditions attached to any deemed planning permission to manage the impacts on the Trunk Road network during construction.
- 7.88 In their consultation response, the Council's Transport Planning Team raised concern over the condition of the local road network and questioned its capacity to handle the predicted construction traffic. Stone and aggregate for the proposed on-site access tracks and other areas of hardstanding are anticipated to be sourced from a quarry 0.6km from the site, reducing the amount of vehicle movements on

the wider public road network. However, there is concern over the ability of the single-track public roads in the immediate vicinity of the site; the C1010, C1033 and U1701, with respect to the increase in traffic through the construction phase and the need for abnormal indivisible load movements over these routes.

- 7.89 Transport Planning have confirmed that they would not object to the proposals. subject to conditions to secure a CTMP, Abnormal Loads Plan, an assessment of road conditions and structures, a Road Mitigation Scheme on the C1010, C1033 and U1701 and a Section 96 Wear and Tear Agreement to be attached to any planning permission in respect of the proposals. The applicant has confirmed in writing that they are willing to accept the delivery of a Road Mitigation Scheme, as defined by Transport Planning, via condition. The applicant will also be required to finalise a legal Section 96 Agreement under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 (as amended) to adequately compensate the public purse in the event of addition damage to Council maintained roads that can be attributable to the associated construction traffic.
- 7.90 In terms of wider public access, the Council's Access Officer notes that there is currently limited recreational access taken at the proposal site. There a no formal Core Paths within the application site or in its immediate vicinity. A basic outdoor access statement should be prepared as a condition of any planning permission, forthcoming, detailing any access control infrastructure proposed, with indicative layouts to show public recreational use of the area will not be affected.

Water, Flood Risk, Drainage and Peat

- 7.91 The results of the applicant's hydrological, flood risk, drainage and peat assessments are outlined in Chapter 10 of the EIAR. Several field drains and ditches are present within the site, draining to the Link Burn which flows from the east to the northwest approximately 280 m north of site. The Link Burn flows to the north and further north is known as Burn of Rattar, which discharges into the Pentland Firth 5.2 km north of the site.
- 7.92 The EIAR specifies that a Construction Environmental Management Document / Plan (CEMP) will be in place to ensure that potential sources of pollution on site can be effectively managed throughout construction and in turn during operation; albeit there will be fewer sources of pollution during operation. The CEMP can be secured by planning condition. This will ensure the agreement of construction methodologies with statutory agencies following appointment of the wind farm balance of plant contractor and prior to the start of development or works. All infrastructure has been designed to maintain a minimum 50m development free buffer zone around watercourses and water bodies where possible.
- 7.93 Scottish Water has confirmed that the site does not lie within a Drinking Water Protected Area (DWPA) and no Private Water Supplies (PWS) have been identified

with potential hydrological connectivity to the site. Environmental Health, however, recommend that prior to commencement of the development an updated PWS risk assessment is included in the development's Construction Environment Management Plan, as may be secured via condition.

- 7.94 The applicant's peat depth survey noted the presence of peat depths in excess of 0.5m to the north and south of the survey area, which exceeds that of the application site red line boundary. The survey confirmed however, that no peat underlies the site directly. The site otherwise, is not underlain by Prime Agricultural Land, this being that identified as being Class 1, 2 or 3.1 in the land capability classification for agriculture developed by Macaulay Land Use Research Institute (now the James Hutton Institute). It is not anticipated that the proposals, once built out on site, would inhibit continuing agricultural operations or access on holdings in the locality.

Noise and Shadow Flicker

- 7.95 Predicted operational noise levels are expressed in the applicant's EIAR Chapter 11. These relate only to the operational noise of the wind energy generation aspects of the development; the operational noise implications of the proposed BESS being scoped out due to the small scale of this element and distance from the closest of the 13 Noise Sensitive Receptors (NSRs) within the applicant's assessment.
- 7.96 Environmental Health had initially requested further information on the applicants proposed noise limits, as adopted in their assessment, of 38dB daytime and 43dB (nighttime), due to the very low levels of background noise prevalent in rural parts of Highland. At this time, the only 11 Noise Sensitive Receptors (NSRs) were financially involved with the proposals, although all 13 are now confirmed to have reached financial agreements with the applicant. On this basis, Environmental Health removed their initial objection to the proposals, subject to a condition limiting noise arising from the development to no more than 45dB LA90, or 5dB above background, whichever is greater, at any financially involved receptor. In cases such as this, where occupiers are financially involved with development, noise limits can be set higher by the relevant thresholds in the 1997 ETSU-R-97 UK Government Guidance and superseding 2026 Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Turbines guidance (ARWTN).
- 7.97 Shadow Flicker is the strobe effect caused when a wind turbine's rotating blades intermittently cast shadows over a property's windows as they turn. Through Chapter 13 of the EIAR, the applicant has conducted an assessment showing that the modelled occurrence of shadow flicker within a realistic scenario, of 30 hours per year or 30 minutes per day (taking account of average meteorological conditions from the nearest Met Office station) is within the accepted limits for realistic shadow flicker, with the exception of five receptors:
- Whitehouse

- 10 Lochend
- South Lochend
- 2 Lochend; and
- 3 Lochend.

7.98 The most impacted of these properties, Whitehouse would theoretically, receive 107.4 hours of shadow flicker in a year. The applicant considers that a Shadow Flicker Protocol could be agreed via condition, to set out potential mitigation measures should a shadow flicker complaint be received. These could include the provision of blinds, shutters or curtains for any affected window at the developer's expense and a shutdown protocol for specific turbines causing shadow flicker, when weather conditions might otherwise lead to this effect, enabled by sensors within the machines. It is noted in this respect, that all 5 of the properties discussed above, are financially involved in the development, as is discussed in more detail below.

Other Material Considerations

Residential Amenity and Financial Involvement

- 7.99 Given the siting and design of these proposals, which would introduce large wind turbines within 500m of the closest residential properties, it is necessary to consider the overall impacts on the amenity of the affected properties that would result both individually, and in respect of the overall planning balance, in terms of noise, visual amenity and shadow flicker.
- 7.100 ETSU-R-97 – “The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms” and the superseding Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Turbines: guidance (ARWTN) (2026) provides advice to Local Authorities on a UK wide basis for assessing planning applications for onshore wind development and states that where an occupier of a residential property has an ongoing financial involvement with a wind farm, higher operational noise limits can be set than where no such involvement exists.
- 7.101 As noted by Environmental Health in their consultation response, considering the large number of financially involved properties, 13 in this case, there is a relatively greater potential for changes of ownership or occupancy during the 40-year lifetime of the proposed development. There is a risk that any new occupier may not wish to continue the financial arrangement and may subsequently complain about the higher operational noise levels.
- 7.102 In this respect, the applicant has provided templates of the relevant financial participation agreements with both owners and tenants. These stipulate that in the case of any change of ownership or tenancy, the new owner or tenant enters in terms that oblige them to comply with the terms of the participation agreement, so resulting that the agreement continues for the operational lifespan of the

development. The template agreements define that, as a consequence of the occupier becoming financially involved in the development, the limits in relation to noise generated as measured at the property and imposed by way of planning condition will be higher than they would have been had there been no financial involvement. Occupiers must also accept that the visual effect of the proximity of the turbines is recognised there may be an effect of shadow flicker depending on the thresholds set by the Council.

- 7.103 In terms of residential visual amenity and shadow flicker, while the financial involvement of the properties with the proposed wind farm extension does not change the findings of the assessments of each issue, there is precedent in previous decisions for how the impacts are weighted within the overall planning balance. While private views from residential properties are not a material planning consideration, it is accepted that it would not be in the public interest for proposals to create unacceptable living conditions at a dwelling, through previous appeal cases including the Ashmark Windfarm (PPA-190-2042) and Pinesburn (PPA-140-2069). The Reporters in these instances, concluded that an appropriate test would be if proposals would result in “overbearing visual effects on residential amenity to a degree that any property might be considered an unattractive place in which to live.” In the appeal decision of the Harelaw Energy Park (Harelaw Energy Park (Section 36 Wind Farm & Section 37)), the Reporter considered that residents of properties with a financial involvement in that proposed wind farm, would be willing to accept diminution in their residential amenity because of the financial benefits to be gained.
- 7.104 The planning balance requires consideration of the renewable energy benefits of the extension wind farm proposals against these adverse impacts, with regard to the development plan and all other material considerations. At 3 of the 27 properties within the applicant’s RVAA, visual effects are judged to breach the residential visual amenity threshold, although it is recognised that in all cases these properties are financially involved with the development through a legal participation agreement. At 5 of 17 properties within the applicant’s Shadow Flicker Assessment, the accepted limits for realistic shadow flicker are exceeded, although it would otherwise, be possible to mitigate these through a Shadow Flicker Protocol.
- 7.105 All of the affected properties are privately owned and the Caithness Housing Market Area is recognised through the Council’s most recent Housing Needs and Demands Assessment (2021) to have relatively low housing demand pressure, which is relevant should these properties, whilst unlikely, become vacant as a result of the wind farm proceeding. The participation agreements between the applicant and the property owners are enduring through any change of owner or tenant, to the effect that any new occupier must accept the comparative reduction in amenity as a matter of choice within the housing market.

- 7.106 While operational noise impacts are regulated by quantified thresholds in national guidance, and shadow flicker impacts may be addressed through mitigation measures, the impacts in terms of residential visual amenity are more subjective. Here, the threshold relates not to whether these effects may make a property a less attractive place to live in terms of the private interest of the occupiers, rather they relate to if the property would experience unsatisfactory living conditions because of the development, which the planning system should protect from in the public interest.
- 7.107 While the magnitude of the impacts on residential visual amenity, where the relevant thresholds are exceeded, are agreed; they apply to a relatively limited proportion of properties adjacent the proposal site and in an area where there is relatively restricted demand for housing. On balance, the amenity impacts for these financially involved properties, where assessed by the applicant to exceed the relevant thresholds, are not considered significantly detrimental to recommend against granting planning permission, given the wider benefits of the proposals in terms of renewable energy generation relative to NPF 4 Policy 11 e) (i) and HwLDP Policy 67. This is subject to the applicant and any wind farm operator evidencing the financial agreements have been concluded and shall remain in place for the operational lifetime of the development, with this to be secured by planning condition.

Telecommunications, Aviation and Radar

- 7.108 None of the relevant consultees have raised objections based on the proposal's effects on T.V or telecommunications links. A mitigation scheme may be implemented via condition, should complaints come forward in this respect.
- 7.109 There are no unresolved objections from aviation interests, with no outstanding concerns raised. The MOD requests a condition which secures submission of an aviation safety lighting scheme detailing how the development would be lit throughout its operational life to maintain civil and military aviation safety; and aviation charting and safety management measures which request specified information is submitted to the MOD 14 days prior to commencement of works. Given that none of the proposed turbines exceed 150m to blade tip height, only infrared aviation lighting for military traffic will be required, which is imperceptible without special equipment.

Decommissioning and Aftercare

- 7.110 The applicant has sought permission to operate the windfarm for 40 years. At the end of its operational life, usual decommissioning and restoration requirements should therefore be secured. If the decision is made to decommission the wind farm, all components, track access and associated infrastructure require to be removed from the site. The Planning Authority also requires that any foundations remain on

site; the exposed concrete plinths would also be removed to a depth of 1m below the surface, graded with soil and replanted. Cables also require to be cut away below ground level and sealed. It would be expected that any new tracks or areas used for constructing the wind farm would be reinstated to the pre-development condition, unless otherwise agreed with the Planning Authority.

- 7.111 The requirements to decommission at its end of life is relatively standard and straight forward, with any request for re-powering to be considered through the submission of a future application. It is important to ensure that any approval of this project secures by condition a requirement to deliver a draft Decommissioning and Restoration Plan (DRP) for approval prior to the commencement of any development and ensure an appropriate financial bond is put in place to secure these works.
- 7.112 The finalised DRP would be expected to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with SEPA no later than 12 months prior to the final decommissioning of the site. The detailed DRP would then be implemented within 18 months of the final decommissioning of the development unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.

Planning Compliance and Monitoring

- 7.113 Given the complexity of major developments, and to assist in discharge of conditions, the Planning Authority usually seeks that the developer employs a Planning Monitoring Officer (PMO). The role of the PMO, amongst other things, would include the monitoring of, and enforcement of compliance with, all conditions, agreements and obligations related to this permission (or any superseding or related permissions) and shall include the provision of a bi-monthly compliance report to the Planning Authority.
- 7.114 Given proposed associated BESS on site, a fire safety management plan, along with finalised design, materials, access along with details of water supply and contaminated water storage could be secured via condition.

8. Matters to be Secured by Legal Agreement / Upfront Payment

- 8.1 A decommissioning and restoration financial guarantee can be secured by condition.
- 8.2 To mitigate the impact of increased Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) traffic on the local public road network arising from the proposed development, the applicant is required to deliver a package of public road improvement and mitigation measures via condition. The precise mechanism for securing this contribution is yet to be concluded (either an up-front payment, Section 75 or Section 69, or alternatively direct developer physical delivery)

- 8.3 A wear and tear legal agreement will also be required under Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act. This would include the provision of a Road Bond or similar security. The agreement would take account of any neighbouring developments that might progress concurrently with the works proposed and would make provision for a mechanism for apportionment of costs between respective developers.

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 21MW of renewable energy capacity, and 10MW 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. As noted in this report, the design is considered successful in localising the landscape impacts of the proposals, such as the underlying characteristics of the host North Caithness landscape would remain, while the proposals will not be significantly detrimental to the integrity of the closest landscape designations, namely the Special Landscape Area (SLA) 4: Dunnet Head.
- 9.3 Similarly, the wider visual impacts are considered within acceptable limits, including when experienced in combination and sequentially with other wind energy development in the wider landscape. Significant visual impacts for residential, recreational, and road receptors are limited to and considered sufficiently localised within, a radius of approximately 7.5km from the proposed turbines and are generally, mitigated by the siting of the proposals adjacent the existing Lochend Windfarm, to which it reads well as an extension. The presence of the consented Hollandmey Windfarm to the east, also embeds the proposals within a developing cluster of windfarms. As such, from these viewpoints, there are generally, already wind turbines in the baseline view and the proposals represent a relatively limited lateral expansion to the consented windfarm development experienced from each location. Due to the height of the proposed turbines, the development would not result in additional landscape and visual impacts during the hours of darkness.
- 9.4 The proposals would result in impacts on the setting of the Earl's Cairn Scheduled Monument 449, located to the northwest of the site, as agreed through consultation with Historic Environment Scotland however, it would remain possible following development, to continue to appreciate both views out from the chamber and the cairn's presence in the landscape.

- 9.5 There are no sustained statutory consultee objections to the application while the report has set out that the impacts and effects of the proposal would be within acceptable limits subject to the developer's compliance with conditions requested by consultees. Through the finalisation of the proposed Habitat Management Plan, the proposals are also capable of delivering biodiversity enhancement. The proposal will be overseen by an appointed Environmental Clerk of Works, with any permission requiring regular compliance monitoring and ongoing engagement by means of a Community Liaison Group.
- 9.6 Due consideration has been given to the policies set out in the Development Plan, principally NPF4 Policy 11 and Highland-wide Local Development Plan Policy 67, which are expanded upon with the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance as well as other policies in the plan related to natural, built, and cultural heritage, protected species and biodiversity. In specific relation to residential amenity as it relates to noise, the immediate visual impacts and shadow flicker, the impacts on the relatively limited number of properties in the close vicinity of the application site, where these impacts are assessed by the applicant to exceed the relevant thresholds, are considered acceptable on balance, given the financial involvement of these properties with the project and the wider benefits of the proposals in terms of renewable energy generation. Given the above analysis, the application is considered to accord with these policies and therefore with the Development Plan.
- 9.7 Under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, the Council is required to reach a reasoned conclusion on the environmental impacts of the proposed development. Officers are satisfied that environmental effects of this development can be addressed by way of mitigation. The Council has incorporated the requirement for a schedule of commitments within the conditions of this permission. Monitoring of operational compliance has also been secured through condition.
- 9.8 All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal accords with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is acceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations.

10. IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Resource: Not applicable
- 10.2 Legal: Not applicable
- 10.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): Not applicable
- 10.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: if permitted the development would produce renewable energy.

10.5 Risk: Not applicable

10.6 Gaelic: Not applicable

11. RECOMMENDATION

Action required before decision issued

Notification to Scottish Ministers **N**

Conclusion of Section 75 Obligation **N**

Revocation of previous permission **N**

11.1 Recommended to **GRANT** the application subject to the following conditions and reasons

A. Members grant delegated authority to the Area Planning Manager North/South to agree the finalised condition wording, with any substantive amendments to be subject to prior consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the North Planning Applications Committee; and,

B. The following conditions and reasons:

1. Commencement of Development

In accordance with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), the development to which this planning permission relates must commence within FIVE YEARS of the date of this decision notice. If development has not commenced within this period, then this planning permission shall lapse.

Reason: In accordance with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).

2. Duration of Development

This planning permission shall expire and cease to have effect after a period of 40 years from the earlier of; a) the date when electricity is first exported on a commercial basis from the last of the wind turbines being constructed as part of the approved development to the electricity grid network; or b) the date falling 18 months from the date on which electricity is first exported to the grid network on a commercial basis from any of the wind turbines constructed as part of the Development. (the "Date of Final Commissioning "). Upon the expiration of a period of 40 years from the Date of Final Commissioning, the wind turbines shall be decommissioned and removed from the site, with decommissioning and restoration works undertaken in accordance with the terms of Condition 24 of this permission. Written confirmation of the Date of Final Commissioning shall be submitted in writing to the Planning Authority within one month of the Date of Final Commissioning.

Reason: This time limited consent period enables a review of the condition of the wind turbines and wind farm components, which have a limited operational lifetime, both in terms of technical and environmental considerations, and, allows for a reassessment of the environmental impacts of the development and the success, or otherwise, of noise impact, species protection, habitat management and mitigation measures. The 40-year cessation date allows for a 2-year period to complete decommissioning and site restoration work.

3. Implementation in Accordance with Approved Plans

Except as otherwise required by the terms of this planning permission, the Development shall be undertaken in accordance with the application, including the:

- (a) Approved drawings listed within the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), Volume 2 Figures, dated June 2024.
- (b) EIAR dated June 2024.

Reason: To ensure that the Development is carried out in accordance with the approved details and to minimise environmental effects.

4. Site Enabling Works

No Site Enabling Works shall commence until a detailed scheme of all Site Enabling Works (including off-site and on-site works) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The scheme shall include a timetable for all enabling works and shall be submitted a minimum of 1 month in advance of the proposed date of commencement of any Site Enabling Works.

Reason: To ensure the final details of the Site Enabling Works have regard for the rural setting of the Development Site and the potential impact of such works on the infrastructure of the area.

5. Design and Operation of Wind Turbines

(1) No development, with the exception of the Site Enabling Works, shall commence until full details of the proposed wind turbines hereby permitted, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. These details shall include:

- (a) The make, model, design, direction of rotation (all wind turbine blades shall rotate in the same direction), power rating, sound power level, and dimensions of the turbines to be installed, which shall have internal transformers;
- (b) The external colour and/or finish of the wind turbines to be used (including towers, nacelles and blades), which shall be non-reflective, pale grey semi-matte unless otherwise turbine blades are required to be painted for bird protection purposes as required under Condition 13 of this permission;
- (c) No text, sign or logo shall be displayed on any external surface of the wind turbines, save those required for operational Health and Safety reasons or by law under other legislation; and
- (d) The application of a turbine blade pitch control system which pitches the blades out of the wind ("feathering") to reduce rotation speeds below 2rpm while idling to reduce bat collision risk.

(2) Thereafter, the wind turbines shall be installed and operate in accordance with these approved details and, with reference to part (b) above, the wind turbines shall be maintained in the approved colour and monitored to ensure no significant rust, staining or dis-colouration occurs until such time as the wind farm is decommissioned.

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

6. Signage

No anemometer, power performance mast, switching station, transformer building, or enclosure, ancillary building or above ground fixed plant shall display any name, logo,

sign or advertisement (other than health and safety signage) unless and until otherwise approved in writing by the Planning Authority.

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

7. Design of Substation, Ancillary Buildings and other Ancillary Development

- (1) No development, with the exception of the Site Enabling Works, shall commence, unless and until final details of the external appearance, dimensions, and surface materials of the substation building, associated compounds, construction compound boundary fencing, external lighting and parking areas have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. For the avoidance of doubt the details of the sub-station shall not exceed the parameters assessed in the EIAR unless otherwise approved in writing by the Planning Authority.
- (2) The substation building, associated compounds, fencing, external lighting and parking areas shall be constructed in accordance with the details approved under paragraph (1).

Reason: To safeguard the visual amenity of the area.

8. Design of Energy Storage Facility

- (1) There shall be no Commencement of Development on the Energy Storage Facility until details of the location, layout, external finishes and appearance, dimensions and surface materials of the energy storage facility, inclusive of battery containers, substation(s), control buildings, external above ground electrical equipment, associated compounds, construction compound, boundary fencing and other enclosures, external lighting, security cameras and parking areas have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. For the avoidance of doubt the details of the energy storage facility shall not exceed the parameters assessed in the EIAR
- (2) The submission shall explain and demonstrate how the proposed BESS layout satisfies the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero Guidance - Health and Safety in Grid Scale Electrical Energy Storage Systems, the National Fire Chiefs Council Guidance – Grid Scale Energy Storage System Planning - Guidance for Fire and Rescue Services and/or any or any superseding guidance prevailing at the time.
- (3) Thereafter, the battery energy storage facility shall be constructed in accordance with the details approved under Part (1) and the infrastructure shall be maintained in the approved colour, free from rust, staining or discolouration until such time as the Development is decommissioned.

Reason: To ensure that the environmental impacts of the energy storage facility forming part of the Development conform to the impacts assessed in the EIA Report and in the interests of the visual amenity of the area.

9. Micrositing

- (1) All wind turbines, buildings, masts, areas of hardstanding and tracks shall be constructed in the location shown on Environmental Impact Assessment Report Site Layout Plan 1.2; wind turbines, buildings, masts, areas of hardstanding and tracks may be adjusted by micrositing within the site.

However, unless otherwise approved in advance in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot, SEPA and the EnvCoW, micrositing is subject to the following restrictions:

- (a) The wind turbines and other infrastructure hereby permitted may be micro-sited within 50 metres save that no wind turbine or other infrastructure may be micro-sited to:
 - i. less than 50 metres from any watercourse feature;
 - ii. within the boundary of areas hosting ground water dependent terrestrial ecosystems.
 - (b) No wind turbine foundation shall be positioned higher, when measured in metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), than 5m above the position shown on the approved Site Layout Plan, 1.2 dated June 2024;
 - (c) All micrositing permissible under this condition must be approved in advance in writing by the Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW) as required under Condition 11.
- (2) A plan showing the final position of all wind turbines buildings, masts, areas of hardstanding, tracks and associated infrastructure forming part of the Development shall be submitted to the Planning Authority within six weeks of the completion of the development works. The plan shall specify areas where micrositing has taken place and, for each instance, be accompanied by copies of the EnvCoW or Planning Authority's approval, as applicable.

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

10. Construction Environmental Management Plan

- (1) No development or site enabling works shall commence until a works specific Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) related to the phase or phases of works or development to be undertaken has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The CEMP shall outline site specific details of all on-site construction works, post- construction reinstatement, drainage and mitigation, together with details of their timetabling.

- (2) The CEMP for each phase of works or development shall include (but is not limited to):
- (a) An updated Schedule of Commitments highlighting amendments made to the EIAR Schedule of Commitments set out in Chapter 15 of the EIAR dated June 2024 and the conditions of this consent;
 - (b) Details and timetable for phasing of construction works;
 - (c) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction-type activities on the environment;
 - (d) A Site Waste Management Plan (dealing with all aspects of waste produced during the construction period), including details of contingency planning in the event of accidental release of materials which could cause harm to the environment;
 - (e) A Pollution Prevention Plan, including a surface water and groundwater management and treatment plan with mitigation measures demonstrating how all surface water run-off and waste water arising during and after development is to be managed and prevented from polluting any watercourses or sources;
 - (f) Site specific details for management and operation of any concrete batching plant, including disposal of pH rich waste water and substances;
 - (g) A private water supply monitoring and mitigation scheme. The scheme should include but is not limited to:
 - i. A drawing showing the supply source and distribution route in relation to the development;
 - ii. A program of water monitoring prior to and during construction;
 - iii. Details of proposed measures to prevent physical disruption or contamination to the supply;
 - iv. Program of daily checks to ensure mitigation measures are in place and are adequate;
 - v. Contingency measures in the event of an incident impacting on the water supply
 - (h) Details of all pollution prevention and mitigation measures to protect habitats and ecological resources on site, which shall include measures to maintain hydrological connectivity of Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems;
 - (i) Finalised Species and Habitat Protection Plans, (including otter, water vole, and bat);
 - (j) Details of proposed temporary site compound, storage of materials, including fuel and other chemicals, machinery, and designated car parking;
 - (k) Details of on-site storage and off-site disposal of all imported or excavated material, including maximum stockpile heights and locations;
 - (l) Details of all internal access tracks, turning areas, including accesses from the public road and hardstanding areas;

- (m) Details of the construction of the access into the site and the creation and maintenance of associated visibility splays;
- (n) Cleaning of site entrance, site tracks and the adjacent public road and the sheeting of all HGVs taking spoil or construction materials to/from the site to prevent spillage or deposit of any materials on the public road;
- (o) Details of archaeological supervision to oversee the protection/fencing off of all known heritage assets, including all areas to be used by construction vehicles;
- (p) Details of the management of noise and vibration during construction including how the best practicable means measures will be implemented to reduce the impact of construction noise at noise sensitive locations;
- (q) A construction dust mitigation scheme which demonstrates how the applicant/contractor will ensure the best practicable measures are implemented in order to reduce the impact of construction dust;
- (r) Details of temporary site illumination;
- (s) Construction Method Statements for:
 - i. Crane pads;
 - ii. Turbine foundations;
 - iii. Working cable trenches; and
 - iv. Erection of the wind turbines and meteorological masts;
- (t) The method of construction of the crane pads, wind turbine foundations, working cable trenches, and the method of construction and erection of the wind turbines and any meteorological masts.
- (u) Details for the provision of the submission of a quarterly report summarising work undertaken at the site and compliance with the conditions imposed under the planning permission during the period of construction and post construction reinstatement; and
- (v) Details of post-construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas not required during the operation of the Development, including construction access tracks, borrow pits, construction compound, storage areas, laydown areas, access tracks, passing places and other construction areas, all of which are to be provided no later than 6 months prior to Date of Final Commissioning, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority. Wherever possible, reinstatement is to be achieved by the careful use of turfs removed prior to construction works. Details should include all seed mixes to be used for the reinstatement of vegetation.

Reason: To ensure that all construction operations are carried out in a manner that minimises their impact on road safety, amenity and the environment, and that the mitigation measures contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (June 2024) which accompanied the application, or as otherwise agreed, are fully implemented.

11. Environmental Clerk of Works

- (1) No development or Site Enabling Works shall commence unless and until the terms of appointment of an independent Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW) by the Company have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The terms of appointment shall:
 - (a) Impose a duty to monitor compliance with the environmental commitments provided in the EIA Report as well as the following (the EnvCoW works):
 - (i) any micrositing under Condition 9;
 - (ii) the Pre-Construction Ecological Survey under Condition 12;
 - (iii) the Bird Protection and Monitoring Plan under Condition 13;
 - (iv) the Construction Environmental Management Plan under Condition 10;
 - (v) the Habitat Management Plan approved under Condition 14;
 - (b) Require the EnvCoW to report to the nominated construction project manager, the developer, and the Planning Authority any incidences of non-compliance with the EnvCoW works at the earliest practical opportunity and no later than 2 working days following the incidence of non-compliance; and,
 - (c) Require the EnvCoW to submit a monthly report to the construction project manager, developer and Planning Authority summarising works undertaken on site; and,
- (2) The EnvCoW shall be appointed on the terms approved under part (1) throughout the period from Commencement of Development to completion of construction works and post-construction site reinstatement works.
- (3) Prior to the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development or the expiration of the operational period of the consent (whichever is the earlier), details of the terms of appointment of a suitably qualified, experienced, and independent EnvCoW by the Company throughout the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development shall be submitted to the Planning Authority for written approval.
- (4) The EnvCoW shall be appointed on the terms approved under part (3) throughout the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development.

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

12. Pre-Construction Ecological Survey

- (1) No phase of the development or Site Enabling Works shall commence until a pre-construction ecological survey undertaken no more than 3 months prior to works commencing on site and a report of the survey has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The survey shall cover both the area relating to that phase of work and an appropriate buffer, in accordance with NatureScot survey specific guidelines as applicable, from the boundary of application site with the report including mitigation measures where any impact, or potential impact, on protected species or their habitat has been identified.
- (2) Development and work shall progress in accordance with any mitigation measures contained within the approved report of survey and the timescales contain therein.

Reason: In the interest of protecting ecology, protected species and habitats.

13. Bird Protection and Monitoring Plan

No phase of the development or Site Enabling Works shall commence until a Bird Protection and Monitoring Plan BPMP to cover both the area relating to that phase of work and an appropriate buffer, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot. The BPMP shall include, but not be limited to, the following provisions:

- (a) A breeding bird protection plan which shall include details of proposed pre-construction survey work, records of breeding or foraging birds within disturbance distance of the site; and appropriate mitigation to avoid the risk of disturbance and/or displacement occurring which shall include but not be limited to suspension of all works within 1km of an eagle eyrie during the breeding season;
- (b) A nesting bird survey which shall be undertaken no more than 24 hours prior to the commencement of development if this coincides within the main bird breeding season (March- August inclusive) and throughout the breeding bird season if new areas are being developed or there has been a break in construction;
- (c) Continued post-construction survey and monitoring activities to include, but not limited to, the following:
 - i. flight activity surveys which shall be undertaken in combination with collision (bird carcass searches) and nest monitoring and recording. All findings shall thereafter be shared with NatureScot and the RSPB.

Reason: Construction works have the potential to disturb nesting birds or damage their nest sites, with all wild bird nests are protected from damage, destruction,

interference and obstruction under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

14. Habitat Management Plan

- (1) No development, with the exception of the Site Enabling Works shall commence unless and until a finalised Habitat Management Plan (HMP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot.
- (2) The HMP shall set out the habitat management of the site including all mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures during the period of construction, operation, decommissioning, restoration and aftercare, and shall detail the long-term management regimes of the compensation and enhancement measures required of the site.
- (3) The HMP shall include provision for regular monitoring and review to be undertaken against the HMP objectives and measures for securing amendments or additions to the HMP In the event that the HMP objectives are not being met.
- (4) Unless and until otherwise agreed in advance in writing with the Planning Authority, the approved HMP (as amended from time to time with the written approval of the Planning Authority) shall be implemented in full.
- (5) GIS Shapefiles shall be provided to the Planning Authority showing the up-to-date areas of compensation and enhancement prior to the commencement of construction works on site.

Reason: In the interests of protecting ecological features and to ensure that the development secures positive effects for biodiversity, and in the interest of ornithology to safeguard the regional eagle population.

15. Archaeology

No works, except Site Enabling Works, in connection with the development hereby approved shall commence unless an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority and a programme of archaeological works has been carried out in accordance with the approved WSI. The WSI shall include details of how the recording and recovery of archaeological resources found within the application site shall be undertaken, and how any updates, if required, to the written scheme of investigation will be provided throughout the implementation of the programme of archaeological works. Should the archaeological works reveal the need for post excavation analysis the development hereby approved shall not be brought into use, unless a Post-Excavation Research Design (PERD) for the analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The PERD shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to protect the archaeological and historic interest of the site.

16. Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)

- (1) No development or site enabling works shall commence until a phase specific CTMP related to the phase or phases of works or development to be undertaken has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with the Roads Authority, Transport Scotland, the Police and affected Community Councils. The final CTMP shall be submitted no later than three months prior to commencement of the relevant phase. The approved CTMP shall be carried out as approved in accordance with the timetable specified within the approved CTMP. The CTMP shall include (but not be limited to) the provision of:
- (a) The routing of all traffic associated with the Development on public roads including identification of any local quarries and suppliers that will be used in the construction of the development;
 - (b) Details of the volume of materials to be imported and removed from the site and identification of local quarries / suppliers that will be used;
 - (c) Details of the number and type of vehicle movements that will be generated;
 - (d) A construction traffic risk assessment during daylight hours and hours of darkness with reference to the peak tourist season;
 - (e) An identification of any sensitive receptors along the public road such as schools that are susceptible to construction traffic or abnormal loads;
 - (f) An assessment of any structures along the public road which are susceptible to damage due to extra-ordinary construction traffic or abnormal loads;
 - (g) Identification of measures to control the use of any direct access onto the trunk road;
 - (h) An analysis of the injury accident records on the road network along all of the roads included within the proposed construction routes for the most recent five-year period. Locations on the road network with poor accident records should be identified with mitigation works or traffic management measures to alleviate any problems;
 - (i) Measures to ensure that the specified routes are adhered to, including monitoring procedures of HGV movements, the establishment of 'acceptable' levels of HGV activity and proposals to manage the level of HGV movements along Council maintained roads;
 - (j) Details of all proposed traffic management and mitigation measures including but not limited to temporary speed limits, suitable temporary signage, road markings, and speed activated signs to be put in place, removal of street furniture, and junction widening, which shall be undertaken by a recognised traffic management consultant as approved by the Council and Transport Scotland;

- (k) Detailed information on vehicle numbers, signing and lining arrangements, arrangements for emergency vehicle access, measures to minimise traffic impacts on existing road users, measures to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists and a nominated road safety person must be provided. In addition, the plan should propose specific measures to further reduce the potential impact of construction and abnormal load traffic during peak tourist season;
- (l) Consideration of any concurrent construction traffic from other developments where there is significant (greater than 10%) trip generation;
- (m) A detailed protocol for the delivery of abnormal loads/vehicles, prepared in consultation and agreement with interested parties. The protocol shall identify any requirement for convoy working and/or escorting of vehicles and include arrangements to provide advance notice of demountable signs or similar approved, shall be established when required, to alert road users and local residents of expected abnormal load movements. All such movements on Council maintained roads shall take place outwith peak times on the network, including school travel times, and should avoid local community events;
- (n) A detailed delivery programme for abnormal load movements which shall be made available to the Council and community representatives;
- (o) Details of a contingency plan prepared by the abnormal load haulier. The plan shall be adopted only after consultation and agreement with the Police and the respective roads authorities which shall include measures to deal with any haulage incidents that may result in public roads becoming temporarily closed or restricted;
- (p) During the operational stage of the Development, advance written notification and approval of the Planning Authority in consultation with Transport Scotland, THC Roads Authority and affected community councils is required for any significant HGV or Abnormal Load movement required during this period;
- (q) A procedure for the regular monitoring of road conditions and the implementation of any remedial works required during the construction period;
- (r) Measures to ensure that all affected public roads are kept free of mud and debris arising from the development;
- (s) Provision for the submission of a Section 96 Roads Wear and Tear agreement (which may require to be entered in to with additional developers should development that also generates significant traffic on the identified road network) including of a roads condition survey pre-and post-construction accompanied by an appropriate agreement between the Council and the Company to ensure the delivery of any post-construction public road restoration that may be required;

- (t) Identification of a nominated person to whom any road safety issues can be referred; and
 - (u) Details on the steps that will be taken to manage potential interactions with construction traffic arising from other major developments' activities in the local area, to the extent using the same access routes as the proposed development. Where information is reasonably available regarding the predicted construction traffic movements of such other major developments, and where the construction stages and access routes of these developments are likely to overlap with that of the Development, an evaluation of the cumulative construction traffic movements will be undertaken. The findings will be used to inform the need for any further mitigation to be detailed in the CTMP.
- (2) The approved CTMP shall be implemented in full, unless otherwise approved in advance in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of road safety.

17. Abnormal Loads Assessment

- (1) There shall be no abnormal load deliveries to the site until an Abnormal Load Route Assessment Report, including proposed unladen trial runs, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with the Roads Authority and Transport Scotland. The Abnormal Load Route Assessment Report shall provide:
- (a) Identification of the Port of Entry and an accurate swept path analysis provided from the port to the development site showing all areas of overrun and oversail;
 - (b) Details of a communications strategy to inform the relevant communities of the programme of abnormal load deliveries;
 - (c) Details of all road improvements and mitigation measures needed to facilitate abnormal load movements and general construction traffic to be agreed with the Council. Such measures may include: modifications to bridges and culverts, carriageway widening and/or edge strengthening, road safety improvements and traffic management;
 - (d) Any additional signing or temporary traffic control measures deemed necessary on the trunk road network due to the size or length of any loads being transported must be undertaken by a recognised QA traffic management consultant, to be approved by Transport Scotland;
 - (e) Details of the route for abnormal loads on the local and trunk road networks and any recommendations for delivery of abnormal loads;

- (f) A detailed assessment of structures along the routes shall be carried out in consultation with and the satisfaction of the Council's Structures Section;
 - (g) An assessment of the capacity of any bridge crossings on the route to cater for abnormal loads, and details of proposed upgrades and mitigation measures required for any bridge crossings;
 - (h) A review of maximum axle loading on structures along the access route.
 - (i) A review of overhead services along the access route.
 - (j) A review in summer conditions of roadside vegetation along the access route and clearance of any vegetation that may interfere with construction traffic.
 - (k) A review of road works or road closures that could affect the movement of construction traffic.
 - (l) A review of new or diverted underground services that may be at risk from construction traffic
 - (m) A plan for access by vehicles carrying abnormal loads, including but not limited to the number and timing of deliveries and the length, width and axle configuration of all such traffic associated with the Development; and
 - (n) Confirmation of the method of discharge and vehicle loading of ALL components within delivery port including information on component storage and an assessment of the impact on users of the harbour and road users in the vicinity of the harbour, which shall be kept to a minimum.
- (2) Prior to the first delivery of an abnormal load, a programme for abnormal load deliveries shall be submitted to, and be approved in writing by, the Planning Authority, in consultation with Transport Scotland.
- (3) Prior to any movement of abnormal loads (including trial runs) the Company must complete any mitigation works set out in in the scheme approved under Part (1) of this condition and maintain such measures during the period of abnormal load deliveries.
- (4) The unladen trial-run from the port of entry to the site access shall be undertaken in accordance with the details approved under Part (1) prior to the movement of any abnormal loads and shall be undertaken in liaison with the Police, Transport Scotland and the Council. The trial shall employ a vehicle configuration representative of the most onerous loads to be transported and shall demonstrate that the horizontal and vertical clearances needed to navigate the route will be available. A video record of the trial run shall be made available to the Council.
- (5) The details in the approved report shall thereafter be implemented in full prior the first delivery of an abnormal load. At the end of the turbine delivery and erection

period, appropriate reinstatement works shall be carried out as required by and to the satisfaction of the Council.

Reason: In the interest of road safety and to ensure that abnormal loads access the site in a safe manner.

18. Public Road Improvement and Mitigation Measures

(1) There shall be no Commencement of Development until a Road and Structures Mitigation Schedule of Works and Transport Report has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The schedule and report shall include:

- a. An engineering assessment of the condition of all routes on Council maintained roads to be used by construction traffic to identify any upgrades required to carriageways, including the site access, verges, and structures to ensure the roads are to a standard to accommodate all construction traffic, which shall detail:
 - i. the assessed structural strength of carriageways including construction depth and road formation where this is likely to be significant in respect of proposed impact including non-destructive testing and sampling as required;
 - ii. the assessed capacity of existing bridges and other structures along the construction access routes;
 - iii. road surface condition and profile; and
 - iv. details on road widths and the vertical and horizontal alignment of carriageway running surfaces.
- b. Detailed layout drawings and full details of upgrades to the existing junctions to the C1033/U2893, the C1033 / Greenland Mains Farm and access onto the U1707. These junctions must be upgraded to comply with current Council guidelines with respect to visibility splays, surfacing and drainage and potential widening to address deficiencies in the horizontal and vertical planes of the road network to enable the delivery of turbine components and abnormal loads.
- c. An engineering assessment of the C1010, C1033 and U1701 to identify sections of road being used for this development with historic verge damage and provide proposals for widening to a minimum of 3 - 5 metres, dependant on road geometry and/or strengthening on these sections. To avoid differential settlement on the longitudinal construction joints, new sections of carriageway must be keyed into the existing carriageway and a bituminous structural overlay provided. The works should also identify any changes to existing drainage or proposals for new drainage and the requirement for road markings, either centre line and/or edge of carriageway. The works to the C1010, C1033 and U1701 should also provide new or enhanced passing places suitable for HGVs (Figure 5.1 from the Council guidance Roads and

Transport Guidelines for New Developments) where suitable, built to an adoptable standard. The works should also identify any changes to existing drainage or proposals for new drainage and the requirement for road markings.

- d. Full details of all temporary and permanent upgrading and mitigation works required and a programme for the delivery of the proposals for the public road improvements including reinstatement.
- (2) All bridge and structure assessment work shall be carried out under the Technical Approval Process as set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges CB300, with the following submitted to the Council as Technical Approval Authority (TAA):
- a. an Approval in Principle (AIP) for each assessment detailing the scope of the assessment and proposed delivery vehicles including axle weights and spacings; and,
 - b. all assessment and check certificates, reports, and check calculations;

Thereafter, all works as set out in Part (1) shall be completed in full to the satisfaction of the Council in compliance with the Council's 'Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments', with the prior written consent of the Highland Council as Roads Authority and made available for use in accordance with the agreed delivery programme prior to works commencing on site.

Reason: To ensure that an adequate level of access is timeously provided for the development in the interests of road safety, amenity, and to ensure that the works involved comply with applicable standards to maintain the integrity of the Council adopted public road network.

19. Outdoor Access Plan

No development or site enabling works shall commence until a finalised and detailed Outdoor Access Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The purpose of the plan shall be to maintain public access routes to site tracks and paths during construction, and to maintain and improve outdoor access provision in the long-term. The Outdoor Access Plan shall include details showing:

- (1) All existing access points, paths, core paths, tracks, rights of way and other routes whether on land or inland water), and any areas currently outwith or excluded from statutory access rights under Part One of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, within and adjacent to the application site;
- (2) Any areas proposed for exclusion from statutory access rights, for reasons of privacy, disturbance or effect on curtilage related to buildings or structures;
- (3) All proposed paths, tracks and other routes for use by walkers, riders, cyclists, all-abilities users, etc. and any other relevant outdoor access enhancement (including construction specifications and methodologies, signage, information leaflets, proposals for on-going maintenance etc.);

- (4) Any diversion of paths, tracks or other routes, temporary or permanent, proposed as part of the development (including details of mitigation measures, diversion works, duration and signage)

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

Reason: In the interests of securing public access rights.

20. Aviation Safety - Lighting

- (1) No development, with the exception of Site Enabling Works, shall commence until a scheme for aviation lighting for the Development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The aviation-lighting scheme shall define how the development will be lit throughout its life to maintain civil and military aviation safety requirements, and shall include:
- a. Details of any construction equipment and temporary structures with a total height of 50 metres or greater (above ground level) that will be deployed during the construction of wind turbine generators and details of any aviation warning lighting that they will be fitted with; and
 - b. The locations and heights of all wind turbine generators in the development, identifying those that will be fitted with aviation warning lighting and the position of the lights on the wind turbines generators; the types(s) of lights that will be fitted; and the performance specification(s) of the lighting types(s) to be used.
- (2) Thereafter, the aviation-lighting scheme shall be implemented as approved and maintained as such for the lifetime of the development unless otherwise an updated scheme is approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with the MOD, NATS, and the CAA.

Reason: In the interests of aviation safety, landscape and visual amenity, ensuring that visible aviation lighting is switched off or replaced to reflect industry technological advances.

21. Aviation Safety – Charting and Safety Management

- (1) Prior to the installation of any turbine, the developer shall provide the Planning Authority, Ministry of Defence, and Defence Geographic Centre with the following information in writing, and provide evidence to the Planning Authority that this has been done:
- (a) the dates of the expected stages of construction of the Development;
 - (b) the height above ground level of the tallest structure forming part of the Development;

- (c) the maximum height of any construction equipment; and
 - (d) the position of the wind turbines and masts in latitude and longitude.
- (2) The Company shall, as soon as is practicable and in any event with 7 days prior to the event, provide to the Planning Authority and the Ministry of Defence written notice of any proposed changes to the information provided under part (1).
- (3) Within 1 month of the erection of the final turbine, the Company shall provide written confirmation to the Planning Authority, the Ministry of Defence and NATS of the actual date on which construction was completed and the confirmed latitude and longitude of all turbines (in degrees, minutes and seconds) and the height above ground level of each turbine (in metres to blade tip).

Reason: In the interests of aviation safety.

22. Telecommunication

Within 12 months of the First Export Date, any claim by any individual person regarding television or telecommunications interference at their house, business premises or other building, shall be investigated by a qualified engineer appointed by the developer and the results shall be submitted to the Planning Authority. Should any impairment of services be attributable to the development, the developer shall remedy such impairment within 3 months or give evidence to the Planning Authority of ongoing works to remedy.

Reason: To mitigate the potential effect of telecommunications interference on the development.

23. Operational Noise

- (1) The rating level of noise immissions from the combined effects of the wind turbines forming part of the Development (including the application of any tonal penalty) when determined in accordance with the attached Guidance Notes¹ for this condition, shall not exceed the values for the relevant integer wind speed set out in, or derived from, Tables 1 and 2 at those properties identified or any dwelling which is lawfully existing or has planning permission at the date of this consent.

¹ If cross-referring to Guidance Notes, the Guidance Notes below this Model Conditions must be included and should be inserted directly after the noise condition as they form part of the noise condition.

Table 1 – Between 07:00 and 23:00 – Noise Limits expressed in dB LA90

Location (including coordinates)	Standardised wind speed at 10 meter height (m/s) within the site averaged over 10-minute periods											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Any financially involved receptor	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
Any non- financially involved receptor	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35

Table 2 – Between 23:00 and 07:00 – Noise Limits expressed in dB LA90

Location (including coordinates)	Standardised wind speed at 10 meter height (m/s) within the site averaged over 10-minute periods											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Any financially involved receptor	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
Any non- financially involved receptor	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35

- (2) The turbines shall be designed to permit individually controlled operation or shut down at specified wind speeds and directions in order to facilitate compliance with noise criteria.
- (3) The Company shall continuously log power production, wind speed and wind direction at each wind turbine all (in accordance with Guidance Notes). These data shall be retained for a period of not less than 24 months. The Company shall provide this information to the Planning Authority, in the format set out in the Guidance Notes, within 14 days of receipt in writing of a request to do so.

- (4) Prior to the Date of Final Commissioning, the Company shall have submitted to, and received written approval of the Planning Authority of, a list of proposed independent consultants who will undertake compliance measurements in accordance with this condition. Amendments to the list of approved consultants shall be made only with the prior written approval of the Planning Authority.
- (5) Within 21 days from receipt of a written request from the Planning Authority, following a complaint to it from an occupant of a dwelling alleging noise disturbance at that dwelling, the Company shall employ a consultant approved by the Planning Authority in terms of part (4) above to assess the level of noise immissions from the wind farm at the complainant's property (or a suitable alternative location agreed in writing by the Planning Authority). The written request from the Planning Authority shall set out at least the date, time and location to which the complaint relates and any identified atmospheric conditions, including wind direction, and include a statement as to whether, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, the noise giving rise to the complaint contains or is likely to contain a tonal component.
- (6) The assessment of the rating level of noise immissions in terms of part (5) above shall be undertaken in accordance with the Guidance Notes and an assessment protocol that shall previously have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The protocol shall include the proposed measurement location(s) where measurements for compliance checking purposes shall be undertaken, whether noise giving rise to the complaint contains or is likely to contain a tonal component, and also the range of meteorological and operational conditions (which shall include the range of wind speeds, wind directions, power generation and times of day) to determine the assessment of rating level of noise immissions. The proposed range of conditions shall be those which prevailed during times when the complainant alleges there was disturbance due to noise, having regard to the written request of the Planning Authority under paragraph (5) above.
- (7) The rating level of noise immissions resulting from the combined effects of the wind turbines when determined in accordance with the Guidance Notes and approved Noise Assessment Protocol shall not exceed the noise limits approved in writing by the Planning Authority for the complainant's property.
- (8) In the event that a complainant does not allow the Company access to undertake a compliance assessment, the assessment protocol shall set out details of the proposed alternative representative measurement position. Where the proposed measurement location is close to the wind turbines, rather than at the complainant's property (e.g. to improve the signal to noise limits to ratio)

(9) The Company shall provide to the Planning Authority the independent consultant's assessment of the rating level of noise immissions undertaken in accordance with the Guidance Notes and the approved Noise Assessment Protocol within two months of the date of the written request of the Planning Authority for compliance measurements to be made under part (5), unless the time limit is extended in writing by the Planning Authority. The assessment shall include all data collected for the purposes of undertaking the compliance measurements, such data to be provided in the format set out in the Guidance Notes. The instrumentation used to undertake the measurements shall be calibrated in accordance with the Guidance Notes and certificates of calibration shall be submitted to the Planning Authority with the independent consultant's assessment of the rating level of noise immissions.

(10) Where a further assessment of the rating level of noise immissions from the wind farm is required pursuant to (in accordance with the Guidance Notes), the Company shall submit a copy of the further assessment within 21 days of submission of the independent consultant's assessment pursuant to part (8) above unless the time limit has been extended in writing by the Planning Authority.

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

Guidance Notes for Operational Noise Condition

These notes are to be read with and form part of the noise condition. They further explain the condition and specify the methods to be employed in the assessment of complaints about noise immissions from the wind farm. The rating level at each integer wind speed is the arithmetic sum of the wind farm noise level as determined from the best-fit curve described in Guidance Note 2 of these Guidance Notes and any tonal penalty applied in accordance with Guidance Note 3. Reference to ETSU-R-97 refers to the publication entitled "The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms" (1997) published by the Energy Technology Support Unit (ETSU) for the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). IOA GPG is "A Good Practice Guide to the Application of ETSU-R-97 for the Assessment and Rating of Wind Turbine Noise" (2013) and includes Supplementary Guidance Notes 1 to 5 of the IOA GPG.

Guidance Note 1

- (a) The LA90,10-minute noise statistic should be measured in accordance with the IOA GPG. Measurements shall be undertaken in such a manner to enable a tonal penalty to be applied in accordance with Guidance Note 3.
- (b) To enable compliance with the conditions to be evaluated, the Company shall continuously log arithmetic mean wind speed in metres per second and wind direction in degrees from north for each turbine and arithmetic mean power generated by each turbine, all in successive 10-minute periods. All 10-minute

periods shall commence on the hour and in ten-minute increments thereafter, synchronised with Universal Coordinated Time (UTC). The wind speeds at turbine hub height shall be 'standardised' to a reference height of ten metres as described in ETSU-R-97 at page 120 using a reference roughness length of 0.05 metres. Unless an alternative procedure is previously agreed in writing with the Planning Authority, it is these standardised ten metre height wind speed data which are correlated with the noise measurements determined as valid.

- (c) Data provided to the Planning Authority in accordance with the noise condition shall be provided in comma separated values in electronic format unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.
- (d) A data logging rain gauge shall be installed in the course of the assessment of the levels of noise immissions. The gauge shall record over successive 10-minute periods synchronised with the periods of data recorded in accordance with Note 1(b).

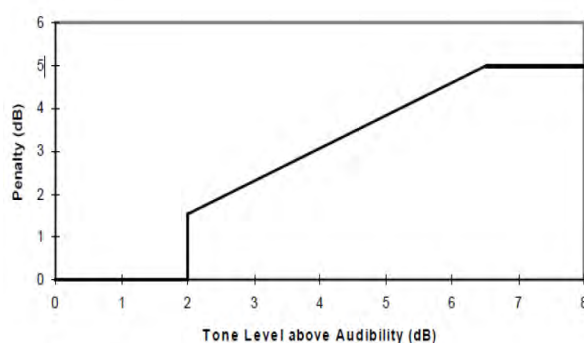
Guidance Note 2

- (a) The noise measurements shall be made so as to provide not less than 20 valid data points as defined in Guidance Note 2 (b)
- (b) Valid data points are those measured in the conditions specified in the agreed written protocol, but excluding any periods of rainfall measured in the vicinity of the sound level meter. Rainfall shall be assessed by use of a rain gauge that shall log the occurrence of rainfall in each 10-minute period concurrent with the measurement periods set out in Guidance Note 1. In specifying such conditions, the Planning Authority shall have regard to those conditions which prevailed during times when the complainant alleges there was disturbance due to noise or which are considered likely to result in a breach of the limits.
- (c) For those data points considered valid in accordance with Guidance Note 2(b), values of the LA90,10 minute noise measurements and corresponding values of the 10-minute wind speed, as derived from the standardised 10 metre height wind speed averaged across all operating wind turbines using the procedure specified in Guidance Note 1(b), shall be plotted on an XY chart with noise level on the Y-axis and the standardised mean wind speed on the X-axis. A least squares, "best fit" curve of an order deemed appropriate by the independent consultant (but which may not be higher than a fourth order) should be fitted to the data points and define the wind farm noise level at each integer speed.

Guidance Note 3

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

- (b) For each 10-minute interval for which LA90,10-minute data have been determined as valid in accordance with Guidance Note 2 a tonal assessment shall be performed on noise immissions during 2 minutes of each 10-minute period. The 2-minute periods should be spaced at 10-minute intervals provided that uninterrupted uncorrupted data are available (“the standard procedure”). Where uncorrupted data are not available, the first available uninterrupted clean 2-minute period out of the affected overall 10-minute period shall be selected. Any such deviations from the standard procedure, as described in Section 2.1 on pages 104-109 of ETSU-R-97, shall be reported.
- (c) For each of the 2-minute samples the tone level above or below audibility shall be calculated by comparison with the audibility criterion given in Section 2.1 on pages 104-109 of ETSU-R-97.
- (d) The tone level above audibility shall be plotted against wind speed for each of the 2-minute samples. Samples for which the tones were below the audibility criterion or no tone was identified, a value of zero audibility shall be used.
- (e) The average tone level above audibility shall be calculated for each wind speed bin, each bin being 1 metre per second wide and centred on integer wind speeds. This process shall be repeated for each integer wind speed for which there is an assessment of overall levels in Note 2.
- (f) The tonal penalty is derived from the margin above audibility of the tone according to the figure below.



Guidance Note 4

- (a) If a tonal penalty is to be applied in accordance with Guidance Note 3 the rating level of the turbine noise at each wind speed is the arithmetic sum of the measured noise level as determined from the best fit curve described in Guidance Note 2 and the penalty for tonal noise as derived in accordance with Guidance Note 3 at each integer wind speed within the range specified by the Planning Authority in its written protocol.
- (b) If no tonal penalty is to be applied, then the rating level of the turbine noise at each wind speed is equal to the measured noise level as determined from the best fit curve described in Guidance Note 2.

- (c) In the event that the rating level is above the limit(s) set out in the Table attached to the noise conditions or the noise limits for a complainant's dwelling, the independent consultant shall undertake a further assessment of the rating level to correct for background noise so that the rating level relates to wind turbine noise immission only.
- (d) The Company shall ensure that all the wind turbines in the development are turned off for such period as the independent consultant requires to undertake the further assessment. The further assessment shall be undertaken in accordance with the following steps:
 - (e) Repeating the steps in Guidance Note 2, with the wind farm switched off, and determining the background noise (L3) at each integer wind speed within the range requested by the Planning Authority in its written request and the approved protocol.
 - (f) The wind farm noise (L1) at this speed shall then be calculated as follows where L2 is the measured level with turbines running but without the addition of any tonal penalty:

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

- (g) The rating level shall be re-calculated by adding arithmetically the tonal penalty (if any is applied in accordance with Note 3) to the derived wind farm noise L1 at that integer wind speed.
- (h) If the rating level after adjustment for background noise contribution and adjustment for tonal penalty (if required in accordance with note 3 above) at any integer wind speed lies at or below the values set out in the Table attached to the conditions or at or below the noise limits approved by the Planning Authority for a complainant's dwelling in accordance with the noise condition, then no further action is necessary. If the rating level at any integer wind speed exceeds the values set out in the Table attached to the conditions or the noise limits approved by the Planning Authority for a complainant's dwelling in accordance with the noise condition, then the Development fails to comply with the conditions.

24. Site Decommissioning, Restoration and Aftercare

- (1) The Development shall cease to generate electricity to the grid network by no later than the date falling 40 years from the Date of Final Commissioning.
- (2) No later than one year prior to the Date of Final Generation or the expiry of the planning permission (whichever is earlier), a decommissioning, restoration and aftercare plan shall be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority, in consultation with SEPA, NatureScot, and Transport Scotland. The detailed

decommissioning, restoration and aftercare plan shall provide updated and detailed proposals, in accordance with relevant guidance at that time, for the removal of the Development, the treatment of ground surfaces, the management and timing of the works and environment management provisions which shall provide:

- (a) A site waste management plan (dealing with all aspects of waste produced during the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases and, including details of measures to be taken to minimise waste associated with the Development and promote the recycling of materials and infrastructure components);
 - (b) Details of the formation of the construction compound, welfare facilities, any areas of hardstanding, turning areas, internal access tracks, car parking, material stockpiles, oil storage, lighting columns, and any construction compound boundary fencing;
 - (c) A dust management plan;
 - (d) Details of measures to be taken to prevent loose or deleterious material being deposited on the local road network, including wheel cleaning and lorry sheeting facilities, and measures to clean the site entrances and the adjacent local road network;
 - (e) A pollution prevention and control method statement, including arrangements for the storage and management of oil and fuel on the site;
 - (f) Details of measures for soil storage and management;
 - (g) A surface water and groundwater management and treatment plan, including details of the separation of clean and dirty water drains, and location of settlement lagoons for silt laden water;
 - (h) Details of measures for sewage disposal and treatment;
 - (i) Temporary site illumination;
 - (j) The construction of any temporary access into the site and the creation and maintenance of associated visibility splays;
 - (k) A Traffic Management Plan based on the principles of the Construction Traffic Management Plan approved under Condition 16, to manage traffic associated with the decommissioning of the wind farm;
 - (l) An Abnormal Load Route Assessment Report based on the principles of the Abnormal Load Route Assessment Report approved under Condition 17;
 - (m) A species protection plan based on surveys for protected species (including birds) carried out no longer than eighteen months prior to submission of the plan.
- (3) The Development shall be decommissioned, the site restored and aftercare undertaken prior to the date falling three years after the Date of Final Generation and in accordance with the approved detailed decommissioning, restoration and aftercare plan.

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

25. Financial Guarantee

- (1) There shall be no commencement of development until a bond or other form of financial guarantee in terms which secures the expected cost of performance of all decommissioning, restoration and aftercare obligations referred to in Conditions 10 and 24 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.
- (2) The value of the financial guarantee shall be agreed between the Company and the Planning Authority or, failing agreement, determined (on application by either party) by a suitably qualified independent professional as being sufficient to meet the expected costs of all decommissioning, restoration and aftercare obligations referred to in Conditions 10 and 24.
- (3) The financial guarantee shall be maintained in favour of the Planning Authority until the completion of all decommissioning, restoration and aftercare obligations referred to in Conditions 10 and 24.
- (4) The value of the financial guarantee shall be reviewed by agreement between the Company and the Planning Authority or, failing agreement, determined (on application by either party) by a suitably qualified independent professional not less than every five years, and at the time of the approval of the detailed decommissioning, restoration and aftercare plan approved under Condition 24. The value of the financial guarantee shall be increased or decreased to take account of any variation in expected costs of compliance with decommissioning, restoration and aftercare obligations referred to in Conditions 10 and 24 and best practice prevailing at the time of each review.

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

26. Redundant Turbines

In the event that any wind turbine installed and commissioned fails to produce electricity on a commercial basis to the public network for a continuous period of 12 months, then unless evidence has been submitted of ongoing plans to bring the turbine back to a working state, or as otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority, such wind turbine will be deemed to have ceased to be required. If deemed to have ceased to be required, the wind turbine and its ancillary equipment will be dismantled and removed from the site within the following 12-month period, and the ground reinstated to the specification and satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

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

27. Site Inspection Strategy

- (1) Prior to the Date of Final Commissioning, the Company shall submit an outline Site Inspection Strategy ("Outline SIS") for the written approval of the Planning Authority. The Outline SIS shall set out a strategy for the provision of site inspections and accompanying Site Inspection Reports ("SIRs") to be carried out at 25 years of operation from the Date of Final Commissioning and every five years thereafter.
- (2) No later than 24 years after the Date of Final Commissioning, the Company shall submit a final detailed Site Inspection Strategy ("Final SIS"), based on the principles of the approved Outline SIS for the written approval of the Planning Authority. The Final SIS shall set out updated details for the provision of site inspections and accompanying SIRs, in accordance with relevant guidance at that time, to be carried out at 25 years of operation from the Date of Final Commissioning and every five years thereafter.
- (3) At least one month in advance of submitting each Site Inspection Report to the Planning Authority, the scope of the Site Inspection Report shall be agreed with the Planning Authority.
- (4) The SIRs shall include, but not be limited to:
 - (a) Details to demonstrate that the infrastructure components of the Development are still operating in accordance with Condition 9 and Condition 26; and
 - (b) An engineering report which details the condition of tracks, turbine foundations and the wind turbines and sets out the requirements and the programme for the implementation for any remedial measures which may be required.
- (5) The SIS and each Site Inspection Report shall be implemented in full unless otherwise agreed in advance in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the Development is being monitored at regular intervals throughout after the first 25 years of operation.

28. Local Employment Scheme

Prior to the Commencement of Development, a Local Employment Scheme for the construction and operation of the development shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Planning Authority. The submitted Scheme shall make reference to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) (June 2024). The Scheme shall include the following:

- a) Details of how the staff/employment opportunities at the development will be advertised and how liaison with the Council and other local bodies will take place in relation to maximising the access of the local workforce to information about employment opportunities;

- b) Details of how sustainable training opportunities will be provided for those recruited to fulfil staff/employment requirements including the provision of apprenticeships or an agreed alternative;
- c) A procedure setting out criteria for employment, and for matching of candidates to the vacancies;
- d) Measures to be taken to offer and provide college and/or work placement opportunities at the development to students within the locality;
- e) Details of the promotion of the Local Employment Scheme and liaison with contractors engaged in the construction of the development to ensure that they also apply the Local Employment Scheme so far as practicable having due regard to the need and availability for specialist skills and trades and the programme for constructing the development;
- f) A procedure for monitoring the Local Employment Scheme and reporting the results of such monitoring to The Highland Council; and
- g) A timetable for the implementation of the Local Employment Scheme.

Thereafter, the development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: In order to ensure compliance with NPF4 Policy 11c) and to maximise the local socioeconomic benefits of the development to the wider local community. To make provision for publicity and details relating to any local employment opportunities.

29. Community Liaison Group

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

Reason: To assist project implementation, ensuring community dialogue and the delivery of appropriate mitigation measures for example to minimise potential hazards to road users, including pedestrians, travelling on the road networks.

30. Planning Monitoring Officer

- (1) There shall be no Commencement of Development until the terms of appointment by the Company of an independent and suitably qualified consultant as Planning

Monitoring Officer (“PMO”) have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The terms of appointment shall:

- (a) Impose a duty to monitor compliance with the terms of the deemed planning permission and the conditions attached to it;
 - (b) Require the PMO to submit a quarterly report to the Planning Authority summarising works undertaken on site, matters of compliance or otherwise with the terms of the deemed planning permission and conditions attached to it, alongside a summary of the incidents recorded and reported by the EnvCoW; and
 - (c) Require the PMO to report to the Planning Authority any incidences of non-compliance with the terms of the deemed planning permission and conditions attached to it at the earliest practical opportunity, and no later than 10 working days following the incidence of non-compliance.
- (2) The PMO shall be appointed on the approved terms throughout the period from Commencement of Development to completion of construction works and post-construction site reinstatement works.
- (3) Prior to the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development or the expiration of the operational period of the consent (whichever is the earlier), details of the terms of appointment of a suitably qualified consultant as PMO by the Company throughout the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.
- (4) The PMO shall be appointed on the terms approved under Part (3) throughout the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development.

Reason: To enable the development to be suitably monitored to ensure compliance with the permission and the conditions attached to it.

31. Financial Participation Mechanism

Prior to the commencement of the development, evidence shall be submitted to the Planning Authority demonstrating that the residential properties identified in Table 6-2-1 of EIAR Appendix 6.2, Residential Visual Amenity Assessment, have been included in the financial participation mechanism described in Chapters 6 and 11 of the EIAR, dated June 2024.

The Developer shall thereafter ensure that the financial participation of those properties in the mechanism is maintained throughout the operational life of the Development.

Evidence demonstrating the continued financial participation of the relevant properties shall be provided to the Planning Authority upon reasonable request.

Reason: To ensure that standards of residential amenity are not unacceptably diminished for occupiers of financially involved properties.

32. Shadow Flicker

No turbine shall be erected until a scheme for the avoidance or mitigation of shadow flicker at residential properties which lawfully exist or for which planning permission has been granted as at the date of this planning permission, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The approved mitigation scheme shall be implemented in full in line with the approved scheme.

Reason: To offset any impacts of shadow flicker on residential property amenity.

REASON FOR DECISION

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

REASONED CONCLUSION

The Council is in agreement with the findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report that: Lochend Wind Farm Extension - Erection and operation of a Wind Farm for a period of 40 years, comprising of 5 Wind Turbines with a maximum blade tip height 149.9m, Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), access tracks and ancillary infrastructure, is unlikely to give rise to any new or other significant adverse impact on the environment.

The exceptions are the potential to give rise to significant visual impacts for residential, recreational, and road receptors at 7 viewpoints, all of which lie within 7.5km of the nearest turbine at Viewpoints 1 (Slickly – 1.8km from nearest turbine), 2 (Barrock – 2.1km from nearest turbine), 3 (Lochend – 2.5km to nearest turbine), 4 (Lyth Memorial – 3.9km to nearest turbine), 5 (Rattar – 3.8km to nearest turbine), 7 (West Dunnet – 6.36km to nearest turbine), 8 (Bower – 6.8km to nearest turbine).

There is the potential for significant impacts in terms of the increase in construction traffic on local single-track roads. These impacts would, however, be significantly localised and mitigated to an acceptable degree via condition.

Significant impacts in relation to residential visual amenity at 3 of the 27 properties within the applicants Residential Visual Amenity Assessment, and 5 of the 17 properties within the applicant's Shadow Flicker Assessment may also potentially arise from the development. These effects would however be sufficiently localised to properties with a financial involvement in the development and could otherwise, be mitigated to an acceptable degree.

The proposals would result in impacts on the setting of the Earl's Cairn Scheduled Monument 449, located to the northwest of the site, as agreed through consultation with Historic Environment Scotland however, it would remain possible following development, to continue to appreciate both views out from the chamber and the cairn's presence in the landscape.

NatureScot highlight that with the application of mitigation measures the proposals would not adversely affect the integrity of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It is considered appropriate to condition the requirement for a finalised otter Species Protection Plan, adopting the applicant's good practice mitigation measures, as listed in Technical Appendix 7.4 Otter survey, as part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

Nature Scot's assessment does not identify any adverse impacts on the integrity of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Protection Area (SPA) or Caithness Lochs Special Protection Area (SPA).

The Council has incorporated the requirement for a schedule of environmental commitments within Condition 10 of this permission. Monitoring of construction has been secured through Condition 30 of this permission

Signature: Bob Robertson

Designation: pp Area Planning Manager – North

Author: Michael Kordas – Principal Planner

Background Papers: Documents referred to in report and in case file.

Relevant Plans: Plan 1 - Figure 1.1 Site Location Plan

Plan 2 - Figure 1.2 Site Layout Plan

Plan 3 - Figure 4.6 Indicative Wind Turbine Elevations

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Letters of Representation

Appendix 2 - Cumulative Wind Farm Developments

Appendix 3 - Development Plan and Other Material Policy Considerations

Appendix 4 - Compliance with the Development Plan / Other Material Policy Considerations

Appendix 5 - LVIA Methodology

Appendix 6 - Viewpoint Visual Assessment Appraisal (operational only)

Appendix 7 - Assessment against Landscape and Visual Assessment Criteria contained within Section 4 of the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance

Appendix 8 – Habitat Regulations Appraisal

Appendix 2 - Cumulative Wind Farm Developments

Reference and Name	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	No. of Turbines	Blade Tip Height (m)
Existing and under construction wind energy development within 40 km			
Lochend	0.3	4	99.5
Taigh na Muir	3.9	1	79
Stroupster	4.9	13	110
Bilbster	15.6	3	90
Wathegar	16.1	5	100
Wathegar 2	16.2	9	114.5
Achairn	16.8	3	100
Halsary	18.4	15	130
Camster	18.9	25	118
Achlachan	20	5	114.5
Causeymire	20.2	21	100
Bad a Cheo	20.8	13	114.5
Baillie	24.1	21	115
Forss 1	25.1	2	75
Forss 2	25.2	4	80
Burn of Whilk	25.4	9	115

Reference and Name	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	No. of Turbines	Blade Tip Height (m)
Buolfroich	33.7	15	75
Beatrice offshore	36.9	84	200
Consented wind energy development within 40 km			
Hollandmey	0.9	10	150
Slickly	3.3	11	150
Cogle Moss	10.4	12	99.5
Camster 2	17.4	11	128.5
Achlachan 2	20.2	3	114.5
Cairnmore Hill	20.4	5	134.5
Hoy	24.3	6	149.5
Hesta Head	26.3	5	125
Golticlay	26.8	19	130
Limekiln Ext	28.7	5	149.5
Limekiln	29.3	21	149.5
Dounreay Tri (Pentland Floating Offshore)	35.2	2	200
Berriedale & Dunbeath	36.8	3	74
In planning wind energy development within 40 km			

Reference and Name	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	No. of Turbines	Blade Tip Height (m)
Greenland	2.5	3	75
Moss of Greenland	3.8	2	149.5
Red Moss	6.8	2	149.5
Corsback Hill	8.1	4	149.5
Tormsdale	22.4	12	149.5
Pentland Offshore	33.4	7	250

- **Bold** are wind farms have either changed status or were not included in the applicant's cumulative list.
 - o Hollandmey was granted Section 36 consent by the Scottish Ministers during September 2024.
 - o Cairnmore Hill was granted planning permission on appeal during July 2026.

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.

Policy 1 – Tackling the climate and nature crisis

Policy 2 – Climate mitigation and adaptation

Policy 3 – Biodiversity

Policy 4 – Natural places

Policy 5 – Soils

Policy 6 – Forestry, woodland and trees

Policy 7 – Historic assets and places

Policy 11 – Energy

Policy 13 – Sustainable transport

Policy 22 – Flood risk and water management

Policy 23 – Health and safety

Policy 25 – Community wealth building

Policy 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

36 – Wider Countryside

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

Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan)

- A3.3 There are no site-specific policies covering the application site therefore the application requires to be assessed against the general policies of the Development Plan (NPF4 and HwLDP) referred to above. It is noted, however, that the CaSPlan does identify Special Landscape Areas (SLA) within the plan area.

Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG) (2016)

- 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 (National Parks and National Scenic Areas), 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.

Other Highland Council Supplementary Guidance

- A3.6
- Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance (May 2024)
 - Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (August 2010)
 - Developer Contributions (Mar 2018)
 - Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)
 - The Flow Country Planning Position Statement 2 (June 2025)
 - 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)
 - Trees, Woodland and Development (Jan 2013)

OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Emerging Highland Council Development Plan Documents and Planning Guidance

- A3.7 The Council has recently commenced the preparation of a new-style Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP), with the tentative programme including an Evidence Report in 2026/2027 and subsequent Gate Check, with Proposed Plan stage in 2027/2028. Once adopted this new style HLDP will supersede and replace HwLDP and the Council 'area' LDP.
- A3.8 In addition, the Council has further advice on delivery of major developments in a number of documents. This includes Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (Aug 2010) and The Highland Council Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments (Jul 2016).

Other International and National Legislation, Policy, and Guidance

A3.9

- The Flow Country World Heritage Site Draft Management Plan (December 2022)
- Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 – interim and annual targets replaced by Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill in November 2024
- Climate Change Committee Report to UK Parliament (July 2024)
- UK Government Clean Power Action Plan (Dec 2024)
- Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)
- Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement (2022)
- Draft Scottish Biodiversity strategy to 2045: tackling the nature emergency (2023)
- Scottish Energy Strategy (2017)
- 2020 Routemap 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 4/1998 – The use of Conditions in Planning Permissions – this states that planning conditions should only be imposed when they meet all of the following six tests: 1) Necessary, 2) Relevant to planning, 3) Relevant to the development to be permitted, 4) Enforceable, 5) Precise; and Reasonable in all other respects.
- Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (2017)
- NatureScot: Guidance on Aviation Lighting Impact Assessment (2024)
- Managing Natural World Heritage (2012)
- Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2025)
- Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA), Landscape Institute

(March 2019)

- UNESCO Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context (2022)
- Scottish Forestry Woodland Creation Application Guidance (November 2017)
- Health and Safety Guidance for Grid Scale Electrical Energy Storage Systems' (UK Government, Mar 2024)
- Scottish Government Planning Guidance: Battery Energy Storage Systems (March 2026)
- National Fire Chiefs Council's guidance - Guidance on Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System planning (Nov 2022) ('the NFCC guidance') and a related draft revision (Jul 2024) approved for publication (Dec 2025).

Appendix 4 - Compliance with the Development Plan / Other Material Policy Considerations

National Policy

- A4.1 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) 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** sets out that we are facing unprecedented challenges and that we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to future impacts of climate change. It sets out that Scotland's environment is a national asset which supports our economy, identity, health and wellbeing. It sets out that choices need to be made about how we can make sustainable use of our natural assets in a way which benefits communities. The spatial strategy reflects legislation in setting out that decisions require to reflect the long-term public interest. However, in doing so it is clear that we will need to make the right choices about where development should be located ensuring clarity is provided over the types of infrastructure that needs to be 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, where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity; liveable places, where we can all live better, healthier lives; and productive places, where we have 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 the 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 are to 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.

This is an important consideration given the proximity of the development natural heritage designations. However, the proposal's impacts on designated sites will be likely to be well within the limits deemed acceptable by Scottish Ministers, subject to conditions.

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.

A4.8 The most significant policy change for Natural Places introduced by NPF4 Policy 4 is with regard to Wild Land Areas (WLA). This policy now states that renewable energy developments that support national targets will be supported in WLAs and

that buffer zones around WLAs will not be applied, so that effects of development outwith WLAs will not be a significant consideration.

- A4.9 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.
- A4.10 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.
- A4.11 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 landscape and visual impacts even if the contribution to national renewable energy targets is considerable.
- A4.12 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, CaSPlan, 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 give more weight to the provisions of its LDP over national policies where there is strong justification for doing so, such as where it feels that LDP policy is better equipped to respond to local conditions for example. However, this matter is yet to be tested through the planning system.
- A4.13 Additionally, whilst the generality of HwLDP’s topic policies are superseded by those in NPF4, HwLDP policies that offer greater detail than NPF4 or that are

tailored to Highland circumstance (and are not wholly incompatible with NPF4) are still relevant and applicable. In particular, Policy 67 Renewable Energy and its related Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance is relevant.

Highland wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP)

- A4.14 The HwLDP identifies the site as “wider countryside” under Policy 36. It sets out a range of parameters against which development will be assessed. It states that development proposals may be supported if they are judged to be not significantly detrimental under the terms of the policy noting “Renewable energy development proposals will be assessed against Renewable Energy Policies, the non-statutory Highland Renewable Energy Strategy and where appropriate the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance”.
- A4.15 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.
- A4.16 Policy 69 – Electricity Transmission Infrastructure states that ‘proposals for overground, underground or sub-sea electricity transmission infrastructure (including lines and cables, pylons/ poles and vaults, transformers, switches and other plant) will be considered having regard to their level of strategic significance in transmitting electricity from areas of generation to areas of consumption’. Subject to balancing with this consideration, and taking into account any proposed mitigation measures, the Council will support proposals which are assessed as not having an unacceptable significant impact on the environment, including natural, built and cultural heritage features.
- A4.17 Although HwLDP Policy 67 and Policy 69 are considered compatible with NPF4 Policy 11, NPF4 expresses greater support for renewable energy projects outwith 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.

Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan)

- A4.18 No specific policies apply however, that the CaSPlan does identify Special Landscape Areas (SLA) within the plan.

Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG)

- A4.19 The Council's OWESG is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The supplementary guidance does not provide additional tests in respect of the consideration of development proposals against Development Plan policy. However, it provides a clear indication of the approach the Council towards the assessment of proposals, and thereby aid consideration of applications for onshore wind energy proposals
- A4.20 The OWESG approach and methodology to the assessment of proposals is applicable and is set out in the OWESG Para 4.16 - 4.17. It provides a methodology for a judgement to be made on the likely impact of a development on assessed "thresholds" in order to assist the application of HwLDP Policy 67. The 10 criteria are particularly useful in considering visual impacts, including cumulative impacts. An appraisal of how the proposal meets with the thresholds set out in the criteria is included in Appendix 7 of this report.

Landscape Sensitivity Study

- A4.21 The OWESG also provides strategic considerations that identify sensitivities and potential capacity for wind farm development. These are called the Landscape Sensitivity Appraisals (LSA) and form part of the statutorily adopted Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance. The Appraisals identify Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways as well as Landscape Character Area sensitivities and guidance.

Other Material Policy Considerations - Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement (2022) and Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)

- A4.22 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.

- A4.23 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.
- A4.24 The document recognises that there may be a need to develop onshore wind energy development on peat. Priority peatland is present on the site, and it is considered that a Peat Management Plan and the Habitat Management Plan, which shows adequate compensation, can be secured by condition.
- A4.25 Additionally, the document acknowledges that in order 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.
- A4.26 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.
- A4.27 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.
- A4.28 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 build out. Again, the sector deal does not detail what the socio-economic commitments should be.

Appendix 5 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

- A5.1. 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.
- A5.2 The EIAR, Chapter 6 includes a description of the design process along with assessments against the host Landscape Character Types (LCTs).
- A5.3 A total of 21 viewpoints across the study area of 40 km have also been assessed. These viewpoints are representative of the range of receptors set out above including communities and residential receptors, recreational users of the outdoors and road users.
- A5.4 The expected bare earth visibility of the development, which has informed the scoped in effects and list of viewpoints, can be appreciated from several EIA Figures showing visibility to blade tip and hub heights with viewpoint locations, as well as cumulative visibility with wind farms in the wider landscape are included. There are plans of LCTs, designated landscapes, and WLAs.
- A5.5 The information submitted with the EIAR and SEI 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.
- A5.6 The methodologies for both the LVIA and CLVIA are set out in EIAR Volume 4 Appendix 6.1: LVIA Methodology, which follow the guidance out in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3). As set out in Paragraph 3.32 of GLVIA3, the 'LVIA should always clearly distinguish between what are considered to be significant and non-significant effect'. The applicant judges significant effects following the combination of judgements based on the sensitivity of the receptor against the magnitude of change.
- A5.7 The sensitivity of the receptor (landscape or visual) is defined by the receptor's susceptibility to the change brought about by the proposal against the importance (value) of the landscape resource / 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). The EIAR methodology advises that such an assessment is based on judgements of a number of factors including special qualities and/or key characteristics, scale and topography, openness, land cover pattern, skyline, rationale, remoteness, naturalness, wildness, tranquillity, landscape context and adjacent landscapes.

- A5.8 For visual receptors, higher susceptibility to the proposed 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 well as passengers in vehicles to also have a higher susceptibility to change. Receptor susceptibility is judged to be high, medium, or low with some receptors falling into intermediate brackets within the applicant's assessment.
- A5.9 The value of a landscape receptor, given as high, medium, low or an intermediary of these brackets, is based on a review of policy designations and application of judgement based on criteria relating to scenic value, rarity, recreational value, representativeness, conservation interest, and association. Similar criteria are applied for views such as designations for specific views and views with recognised scenic value, whether they are specifically mentioned in special qualities of a designated landscape, their importance to heritage assets, and value attached to views by visitors as may be indicated by inclusion in tourism literature or references in literature and art.
- A5.10 Judgement of magnitude of change is based on an assessment of factors including: size and scale of effect; geographical extent of the effect, described as large, medium, small; duration, long-term, medium-term, or short-term; and, reversibility of the effect, reversible, partially reversible, irreversible (i.e. permanent).
- A5.11 For landscape, judgements of size and scale of effect require consideration of the degree to which the loss of, or change to, landscape elements effect the character of a landscape and its key characteristics. For visual, this judgement requires a consideration of the scale of the loss or addition of features (turbines) within the view including portion of the view effected, degree of contrast or integration of the new elements within the view setting in terms of scale and mass, line, height, colour, and texture, and, how the view is experienced by the receptor (e.g., full, partial, or glimpsed). Scale of effects are described using the large, medium, small, barely perceptible and intermediary brackets.
- A5.12 Geographic extent of landscape effects is a judgement on the extent of the effect relative to the scale of the landscape character type or character area, whether it affects several landscape types or character areas, or if it is limited to immediate surrounds or is a site level effect. Judgement on geographic extent of visual effects requires consideration of whether the viewpoint represents a similar visual effect for the receptor over an extensive or limited geographical area. In reality, this judgement will likely reflect the activity of the receptor (stationary or moving), the distance of the receptor from the proposal, and the angle of view towards the proposal in relation to the receptor's main activity. The

judgement of geographic extent of effects is described using 'large', 'medium', 'small', or intermediary brackets.

- A5.13 In concluding the level and significance of an effect, the appraisal assumes a long term duration and reversible effect following the potential decommissioning of a site, although Policy 11 (f) of NPF4 states that windfarm sites should be suitable in perpetuity. Moreover, it is generally agreed that the landscape and visual effects arising from wind farm developments should be assumed to be adverse.
- A5.14 It is important to note that the consideration of existing turbines in the baseline view for landscape effects is a consideration for the susceptibility of the landscape receptor in the methodology rather than of the magnitude of change. That means that it is the sensitivity to the development that is reduced in the applicant's assessment where wind farm developments already exist. For visual receptors, the presence of existing and under construction turbines in views reduces the size and scale of the effect of the application wind farm and therefore the magnitude of change for the in-solus visual impact assessment is itself a judgement of cumulative effects.
- A5.15 Following on, the cumulative landscape and visual assessment (CLVIA) are also a function of sensitivity and magnitude of change but with a focus on the additional impacts occasioned by the development when considered together with two scenarios of existing, consented, or proposed wind farms. Scenario 1 includes existing, under construction, and consented wind farm schemes. Scenario 2 considers Scenario 1 plus application stage, and scoping stage (where requested), wind farm schemes. Additional impacts in these future scenarios are taken to be those effects that result from the interaction of the proposal with the future baseline schemes. The total or combined effects are also considered under these scenarios.
- A5.16 More significant cumulative landscape effects are considered to arise from changes to the landscape character of the study area whether through effects on key characteristics/features or whether the landscape is transformed into a different type, as set out in GLVIA3 at Paragraph 7.28. The methodology sets out that wind farm development that results in the creation of a 'wind farm landscape' as opposed to a 'landscape with wind farms' or 'landscape with occasional wind farms' is likely to be assessed as significant. Such effects may occur where the proposal extends or intensifies a landscape effect, or it fills an area such that it alters the landscape resource, or, where the interaction between the proposal and other wind farms is such that the effect is greater than it should otherwise be.

- A5.17 Similarly, more significant cumulative visual effects are considered to occur where the proposal would extend or intensify a visual effect, where the proposal fills an area such that it alters the character of the view/visual amenity, and / or, where the interaction between the proposal and other wind farms is such that the effect is greater than it should otherwise be. Sequentially, more significant cumulative visual effects are considered to occur where the proposal lengthens the time over which an effect is experienced for receptors moving through the landscape.
- A5.18 It is noted here that it would be perfectly reasonable to expect a development of the type, size, scale, and texture of a wind farm to result in significant landscape and visual impacts, bearing in mind that significant effects are not relative to the size and scale of the proposal, and do not necessarily equate to unacceptable effects.
- A5.19 EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.1 LVIA Methodology 'Evaluation of Landscape and Visual Effects' sets out the relationship between the above considerations and how they combine to reach a conclusion on the level of effect (none, negligible, minor, moderate, major, or substantial), and thus the significance of the effect (significant or not significant). Impacts of major to moderate up to substantial levels of effect correspond to significant effects in the context of the EIA Regulations, moderate may be considered significant depending on professional judgement. Non, negligible, and minor effects are not significant.
- A5.20 As stated, Chapter 6 of the EIAR, sets out the assessor's visual impact assessment of each viewpoint whereby the applicant has come to a judgement as to whether the effect is significant or not on a viewpoint by viewpoint basis. In assessing visual impacts in particular, it is important to consider that the viewpoint is representative of particular receptors i.e., people who would be at location and experiencing that view of the landscape not just in that single view but in taking in their entire surroundings.
- A5.21 The summary of the applicant's assessment and officer appraisal of this assessment, which highlights the differences and any concerns with regard to visual impact, can be found in Appendix 6 of this report.
- A5.22 A key part of the of the Council's assessment of landscape and visual effects is a consideration of the proposal against the Criteria set out in Section 4 of the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG), with the assessment against each relevant criterion with a view as to whether the threshold set out in the guidance is met or not, contained in Appendix 7 to this report.

Appendix 6 - Viewpoint Visual Assessment Appraisal

Scenario 1 = existing (including under construction) + consented + the proposed development

Scenario 2 = existing + consented + applications + the proposed development

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Viewpoint 1: Slickly	App	Medium – high	Large	Major	Significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Large <u>Scenario 2:</u> Large	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Major <u>Scenario 2:</u> Major	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Significant
Distance: 1.8km								
Looking: northwest	THC	High	Large	Major	Significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Large <u>Scenario 2:</u> Large	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Major <u>Scenario 2:</u> Major	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Significant
<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: medium distance views to the north-west from the C1037 public road. Large open fields of rough pasture/ moorland, post and wire fences and scattered properties characterise the foreground Existing Development – Lochend Windfarm will be a prominent presence in the view to the northwest. Stroupster Windfarm will be visible to the east. Camster will be visible in the distance to the west.								

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Consented Development – Slickly Wind Farm would be visible in close views to the east, partially in front of the operational Stroupster Wind Farm. Several consented wind farms including Cogle Moss and Camster 2 would be visible on the distant horizon to the south, alongside operational wind farms including Camster. Hollandmey Wind Farm (consented) would be visible in close views to the north, alongside the operational Lochend Wind Farm In Planning Development – Several small wind farms at scoping stage would be visible to the west / south-west. These would include Greenland, Moss of Greenland, Red Moss and Corsback Hill, all of which are within 10 km. Proposals would fill a gap on the skyline between Greenland (scoping) and Hollandmey. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by nearby properties and oblique views experienced by road users. Susceptibility: Residents have a high susceptibility to change in views from their properties. Value: Lower value can be accepted due to lack of designations <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC large. The proposed turbines will be seen in front of the Lochend Windfarm as a second, regularly spaced row of 5 machines, appearing notably different in scale. The turbines will however, read well as an extension to the current operational Lochend development, forming a logical parallel array to the existing windfarm and being relatively contained in terms of the degree of overall horizontal expansion. The proposal is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a major level of effect. Agree this is significant. <u>Future baseline effects</u>								

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Scenario 1 – Slickly Wind Farm (consented) would be visible on the skyline to the southeast, partially screened by intervening forestry and partly behind the operational Lochend Wind Farm. Other consented wind farms to the south, including Cogle Moss and Camster 2, would be partially filtered and screened by intervening vegetation and buildings, and where visible would form part of existing wind farm clusters. Hollandmey (consented) would be visible in close views to the south-east, to the east of Lochend Wind Farm (operational), and in front of Stroupster (operational) and Slickly (consented). The Proposed Development would slightly extend the field of view occupied by the turbines of Hollandmey (consented) and Lochend (operational). Agree the level of effect remains major and significant. Scenario 2 – As Scenario 1: accept that other proposed wind farms would be distant and views would generally be filtered and screened by intervening vegetation and buildings.								
Viewpoint 3: Lochend Distance: 2.5km Looking: northeast	App	Medium	Large	Major	Significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Large <u>Scenario 2:</u> Large	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Major <u>Scenario 2:</u> Major	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Significant
	THC	High	Large	Major	Significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Large <u>Scenario 2:</u> Large	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Major <u>Scenario 2:</u> Major	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Significant
<u>Baseline</u>								

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
		As described in EIAR Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: medium distance views to the north from the Lyth War memorial at the crossroads of the C1006 and C1037 public roads. Dense hedgerows, gorse bushes and a crossroad junction are present in the foreground of the view. Properties at the northern edge of Lyth are apparent above the hedgerow. The operational Lochend Wind Farm is visible above the gently undulating moorland horizon in middle distance views to the north. High ground at Dunnet Head is visible in longer distance views beyond. Existing Development – Lochend Windfarm will be a prominent in the view to the north. To the east, turbines at Stroupster Wind Farm are visible. Camster Wind Farm is partially visible in distant views to the south. Consented Development – Slickly Wind Farm (consented) would be visible on the skyline to the east, partially in front of Stroupster Wind Farm (operational). Hollandmey (consented) would be visible on the skyline to the north In Planning Development – Greenland Wind Farm (scoping) would be visible on the horizon to the north. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by nearby properties and by road users. Susceptibility: Residents have a high susceptibility to change in views from their properties. Value: Lower value can be accepted due to lack of designations. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC medium. The proposed turbines will be seen in front of the Lochend Windfarm and will appear notably different in scale although this effect is somewhat mediated by distance. They will read as a horizontal expansion of the operational development, which presents a much more contained linear and stacked profile from this aspect. The proposal is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a moderate level of effect. Agree this is significant. <u>Future baseline effects</u>						

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
			Existing Development – Lochend Windfarm is theoretically visible, although screened by landform and walling, within the Castle gardens, to the south. Consented Development: Slickly and Hollandmey Windfarms would have theoretical blade tip visibility to the south. In Planning Development: Wind farms at scoping stage, including Moss of Greenland, Greenland, Red Moss and Corsback Hill, are likely to be screened by the intervening wall and woodland within the castle grounds. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced mainly by visitors to the heritage attraction. Susceptibility: Recreational users are normally considered to have a high susceptibility to change as attention/interest is likely to be focused on the landscape or particular views. Value: High value considering location is a designated and high-status cultural heritage asset. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC low. The proposed turbines will have only theoretical blade tip visibility, above the garden wall. The proposal is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor level of effect. Agree this is not significant. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 –Slickly and Hollandmey Windfarms will be theoretically visible to blade tip but would be filtered and screened by intervening walls. The proposal would slightly extent the horizontal spread of turbine blades. Other consented wind farms in other directions would be filtered and screened by intervening vegetation and buildings. Agree the level of effect remains minor and not significant. Scenario 2 – Other consented wind farms in other directions would be filtered and screened by intervening vegetation and buildings. Agree the level of effect remains minor and not significant.					

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
		<u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by nearby properties. Susceptibility: Residents have a high susceptibility to change in views from their properties. Value: Higher value due to presence within SLA. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC medium. The proposals will be seen in front of the turbines of the operational Lochend and Stroupster Windfarms. The proposals will extend the horizontal field of view occupied by turbines in this cluster, to the south, with a notable difference in scale between the three schemes. However, they will still read coherently together as a whole. The proposal is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a moderate level of effect. Agree this is significant. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – Slickly Windfarm would be visible to the south-east, behind Lochend. The proposals would slightly extend the field of view occupied by turbines, and the turbines would be closer and therefore appear larger than Lochend and Slickly Wind Farms. Other consented wind farms would be filtered and screened by intervening vegetation and buildings. Hollandmey (consented) would be visible to the south-east, partly behind Lochend and extending to the north-east. The proposals would appear as an extension to Hollandmey from this angle of view and would be visible in front of other operational and consented wind farms. Agree the level of effect remains moderate and significant. Scenario 2 – Greenland and Moss of Greenland (scoping) would form separate schemes to the south-east and would not meaningfully interact with the proposals. Agree the level of effect remains moderate and significant.						

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Viewpoint 8: Bower	App	Medium-high	Medium	Moderate	Significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Medium	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Moderate	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Significant
Distance: 6.8km						<u>Scenario 2:</u> Medium	<u>Scenario 2:</u> Moderate	<u>Scenario 2:</u> Significant
Looking: northeast	THC	High	Medium	Moderate	Significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Medium	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Moderate	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Significant
						<u>Scenario 2:</u> Medium	<u>Scenario 2:</u> Moderate	<u>Scenario 2:</u> Significant
<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: large scale panoramic views over undulating pasture, from the settlement of Bower, on the U1755 public road. Existing Development - Turbines in Lochend Windfarm are visible on the horizon. Stroupster Windfarm are visible on the horizon further north-east. Consented Development: Slickly Windfarm would be visible to the north-east, in front of Stroupster (operational) and extending to the west. Cogle Moss would be visible on the skyline to the south, partially screened by nearby buildings. Hollandmey (consented) would be visible to the north-east, behind Lochend and the proposals. In Planning Development: Moss of Greenland (scoping) would be visible in close views to the north-east, with Greenland on the horizon. Close views of Corsback Hill and Red Moss to the north-west, both at scoping, would be available.								

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
		<u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by nearby properties and by local road users. Susceptibility: Residents have a high susceptibility to change in views from their properties. Value: Lower value can be accepted due to lack of designations <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC medium. The proposed turbines will be seen in front of the Lochend Windfarm and will appear notably different in scale, extending the influence of wind energy development forward towards the viewpoint, while still however, reading well as an extension to the operational development. The proposal is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a moderate level of effect. Agree this is significant. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 –Slickly Wind Farm would be visible to the north-east, in front of Stroupster (operational) and extending to the west. Cogle Moss would be visible on the skyline to the south, partially screened by nearby buildings. Hollandmey (consented) would be visible to the north-east, behind Lochend and the proposals, which would appear as an extension to Hollandmey from this angle of view, filling the separation between Hollandmey and Moss of Greenland (scoping). Agree the level of effect remains moderate and significant. Scenario 2 – Moss of Greenland (scoping) would be visible in close views to the north-east, with Greenland on the horizon. There would be close views of Corsback Hill and Red Moss to the north-west. The proposal would appear as an extension to Hollandmey from this angle of view. It would partially fill the small gap between Hollandmey (consented) and Moss of Greenland. Agree the level of effect remains moderate and significant.						

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
		<u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by road users. Susceptibility: Road users have a medium susceptibility to change. However, viewpoint is located on the designated NC 500 route. Value: Higher value due to presence on NC 500 route. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC medium – low. The proposed turbines will be seen obliquely on the right-hand side of the A836 for receptors heading eastbound, in front of the Lochend Windfarm and will appear slightly different in scale, while still however, reading well as an extension to the operational development. The proposal is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor level of effect. Agree this is not significant. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 –Slickly Wind Farm blades would be perceptible above the distant horizon to the west, with the majority of the wind farm screened by the intervening landform, Hollandmey (consented) would be visible to the east, behind Lochend Windfarm and the proposals. The proposals would appear as an extension to Hollandmey and Lochend Wind Farms from this angle of view, bridging a gap between Lochend / Hollandmey and Greenland. Given the viewing distance and presence of wind farms in this alternative baseline, the magnitude of change is judged to be low and taking account of the medium sensitivity will result in a Minor and not significant effect under Scenario 2. Agree the level of effect remains minor and not significant. Scenario 2 – The proposals would appear as an extension to Hollandmey and Lochend Wind Farms from this angle of view, bridging a gap between Lochend / Hollandmey and Greenland (scoping). Agree the level of effect remains minor and not significant.						

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Viewpoint 11: Warth Hill	App	Medium – high	Low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Low <u>Scenario 2:</u> Low	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Minor <u>Scenario 2:</u> Minor	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Not significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Not significant
Distance: 9.3km								
Looking: southwest	THC	High	Low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Low <u>Scenario 2:</u> Low	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Minor <u>Scenario 2:</u> Minor	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Not significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Not significant
<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: large-scale and long-distance panoramic views from the summit of a local hill summit 124m AOD. Existing Development – Lochend Windfarm is apparent. Baillie is visible on the distant horizon beyond Lochend. Stroupster is visible in medium distance views to the south-west, with more distant wind farms visible beyond, including Causeymire, Achlachan, Halsary and Bad a Cheo. Beatrice Offshore Wind Farm is visible to the south. Consented Development: Slickly would be visible to the south-west, behind Stroupster (operational) and extending to the west. Golticlay, Camster, Cogle Moss and Achlachan 2 Wind Farms would be visible in distant views to the south-west, forming larger groups with operational wind farms. Limekiln and Limekiln Extension would be visible on the distant horizon behind Lochend Windfarm. Hollandmey (consented) would be visible to the south-west, in front of the proposals. Cairnmore Hill would be visible on the distant horizon.								

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Scenario 2 - Wind farms at scoping stage (Corsback Hill, Red Moss, Moss of Greenland and Greenland) would be visible in distant views to the west, partially filling the gap between Slickly and the Site. Agree the level of effect remains minor and not significant.								
Viewpoint 12: Dunnet Head Distance: 9.9km Looking: southeast	App	Medium-high	Low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Low <u>Scenario 2:</u> Low	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Minor <u>Scenario 2:</u> Minor	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Not significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Not significant
	App	High	Medium	Moderate	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Medium <u>Scenario 2:</u> Medium	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Moderate <u>Scenario 2:</u> Moderate	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Not significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Not significant
<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: large-scale and long-distance views available from the Dunnet Head viewpoint. To the south-east, large open expanses of moorland across the higher ground at Dunnet Head and waterbodies including Loch Burifa, Loch of Easter Head and Long Lochand characterise the foreground. Wide open vistas beyond the lochs towards the headland and coastline are also visible. Along the coastal edge further east, and in inland areas, farmland characterises the view. Existing Development – Lochend Windfarm is visible above the distance skyline. Other operational wind farms, in views to the southeast, include the single turbine at Taigh na Muir (near the coastal edge) and Stroupster in the longer distance. To the south-east there is a cluster								

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	<u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – Slickly Wind Farm would be visible to the south-east, in the gap between Lochend (operational) and Stroupster (operational). The proposals would appear as a small extension to this larger group. Cogle Moss, Camster 2 and Golticlay Wind Farms would be visible on the distant horizon to the south-east, alongside operational wind farms including Camster. Hoy and Hesta Head Wind Farms would be visible on the Orkney Isles to the north-east, looking across the Pentland Firth. Limekiln and Limekiln Extension Wind Farms would be visible alongside Baillie (operational) to the south-west. Hollandmey (consented) would be visible to the south-east, in front of Stroupster (operational) and Slickly (consented) and alongside Lochend, with the proposals appearing as a small extension to this grouping. Cairnmore Hill would be visible alongside the Baillie (operational) and Limekiln / Limekiln Extension (consented) cluster in views to the south-west. Agree not significant. Scenario 2 –Several wind farms at scoping stage would be visible on the skyline to the south and south-east, including Corsback Hill, Greenland, Moss of Greenland and Red Moss. Level of effect moderate and not significant.							
Viewpoint 13: A99 north of Quoys of Reiss Distance: 10.7km	App	Medium	Low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Low <u>Scenario 2:</u> Low	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Minor <u>Scenario 2:</u> Minor	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Not significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Not significant
Looking: northwest	THC	High	Medium	Moderate	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Medium <u>Scenario 2:</u> Medium	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Moderate <u>Scenario 2:</u> Moderate	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Not significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Not significant

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	<u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – Slickly Wind Farm would be visible on the skyline to the north-west, alongside Stroupster (operational) and above a forested horizon. The proposals would form a smaller and separate group with Lochend Wind Farm, also in views to the north-west. Hollandmey (consented) would be visible to the north-west, alongside Slickly (consented) and partially filling the gap between the Lochend Windfarm and the Slickly / Stroupster group. The proposals would slightly extend the field of view occupied by wind turbines in views to the north-west. Agree the level of effect remains minor and not significant. Scenario 2 – No additional effects.							
Viewpoint 14: Gills Bay Ferry	App	Medium	Low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Low <u>Scenario 2:</u> Low	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Minor <u>Scenario 2:</u> Minor	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Not significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Not significant
	THC	Medium	Low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Low <u>Scenario 2:</u> Low	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Minor <u>Scenario 2:</u> Minor	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Not significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Not significant

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: located on the ferry between Gills Bay on the Caithness mainland and South Ronaldsay, on the Orkney Isles. It is representative of sequential views for recreational users of the ferry, when travelling towards the mainland. Existing Development – Turbines at Lochend and Stroupster are visible in views south. Consented Development: Slickly and Hollandmey Windfarms would be visible to the south. In Planning Development: Several wind farms at scoping stage would be visible on the skyline to the south-west, including Corsback Hill, Greenland, Moss of Greenland and Red Moss. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by ferry passengers. Susceptibility: Travellers on transport routes have a medium susceptibility to change. Value: Lower value can be accepted given presence on transport route. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC low. The proposed turbines will be seen on the distant horizon, alongside the Lochend Windfarm and will appear slightly different in scale, extending the horizontal spread of turbines westward. The proposal is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor level of effect. Agree this is not significant.								

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
		<u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced mainly by visitors Susceptibility: Recreational users are normally considered to have a high susceptibility to change as attention/interest is likely to be focused on the landscape or particular views. Value: High value considering location is a defined scenic viewpoint. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC low. The proposed turbines will be seen in front of the Lochend Windfarm and will appear different in scale, while still however, reading as an extension to the operational development. The proposal is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor level of effect. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – Slickly Windfarm would be visible to blade tips on the southwestern skyline between the operational Stroupster and Lochend Windfarms. Hollandmey (consented) would be visible to the south-west, with the proposal appearing as an extension to this development. Agree the level of effect remains minor and not significant. Cairnmore Hill would form a separate and more distant scheme further to the west. Agree the level of effect negligible and not significant. Scenario 2 – No further effects.						

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Viewpoint 17: Noss Head	App	Medium	Low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Low <u>Scenario 2:</u> Low	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Minor <u>Scenario 2:</u> Minor	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Not significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Not significant
Distance: 15.9km								
Looking: northwest	THC	High	Low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Low <u>Scenario 2:</u> Low	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Minor <u>Scenario 2:</u> Minor	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Not significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Not significant
<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: large scale and long-distance views over water from the viewpoint at Noss Head. Existing Development – Lochend and Stroupster Windfarms are visible distantly to the northwest. Consented Development: Slickly and Hollandmey would be visible distantly to the northwest. Cogle Moss Wind Farm would be visible in medium distance views to the west. In Planning Development: Several wind farms at scoping stage would be visible on the skyline to the north-west, namely Greenland, Moss of Greenland, Red Moss and Corsback Hill <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u>								

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
			Represents views experienced mainly by visitors Susceptibility: Recreational users are normally considered to have a high susceptibility to change as attention/interest is likely to be focused on the landscape or particular views. Value: High value considering location is a defined scenic viewpoint. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC low. The proposed turbines will be seen in front of the Lochend Windfarm at a considerable distance, reducing the effect of the apparent difference in scale and reading well consequently, as an extension to the operational development. The proposal is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor level of effect. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 –Slickly would be visible in distant views to the north-west, between the operational Lochend and Stroupster Wind Farms. Cogle Moss Wind Farm would be visible in medium distance views to the west, on the horizon. Other consented wind farms would be barely perceptible due to intervening landform which would screen the majority of the turbines. Hollandmey (consented) would be visible to the north-west, behind Lochend, and partially infilling the gap between Slickly and Lochend. The proposals would form a small extension to this group, partially infilling gaps. Changes would not notably alter the existing baseline. Agree the level of effect remains minor and not significant. Scenario 2 –Several wind farms at scoping stage would be visible on the skyline to the north-west, namely Greenland, Moss of Greenland, Red Moss and Corsback Hill. Agree the level of effect remains minor and not significant.					

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
		<u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by road users. Susceptibility: Road users have a medium susceptibility to change. However, viewpoint is located on the designated NC 500 route. Value: Higher value due to presence on NC 500 route. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC low. The proposed turbines will be seen alongside the Lochend Windfarm at a considerable distance, reducing the effect of the apparent difference in scale and reading well consequently, as an extension to the operational development. The proposal is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor level of effect. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – Slickly would be visible on the distant horizon to the south-east, in front of Stroupster (operational). Hollandmey (consented) would be visible to the south-east, in front of the operational Lochend Windfarm and the Site. The proposals would appear as an extension to Hollandmey from this angle of view and would fill a small gap between Hollandmey / Lochend and Stroupster / Slickly. Agree the level of effect remains minor and not significant. Cairnmore Hill (consented) would be visible in close views to the west, partially screened by the intervening landform. Scenario 2 –The blades of Tormsdale Wind Farm (at appeal) would be perceptible in distant views to the south. Agree the level of effect remains minor and not significant.						

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Viewpoint 20: Ben Dorrery	App	Medium	Low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Low <u>Scenario 2:</u> Low	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Minor <u>Scenario 2:</u> Negligible	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Not significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Not significant
Distance: 25.1km								
Looking: northeast	THC	High	Low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Low <u>Scenario 2:</u> Low	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Minor <u>Scenario 2:</u> Negligible	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Not significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Not significant

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Consider the MoC low. The proposed turbines will be seen in front of the Lochend Windfarm and will appear slightly different in scale, although at considerable distance and in the context of panoramic views taking in other operational windfarms. The proposal is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor level of effect. Agree this is not significant. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – Several consented wind farms would be visible in medium to distant views. Slickly would be visible in front of Stroupster to the east. Hollandmey (consented) would be visible on the distant skyline. The proposals would form a separate group with Lochend in views to the east. The Limekiln and Limekiln Extension would be visible in medium distance views to the north-west, above a forested horizon. Achlachan 2 would form part of a cluster with the operational Causeymire/ Halsary / Achlachan cluster to the south-east. Camster 2 would be visible on the distant skyline beyond this cluster. The proposals would appear as an extension to Hollandmey and would form part of a larger group with scoping stage wind farms and the Stroupster / Slickly group. Cairnmore Hill (consented) would be visible as a standalone scheme to the north. Agree the level of effect remains minor and not significant. Scenario 2 - Tormsdale would be visible to the south-east, forming part of the operational and consented cluster of wind farms centred on Causeymire. A number of schemes at scoping stage would be visible in the same direction as the Site, namely Greenland, Moss of Greenland, Red Moss and Corsback Hill. The proposals would appear as an extension to Hollandmey and would form part of a larger group with scoping stage wind farms and the Stroupster / Slickly group. Agree the level of effect is negligible and not significant.							
Viewpoint 21: Coire na Beinne	App	Medium – high	Low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Low <u>Scenario 2:</u> Low	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Minor <u>Scenario 2:</u> Negligible	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Not significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Not significant

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view)	Magnitude of change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration)	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance (Major and Major / Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant)	Magnitude of Impact of Existing/consented development	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Distance: 30.1km Looking: northeast	THC	High	Low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Low <u>Scenario 2:</u> Low	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Minor <u>Scenario 2:</u> Negligible	<u>Scenario 1:</u> Not significant <u>Scenario 2:</u> Not significant
<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: large-scale and long-distance panoramic views from a hill summit at 226m AOD. Visualisations are wireframe only. Existing Development – Lochend Windfarm is visible in distant views to the north. Operational wind farms visible in the view, including the larger cluster at Causeymire/ Halsary / Achlachan and Bad a Cheo in the more immediate context to the north. Buolfrulich Wind Farm is visible to the south. Consented Development: Achlachan 2 would form part of a cluster with the operational Causeymire/ Halsary / Achlachan cluster. Camster 2 would form part of a cluster with the operational Camster, Wathegar and Wathegar 2. Golticlay would be visible to the east, in front of the more distant operational Burn of Whilk. Hollandmey (consented) would be visible on the distant horizon to the south-west. In Planning Development: Tormsdale (at appeal) would be visible to the north. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced mainly by recreational users of the outdoors. Viewpoint is from a hilltop affording views out across the landscape, and these views will be amongst the principal reasons for any visit. Susceptibility: Recreational users are normally considered to have a high susceptibility to change as attention/interest is likely to be focused on the landscape or particular views.								

[illegible]

Appendix 7 - Assessment against Landscape and Visual Assessment Criteria contained within Section 4 of the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance

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 nearest settlement of size is Castletown. Although widespread theoretical visibility of the proposals will be incurred from within Castletown, buildings within the settlement and established riparian woodland to the east, along the Stangergill Burn, will generally limit the potential for longer distance views toward the proposals. The proposals will be prominent within the views from nearby smaller, dispersed settlements, most notably: Barrock, Inkstack and Lochend, albeit as a relatable extension to the Lochend Windfarm. It is concluded that the threshold for this criterion 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. ----- Of particular note is the impact of the development on both the A99 and A836 which form part of the NC500 tourist route. In both cases, the proposals will increase the presence of wind energy infrastructure from these routes, most notably at Viewpoints 9 (A836 Castletown), 10 (A99 North of Tofts) 13 (A99 north of Quoys of Reiss) and 18 (A836 Scrabster). Significant sequential visual impacts are predicted along an approximately 7km section of the A836 route, representing approximately 6 minutes of driving time, between the settlements of Dunnet and Mey. These impacts are best represented by Viewpoint 5 (Rattar). However, given the degree of localisation of these effects, it is agreed that these do not translate into significant sequential effects overall for the route. It is concluded that the threshold for this criterion is met.
3	Valued and natural cultural	The development does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting.

	landmarks are respected	----- No significant visual effects are anticipated from most natural and cultural heritage focused viewpoints within the study area. Historic Environment Scotland's assessment does not consider that the proposals raise impacts of national importance in cultural heritage assets within their remit, namely the Earl's Cairn Scheduled Monument 449 and Castle of Mey listed building and garden and designed landscape. While significant visual effects would be incurred from Viewpoint 4 (Lyth Memorial), it is not considered that they are of a nature that would diminish the prominence of this landmark or diminish its relationship to setting. It is concluded that the threshold for this criterion is 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. ----- The applicant's assessment considers that significant sequential visual effects would not be incurred from recreational routes with the exception of localised sections of the Far North Way long distance cycle route. Significant visual effects will be incurred along sections of this route between Thurso and John o' Groats, over some 7km distance, or approximately 30 minutes cycle time, as represented by Viewpoints 9 (A863 Castletown) and 2 (Barrock). However, given the relatively localised nature of these impacts it is considered they do not translate into significant sequential effects on the route overall. As such, the thresholds for this criterion are considered met.
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 ----- For the majority of routes in the area, the threshold is achieved, as discussed in more detail in relation to Criteria 2 and 5, above.
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 • Planning Authority stated aims for development of area

		----- The existing pattern of development is of wind farms set within the Sweeping Moorland and Flows and Farmed Lowland Plain Landscape Character Types. The proposals are located predominately within Group 3: areas with potential for wind farm development, within the spatial framework of the Council's Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance. There is visual separation between most schemes. The proposed development will reduce the visual separation between wind energy developments but, in conjunction with the operational Lochend Windfarm, will still retain an appropriate visual break, thus providing this scheme with its own setting and not adversely affecting the setting of other wind energy developments. The proposals represent an extension to an existing windfarm and conforming to an emerging cluster of development around this. The threshold is considered met for this criterion.
7	The proposal contributes positively to existing pattern or objectives for development in the area.	The proposal maintains appropriate and effective separation between developments and/ or clusters ----- It is considered that the threshold is broadly met, given that the proposals represent an extension to an existing windfarm and conforming to an emerging cluster of development around this.
8	The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected	The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected ----- For the most part, the turbines do not create a focal point in the view and they do not diminish the scale of the landforms in which they are situated amongst, although larger than the existing Lochend Windfarm turbines. It is considered that this threshold is 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. ----- It is considered that the threshold is broadly met, considering the assessment of the cumulative landscape and visual impacts of the development undertaken.
10	Distinctiveness of Landscape character is respected	Integrity and variety of Landscape Character Areas are maintained. -----

		The proposals would lead to an increase in the influence of wind energy development upon landscape character, with significant, although localised effects incurred in this regard on the western part of LCT 134, between Rattar and Lyth and the eastern part of LCT 143. The proposed development is located in the agricultural and moorland landscape of northeast Caithness, now characterised by the presence of a series of operational wind farms. Although the proposed turbines would be higher than those of the closest neighbouring developments, and despite the significant local landscape impacts, it is considered that the underlying characteristics of the landscape, namely its large scale and large skies, would remain. Overall, it is considered that the threshold is met for this criterion.
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Appendix 8 - Habitats Regulations Appraisal

Lochend Wind Farm extension - Erection and operation of a Wind Farm for a period of 40 years, comprising of 5 Wind Turbines with a maximum blade tip height 149.9m, Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), access tracks and ancillary infrastructure

24/02641/FUL

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS AFFECTING EUROPEAN SITES

Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA)

Caithness Lochs Special Protection Area (SPA)

The status of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and SPA and Caithness Lochs SPA means that the requirements of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, and c.) Regulations 1994 as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations') or, for reserved matters the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended apply.

This means that where the conclusion reached by the Council on a development proposal unconnected with the nature conservation management of a Natura 2000 site is that it is likely to have a significant effect on those sites, it must undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the implications for the conservation interests for which the areas have been designated. The need for Appropriate Assessment extends to plans or projects out with the boundary of the site in order to determine their implications for the interest protected within the site.

This means that the Council, as competent authority, has a duty to:

- Determine whether the proposal is directly connected with or necessary to site management for conservation; and, if not,
- Determine whether the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the site either individually or in combination with other plans or projects; and, if so, then
- Make an Appropriate Assessment of the implications (of the proposal) for the site in view of that site's conservation objectives.

The competent authority can only agree to the proposal after having ascertained that it will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the sites. If this is not the case and there are not alternative solutions, the proposal can only be allowed to proceed if there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, which in this case can include those of a social or economic nature.

Screening of Likely Significant Effects

It is evident that the proposal is not connected with or necessary to site management for conservation, hence further consideration is required. The proposed works has the potential to have a likely significant effect on the qualifying interests of the SPA due to impacts arising from construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development. The Council is therefore required to undertake an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposal on the above named European designated sites.

Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

NatureScot have advised that the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of otter.

Consequently, The Highland Council, as competent authority, is **required** to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of the site's conservation objectives for its qualifying interests.

Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Protection Area (SPA)

NatureScot have advised that the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of hen harrier.

Consequently, The Highland Council, as competent authority, is **required** to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of the site's conservation objectives for its qualifying interests.

Caithness Lochs Special Protection Area (SPA)

NatureScot have advised that the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of Greenland white-fronted geese, greylag geese and whooper swan.

Consequently, The Highland Council, as competent authority, is **required** to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of the site's conservation objectives for its qualifying interests.

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

While the responsibility to carry out the Appropriate Assessment rests with the Council, advice contained within Circular 6/1995 is that the assessment can be based on the information submitted from other agencies. In this case, the Appropriate Assessment is informed by information supplied by NatureScot, the applicant and various published information.

Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

In its response to the Council of 10 January 2025, NatureScot advised that the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on otter. Their advice is set out below:

Our advice is that the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on otter. Consequently, the Highland Council, as competent authority, is required to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of the site's conservation objectives for its qualifying interest. To help you do this, we advise on the bases of the information provided, if the proposal is carried out strictly in accordance with the following mitigation, our conclusion is that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

- *Adoption of 'good practice' mitigation measures as listed in Technical Appendix 7.4 Otter survey.*

NatureScot highlight that with the application of the above mitigation measures the proposals would not adversely affect the integrity of the site. It is considered appropriate to condition the requirement for a finalised otter Species Protection Plan, adopting the applicant's good practice mitigation measures, as listed in Technical Appendix 7.4 Otter survey, as part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Protection Area (SPA)

In its response to the Council of 10 January 2025, NatureScot advised that the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on hen harrier. Their advice is set out below:

Our advice is that this proposal is likely to have a significant effect on hen harrier. Consequently, the Highland Council, as competent authority, is required to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of the site's conservation objectives for its qualifying interests. To help you so this we advise based on the information provided, our conclusion is that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

The appraisal we carried out considered the impact of the proposal (alone and in combination with other proposals affecting the SPA) on the following factors: Hen harrier roost locations were recorded to the north-east of the proposal. Only one of these was within 500m (which is approximately mid-point of the recommended disturbance buffer distance) of the nearest proposed infrastructure with the others being between 515m and 1015m away. The applicant has provided evidence to show that hen harriers will nest close to construction activities (200-300m). Potential disturbance would affect a maximum of five individual birds and there is similar suitable roosting habitat in the wider area.

Foraging harriers may be disturbed during construction. However, the proposal forms a small part of their total wintering range and there are abundant areas of foraging habitat nearby. Most hen harrier flights were below the sweep of the turbine blades which has resulted in low predicted collision mortality (0.012 birds per year).

Caithness Lochs Special Protection Area (SPA)

In its response to the Council of 10 January 2025, NatureScot advised that the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on Greenland white-fronted geese, greylag geese and whooper swan. Their advice is set out below:

Our advice is that this proposal is likely to have a significant effect on Greenland white-fronted geese, greylag geese and whooper swan. Consequently, the Highland Council, as competent authority, is required to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of the site's conservation objectives for its qualifying interests. To help you so this we advise based on the information provided, our conclusion is that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

The appraisal we carried out considered the impact of the proposal (alone and in combination with other proposals affecting the SPA) on the following factors:

Greenland white-fronted geese

Greenland white-fronted geese may be disturbed by construction traffic travelling to and from the site. This may be considered temporary, short-term and reversible if construction is taking place in winter. This species needs access to undisturbed feeding and roosting areas during winter. These geese can and do shift feeding areas during and between winters. The Loch of Mey area is favoured by these geese and there are other available alternative feeding sites out with disturbance distance for this species in the nearby area. There is an extremely low predicted collision mortality (0.012 birds per year).

Greylag geese and whooper swan

Greylag geese and whooper swans may be disturbed by construction traffic travelling to and from the site. This may be considered temporary, short-term and reversible if construction is taking place in winter. The applicant has stated the fields where both species feed form part of a working farm with regular vehicular and pedestrian use of the minor roads surrounding the fields, indicating habituation to a degree of disturbance including the use of farm machinery. We therefore consider it unlikely that roosting or feeding greylag geese would be displaced. Most records of feeding swans were west of the proposal around Syster and Lochend, commuting from these fields to and from Loch Heilen (away from the proposed turbines). There is a low predicted collision mortality for both greylag geese and whooper swans (0.562 and 0.108 birds respectively per year). We consider that the predicted levels of collision mortality will not adversely affect the population, either alone or in combination with other proposals affecting the SPA.

HIGHLAND COUNCIL APPRAISAL OF THE PROPOSAL

- The proposal is not directly connected with or necessary to site management for conservation;
- The proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the site either individually or in combination with other plans or projects; therefore;
- An Appropriate Assessment of the implications (of the proposal) for the site in view of that site's conservation objectives is provided below.

The impacts on the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Protection Area (SPA) and Caithness Lochs SPA have been considered. The mitigation proposed by the applicant in their Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) in addition to conditions to secure the submission and implementation of species protection plans for qualifying features of the designated sites will be sufficient to address any significant risk and avoid an impact on the integrity of the designated sites and their qualifying features.

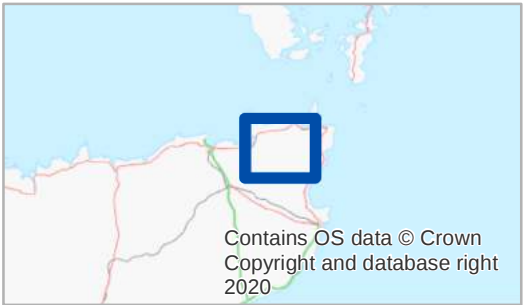
Overall, it can be therefore concluded that while likely significant effects have been identified during both the construction and operational phases of the development, there will not be an adverse effect on site integrity of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC, Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA and Caithness Lochs SPA.



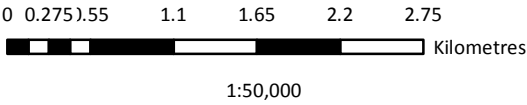
KEY

Site Boundary

Ownership Boundary



Coordinate System: British National Grid
Projection: Transverse Mercator

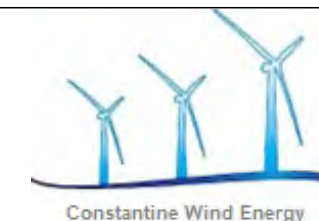
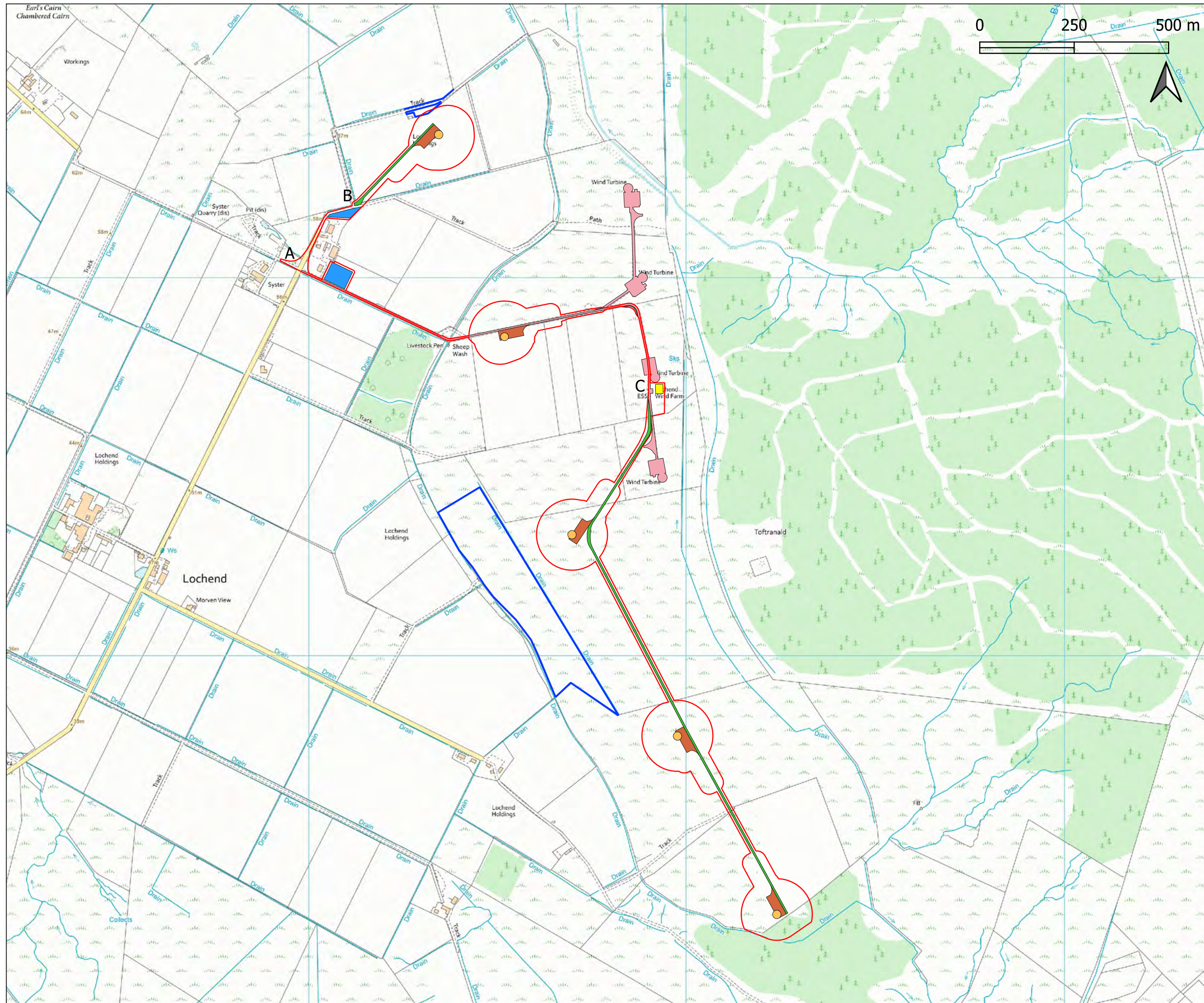


Lochend Wind Farm Extension
EIA Report

Figure 1.1
Site Location Plan

Date:	Lead:	Review:	Version:
17/06/2024	EO	YD	1.0

Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2020



Lochend Wind Farm Extension Figure 1.2 Site Layout Plan

- ## Legend
- Application Boundary
 - Original Site Infrastructure
 - Proposed Turbine Foundations
 - Proposed Battery Storage
 - Temporary Construction Compound
 - Proposed Crane Pad
 - Proposed Access Tracks
 - Enhancement Area

Lochend Holding
Barrock
Castletown
Caithness
KW14 8TA

1:10,000 Scale in A3

Technical Notes:

Northern proposed turbine (T1) -
Micrositing not possible to the north

Centre-north turbine (T2) -
Micrositing not possible to the south

Southern turbine (T5) -
Micrositing not possible to the south

A - Fence moved back to account for
corner widening

B - Gate repositioned to fit revised corner
entrance

C - Cabling to existing substation along
access track

