Agenda Item	6.2
Report No	PLN/058/26

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: North Planning Applications Committee

Date: 25 November 2026

Report Title: 25/04675/S36: RWE Renewables UK Swindon Ltd
Land 1120M SE Of Achvanich Farmhouse, Latheron

Report By: Area Planning Manager - North

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Golticlay Extension Wind Farm - Erection and operation of a wind farm for a period of 40 years, comprising 6 wind turbines with a maximum blade tip height of up to 180 metres, Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure.

Ward: 03 – Wick and East Caithness

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

Reason referred to Committee: National Development

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

Recommendation

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

1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

1.1 The Highland Council (THC) has been consulted by the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU) on an application made under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 (as amended) for the construction and operation of the Golticlay Extension Wind Farm with Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure. The indicative generating capacity of the wind farm is 34MW while the indicative storage capacity of the BESS facility is 55MW. The application site is located directly to the northwest of the consented Golticlay Wind Farm, which gained approval under Section 36 and deemed planning permission from Scottish Ministers in December 2024. Members raised no objection to the consented wind farm, THC reference 23/05188/S36, comprising up to 13 wind turbines with a blade tip height of up to 180m, access tracks, borrow pits, substation, control building, metrological mast, and ancillary infrastructure.

1.2 The proposed development comprises:

- 4 turbines with a blade tip height of up to 180m, and 2 turbines with a blade tip height of up to 160m;
- Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility compound, measuring 84m x 120m;
- Permanent and temporary crane hardstanding areas; permanent areas measure 2.6ha and temporary areas (to be removed and restored following construction) measure 1.2ha;
- 5.8km of new access tracks with a typical running width of 5m with a 2.5m shoulder either side and localised widening for passing places;
- Onsite substation compound measuring 50m x 100m;
- Electrical and communication underground cables running along sections of the access track;
- Permanent meteorological mast up to 105m;
- 3 onsite borrow pits to be restored following construction; and
- Temporary construction compound and laydown area utilising the same development footprint as the proposed BESS.

1.3 The applicant has confirmed that the off-site point of grid connection to be via the Mybster substation, utilising the same route as that of the Golticlay Wind Farm underground cable connection, broadly following the A9 trunk road, as granted prior approval under THC reference 25/04427/PNO.

1.4 Permission is sought to operate the wind farm for 40 years; a further application would be necessary to determine any future re-powering proposal. If the decision is

made to decommission the wind turbines, all components and above ground infrastructure would be removed. Any such turbine foundation retention would however need to be agreed via a decommissioning method statement. Retention of tracks would require separate planning application at the time of decommissioning. Any application for retention of such infrastructure will be determined in line with the Development Plan in place at that time.

1.5 The applicant held two rounds of public consultation with events held at Lybster Bowling Club and then the Lybster Community Centre in March and September 2025 respectively, with materials 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).

1.6 The applicant utilised the Major Pre-application Advice Service (THC reference 25/00264/PREMAJ). This was for a proposal of 11 turbines with a blade tip height of up to 200m. The Council's pre-application advice noted concerns with the scale and composition of turbines, the extension of wind farm development into proximity of the A9 trunk road, deep peat impacts, and cultural heritage impacts on designated sites.

1.7 The application is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), dated November 2025, the contents of which has been informed through EIA Scoping. The EIAR contains the following technical chapters: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; Cultural Heritage; Ecology; Ornithology; Noise and Vibration; Traffic and Transport; Hydrology; Geology and Soils; Aviation; and Shadow Flicker. 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.

1.8 No amendments have been made to the proposals since the application's submission in December 2025. However, the applicant submitted an Additional Environmental Information Report (AIR), dated June 2026, in response to matters raised by the following consultees:

- Historic Environment Scotland (HES) - to provide clarification of the conclusions of the applicant's Cultural Heritage Assessment in response to HES's consultation response regarding the impacts of the proposal on the setting of scheduled monuments within the site; and
- Ironside Farrar (Peat Consultant) – to provide updated details in respect of the applicant's Peat Landslide Hazard Risk Assessment.

Details of Golticlay Wind Farm's underground grid connection, which the proposals will follow, were also provided, to define the scope of the EIA Project.

Determination Procedure

1.9 Should the Council object to the application, the applicant will have the option of how they wish to proceed. This could be the withdrawal of the application or proceed to determination, potentially with the submission of Additional / Further / Supplementary Environmental Information.

1.10 In the event the Council objects and application progresses, it will be passed to the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA). An appointed Reporter shall then confirm the need for any further procedure, which could include a Public Local Inquiry (PLI) to be held, amongst other options. The inquiry / further procedure programme and associated deadlines will be set by the Reporter and provide only limited opportunity for matters arising to be referred to Committee.

1.11 The concern here is the limited opportunity for the Council to consider any further environmental information submitted by the applicant and, where necessary, report that information through the Council's Committee process before relevant inquiry / further procedure deadlines are reached. Delaying the Council's response pending further Committee consideration could therefore result in the inquiry proceeding, or determination of the application, without the Council's position being fully presented. This is further complicated by the number of related electricity transmission and generation proposals progressing through separate consenting and inquiry processes, the Area Committee's finite capacity to consider this caseload, as well as the potential for further information arising through those processes to have implications for the cumulative assessment, and the presentation of the Council's case.

1.12 In recognition of these constraints, a wider suite of delegated powers is sought to enable officers to manage the Council's effective participation in PLI / further procedures, including responding to further information and evidence, making necessary procedural submissions, refining or supplementing the Council's case and taking such other steps as may reasonably be required to protect the Council's interests. Any exercise of these delegated powers would remain consistent with the substantive position and grounds established by Committee and would be informed, where appropriate, by specialist legal advice provided by our Legal Counsel. Following PLI or any other further procedure, the application will be determined by Scottish Ministers.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The application site is located to the northwest of the small and dispersed settlement of Roster, approximately 6km northwest of Lybster, bordering the A9 trunk road and straddling the C1053 local public road, within Caithness. The 998ha application site is primarily open moorland which is grazed by cattle and sheep and is bisected by the C1053. The proposed development is intended to form an extension to the

consented Golticlay Wind Farm (THC reference 23/05188/S36). The existing consent is currently being constructed and a small portion of the proposed application site boundary overlaps the Golticlay Wind Farm site boundary. This is to accommodate shared infrastructure, comprising a consented access track spur, near to the consented scheme's Turbine 5. The application site was also the subject of a previous proposal for the development of Stemster Wind Farm. That proposal was for up to 13 turbines at up to 175m tip height. It did not however proceed beyond EIA Scoping (THC consultation response reference 19/03049/SCOP).

2.2 Loch Stemster is situated close to the centre of the site and lies between two on-site hills, Stemster Hill to the south west which is the highest point within, at 248m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD); and Sidhean Mhor, which rises to 190m AOD to the north west of Loch Stemster. Turbines are situated between the 190m and 210m AOD contours.

2.3 In addition to Loch Stemster, a number of burns and drains are present within the site. The Loop Burn flows westwards from Loch Stemster into Loch Rangag, located to the west of the site. Reisgill Burn originates in the southern portion of the site and flows southwards into Rumster Forest and into the sea at Lybster Bay.

2.4 There are no residential properties within the site boundary. Individual properties are located in the vicinity; the closest being Corrieview Cottage and Willow Cottage which are respectively 800m and 1.13km from the nearest proposed turbine, to the southwest. To the west, along the A9 trunk road, Lochend Cottage lies around 1.3km from the nearest turbine. Additional individual properties are located southeast of the turbine locations, along the C1053 towards the A99 junction, with the closest in this respect, Bulreanrob, located 2.37km from the nearest turbine.

Environmental Designations and Habitats

2.5 The application site does not form part of any natural heritage designation. The eastern part of the site however, has a common boundary with the Flow Country World Heritage Site (WHS), Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), and RAMSAR and the Shielton Peatlands Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), at the latter's western edge. The WHS is designated for its blanket bog and peatland habitats. The applicant's assessment has scoped in the following designated sites:

2.6

Designation	Distance to Site Boundary	Qualifying Interests
Flow Country WHS	0m - On boundary	Peatland habitats including blanket bog

Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC, SPA, and RAMSAR.	0m - On boundary	Blanket bog; Acid, peat-stained lakes and ponds; Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath; Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels; Marsh saxifrage; and Very wet mires often identified by an unstable `quaking` surface; Otter; Black-throated diver; Red-throated diver; Common scoter; Wigeon; Hen harrier; Merlin; Short-eared owl; Dunlin; Golden eagle; Golden plover; Greenshank; and Wood sandpiper
Shielton Peatlands SSSI	0m - On boundary	Blanket bog
Coire na Beinne Mires SSSI,	180m west	Blanket bog
Blar nam Faoileag SSSI	2km northwest	Blanket bog
River Thurso SAC	2.5km west	Atlantic Salmon
Reisgill Burn SSSI	5.5km south	Scrub woodland

Oliclett SSSI	7.1km east	Blanket bog

2.7 The site environs mainly comprises blanket bog, wet modified bog and wet heath. Other habitats present include marshy grassland and recently felled conifer plantation.

2.8 Class 1 and 2 peatlands, which are defined as nationally important carbon rich soils, deep peat, and priority peatland habitat of high conservation value are present within the site. Peat deposits primarily consist of Class 2 peat with surveys recording varying depths of less than 0.5m, to up to 5.5m.

2.9 Evidence of badger, pine marten, otter and water vole was 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, osprey, white-tailed eagle, hen harrier, merlin, short-eared owl, barn owl, curlew, herring gull, and great black-backed gull. Collision risk modelling has also been undertaken for: osprey, greylag goose, hen harrier, short-eared owl, herring gull and great black-backed gull.

Landscape Designation, Wild Land, and Landscape Character

2.10 The application site does not form part of any landscape designation or Wild Land Areas (WLA). Landscape designations assessed within the applicant's 45km study area comprise:

Designated Landscape	Distance and Direction from the Proposed Development
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	
SLA6: The Flow Country and Berriedale Coast	0km - On western site boundary
SLA4: Dunnet Head	21km north
SLA7: Bens Griam and Loch nan Clar	30km west
SLA9: Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth	30km southwest
SLA5: Duncansby Head	32km northeast
SLA3: Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra	38km northwest
Wild Land Areas (WLA)	

WLA36: Causeymire-Knockfin Flows	1km west
WLA39: East Halladale Flows	13km northwest
WLA 35 Ben KIlbreck – Armine Forest	35m southwest

2.11 The host Landscape Character Type (LCT) is Sweeping Moorland and Flows - Caithness and Sutherland LCT 134, which would be directly affected by the development. Surrounding LCTs from within views of the turbines would be obtained include:

- 135 Rounded Hills - Caithness and Sutherland LCT;
- 136 Rocky Hills and Moorland LCT;
- 138 Lone Mountains LCT;
- 140 Sandy Beaches and Dunes LCT;
- 142 Strath - Caithness and Sutherland LCT;
- 143 Farmed Lowland Plain LCT; and
- 144 Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT.

2.12 Key recreational and tourist activities in the wider area include, but are not limited to, walking, bird watching, hunting, fishing, mountaineering, horse riding and mountain biking.

Built Heritage

2.13 Three Scheduled Monuments are located within the application site itself, all of which date to the prehistoric period and consist of the Achkinloch Chambered Cairn (SM419) and Achkinloch Stone Setting (SM420), both of which are located on the south side of Loch Stemster, and Ballachly Broch (SM520) which is located north of Loch Stemster. Four further Scheduled Monuments have been assessed within the applicant's wider 10km study area. These comprise two prehistoric assets and two post-medieval assets. The prehistoric assets consist of Greysteil Castle Broch (SM555) located on Loch Rangag, some 122m west, while Rangag Standing Stone (SM473) is located some 544m north of the application site boundary. The two postmedieval assets consist of a cross incised stone in the churchyard of Lybster Church (SM613), some 260m south, and Reisgill Old Bridge (SM624) around 511m south of the application site at the A99 junction. The wider 10km study area hosts 12 Category B and 22 Category C Listed Buildings, the majority of which are located within the Lybster Conservation Area to the south. Additionally, the study area includes undesignated assets, however, the overall potential for the site to contain unrecorded heritage assets is considered low.

Cumulative Development

2.14 Appendix 2 of this report provides details of operational, consented and under construction, and in planning wind farm projects within the 45km landscape and visual impact assessment study. The cutoff date for the applicant's assessment was July 2025. The status of several schemes in the cumulative study area has since changed, as is noted in the appendix.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

On Site

3.1	22 Feb 2026	25/04427/PNO: Prior notification under Regulation 62 – cabling works in connection with the Golticlay Windfarm grid connection	Prior Approval Granted
3.2	22 Apr 2025	25/00553/SCOP: Golticlay Wind Farm extension - Erection and operation of a wind farm for a period of 40 years, comprising up to 11 turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 200m, control building, substation (including transformer and Battery Energy Storage System), upgraded access, access tracks, watercourse crossings, borrow pits, underground cabling, construction compounds, laydown areas, anemometer mast and ancillary infrastructure.	EIA Scoping Response Issued
3.3	4 Jun 2024	23/05188/S36: Golticlay Wind Farm Redesign - Erection and operation of a wind farm for a period of 35 years, comprising up to 13 wind turbines, 11 with a maximum blade tip height of 200m, 2 with a maximum blade tip height of 180m, access tracks, borrow pits, substation, control building, metrological mast, and ancillary infrastructure.	Consented by Scottish Minsters
3.4	3 Mar 2020	20/00393/PAN: Stemster Wind Farm - Up to 13 wind turbine generators of up to 175 metre tip height, with a capacity not exceeding 49 mw	PAN Reported to Committee
3.5	8 Aug 2019	19/03049/SCOP: Stemster Wind Farm - Request for Scoping Opinion under The	EIA Scoping Response Issued

		Electricity Works (EIA) (Scotland) Regulations 2017	
	Energy Related Development in Surrounding Area		
3.6	30 Oct 2025	25/03311/S37: Spittal to Beauly 400 kV OHL - Install, operate and keep installed 173km of new 400 kV overhead electricity line, supported on steel lattice tower structures, between proposed new substations at Banniskirk (ND 15905 56823) in the area of Spittal, and Fanellan (NH 48534 43208) in the area of Beauly, with a connection via a proposed new substation at Carnaig (NH 65053 97458) near to the existing substation at Loch Buidhe, in the area of Bonar Bridge; associated permanent diversion works to 18km of existing 132 kV and 275 kV overhead electricity lines, including the temporary diversion works, and ancillary development and associated works.	THC Raise Objection – Subject of ongoing Public Local Inquiry

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.1 Advertised: EIA Development advertisements:

- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report advertisements:
  - Edinburgh Gazette: 5 December 2025
  - The Scotsman: 5 December 2025
  - John O' Groats Journal: 5 and 12 December 2025
- Additional Information Report advertisements:
  - John O' Groats Journal: 12 June 2026
  - Edinburgh Gazette: 12 June 2026

The deadline for representations was 23 January 2026 for the EIA Report and 13 July 2026 for the Additional Information Report.

0 representations received by the Highland Council.

4 objections and 8 supporting comments received by the ECU.

4.2 Material considerations raised are summarised as follows:

- Conformity with the Electricity Act (1989), the Development Plan, and other related national energy policy documents;

- Landscape and visual impacts including cumulative impacts and effects on NSAs, WLAs, effects from specific viewpoints, and concerns with red aviation safety lighting;
- Ecological and habitat effects including fragmentation of peatland habitats, considering the proximity of the site to the Flow Country World Heritage Site.
- Whether the proposed biodiversity enhancement measures are sufficiently detailed and enforceable;
- Health and safety risk, particularly relating to the proposed BESS;
- Effects on terrestrial wildlife and ornithological interests, biodiversity, habitats including peatland habitats, and habitat management;
- Impact on cultural heritage assets;
- Impact on dark skies;
- Socio-economic impacts including employment opportunities, and effects on tourism and recreational interests; and
- Contribution to national and international renewable energy targets and national energy security.

4.3 Non-material considerations raised are summarised as follows:

- The need for the development; and
- Community benefit funding.

4.4 All letters of representation received by the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit can be accessed via www.energyconsents.scot.

5. CONSULTATIONS

Consultations Undertaken by Highland Council

5.1 The following **Community Councils** did not respond to the consultation request:

- Latheron, Lybster and Clyth (host);
- Berriedale and Dunbeath;
- Halkirk and District; and
- Tannach and District.

5.2 **Watten Community Council object** based on the adverse environmental impacts of large wind energy developments on Caithness in terms of landscape and visual, ecological, hydrological, and lack of tangible employment and economic benefits.

5.3 **Access Team** do not object subject to pre-start condition for a Recreational Access Management Plan to maintain public access rights to and across the site.

5.4 **Ecology Team objects** based on inadequate peatland restoration proposals and methods proposed by the applicant. Should consent otherwise be granted, the Ecology Officer suggested a list of conditions that may be attached.

5.5 **Environmental Health Team** do not object. Further to discussion with the applicant and Planning Officers relating to the UK Government's guidance; Assessment and Rating of Wind Turbine Noise (ARWTN), conditions are advised to secure prior approval of a scheme to limit noise and dust from construction activities, and a condition to limit operational noise emissions from the wind turbines and BESS.

5.6 **Flood Risk Management Team** does not object and has no specific comments.

5.7 **Forestry Team** do not object. Concerns are however expressed over the potential impact of works to roadside trees to facilitate the access of Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AIL) to the site. Any AIL route assessment to come forward via condition is advised to be supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA). Any proposed tree surgery or felling is also advised to be conditioned.

5.8 **Historic Environment Team (Archaeology) object**. This is due to the impact on the setting of Achkinloch, stone setting SW of, Loch Stemster (SM420) and Achkinloch, chambered cairn 755m SW of, Loch Stemster (SM419). Otherwise, the applicant's suggested mitigation strategy for undesignated cultural heritage assets is satisfactory. Should consent be granted a programme of archaeological works is advised to be conditioned.

5.9 **Historic Environment Team (Conservation)** do not object and raised no further comments in terms of the impacts of the proposals on the local heritage assets within their remit.

5.10 **Landscape Officer** does not object. The LVIA however underestimates the magnitude of change and level of effect from a number of surrounding locations, including Viewpoints 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 19, and that effects at Viewpoint 23 are also regarded as significant. Their principal concern relates to the siting of Turbines T5 and T6, which would increase visual effects experienced from the A9 and nearby residential properties. These turbines are considered to give rise to the greatest visual effects and to contribute to increased visual clutter within affected views. The proposal would also intensify cumulative effects through its close relationship with the consented Golticlay Wind Farm. Overall, these effects are however considered to be localised.

5.11 **Transport Planning Team** do not object subject to conditions. One of the recommended conditions relates to protection of the C1053 local road, which, beyond the access point to the consented Golticlay Wind Farm, is of uncertain structural strength to accommodate the proposed construction traffic. In this respect, a structural investigation study may be secured via condition in advance of development commencing. Transport Planning also recommends conditions to secure a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and for the provision of a Road Safety Audit.

Consultations Undertaken by the Energy Consents Unit

5.12 **British Horse Society** do not object but advises that vehicles travelling to and from the site are likely to meet equestrians on the road and that drivers should be aware of this risk and take note of its published "Guidance to drivers of large vehicles".

5.13 **British Telecom** do not object, subject to a condition to secure clearance of the proposed turbines from a fixed BT microwave link that crosses the application site.

5.14 **Crown Estate** do not object and confirms that the assets of Crown Estate Scotland are not affected.

5.15 **Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) object**. DIO had initially raised no objection, 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 for aviation charting purposes. However, the DIO has since objected. A statutory safeguarding zone, designed to assure the operation and capability of a recently installed technical asset known as the Lossiemouth Wide Area Multilateration Network (WAM Network) has been designated. As such, the DIO has completed reassessment of the development and identified that elements of the proposals would have a significant and detrimental impact on the operation of the WAM network, and on the air traffic services it facilitates.

5.16 **Fisheries Management Scotland** do not object and advises the decision maker to seek the views of the Caithness District Salmon Fishery Board and Flow Country Rivers Trusts as the local qualified organisations.

5.17 **Flow Country Partnership** do not object and commented on the applicant's pollution prevention plan and restoration enhancement plan.

5.18 **Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd.** do not object as the development would not infringe the safeguarding criteria and operation of Wick Airport.

5.19 **Historic Environment Scotland object** based on the impact on the setting of Achkinloch, stone setting SW of, Loch Stemster (SM420) and Achkinloch, chambered cairn 755m SW of, Loch Stemster (SM419). The proposed turbines would introduce several large-scale and moving features across the skyline, directly into one of the most significant key features of the stone setting (SM420); views along the alignment of the stone setting out through the open end to the south-southeast. These turbines would also become the most prominent features across the hillside to the south in views from the stone setting, and towards it from throughout the topographic bowl surrounding the monument and the Loch of Stemster. The turbines would also directly affect views of, and the relationship between, the stone setting and the cairn (SM419). The proposed turbines would be substantially more visible than those already consented in the area, which would

only be visible as tips and would not appear directly along the axis of the setting. Thus, by dominating and substantially altering these key factors of both monuments, the proposals would result in a significant adverse impact on the integrity of their setting.

5.20 **Ironside Farrar (peat advisor)** do not object on the grounds of peat landslide hazard risks. It had previously considered that the applicant's Peat Landslide Hazard Risk Assessment (PLHRA) required minor revisions, which have been addressed satisfactorily through the additional information (AI) submission.

5.21 **Joint Radio Company** do not object as the proposed development would not interfere with the radio link infrastructure operated by local energy networks, subject to a 50m micrositing limit.

5.22 **National Air Traffic Services (NATS)** do not object, having withdrawn an initial objection with respect to possible interference with the Alanshill enroute RADAR. Following discussions with the applicant, NATS agreed to remove their objection subject to conditions to secure a primary radar mitigation scheme in advance of any turbine being erected.

5.23 **NatureScot** do not object subject to conditions. It has considered the proposal's impacts in relation to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site, River Thurso SAC, East Caithness Cliffs SPA and Caithness Lochs SPA and Ramsar site. It advises that the Scottish Government as the competent authority is required to undertake Habitats Regulations Appraisals (Appropriate Assessments) in respect of these sites.

5.24 **RSPB** do not object provided a Bird Protection Plan (BPP) is secured by condition to establishing safe working buffers in respect to the Caithness and Sutherland SPA species, Hen Harrier and Short Eared Owl. Concerns remain regarding the collision risk and foraging displacement to SPA raptors. RSPB request further assessment and further detail in response to the applicant's additional information (AI) submission, in terms of the impact of the grid connection on the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands, SPA, SAC and Ramsar.

5.25 **Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc** do not object. Following further discussions with the applicant they have withdrawn their previous objection on the basis of potential 'wake effects' on the existing 132kV Dunbeath to Mybster overhead line and the proposed Spittal to Beauly 400kV overhead line.

5.26 **Scottish Water** do not object and advises that there are no Scottish Water drinking water catchments or water abstraction sources in the area that may be affected.

5.27 **SEPA** do not object subject to conditions to ensure that micrositing is used as a means to refine the route between Turbines 5 and 6 such that it minimises the volume of peat that requires to be excavated as far as is practical.

5.28 **Transport Scotland** do not object subject to conditions to secure a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and to confirm the route for abnormal loads to access the site together with any accommodation measures, and any additional signage and temporary traffic control measures required for the development's construction.

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 This application has been submitted to the Scottish Government under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 (as amended). Should Ministers approve the development, it will receive deemed planning permission under Section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended). Although not a planning application, the Council processes Section 36 applications in a similar manner given that planning permission may be deemed to be granted.

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

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

7.3 It should be noted that for applications under the Electricity Act that the Development Plan is just one of several considerations, and therefore Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 which requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, is not engaged. That said, the application still requires to be assessed against all policies of the Development Plan

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

Planning Considerations

7.4 The key considerations in this case are:

a) Compliance with the Development Plan / Other Planning Policy;
b) Energy and Economic Benefit;
c) Construction Impact;
d) Siting, Layout, and Design;
e) Landscape and Visual Impact;
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) Telecommunications;
l) Aviation and Radar;
m) Decommissioning and Aftercare;
n) Planning Compliance and Monitoring; and
o) Other Material Considerations.

Compliance with the Development Plan and Other Government Policy

7.5 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).

7.6 The principle of wind farm development is established in national policy, with the proposed development being of national importance for the delivery of the national Spatial Strategy. NPF4 considers that Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure will assist in the delivery of the Spatial Strategy and Spatial Priorities for the north of Scotland, and that Highland can continue to make a strong contribution toward meeting Scotland's ambition for net zero. Alongside these ambitions, the strategy for Highland aims to protect environmental assets as well as to stimulate investment in natural and engineered solutions to address

climate change. This aim is not new and will clearly require a balancing exercise to be undertaken, which is reflected throughout NPF4.

7.7 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 maintains 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.

7.8 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 criterion, 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 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 Benefit

7.9 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.

7.10 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 34MW of installed capacity in addition to 55MW of battery energy storage capacity.

7.11 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”.

7.12 The applicant’s assessment of the carbon losses and gains, within Technical Appendix 2.2, estimates a total loss of between 26,504 and 179,619 tonnes of CO2e, this is mainly due to lifecycle emissions of the turbines and the batteries including embodied losses from the manufacture of the turbines and provision of backup power to the grid, which could be minimised through the provision of on-site energy storage. Ecological carbon losses during the construction phase of development are predicted to represent 34% of these total losses. The scheme is estimated to produce annual carbon savings of 28,341 tonnes of CO2e / year, based on a grid mix, referring to a proportion of different energy sources that collectively generate the electricity supplied to the national grid. The maximum estimated payback time of the proposed development is 6.2 years.

7.13 The proposed development anticipates a construction phase of 24 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.

7.14 As detailed in their Socio-Economic Statement, the applicant has estimated that the construction cost of the development will be up to £100 million. The applicant calculates that the development will result in the following socio-economic benefits:

- Construction Phase:
  - £17 million Gross Valued Added (GVA) and 335 job years in Scotland;
  - £7 million GVA and 112 job years in Highland; and
- Operational Phase:
  - £79.7 million GVA and 1,143 job years in Scotland; and
  - £31.7 million GVA and 455 job years in Highland.

These economic contributions are positive and beneficial and are considered by the applicant to be significant in terms of economic growth, although not in EIA terms.

7.15 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, as well as the shared community benefit fund with the original Golticlay Wind Farm, as proposed. However, as Members are aware, community benefit is not a material planning consideration in the determination of this application.

Construction Impact

7.16 The applicant anticipates that the wind farm construction period will be 24 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 11: Traffic and Transport, outlines the mitigation measures that would be included with the finalised CTMP, which should be secured by conditions prior to construction works commencing on site. The CTMP should be reviewed throughout the works and informed by feedback from ongoing engagement with the community through a Community Liaison Group to ensure that the community council and other stakeholders are kept up to date and consulted before and during the construction period.

7.17 A finalised Construction and Environment Management Plan (CEMP) would also 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. 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.

7.18 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.

7.19 The applicant's desired construction hours would be from 07:00 - 19:00 Monday to Friday and Saturday 07:00 to 16:00. 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.

7.20 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 no objection and considers that construction noise is unlikely to be a significant issue. However, 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.

7.21 A micrositing allowance of 50m is requested for turbines T2 to T6. A 100m micrositing allowance is requested for T1, the proposed BESS, and all other ancillary infrastructure, including borrow pits. A 50m limit is 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 microsited on to noticeably higher elevations of ground (no more than 5m AOD). However, there may be more flexibility for specific infrastructure, provided it avoids moving infrastructure into watercourse buffers, Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE), and does not disturb additional peat resources to that shown in the EIAR, or increase impacts on natural or cultural heritage assets, including unknown archaeology. The 100m micrositing limit requested for T1 and the additional site infrastructure may be agreeable, in this respect, considering the presence of pockets of deep peat across the application site. The applicant would require to provide justification for this additional allowance, following confirmation of the finalised design of infrastructure and further survey work, should the proposals otherwise be granted consent. All micrositing limits should be controlled through condition, along with a requirement to ensure that any movement from the consented locations are subject to approval by the Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW).

7.22 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, verges, turbine base edges and the 3 site borrow pits 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.

7.23 Should the development be granted consent, a Community Liaison Group (CLG) should be set up / re-established, via condition, 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

7.24 Chapter 3 of the EIAR describes the factors that led to selection of the site. In this respect, key considerations were that the site benefits from high average wind speeds at hub height, which puts the development close to the primary renewable resource and that the proximity of the location allows it to act as an extension to the consented Golticlay Windfarm. 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 settlements.

7.25 Chapter 4 of the EIAR sets out the design principles that underpin the applicant's finalised layout. In this respect, the finalised layout represents a reduction from 11 turbines as set out at EIA Scoping, to the current layout comprising 6 turbines, at a maximum height of 180m to blade tip and an associated reduction in the length of proposed access tracks. The applicant's design principles seek to maintain a rationalised wind farm image when seen in views from sensitive locations, with the Golticlay Wind Farm and proposed extension being read as a whole and seeking to avoid outlier turbines, either laterally, or in terms of elevation. 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, should the proposals otherwise, be consented. 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.

7.26 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.

7.27 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.

7.28 The cumulative effects of the proposal scheme with newer schemes at the scoping stage have not been assessed as part of the EIAR. Some schemes have moved from the scoping to the application stage since the application was submitted (see Appendix 2). For the purposes of this assessment, a consideration of the total cumulative effects of the application proposal with wider future schemes is avoided in favour of the additional cumulative effects of the proposal, that is those effects attributable to the scheme, so that that this scheme's contribution to cumulative landscape and visual effects can be better understood and to avoid making undue judgements on schemes yet to be determined.

7.29 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.

7.30 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 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) of the receiving landscape along with the landscape composition they engender, as well as any landscape designations in the wider area, susceptible receptors, public views and the amenity of residents, recreational, and road user receptors.

7.31 For landscape and visual receptors in the surrounding area, the design of the development and its relationship with the surrounding landscape and features is best demonstrated by visuals from:

- North – Viewpoint (VP)7 (A9 Tacher, 6.4km distant from the nearest proposed turbine). This VP is located on the A9 in the vicinity of Tacher and is representative of views incurred by southbound road users. All of of the proposed turbines would be visible to blade tip height from this location, viewed in the context of the Golticlay Wind Farm, which once constructed would be prominent in the left or eastern part of the view, with three of its turbines visible to hub height. There is also a degree of screening from intervening topography and the influence of existing large scale overhead power lines in the foreground.

- East – VP1 (Roster, 6.4km distant from the nearest proposed turbine). This viewpoint provides an expansive, panoramic view westwards from a minor

road off the U1170 Roster Road and is primarily representative of views from residents in the area. All of the proposed turbines would be visible to hub height, albeit, they would appear completely within and behind the envelope of the Golticlay Wind Farm. However, they would contribute to visual clutter within the overall view, intensifying the cumulative presence of turbines in the landscape.

- South – VP2 (A99, west of Lybster, 5.8km distant from the nearest turbine). This viewpoint looks north from the junction of the A99 trunk road with the C1053 road to Achavanich and is representative of both local residents and road users. The view is towards a gently undulating horizon intermittently broken by nearby properties, vegetation cover and electricity poles. The television mast at Rumster Forest is prominent to the north-west. All of the proposed turbines would be visible to hub height, extending the influence of electricity development and the horizontal field of view westwards from the Golticaly Wind Farm, the turbines of which, will be prominent in the central area of the view, intensifying the cumulative presence of turbines in the landscape.

- West – VP 23 (Minor Road off A9, Braehungie, 3km distant from the nearest turbine). This viewpoint looks northeast from the C1065 local road that runs from the Latheron area and is representative of road users on this route. Two of the proposed turbines will be visible to hub height. The proposals here, will extend large turbines into an area of the view where these have previously been absent, albeit in the context of a landscape which accommodates other large, engineered structures of similar apparent scale; namely the Rumster Mast directly adjacent in the west of the view and the OHL transmission pylons running nearby.

- On Site – VP5 (Sheppardstown Road, by Loch Stemster, 1.6km distant from the nearest turbine, within the applicant's wider red line boundary area). This viewpoint looks south from the lay-by/parking area at the side of the C1053 road that runs between Lybster and Achavanich. The VP is immediately adjacent to the Stones of Achkinloch schedule monument. All of the proposed turbines will be visible, four to hub height and will form a prominent extension of wind energy development to the west of the Golticlay Wind Farm which will mainly be screened by higher ground to the east. It will introduce close range development into the view which is currently, largely free of the influence of wind farms.

7.32 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 sections below. Generally, while significant visual impacts will be incurred from receptors on the A9

and certain residential properties, these will be localised and will occur directly in the context of the consented Golticlay Wind Farm turbines, of a similar scale. Nevertheless, there would be some significant effects, due to the turbines contributing to visual clutter within the overall view, thereby intensifying the cumulative presence of turbines in the landscape.

Ancillary Infrastructure

7.33 The applicant has identified that a grid connection will be required, as discussed in more detail in the 'Other Material Considerations' section of this report, and has applied for a substation to facilitate this, in the northern part of the development site, located directly adjacent the proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) compound.

7.34 The final layouts, component designs and external material finishes, together with the compounds and perimeter fencing can be secured by condition. For the BESS facility a condition may be imposed to secure the proposal is reasonably sited to demonstrate 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 National Fire Chiefs Council on Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage Systems and/or any or any superseding guidance prevailing at the time.

7.35 It should be noted however that fire safety and fire risk management are covered by other legislation and therefore are not matters for the Planning Authority. That said, site layout, access, water supply, drainage including segregation, containment, and safe disposal of expended fire suppression agent and / or water from the water environment are relevant to the consideration of the BESS facilities and as such, details of these matters should also be secured by condition.

7.36 Similarly, the final colour/finish of the turbines can be secured by a planning condition. 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 in order to minimise ground disturbance.

7.37 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. In relation to the proposed borrow pits, a restoration scheme can be secured by condition.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Landscape Impact

7.38 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.

7.39 The applicant's assessment of landscape and visual impact is set out in Chapter 4 of the EIAR. A total of 25 viewpoints (VPs) within a 45km study area have been assessed in relation to landscape and visual effects. The supplied visualisations and wirelines are based on the locations of visualisations identified with regards to a previous proposal for wind energy development on the current application site.

7.40 The site lies within the Landscape Character Type LCT 134 - Sweeping Moorland and Flows. This is an extensive type covering much of the land to the south 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 to low as there are already several large operational or consented wind farms in the LCT.

7.41 The consideration of the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposal has focussed on the assessment of how it would modify the appearance of the consented Golticlay Wind Farm. The proposals would lead to a marked increase in the influence and intensification of wind energy development upon landscape character, with significant, although localised effects incurred in this regard, especially in relation to the section of the A9 trunk road between Latheron and Georgemas, immediately to the west of the application site.

7.42 The proposed development would, however, be located towards the edge of the open moorland landscape of inland 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 enclosed agriculture, a settled A99 corridor and strong marine and coastal influence would remain.

7.43 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, on the basis that the predicted effects do not meet their thresholds in respect of their national remit for landscapes.

7.44 In terms of impacts on landscape designations, the proposed development is not situated within any formal landscape designation, although the closest, Special Landscape Area (SLA) 6, the Flow Country and Berriedale Coast, extends up to the A9 immediately adjacent the application site to the west. The applicant's assessment considers that, due to the prominence of existing development, including wind farms and overhead transmission lines, along the A9 and the positioning of the proposals on the opposite eastern side of the trunk road from the direction of views into the SLA, significant landscape impacts would not be incurred on the integrity and character of the designation, which is not disputed.

7.45 In relation to Wild Land, no element of the proposed development is within a wild land area, however it is close to Causeymire and Knockfin Flows (WLA 36), which lies some 1km to the west across the A9. The applicant's assessment concludes that any change in the perception of wildness of the WLA as a result of the proposals would be negligible. Views of the proposed turbines from within the WLA would in this respect, be in the context of existing commercial-scale wind farms at its boundary and in an area where electricity pylons and transmission towers are also prominent vertical features located along the corridor of the A9, immediately east of the WLA. The route of the A9 itself creates a defined boundary between the WLA and more settled areas to the east, with the proposed turbines very clearly an external feature. As a result, the effects on the overall qualities of WLA 36 are unlikely to be significant, with NatureScot confirming landscape and visual impacts, including on wild land, do not raise issues of national interest.

Visual Impact

7.46 The Council considers visual impact using the criterion set out in Section 4 of the OWESG, with assessment against the criterion and view as to whether the threshold set out in the guidance is met or not, is contained in Appendix 7 to this report. 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.

7.47 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 25km. Beyond this distance there will be more intermittent visibility.

7.48 Whilst a large-scale wind energy scheme would be expected to result in significant visual impact 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 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:

- VP2 (A99, west of Lybster);
- VP3 (A99, Burigill);
- VP4 (Osclay, public road between Lybster and Achavanich);
- VP5 (Sheppardstown Road, by Loch Stemster);
- VP6 (Public road near Badlipster, Camster);
- VP8 (Track by Loch a' Cherigal);
- VP19 (A9, Newport); and
- VP23 (Minor Road off A9).

7.49 Except for VP19 and VP23, these differences relate to the applicant underassessing the magnitude of change or level of effect by a bracket below the Council Officer's assessment, from locations with closer range views of the proposals, up to a range of 10km. In the case of VP19, this is located on a section of the A9 trunk road some 17km to the south of the application site, where visibility of the proposals will first be incurred for northbound road users, as discussed in more detail in the section on road-based receptors below. In all cases however, the applicant and Council Officers do not disagree on the significance of the visual effects from any of these viewpoints. The exception to this is VP23 where both the applicant and Council Officers assess Moderate visual effects, however, Council Officers consider this to be significant which is discussed in detail in the viewpoint appraisal provided at Appendix 6 of this report.

7.50 Most viewpoints are considered 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 sections below, outline the visual effects for specific groups of receptors.

Impact on Road Users

7.51 The Caithness Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal, contained within the OWESG, identifies key routes within the area, that may be affected by this development. While sections of the A99, between Helmsdale and Wick, which also form part of the North Coast) 500 (NC500) tourist route, and, of the A882 between Wick and Georgemas, will have theoretical visibility of the development, due to the siting and design and distance from the proposed turbines, the visual impacts are not considered significant for users of these more distant routes.

7.52 As indicated by the applicant's ZTV, visibility of the proposals will first be incurred for northbound road users of the A9/99 around Newport, as represented by the VP19, some 17km from the nearest turbine. The proposals will extend large turbines north and westwards inland from the extent of the Golticlay Wind Farm and into a

visible gap between higher ground in the fore and backgrounds. When travelling north on these routes, one has already travelled through the more enclosed landscapes around Berridale. Receptors would begin to appreciate some of the expansive nature of the Caithness Flows, while views along the coast remain evident. Travelling northbound on the A9/99 from VP19 to south of Dunbeath, the turbines would remain in theoretical visibility for a distance of some 3km intermittently, or 3-4 minutes at prevailing road speeds. The road is twisting at this point, without formal parking spaces or laybys and demanding a driver's full attention, although a passenger's attention would most likely be drawn toward the coastal views on the right-hand side of the road. While still at a relatively distant location from the nearest turbine, the proposals will represent a further new feature at a key transitional point on the route, particularly given the elevation of the site and increased scale of the proposed turbines, albeit that the applicant's assessment that these effects will not be significant in EIA terms, which is agreed.

7.53 The turbines would then drop out of view, due to a lower road level moving towards Dunbeath. The turbines would then largely be out of view until just south of Lybster, where they would once more be visible; albeit set back from the road by some 3.5km and not in the immediate view, as is evidenced from VP3 (A99 Burigill) and VP2 (A99 West of Lybster), over a route distance of some 5km and a drive time of some 3-4 minutes. Given these relatively localised impacts on the route and that from both viewpoints, the proposals would read as logical extension to the Golticlay Wind Farm, which occupies approximately double the horizontal extent, the applicant's assessment of no significant effects in EIA terms is broadly accepted.

7.54 As indicated by the applicant's ZTV, theoretical visibility of all of the proposed turbines will be incurred for southbound users of the A9 trunk road between Spittal and the junction with the C1053 local road, around Achavanich. These effects will not be significant given the relatively limited change in the horizontal extent of the Golticlay Wind Farm represented and in the context of a large-scale landscape containing a high density of turbines closer to the trunk road within the existing A9 cluster, comprising the Achlachan, Causeymire, Halsary and Bad a Cheo wind farms. The proposed extension will appear appreciably more prominent than the Golticlay Wind Farm over a relatively localised stretch looking eastward off the southbound A9, 1.5km north and south of the C1053 junction, with Turbines 5 and 6 adding additional visual clutter. This will, however, be seen in the context of the existing overhead electricity line, composed of steel lattice towers that will be directly in the foreground on the left side of the road. Discussions with the applicant also confirmed that the proposed location of Turbines 5 and 6 westward of the C1053 local road was made necessary in part due to peatland constraints, with deeper peat preventing these turbines being drawn closer to the other proposed site infrastructure and existing Golticlay Wind Farm and was also necessary to embed design mitigation to reduce the visual impacts of the proposals on the Scheduled Monuments at Achkinloch to the north. As such, given that the proposals

generally read well as a logical extension to the Golticlay Wind Farm from most viewpoints, the visual effects on this section of the A9, are on balance, not considered as severe as to warrant objection on visual impact grounds.

Impact on Residential Receptors

7.55 The settlements of Lybster, Upper Lybster and Roster are the nearest to the proposed development, at distances of 6.4km, 5.6km and 5.3km respectively. In this respect, the proposed development would represent a westerly expansion of large turbines into an area where wind farms have previously been absent, albeit in the context of the consented Golticlay Wind Farm, currently under construction. However, more widely, several wind energy schemes can be seen on the approach to the settlements and their surrounding area, including most prominently, Burn of Whilk Wind Farm and the Beatrice development, some 16km offshore. The orientation of dwellings in Lybster also provides a further point of mitigation, where many are located on the central Grey's Place / Main Street facing east to west, or are equally, orientated towards a coastal view to the south, looking away from the proposed development, with this also being the case with respect to inland views in Upper Lybster. Some properties at Roster have views facing the site but are located in an open setting with views available in most directions.

7.56 The applicant has prepared a dedicated Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) featuring a 3km study area around the proposed development site and encompassing nine residential properties. For four of the properties, located along the A9 to the west and southwest of the applications site, the proposals would represent a new and isolated feature in the view. For the remaining five, closer to the application site, the proposals would be seen in the context of the Golticlay Wind Farm. In all cases, the proposed turbines would be prominent in views from properties, although this would vary by degree depending on localised screening by topography, vegetation and other buildings. The RVAA concludes that whilst change in view would occur from each property, the visual effects of this would not be so adverse as to be unpleasantly overwhelming, and would not lead to a decline in the overall living conditions at any of the properties, either in solus or in any of the cumulative scenarios. The main effects here are assessed to be the proposed Spittal to Beauly 400kV overhead line (which the Council has objected to), with its introduction leading to a change in the influence of tall structures in wider views, somewhat reducing the overall effect of the proposed Golticlay Extension Wind Farm. Overall, it is agreed that the proposed wind farm's impacts can be accommodated should the proposals progress.

Impact on Recreational Users of the Outdoors

7.57 The applicant's assessment includes several elevated locations that may be of interest for hillwalkers, including VP20 (Scaraben), VP17 (Ben Alisky) and VP16 (Ben Dorrery). Significant visual effects would not be incurred from these

viewpoints, whereby the proposals will generally be seen at distances of at or beyond 15km and would read as a small increase in the horizontal extent of the consented Golticlay Wind Farm, within the context of other existing wind energy development.

7.58 Closer to the site, the applicant's assessment also predicts significant visual impacts on a 2.2km section of core path CA10.11 in the northern part of the site around Loch Stemster and core paths CA10.03 and CA10.04 which run through the Rumster forest in the vicinity, where these are not screened by forestry or other intervening features. As such, given the relatively localised and intermittent impacts, it is agreed that these do not translate into significant sequential effects for the core path network in the area overall.

7.59 Significant visual impacts would also be incurred from around the Achkinloch Stone Setting and Achkinloch Chambered Cairn scheduled monuments, as represented by VP5, as is considered in more detail in the discussion of cultural heritage impacts below.

Cumulative Visual Impact

7.60 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 includes these impacts and the additional impacts of those schemes in the planning system; and Scenario 3 includes these impacts and those additional to the presence of the SSEN proposed Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line (OHL).

7.61 The proposals would read well as an immediate extension to the Golticlay Wind Farm from most viewpoints. Neither of the Golticlay proposals are directly associated with any existing cluster of operational wind energy sites, the closest of these in the area being the Halsary, Bad a Cheo and Causeymire cluster to the northwest and Bilbster, Camster and Wathegar cluster to the northwest.

7.62 For the most part, due to location and visual separation, there will not be an inter-relationship between the proposed development, and other operational and consented schemes within the study area, except for VP5 (Sheppardstown Road, by Loch Stemster). Here, the Spittal to Beauly proposed 400kV OHL would be an obvious addition and would increase the existing influence of pylons upon views looking broadly westwards from the viewpoint. Otherwise, while the proposed development will reduce the visual separation between wind energy developments in the area but will still retain an appropriate level of visual distance, thus providing the proposed Golticlay Extension and the Golticlay Wind Farm with their own setting and not adversely affecting the setting of other wind energy projects.

Aviation Lighting During Hours of Darkness

7.63 The turbines will require to be lit for aviation safety on account of being over 150 metres in height. Consequently, any lighting scheme will extend the development's impacts into the hours of darkness. There are operational wind farms above 150m to blade tip height with aviation lighting in the LVIA study area, although these are relatively distant, being Telford and Stevenson, part of the Moray West offshore development, some 35km to the southwest. Several of the Burn of Whilk Wind Farm turbines, some 7km east of the application site, are fitted with low intensity, assumed 32 candela, aviation lights at a hub height of 70m, with similar arrangements on the Wathegar 2 turbines, some 13km northwest. Consented aviation lit turbines above 150m to blade tip height also form part of the Strathy Wood and Strathy North onshore projects, some 40km to the northwest. Beyond renewable energy developments, there are two large adjacent nighttime lit structures. The 229m tall Rumster telecoms mast, some 4km from the southwestern site boundary, is fitted with five medium intensity, 2000 candela red aviation lights at equal spacings up the mast. Thrumster telecoms mast is located some 15km to the northeast, is 122.5 m high and fitted with three 2000 candela red aviation lights.

7.64 The adjacent Golticlay Wind Farm will be fitted with seven variable aviation visible warning lights around the perimeter of the turbine array and able to switch between 2000 and 200 candela depending on visibility conditions. three of the proposed Golticlay Extension turbines would require the same hub mounted 2000/200 candela lights. The design of aviation warning lights will be specified to limit the maximum light emission to a narrow horizontal beam and a tight spectrum. This is defined as an angle of between 0° (horizontal) to +3°. Infra-red lighting will also be required on all of the turbine hubs for purposes of safety for low flying military aircraft, but this is not perceptible without special equipment.

7.65 The EIAR does not identify significant effects on the landscape character of the surrounding LCT's during hours of darkness. This is noted in the context of a wider landscape incorporating other lit turbines and transmission masts where the additional lighting would not become a focal point in nighttime views to the degree that would be expected where these developments are not present.

7.66 The need for aviation lighting also creates further visual impacts on views for receptors including local residents, road users and walkers, at night, on the local core paths, and to a more limited degree on hill summits. The applicant has provided an assessment from each of the LVIA viewpoints.

7.67 The impact of the additional aviation lighting from the extension proposals on residential receptors at VP1 (Roster) and VP2 (Upper Lybster and Lybster) will be somewhat mitigated by the angle between the viewer and the turbine hubs. For receptors on the A9 and 99 routes, as represented by VPs 7 (A9, Tacher) and 19

(A9 Newport) the intensity of lighting seen will again be reduced due to the distance, angle between the turbine hubs and receptors, and will also be viewed in the context of lighting from residential properties and other vehicles. There may also be intermittent screening from forestry, buildings and other roadside features. For recreational receptors on the local core paths in the Rumster Forest, directly to the southwest of the site, lighting will be of minimal intensity due to the angular difference between the turbine hubs and the receptors, as illustrated via the applicant's lighting ZTV. For receptors on hill summits, all the additional lights may be visible, but the maximum lighting intensity will be 200 candela, due to the distance from the boundaries of the proposals. It is also anticipated that, should consent otherwise be granted, a condition could be sought to ensure submission of a revised and consolidated aviation lighting scheme across both the Golticlay Windfarm and these extension proposals. For all receptors, the proposal will therefore, increase the area of the sky that contains artificial lighting, however, it will not represent a significant additional impact over and above that already experienced in the area and will be seen in the context of the larger number of lit turbines within the Golticlay Wind Farm.

Natural Heritage (Including Ornithology)

Designated Sites

7.68 The site is adjacent to the Flow Country WHS on its northeastern boundary. The applicant has submitted a UNESCO Heritage Site Impact Assessment Toolkit in this respect. None of the proposed turbines are located within the WHS designation, with the closest piece of infrastructure, Turbine 1 and its foundations, being located some 0.7km from the boundary. The proposals will not result in the loss of any habitats within the WHS boundary, and no pathways were identified affecting the climatic, topographic gradients or geological diversity that support bog macroform diversity. There will be no direct or indirect impact on the ability of the Flow Country WHS to sequestrate and store carbon, and it is concluded that there is no direct hydrological connectivity between the proposals and the Flow Country WHS.

7.69 The application site also borders on the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), and RAMSAR. The SAC is protected for its peatland habitats, otter and marsh saxifrage. The SPA is protected for its population of breeding upland waders, waterfowl and raptors. The Ramsar site is protected for its peatland and freshwater habitats, sphagnum species, bog orchid, otter, freshwater pearl mussel (FWPM), water beetle, and breeding upland waders and waterfowl. NatureScot advise that the proposals are likely to have significant effect on peatland habitats and otter in relation to the SAC and Ramsar, and a significant effect on hen harrier, merlin and short-eared owl of the SPA. NatureScot has considered that the proposals will not adversely affect the integrity of the SAC and Ramsar provided suitable mitigation is included within a

Finalised Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) and Pollution Prevention Plan (PPP), alongside the appointment of an Environmental Clerk of Work (ECoW) to be secured via condition. The applicant must also deliver an otter Species Protection Plan (SPP) alongside pre-construction otter surveys and specific pollution prevention measures for work in proximity to watercourses. In relation to the SPA, NatureScot has considered that the proposals will not adversely affect the integrity of the site, subject to a Brid Protection Plan (BPP) being agreed with the agency and breeding bird surveys being carried out prior to construction operations.

7.70 The application site is located 2.5km west of the River Thurso SAC, protected for its population of Atlantic salmon. NatureScot do not consider the proposal would adversely affect the integrity of this site, provided the applicant's pollution prevention and environmental management measures, as tabled in the EIAR Schedule of Mitigation are finalised via consultation and implemented, and an Emergency Response Plan in relation to firefighting water runoff is provided before construction commences. These details may be secured via condition, as noted in the 'Ancillary Infrastructure' section above, should the proposals otherwise be consented.

7.71 NatureScot does not consider that the proposals would undermine the conservation objectives of the East Caithness Cliffs SPA in relation to herring gull and great black backed gull or the conservation objectives of the Caithness Lochs SPA for Greylag Goose.

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 or, for reserved matters, The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Consequently, the Energy Consents Unit is required to consider the effect of the proposal on SPAs and SACs and Ramsars before it can be consented (commonly known as Habitats Regulations Appraisal). Consequently, Scottish Ministers, as competent authority, are required to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of the sites' conservation objectives for their respective qualifying interests.

Protected Species

7.73 The application site has been subject to a protected species survey, undertaken in June 2024, updating previous survey work undertaken in 2019. The most recent field survey found evidence of water vole within the site. Due to lack of suitable habitat, bats were scoped out of the ecological assessment and surveys through agreement with NatureScot.

7.74 In relation to ornithology, the applicant's assessment focussed on greylag goose, osprey, hen harrier, white-tailed eagle, merlin, short-eared owl, barn owl, curlew,

herring gull and great black-backed gull; all species that are considered at high nature conservation importance, with the exception of curlew, considered as of moderate conservation importance. The 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.

7.75 The Council's Ecology Team initially objected to the proposals on the grounds of insufficient cumulative assessment of the ornithological impacts. The applicant's assessment in this respect, uses the Peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland Natural Heritage Zone (NHZ) as defined by NatureScot, as its appropriate ecological unit. The Ecology Team were initially satisfied with the applicant's collision risk modelling, undertaken for great black backed gull, greylag goose, hen harrier, herring gull, osprey and short eared owl, which predicts that bird mortality would be low. On receipt of further information form the applicant, including clarification around collision risk data relative to NHZ populations, the Ecology Team's objection on ornithological grounds was withdrawn.

7.76 In their consultation response, the RSPB noted the density of moorland raptor species on site, predominantly merlin, hen harrier and short eared owl. These are all qualifying species of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA and should be considered part of the SPA population for the purposes of assessment due to the close proximity of the application site to this designation. While not objecting to the proposals, RSPB request that development is subject to a Bird Protection Plan setting safe working buffers for these species' nest sites. In relation to the SPA, NatureScot has similarly considered that the proposals will not adversely affect the integrity of the site, subject to a Bird Protection Plan (BPP) being agreed with the agency and breeding bird surveys being carried out prior to construction operations. Pre-construction surveys and BPP's for all nesting and roosting Schedule 1 bird species are also required by the Council's Ecology Team.

Habitats and Biodiversity Enhancement

7.77 The application site mainly comprises blanket bog, wet modified bog and wet heath. Other habitats present include marshy grassland and recently felled conifer plantation. NatureScot is currently developing a Biodiversity Metric to guide planning decision making; however, this is at consultation stage until end of November 2026, with a finalised version expected in Spring 2027. While the metric is being developed, the Scottish Government's Planning Guidance: Biodiversity (December 2025) advises that "…the absence of a universally adopted Scottish methodology/tool should not be used to frustrate or delay decision making, and a flexible approach will be required".

7.78 The applicant has in this respect, submitted an Outline Restoration Enhancement Plan, as Technical Appendix 6.6, to guide the commencement of practical habitat creation and restoration techniques during construction of the proposed wind farm

and to inform on-going habitat management throughout operation. The applicant has proposed mitigation for the potential impacts of the proposals, including suggested peatland restoration and enhancement, the creation of species rich grassland and measures to support bird life, including providing additional; nesting sites for black throated diver, common scoter and osprey. The plan also includes measures for long term monitoring and management of habitats across the site with respect to environmental conditions.

7.79 The Ecology Team has maintained an objection to the proposals, primarily on the grounds of deficits in the applicant's peatland restoration. The applicant argues that the proposals would affect 21.34ha of peatland habitat (including indirect impacts within a 10m buffer). Following from the Council's Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance (2024) a 1:10 lost / restored ratio for peatland is required for offsetting, with additional enhancement resulting in a 1:11 combined ratio. Therefore, considering the development footprint with a 10m buffer, the Ecology Team notes that the area of restoration required is at least 234.74ha. The applicant's assessment, within Technical Appendixes 6.6 (Outline Restoration Enhancement Plan (OREP)) and 11.4 (Peatland Condition Assessment (PCA)), identifies 96.6 ha of peatland with restoration potential, comprising approximately 91.4ha of degraded blanket bog affected by artificial drainage and 5.2ha of former peat cuttings, leaving a deficit of approximately 144ha. The Ecology Team initially, also raised concern with the applicant's proposed restoration measures, noting that the proposed infilling of drains and peat cuttings does not follow best practice and there is no evidence to support the use of excavated peat in successful restoration as suggested by the applicant.

7.80 In their response to the Ecology Team, the applicant notes the proposed restoration is defined by the opportunities identified within this PCA area and that restoration opportunities beyond would require additional access infrastructure and associated disturbance. In this respect, the applicant considers their restoration strategy provides a suitable site-specific approach. Following this response, the Ecology Team have retained their objection, based on the low ratio of peatland compensation and enhancement proposed. Any deficit in on-site enhancement in this respect, should be 'over-compensated' for by delivering a greater level of off-site enhancement, the scale of which should increase the further from the development site that off-site measures are delivered. The Ecology Team does, however, recognise the value of an additional 65ha of conifer regeneration management proposed by the applicant. Such management can prevent encroachment of self-seeded conifers onto areas of peatland, and the Ecology Team suggests this can count towards the total peatland restoration requirements, provided that any other restoration work is carried out in this area, as necessary to maintain the habitat in good condition. Nevertheless, even the inclusion of these measures, leaves a restoration deficit of 71.13ha as a minimum.

Built and Cultural Heritage

7.81 The application red line site area contains 3 scheduled monuments, all dating to the prehistoric period. The Achkinloch Stone Setting (SM420) and Achkinloch Chambered Cairn (SM419), both of which are located on the south side of Loch Stemster. These assets are located outwith the developable area of the site and the turbine array.

7.82 SM420 comprises a horseshoe-shaped stone setting, open at the south-southeast end and probably dating to the early Bronze Age. This form of monument is very rare in Scotland. The orientation of the stones which comprise the monument is highly unusual, with the stones set with their edges facing toward the interior of the setting and their flat faces along the linear alignment from south-southeast to north-northwest. In other types of stone orthostat monuments, such as stone circles, the standing stones are typically arranged with their flat faces toward the centre of the monument. This suggests that the focus of the monument was along its alignment.

7.83 The monument is situated close to the south-southwest of Loch Stemster. Its elongated plan and open-end results in the monument having a linear alignment, focussing views from the monument to the south-southeast through the monument's open end, as well as reciprocal views to the north-northwest. The monument is actively promoted as a visitor attraction and was most likely to have been a ritual or sacred site, perhaps associated with funerary activity, considering the visual and spatial relationship with the chambered cairn SM419, to the southeast. SM419 comprises the remains of an Orkney-Cromarty type chambered cairn, dating to the Neolithic period, probably constructed and in use between 3800BC and 2500BC. The monument is visible as a stone and turf covered oval mound, situated on raised ground overlooking Loch Stemster. The cairn is likely to pre-date the stone setting, the people who built and used the stone setting would have been aware of the chambered cairn and are likely to have deliberately referenced it.

7.84 The applicant's assessment within Chapter 5 of the EIAR states that the proposals will introduce renewables development within the landscape setting of these assets, intervening in views to the south from both scheduled monuments. However, it is argued that there is no evidence to suggest that views to the south or south south-west are key to the understanding of these assets or their functional setting. As a result, the effects are considered by the applicant as minor adverse in both cases, although not significant in EIA terms.

7.85 Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in their objection response, however, note that the proposed turbines would introduce several large-scale and moving features across the skyline directly into one of the most significant key features of the stone

setting SM420: views along the alignment of the stone setting out through the open end to the south-southeast, on account of the monuments clear axial alignment form north - northwest to south - southeast. Views along this axial alignment are largely undeveloped at present with the only modern development appearing on the skyline being tips of some of the consented Golticlay wind Farm turbines, and the Rumster mast, whose profile is slim and the stationary nature of which, is not considered to present a significant distraction. The turbines would also become the most prominent features across the hillside to the south in views from the stone setting and towards it from the higher topography surrounding the monument and the Loch of Stemster. In contrast to the applicant's assessment, the proposed turbines would thus, significantly alter the setting of the monument, within a view that substantially contributes to its cultural significance. The large, moving elements would be distracting when looking from the monument along the axis of alignment and would fundamentally alter the nature of this key view from one which currently appears as undeveloped and rural to one which significantly developed and influenced by modern electricity infrastructure.

7.86 HES consider that the proposed turbines would also directly affect views of, and the relationship between, the stone setting and the cairn, SM419. In this respect, the applicant's photomontage information shows blade tips and hubs of two of the proposed turbines, T2 and T3 prominent directly behind the cairn in views from the northern part of the stone setting and further views of turbine T4 prominent to the west of the cairn. This would be at detriment to the visual relationship between the two monuments, the close proximity of which, suggests an intentional relationship and indicates a continuity of this specific area for burial, interment and ritual over potentially thousands of years.

7.87 The proposed wind farm would not intervene on views from the chambered cairn SM419, towards the stone setting directly. In respect to this monument's wider setting however, views toward the cairn from the surrounding higher ground around Loch Stemster, would be significantly altered. The turbines would become a dominant feature in views looking from north to south across the setting around Loch Stemster, potentially overwhelming the presence and visibility of the cairn and the stone setting and undermining the significance of the monuments' close association. Through this domineering effect, the proposals would result in a significant adverse impact on the ability to understand, appreciate and experience the monument and its cultural significance.

7.88 HES acknowledges the applicant has revisited the design of the proposed development since the initial scoping layout (THC reference 25/00553/SCOP). However, despite the impact being reduced through the deletion of several turbines and a reduction in size of the others during the iterative design process, the impact on the setting of two Scheduled Monuments remains contrary to national planning policies designed to protect the historic environment. In this respect, NPF4 Policy 7

h) states that development proposals affecting Scheduled Monuments will only be supported where significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the setting of a Scheduled Monument are avoided. NPF4 Policy 11 e) (vii) also states that project design and mitigation will satisfactorily demonstrate how impacts on the historic environment have been addressed, which has therefore, not been adequately shown in this case.

7.89 The proposals are also contrary to HwLDP Policy 57, as noted by the Council's Historic Environment Team (Archaeology), in that they compromise the setting of a nationally important heritage resource. While the socio-economic benefits that the applicant states within their Socio-Economic Statement are considered significant by them in terms of economic growth in Highland, this is not so in EIA terms and as such, they do not outweigh the significant impacts discerned by HES in their appraisal. The applicant's community benefit package is also not material to this assessment and the proposals do not otherwise, incorporate any specific measures to support communities in fragile areas, as originally defined by the Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise through the plan, as those datazones that are in decline or in danger of becoming so as a consequence of remoteness and socio-economic factors, such as population loss, erosion of services and facilities and lack of employment opportunities.

7.90 Ballachly Broch (SM520) which is located north of Loch Stemster, also lies within the application red line site boundary. HES have identified no effects on the setting of this monument that are contrary to policy in terms of their interests.

7.91 The Council's Historic Environment Team (Conservation) otherwise, have no further concerns regarding the proposed development in terms of the impacts on the other local heritage assets within their remit. Should the proposals otherwise, achieve consent the submission of a detailed archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation can be secured by condition

Roads, Transport and Access

7.92 The applicant has highlighted, in Chapter 9 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 Wick Harbour with these being routed to the site via the A99 Trunk Road and C1053. EIAR technical Appendix 9.1, presents the applicant's assessment of the predicted traffic impacts of the proposals on the road network, considering these cumulatively with other projects, including windfarms and delivery of the Spittal to Beauly 440kV line. The scenario presented is 'worst case' in that aggregate for access tracks and concrete production are assumed to be imported from off-site by road, where it is more likely that on-site borrow pits would provide some or all of the required aggregate, and all concrete required on-site is assumed to be imported by road as ready-mixed, where

on site batching and production would more likely reduce requirements for deliveries of this nature.

7.93 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 Technical Appendix 9.1.3, that the maximum total additional one-way daily vehicle movements, including HGV's, during the entire construction period would be 162 during month 14 of the construction phase. Traffic volumes would decrease considerably outside the peak period of construction. Should consent otherwise be granted, a range of mitigation may be secured via condition, including formation of a Community Liaison Group, or the continuation of the existing group, created in respect of the Golticlay Windfarm, alongside the delivery of a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP). In principle this type of mitigation is acceptable, subject to detailed consideration of the CTMP. It is anticipated that most of the same road improvements used to facilitate construction access for the Golticlay Windfarm, including widening of sections of the C1053, will remain in place.

7.94 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.

7.95 In their consultation response, the Council's Transport Planning Team initially raised a holding objection to the proposals on the basis of lack of information on the detail and timing of improvement works to the local road network around Wick Harbour and on the C1053, as well as the positioning of the access point relative to physically limited sections of this latter route. Since the first consultation response, experience with the construction phase of the Golticlay Wind Farm has provided comfort to the Transport Planning Team that the abnormal loads required can be suitably transferred from Wick Harbour without incident. The applicant proposes a dedicated new access point from the C1053. The Council's records indicate that the C1053, further north beyond the access point to the consented Golticlay Wind Farm is not constructed by conventional means, instead floating on polystyrene blocks due to underlying deep peat. In this respect, a structural investigation could be secured via condition to ensure that the affected section of C1053 is suitable for construction traffic use, by demonstrating adequate road strengths between the access points. This approach is considered acceptable in principle by Transport Planning. However, should the applicant be unable to demonstrate the adequacy of the C1053 for construction access or suggest any redesign and strengthening measures as mitigation, this approach risks postponing a matter that is otherwise, integral to the acceptability of the development. Discussions with officers in this respect, have indicated that it may instead be possible to achieve construction access to the extension windfarm site from the adjacent Golticlay Windfarm track network, although a further planning application for any linking infrastructure would

be required, and no further details have otherwise, been provided. As such, this matter has been taken into account in the Council's proposed objection to the application.

7.96 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.

7.97 In terms of wider public access, the Council's Access Officer notes that there is currently limited recreational access taken at the proposal site but that a Recreational Access Management Plan (RAMP) be required prior to the start of construction to ensure the installed access tracks and access points can be used by the public for recreation once the development is operational. Particularly, the RAMP must highlight any cross connections between these extension proposals and the originally consented Golticlay Wind Farm.

Water, Flood Risk, Drainage and Peat

7.98 The results of the applicant's hydrological, flood risk, drainage and peat assessments are outlined in Chapter 10 of the EIAR. Several small watercourses are present across the site, with the Loch of Stemster located in the northern part of the wider red line area, however, the applicant's assessment highlights that the site is generally, at very low likelihood of fluvial (watercourse) and pluvial (surface water) flooding. 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. With the exception of the three proposed watercourse crossings, located on the access tracks to turbines T1, T3 and T6, all infrastructure has been designed to maintain a minimum 50m development free buffer zone around watercourses and water bodies. As confirmed in EIAR Technical Appendix 10.2, all watercourse crossings would be designed to prevent any restriction of flows, as well as allowing the free passage of mammals and aquatic ecology.

7.99 Scottish Water has confirmed that the site does not lie within a Drinking Water Protected Area (DWPA).

7.100 No Private Water Supplies (PWS) have been identified with potential hydrological connectivity to the site. All PWS identified in the applicant's assessment are outside of the maximum 250m buffer applied by SEPA guidance for consideration of potential hydrogeological impact.

7.101 The proposed development site was assessed for it potential for Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE's). The identified habitat communities were however, assessed as not likely groundwater dependant. This is due to the relevant habitats occurring on sloping ground where surface water runoff is evident, the application site lacking the characteristic "flush" features normally associated with groundwater emerging at the surface and the onsite peat cover having low permeability, limiting groundwater movement.

7.102 Deep peat, generally ranging from 0.5 m to 1.5m, is present across the site. There are localised pockets in excess of 5 m in depth, although these are shown as outwith parts of the developed area where turbines, access tracks and other built elements are to be located, on the applicant's interpolated peat depths study map. Overall, a total of approximately 74,000m3 of peat is expected to be extracted, with most peat impacts relating to access tracks and borrow pit requirements, with peat to be used for the reinstatement of onsite access track verges and borrow pits. Peat management and reinstatement during and following construction has been detailed in the applicant's outline Peat Management Plan, the finalisation of which can be conditioned. SEPA raised no objections to the proposals on peat management grounds but did recommend micrositing to refine the route between Turbines 5 and 6, to minimise the volume of peat that requires to be excavated as far as is practical. This may otherwise be achieved via condition.

7.103 A Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessment has been submitted as part of the EIAR and have helped to inform the proposals. The applicant's risk assessment identifies that providing the assessment's mitigation is followed, the site is of generally low risk to peat instability. Adherence to this document can be secured through condition.

Noise and Shadow Flicker

7.104 Predicted operational noise levels are expressed in the applicant's EIAR Chapter 8. The applicant's assessment considers the potential cumulative noise impacts arising from the proposals and other existing and consented wind energy developments in the area. The majority of these projects are too distant to have any significant cumulative impact with the Golticlay wind farm the most important in terms of cumulative noise.

7.105 The applicant's assessment concludes that the predicted operational noise levels from the development will be below the ETSU-R-97 standard daytime and night-time noise limits at all Noise Assessment Locations (NALs). Following discussions between the applicant, Environmental Health and the Planning Case Officer, it has been agreed that, should consent otherwise be granted, the noise impacts of both the Golticlay Wind Farm and current extension proposals, may be effectively managed via a condition limiting operational noise levels to 3dB above predicted

levels, as defined for each of the 10 NAL properties defined in the applicant's assessment. It is understood that three of these properties; NAL4 – Lochend, NAL5 – Corrie View and NAL7 - Bulreanrob have a financial involvement with the development and both ETSU-R-97 and the UK Government's emerging Assessment and Rating of Wind Turbine Noise (ARWTN) guidance affords that in such cases, if evidenced through provision of legal agreements, a higher noise limit may be considered of 45dB LA90 or up to 5dB above background. Should consent otherwise be granted, a condition may be attached to secure evidence that this financial involvement has been maintained, prior to the commencement of development on site.

7.106 Environmental Health recommends further conditions to limit operational noise specifically in relation to the proposed BESS and substation components of the proposals and to secure a construction noise mitigation scheme.

7.107 In terms of shadow flicker, as addressed through Chapter 13 of the EIAR, it is not anticipated that this will be an issue for this development either individually or cumulatively given the location of the development in relation to properties. The applicant has conducted an assessment that has shown that the modelled occurrence of shadow flicker within a realistic scenario (taking account of average meteorological conditions from the nearest Met Office station) is within the accepted limits for realistic shadow flicker for all receptors, with the exception of one, Corrieview Cottage. However, this property is currently uninhabitable and subject to a purchase option from the applicant. Furthermore, the potential shadow flicker effects are anticipated to occur primarily in the early morning hours, between 04:00 - 06:00, May to July where occupants would not be expected to be active in or around the property. Should the applicants purchase not proceed, they consider that a Shadow Flicker Protocol could be agreed via condition, to set out potential mitigation measures should a shadow flicker complaint be received. Mitigation may include the provision of internal or external screening at the property or programming of the turbines to minimise impacts.

Effects on Other Infrastructure

7.108 An existing BT microwave link passes across the site from south to north. Should the proposals be granted consent it is anticipated that a condition could be applied to secure suitable mitigation in the form of micrositing of Turbine 6 to prevent interference, as noted by BT in their consultation response. Most specifically, BT does not currently object to the proposals subject to the rotor tip of T6 being located no closer than 35m to the fixed radio link, a distance that is within the standard 50m micrositing allowance accepted for wind energy proposals.

7.109 No further concerns have been raised in relation to potential interference with radio/television networks. However, a condition would nonetheless be sought to secure a scheme of mitigation in this regard, should an issue arise.

7.110 The SSEN Transmission 132kV Dunbeath to Mybster overhead electricity line runs parallel to the A9, within the western part of the application site red line boundary. SSEN Transmission had raised concerns over potential 'wake effects'; physical disturbances to conductor wires, on both this overhead line and the proposed Spittal to Beauly 400kV line, due to disturbed airflow behind wind turbine blades. Following further clarification and discussions with the applicant however, their initial objection on this matter was withdrawn.

Aviation and Radar

7.111 The Defence Infrastructure Organisation having initially raised no objection, now object to the development on the basis that five of the proposed turbines (T2-T6) and the onsite meteorological mast, fall within the statutory safeguarding zone for the Lossiemouth Wide Area Multilateration Network (WAM Network). The WAM network provides data to facilitate air traffic services, specifically providing aircraft locations and other data to air traffic controllers for navigation and deconfliction. The MOD has completed reassessment of the proposals, identifying that they, in their current form, by virtue of scale and location, would have a significant and detrimental impact on the operation of the WAM network and on the air traffic services it facilitates. The proposed developments' adverse effects on the WAM is therefore cited as a reason for objection, given that it is not yet understood, from Officer discussions with the DIO, whether these effects may be effectively avoided or mitigated through micrositing of the proposals or other technical measures.

7.112 Otherwise, should the objection be satisfactorily resolved, it is anticipated that the DIO would require 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.

Decommissioning and Aftercare

7.113 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.

7.114 The requirements to decommission the development 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.

7.115 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

7.116 As with any wind farm, the Planning Authority would request that any forthcoming permission includes a clear description of development which specifies the precise number of turbines to be developed, the maximum blade tip height, the rotor diameter and includes details of all associated ancillary infrastructure. The Council requests this detail in the description so that it conveys the scope and substance of the development and so that such matters are not left to planning conditions, which could lead to for further redesign or re-powering without requiring a full fresh consent (which could also require substantial additional Council resource that would not be reflected in the fee).

7.117 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 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.

Other Material Considerations

7.118 The associated grid connection for this scheme, along with other renewable energy developments, was previously considered by the Planning Authority and ECU, through the screening process, as not forming part of the overall ‘project’ in EIA terms. This previous position has been challenged by the decision on Raeshaw Wind Farms Ltd v Scottish Ministers [2026] CSIH 2010. In that case, the Court held that the Reporter erred in law by failing to undertake the necessary fact-specific

evaluative exercise as to whether the wind farm and its required grid connection formed a single EIA “project”, and by proceeding on the basis that it was sufficient that the grid connection did not form part of the application and could be considered later through a separate consenting process. The Court also made clear that the question is not dependent on any intention to avoid EIA, but on whether, in substance, what is proposed should be treated as a single project for environmental assessment purposes. Relevant considerations include the non-exhaustive factors identified in R (Wingfield) v Canterbury City Council [2020] JPL 154, including functional interdependence and whether the deferred works are properly to be regarded as a stand-alone project, alongside consideration of the true nature and scope of the project and the degree of connection between its component part.

7.119 The applicant’s AIR submission of June 2026, notes that the currently proposed Golticlay Extension Wind Farm will connect to the electricity grid via an underground cable from the proposed Golticlay Extension substation to the existing Mybster Substation, approximately 14km north, with an indicative route following that of the Golticlay Wind Farm underground grid cable, currently under construction.

7.120 The actual grid connection infrastructure, including the cable route, joint bays and any further related works is not detailed further in the applicant’s supporting information. The applicant notes that the cable would be brought forward under the permitted development rights afforded electricity undertakings under Schedule Part 13, Class 40 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992 (as amended).

7.121 The assessment is complicated in this case due to the route paralleling that of the Golticlay Wind Farm grid connection and most likely, being very similar in construction. The Council had previously assessed and granted prior approval for the Golticlay connection under 25/04427/PNO on the basis that, following consultation and guidance from NatureScot, the development would not have any adverse effect on the integrity of designated sites in the area, namely the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC/SPA/Ramsar and River Thurso SAC, provided the mitigation identified by NatureScot was carried out. On this basis, the applicant argues that no further significant environmental effects would likely arise from bringing forward the Golticlay Extension connection, a viewpoint that is generally agreed.

7.122 As part of the AIR submission, the applicant considered if the grid connection forms part of the EIA project against the four tests set out in R (Wingfield) v Canterbury City Council [2020] JPL 154. While concluding that the proposed development and its required grid connection are functionally interdependent, in that the scheme could not operate for its intended purpose without connection to the grid, the applicant does not intend to pursue the extended windfarm and grid connection as a single project. In their response, the applicant otherwise notes that the wind farm

and connection will not be in common ownership, the latter being adopted by a Distribution Network Operator (DNO), will not be brought forward at the same time and will rely on separate consenting processes.

7.123 Nevertheless, it is the opinion of Council Officers that the assessment of the project for EIA purposes, including the original screening opinions, cannot be determined solely by the way in which the current application has been framed so as to exclude the off-site grid connection infrastructure, but requires consideration of the true nature and scope of the project in substance. In that regard, the fact that the grid connection infrastructure may come forward under a separate consenting process, together with the other issues noted above, regarding the timing of works and degree of common ownership, does not, in itself, resolve whether the wider scheme has been properly assessed for EIA purposes. It is further noted that the energy and operational benefits relied upon in support of the proposed application depend upon a grid connection being delivered. It is therefore considered that the grid connection is an essential component of the wider scheme, and that its omission from the application gives rise to a legitimate concern as to whether the full environmental effects of the project have been assessed. In this respect, RSPB noted in their consultation response that the AIR does not address the issue of whether the Golticlay Wind Farm grid connection could be shared by the proposed extended wind farm, or whether the existing cable trench could be shared. This observation is made in the context that the cable route is located in proximity to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA, SAC and Ramsar, and the River Thurso SAC.

7.124 From the perspective of the Council Officers, considering the limits to the scale of the additional UGC connection works inherent, in that they will follow the now established, Golticlay Wind Farm route adjacent to the A9 Trunk Road and the previous assessment undertaken in support of prior notification 25/04427/PNO, concluding this development, with appropriate mitigation, would not have adverse effect on the integrity of the nearby designated sites in view of their conservation objectives, merit is not seen in raising an objection based on the omission of the grid connection from the EIA project at this point.

7.125 Scottish Ministers are however, the decision maker, and it is ultimately a matter for them to determine, in light of Raeshaw, whether the proposed development and its required grid connection constitute a single project for EIA purposes and whether the original screening opinion request before them, is legally adequate. This decision would also have implications for the consenting route of the grid connection works. Should the Scottish Minster's conclude that the Golticlay Extension Wind Farm and its grid connection constitute a single project for EIA purposes, the applicant would not be able to utilise the aforementioned permitted development rights for construction of the grid connection and a further planning application would be required in this respect.

Non-Material Considerations

7.126 The following are not material to the assessment of this application:

- The need for the development; and
- Community benefit funding.

8.0 Matters to be Secured by Legal Agreement / Upfront Payment

8.1 A decommissioning and restoration financial guarantee and a Section 96 Roads Agreement can be secured by condition. No legal agreement is required should consent otherwise be granted. This is also on the basis that no further offsite biodiversity enhancement or peatland restoration provisions be introduced by the applicant to address the substantial deficit identified in the Natural Heritage section of this report. Should such an offsite solution be tabled, potentially through an additional round of Further Envrionental Information, this should be secured by way of tripartite Section 75 agreement between the Council, developer and landowner to secure the delivery long term management of this resource.

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 34MW of renewable energy capacity, and 55MW 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 an application submitted under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989, it will be for the Scottish Ministers to decide whether the applicant has had sufficient regard to the preservation of amenity and the desirability of preserving the natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geographic or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting site, buildings, and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest, to the extent that any such impacts are reasonably mitigated as required under Schedule 9 of the Act.

9.3 The report has set out that the impacts and effects of the proposal as they relate to construction, roads, traffic, transport, and access, the water environment and amenity, as it relates to noise and shadow flicker, telecommunications, aviation and radar, as well as decommissioning and aftercare, would be within acceptable limits subject to the developer’s compliance with conditions requested by consultees.

9.4 The assessment, alongside that of Historic Environment Scotland has however, also considered the proposal against the criteria cited in the Council's Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance, designed to ensure developments are suitably located and sensitively sited and designed to avoid unacceptable impacts on the development's wider context. In this case the development does not achieve the threshold for one of these criteria, given its significant adverse impacts on the setting of two Scheduled Monuments: Achkinloch Stone Setting SM420 and Achkinloch Chambered Cairn SM419.

9.5 As this report sets out, these impacts are due to the proposal's introduction of large scale moving engineered features across the skyline on the alignment of the stone setting that constitutes SM420, also directly impacting on views and the relationship between it and the adjacent cairn, SM419. The siting of large-scale turbines, with a blade tip height of up to 180m, within this context would introduce a prominent new infrastructure focus in the view, dominating and substantially altering the key factors of both monuments' settings and resulting in a significant and adverse impact on the ability to understand, appreciate and experience the monuments and their cultural significance. As such, the proposals are contrary to NPF4 Policy 7 h), NPF4 Policy 11 e) (vii) and HwLDP Policy 57.

9.6 The proposal is considered contrary to NPF4 Policy 3 a) and b) and HwLDP Policy 67 in that it has not been adequately demonstrated that it will bring about a suitable amount of peatland restoration, as noted in this assessment, alongside that of the Council's Ecology Team, who have raised a holding objection in this regard. As the peatland restoration provisions fall substantially short, by some 71ha in the best case, of NatureScot's advised 1:11 compensatory ratio, the proposed development would result in net biodiversity loss.

9.7 The proposal is considered contrary to NPF4 Policy 11 e) (vi) and HwLDP Policy 67, as it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the development will not have unacceptable risk on the condition of the local public road network, by virtue of failing to adequately assess the development's risk in respect of the C1053 route.

9.8 The proposal is also, subject to a holding objection from DIO in terms of the predicted significant and detrimental impacts on the operation of the Lossiemouth Wide Area Multilateration Network (WAM Network) and on the air traffic services it facilitates. Consequently, it has not been demonstrated that the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on an established aviation interest, contrary to NPF4 Policy 11 e) (iv) and HwLDP Policy 67.

9.9 Significant weight has been given to the global climate and nature crises in this assessment. However, the significant impacts on the historic and natural environment and aviation safety, are considered to outweigh the proposal's benefits

and contributions to mitigate both crises and are sufficient reason to recommend the Council Raises an Objection to the application with the Scottish Ministers.

9.10 This application has been assessed against the policies set out in NPF4 and the Local Development Plan, including NPF4 Policy 1 for Tackling the climate and nature crises, NPF4 Policy 11 for Energy with its 13 considerations for project design and mitigation, along with the equivalent parallel HwLDP Policy 67 for Renewable Energy, itself describing eleven tests as expanded upon within the OWESG. This HwLDP policy also reflects policy tests set out in other HwLDP policies, for example Policy 28 Sustainable Design.

9.11 All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal does not reach the threshold of acceptability set out in Schedule 9 of The Electricity Act 1989, nor does it accord with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is unacceptable in terms of applicable material considerations.

10. IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Resource: Not applicable

10.2 Legal: 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 consultation response being issued to Scottish Ministers: None

11.1 It is recommended that the Council **RAISE OBJECTION** to the application subject to Part A and for the reasons set out in Part B below:

Part A – Delegated Authority

Members granting delegated authority to the Area Planning Manager, in consultation with the Area Planning Committee Chairs, to respond to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit / Scottish Minsters, regarding any future procedure / Public Local Inquiry and/or Further / Supplementary Environmental Information; save for the circumstance that information is deemed to overcome /

address all reasons for objection (Part B below) by virtue of a material reduction in the scale, or adverse environmental effects, of the proposed development. In that scenario, the application shall be reported back to Committee as a continued item.

Part B - Reasons for Objection

1. The application does not accord with the provisions of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989, by virtue of not demonstrating sufficient regard to the desirability of, and failing to reasonably mitigate effects detrimental to, conserving physiographical features of special interest. The proposals would introduce large scale moving engineered features across the skyline on the alignment of the Achkinloch stone setting that constitutes Scheduled Monument SM420, also directly impacting on views and the relationship between it and the adjacent Achkinloch chambered cairn, Scheduled Monument SM419. The siting of large-scale turbines within this context would introduce a prominent new infrastructure focus in the view, dominating and substantially altering the key factors of both monuments settings and resulting in a significant and adverse impact on the ability to understand, appreciate and experience the monuments and their cultural significance. As such, the proposals fail to demonstrate compliance with NPF4 Policy 7 h) and HwLDP Policy 57, owing to the proposal resulting in unacceptable impacts on scheduled monuments. Consequently, the proposal is also contrary to NPF4 Policy 11 e) (vii) in that, it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the siting and design of the development addresses impacts on the historic environment.

2. The proposal is contrary to NPF4 Policy 3 a & b), HwLDP Policies 55 and 67, the NatureScot guidance ‘Advising on Peatland Habitats and Carbon-rich Soils in Development Management’ and the Highland Council Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance, in that, it has not been adequately demonstrated that it will bring about a suitable amount of biodiversity restoration related to peatland, so as this habitat remains in a demonstrably better state than without intervention.

3. The proposal is contrary to NPF4 Policy 11 e) (vi) and HwLDP Policy 67, as it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the development will not have unacceptable risk on the condition of the local public road network, by virtue of failing to adequately assess the development's risk in respect of the C1053 route. Consequently, it has not been demonstrated that the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on road traffic and transport interests.

4. The proposal is contrary to NPF4 Policy 11 e) (iv) and HwLDP Policy 67, as it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the development will not have unacceptable risk on aviation safety by virtue of failing to adequately assess the development's risk due to the potential to interfere with the operation of the Lossiemouth Wide Area Multilateration Network (WAM Network). Consequently, it

has not been demonstrated that the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on established aviation interests.

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 1.2 Site Location Plan Plan 2 - Figure 2.1 Proposed Development Layout Plan 3 - Figure 2.2 Indicative Wind Turbine Elevations Plan 4 - Figure 2.8 Indicative BESS Compound Layout
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 1 – Letters of Representation Received by the Planning Authority

No representations received by the Highland Council.

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 45 km			
Golticlay	0.37 km	12	180 m
Buolfruich	5.07 km	15	75 m
Cairnald House	5.35 km	1	27 m
Middelton Cottage	5.77 km	1	11.8 m
New Black	6 km	1	33.6 m
Tacher	6.82 km	3	142.5 m
Bad a Cheo	7.37 km	13	112 m
Camster	7.44 km	25	120 m
Burn of Whilk	8 km	9	114.9 m
Halsary	8.42 km	15	120 m
Causeymire	8.77 km	21	101 m
Achlachan	11.74 km	5	110 m
Wathegar	11.78 km	5	101 m
Wathegar 2	11.96 km	9	110 m
Bilbster	12.38 km	3	90 m
Achairn	12.86 km	3	100 m

Reference and Name	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	No. of Turbines	Blade Tip Height (m)
Cogle Moss	16.04 km	12	99.5 m
Moray West	24.12 km	85	285 m
Weydale Farm	24.92 km	1	66 m
Beatrice Offshore	25.81 km	84	187 m
Stroupster	27.39 km	13	110 m
Limekiln (inc Extension)	27.8 km	24	149.9 m
Lochend	28.23 km	4	99.5 m
Baillie Hill	29.15 km	21	110 m
Beatrice Demonstrator	31.53 km	2	150 m
Taigh na Muir	31.98 km	1	79 m
Moray East	33.31 km	186	204 m
Hill of Lybster	33.46 km	1	99.5 m
Forss 1 and 2	33.7 km	6	78 m
Strathy South	39.43 km	35	200 m
Gordonbush	39.79 km	35	110 m
Strathy North	41.04 km	33	110 m
Gordonbush Extension	42.51 km	11	149.9 m

Reference and Name	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	No. of Turbines	Blade Tip Height (m)
Consented wind energy development within 45 km			
Lower Rumster	3.94 km	3	35 m
Berriedale and Dunbeath	7.87 km	3	74 m
Camster 2	9.66 km	11	126.5 m
Slickly	26.63 km	11	149.9 m
Hollandmey	28.24 km	10	149.9 m
Cairnmore Hill (consented)	30.23 km	5	138.5 m
Strathy Wood	39.28 km	11	180 m
Pentland	42.8 km	7	300 m
Dounreay Demonstrator	44.05 km	2	201 m
In planning wind energy development within 45 km			
Hill of Lychrobbie	7.7 km	2	149.9 m
Tormsdale	7.98 km	12	149.9 m
Watten (withdrawn)	9.57 km	7	220 m
Achlachan Extension	11.81 km	2	149.9 m
Swarclett	21.48 km	2	149.9 m
Lochend Extension	27.2 km	5	149.9 m
Kirkton (refused)	35.96 km	11	149.9 m

Reference and Name	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	No. of Turbines	Blade Tip Height (m)
Melvich	39.26 km	12	149.9 m
Armadale	45.11 km	9	149.9 m

- **Bold** are wind farms have either changed status or were not included in the applicant's cumulative list.
    - **Watten** (withdrawn, January 2026)
    - **Kirkton** (refused by Scottish Ministers, January 2026)
    - **Cairnmore Hill** (granted planning permission on appeal, 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.

1 – Tackling the climate and nature crisis

2 – Climate mitigation and adaptation

3 – Biodiversity

4 – Natural places

5 – Soils

6 – Forestry, woodland and trees

7 – Historic assets and places

11 – Energy

13 – Sustainable transport

22 – Flood risk and water management

23 – Health and safety

25 – Community wealth benefits

33 – Minerals

Highland Wide Local Development Plan 2012

A3.2 28 - Sustainable Design

29 - Design Quality and Place-making

30 - Physical Constraints

31 - Developer Contributions

36 - Wider Countryside

51 - Trees and Development

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)
- 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’ LDPs. Alongside the new HLDP, the Council has also produced the draft Dark Skies: Reducing Light Pollution Planning Guidance and Future Policy document (September 2026)

A3.8 In addition, the Council has further advice on delivery of major developments in a number of documents. This includes 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).
- Nature Scot Consultation Version Scottish Planning Biodiversity Metric (Aug 2026)

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 that Scotland's environment is a national asset which supports out 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. The proposals in this instance, are not considered to comply with the requirements of NPF 4 Policy 3 in that, it has not been adequately demonstrated that they will bring about a suitable amount of biodiversity restoration related to peatland, so as this habitat remains in a demonstrably better state than without intervention

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 are 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 Policy 7 includes consideration of the impacts of development proposals on schedule monuments. Proposals will only be supported where significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the setting of a scheduled monument are avoided. As discussed, the proposals fail to demonstrate compliance with the relevant part h) (ii) of NPF Policy 7 h) due to their significant adverse impacts on scheduled monuments SM 420 and SM419.

A4.9 Policy 11's 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, through the 13 criteria set out in Policy 11 e), including amenity, landscape and visual and cultural and natural heritage impacts, even if the contribution to national renewable energy targets is considerable. In this respect, the proposal is contrary to National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Policy 11 e) (vii) in that, it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the siting and design of the development addresses impacts on the historic environment. The proposal is also contrary to Policy 11 e) (vi) in that it has not been demonstrated that it will not have a detrimental impact on road traffic and transport interests and to Policy 11 e) (iv) in that it has not been demonstrated that the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on established aviation interests.

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.

A4.14 **Part 3: Annex B – National Developments Statements of Need**. National developments are significant developments of national importance. Appendix B identifies 18 types of national development which will support the delivery of the spatial strategy. The statements of need set out in the Appendix are a requirement of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997). Any project identified as national development is required to be considered at a project level to ensure all statutory tests are met. This project is classified as National Development under Annex B Section 3 which states National Development for renewable energy includes "Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure" including: a) On and offshore electricity generation, including electricity storage, from renewables exceeding 50 megawatts capacity.

A4.15 This brings the application under the 13 environmental considerations set out in NPF4 Policy 11e) that require to be sufficiently mitigated against, and which largely correspond to their HwLDP Policy 67 equivalents.

Highland wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP)

A4.16 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".

A4.17 HwLDP Policy 55 – Peat and Soils, requires that proposals should demonstrate how they have avoided unnecessary disturbance, degradation or erosion of peat

and soils. As discussed, the proposals fail to demonstrate compliance with HwLDP Policy 55 in that, it has not been adequately demonstrated they will bring about a suitable amount of biodiversity restoration related to peatland, so as this habitat remains in a demonstrably better state than without intervention.

A4.18 HwLDP Policy 57 – Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage sets out that all proposals will be assessed taking into account the level of importance and type of heritage features, the form and scale of the development, and any impact on the feature and its setting. For features of national importance developments will be supported that can be shown not to compromise the natural environment, amenity and heritage resource. As discussed, the proposals fail to demonstrate compliance with HwLDP Policy 57 due to their significant adverse impacts on scheduled monuments SM 420 and SM419.

A4.19 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. In this respect, the proposal is contrary to HwLDP Policy 67 in that, it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the siting and design of the development addresses impacts on cultural heritage features, peatland habitats and road and aviation transport interests. Although HwLDP Policy 67 is 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)

A4.20 No specific policies apply however, that the CaSPlan does identify Special Landscape Areas (SLA) within the plan.

Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG)

A4.21 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

A4.22 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, the proposals failing to meet the considerations of the third criteria relating to respecting the settings of valued cultural landmarks.HLDP

Landscape Sensitivity Study

A4.23 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)

A4.24 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 18.4 GW (Quarter 2, 2026). 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.

A4.25 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. Taking this approach echoes Scotland’s Third Land Use Strategy.

A4.26 The document recognises that there may be a need to develop onshore wind energy development on peat. Priority peatland is present on the site. As discussed, the proposal is contrary to NPF4 Policy 3 a) and b), HwLDP Policies 55 and 67, Nature Scot guidance 'Advising on Peatland Habitats and Carbon-rich Soils in Development Management' and the Highland Council Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance, in that, it has not been adequately demonstrated that it will bring about a suitable amount of biodiversity restoration related to peatland, so as this habitat remains in a demonstrably better state than without intervention.

A4.27 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.

A4.28 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.

A4.29 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.

A4.30 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 4 includes a description of the design process along with assessments against the host Landscape Character Types (LCT), Special Landscape Area (SLA) 6: The Flow Country and Berriedale Coast and Wild Land Area (WLA) 36 Causeymire and Knockfin Flows.

A5.3 A total of 25 viewpoints across the study area of 45 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 Technical Appendix 4.1: 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 requires 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, the Golticlay Windfarm being included in the 'under construction' category. Scenario 2 considers Scenario 1 plus application stage, and scoping stage (where requested), wind farm schemes. Scenario 3 considers Scenario 2 alongside the Spittal to Beauly OHL, to which the Council raised an objection during October 2025, based on grounds including design landscape and visual impact. 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, Technical Appendix 4.5 of EIAR Volume 4, 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
Scenario 3 = existing + consented + applications + the proposed development + Spittal to Beauly 400kV OHL

			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: Roster Distance: 6.37km Looking west	App	High	Small	Minor to moderate	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor to moderate Scenario 2: Minor to moderate Scenario 3: Minor to moderate	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	THC	High	Small	Minor to moderate	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor to moderate Scenario 2: Minor to moderate Scenario 3:	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: 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
							Minor to moderate	
	Baseline As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: Expansive, panoramic view westwards from a minor road that serves a number of residential properties and crofts. **Existing Development** – Golticlay Wind Farm will be a prominent presence in views to the west. Other existing turbines are well screened by landform (Burn of Whilk) or are a distant offshore presence (Moray West). **Consented Development** – Berriedale and Dunbeath would be a distant feature and would have little or no influence upon the view. **In Planning Development** – Hill of Lychrobbie turbines would be a further limited presence to the south-west. Spittal to Beauly 400kV pylons would be a minor presence on the western skyline Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced by nearby properties. Susceptibility: Residents have a high susceptibility to change in views from their properties. Value: Medium to high value can be accepted due to lack of designations however the view is still of a reasonable scenic quality. MoC Considerations Consider the MoC small. The proposed turbines would be viewed entirely within the horizontal extent of the Golticlay Wind Farm, positioned behind the existing turbines and appearing at a relatively limited height above the surrounding topography. While some stacking effects and increased visual clutter would be evident, these arise primarily from the greater number of turbines visible within the view. The duration is long term and reversible.							

			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>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be minor to moderate adverse and not significant effect which is agreed. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future baseline effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would represent a small additional MoC given the proposed turbines would be completely within the extent of the Golticlay Windfarm, agree level of effect as minor to moderate and not significant. Scenario 2 – Hill of Lychrobbie turbines would be a further limited presence to the south-west, agree level of effect as minor to moderate and not significant. Scenario 3 - 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be a minor presence on the western skyline, agree that the level of effect is minor to moderate and not significant.							
Viewpoint 2: A99, west of Lybster Distance: 5.8km Looking: northwest	App	High	Small	Minor to moderate	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Small <u>Scenario 2</u>: Small <u>Scenario 3</u>: Small	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor to moderate <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor to moderate <u>Scenario 3</u>: Minor to moderate	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</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
	THC	High	Medium	Moderate	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Medium <u>Scenario 2</u>: Medium <u>Scenario 3</u>: Medium	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Moderate <u>Scenario 2</u>: Moderate <u>Scenario 3</u>: Moderate	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: Not significant
	<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: View north from the junction of the A99 with a minor road leading to Achavanich, at the north-western edge of Lybster. **Existing Development** – Golticlay is a prominent presence in the views to the north. Other existing onshore developments are well screened by landform. Offshore turbines at Moray West are visible to the south but are distant from the Viewpoint. **Consented Development** – Berriedale and Dunbeath turbines would be a distant presence to the south-west **In Planning Development** – Hill of Lychrobbie turbines would be a further limited presence to the south-west. Spittal to Beauly 400kV OHL would be a minor presence on the north-western skyline. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by nearby properties and near road users on the A99. Overall sensitivity is high. Susceptibility: Residents have a high susceptibility to change in views from their properties whilst road users have a lower susceptibility. Value: Medium to high value can be accepted due to lack of designations.							

			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
	MoC Considerations Consider the MoC medium. The proposed turbines would be perceived as a logical, yet notable, westward extension of the Golticlay Wind Farm. The extension turbines would appear slightly smaller in scale due to their position behind the existing Golticlay array; however, the increased horizontal extent of the combined turbine array would be readily perceptible within the view. The Rumster Mast remains a prominent feature on the northwestern skyline, providing a visual bookend to the extent of the turbine array. The duration is long term and reversible. Level of Effect Considerations The applicant has under-assessed the magnitude and level of effect at this location. Officers consider that this will result in a moderate adverse level of effect which would be not significant for the reasons stated above. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. Future baseline effects Scenario 1 – The proposal would represent a moderate additional MoC given the relationship of the proposed turbines to the Golticlay Windfarm and little interactions with other development, the level of effect is moderate and not significant. Scenario 2 – Hill of Lychrobbie turbines would be a further limited presence to the south-west; the level of effect is moderate and not significant. Scenario 3 - 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be a minor presence on the northwestern skyline, the level of effect is moderate 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 3: A99 Burrigill Distance: 5.6km Looking: northwest	App	Medium	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	THC	High-medium	Medium to Small	Moderate to Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Medium to Small Scenario 2: Medium to Small Scenario 3: Medium to Small	Scenario 1: Moderate to minor Scenario 2: Moderate to minor Scenario 3: Moderate to minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: 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
	Baseline As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: View from the side of the A99, adjacent to a residential property and post box. The view is northwards across the road to the adjacent farmland and buildings (including some large agricultural barns), with longer views of the more distant moorland intermittently available. **Existing Development** –Golticlay Wind Farm will be a prominent presence in the views to the north. Other existing turbines at Burn of Whilk and Cairnald House and Remiggy Forse are screened by roadside vegetation to the east. Moray East and West offshore turbines to the south are screened by the adjacent properties and garden vegetation. **Consented Development** – Berriedale and Dunbeath would be a distant presence to the southwest. **In Planning Development** – Hill of Lychrobbie turbines would be visible to the southwest. Spittal to Beauly 400kV OHL would be theoretically visible in the northwestern skyline. Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced by nearby properties. Overall sensitivity is high-medium. Susceptibility: Residents have a high susceptibility to change in views from their properties, albeit most properties typically present gable to the proposed development rather than a front or end view. Value: Low to medium value due to lack of designations however officers consider the value to be Medium as the view is of reasonable scenic quality. MoC Considerations Consider the MoC to be medium to small. The proposed turbines would be perceived as a logical, but nevertheless notable, westward extension of the Golticlay Wind Farm. The extension turbines would appear slightly smaller in scale due to their position behind the existing Golticlay array. However, there is some vegetation screening which would partially screen the turbines, particularly in the summer. The							

			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
	Rumster Mast remains a prominent feature on the north-western skyline, continuing to provide a visual bookend to the extent of the turbine array. The duration is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> The applicant has under-assessed the magnitude and level of effect at this location. Officers consider that it will result in a moderate to minor adverse level of effect which would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future baseline effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would represent a small additional MoC given the relationship of the proposed turbines to the Golticlay Windfarm and little interactions with other development, the level of effect moderate to minor and not significant. Scenario 2 – Hill of Lychrobbie turbines would be a further limited presence to the southwest, the level of effect would be moderate to minor and not significant. Scenario 3 - 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be a minor presence on the northwestern skyline, agree that the level of effect is moderate to 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 4: Osclay, public road between Lybster and Achavanich Distance: 3km Looking: northwest	App	Medium	Small to medium	Minor to moderate	Not significant	Scenario 1: No effect Scenario 2: Small to medium Scenario 3: Small to medium	Scenario 1: No effect Scenario 2: Minor to moderate Scenario 3: Minor to moderate	Scenario 1: No effect Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	THC	Medium	Medium	Moderate	Not significant	Scenario 1: No effect Scenario 2: Medium Scenario 3: Medium	Scenario 1: No effect Scenario 2: Moderate Scenario 3: Moderate	Scenario 1: No effect Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: 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

Baseline

As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: Expansive, panoramic view from minor road looking northwards towards the Site at short-range (3.01 km). The view is across rough grassland towards the commercial plantations at Golticlay and Rumster Forests. Much of the visible forestry is scheduled to be removed prior to construction of the wind farm.

Existing Development –Golticlay windfarm highly prominent to northwest. Existing onshore developments screened by landform. Existing offshore developments at Moray West and East are visible in the distance out to sea to the south.

Consented Development – Berriedale and Dunbeath screened by landform.

In Planning Development – Hill of Lychrobbie a further limited presence to the southwest. Spittal to Beauly 400kV OHL would be a minor presence on the western and north-western skyline.

Sensitivity Considerations

Represents views experienced mainly by road users. Views from properties to the north are not well represented due to south facing aspect and intervention of screening features from north.

Susceptibility: Travellers on roads are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change.

Value: Low to medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations and otherwise, remoteness and lack of distinction of location.

MoC Considerations

Consider the MoC to be medium. The proposed turbines would increase the horizontal extent of the Golticlay Wind Farm. They would appear of a similar scale to the rear existing turbines. However, turbines 4, 5 and 6 would form a notable outlier group, extending beyond the main array. Turbines 5 and 6 would also be prominently stacked, increasing the perceived density of turbines and contributing to greater visual clutter.

The duration is long term and reversible.

			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
	Level of Effect Considerations The applicant has under-assessed the magnitude and level of effect at this location. Officers consider that it will result in a moderate adverse level of effect which would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. Future baseline effects Scenario 1 – Agree no effect as only existing development present in view in this scenario. Scenario 2 – Hill of Lychrobbie turbines would be a further limited presence to the south-west, agree additional level of effect not significant. Scenario 3 - 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be a minor presence on the northwestern skyline, agree additional level of effect 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 5: Sheppardstown Road, by Loch Stemster Distance: 1.6km Looking: southeast	App	High	Medium to large	Moderate to major	**Significant**	Scenario 1: Medium to large Scenario 2: Medium to large Scenario 3: Medium to large	Scenario 1: Moderate to major Scenario 2: Moderate to major Scenario 3: Moderate to major	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: **Significant**
	THC	High	Large	Major	**Significant**	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Large	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: Major	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: **Significant**
	Baseline As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: 360-degree panoramic view from a lay-by/parking area at the side of the minor road that runs between Lybster and Achavanich.							

			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 is immediately adjacent to the Stones of Achkinloch (a scheduled monument), with a chambered cairn (also a scheduled monument) close by to the south. The view is an expansive one looking over an open landscape defined largely by its undulating landform and moorland and peatland vegetation cover **Existing Development** – Golticlay Wind Farm well screened by landform to the south. Turbines along A9 (well screened by topography Buolfruich turbines are visible as a relatively minor presence to the south-west. **Consented Development** –Dounreay Demonstrator, Pentland and Strathy Wood would be very distant background additions to the view **In Planning Development** – Tormsdale would be theoretically visible to the north and would result in a very limited increase of the influence of the cluster of turbines along the A9. Turbines at Kirkton would be barely visible to the west. Spittal to Beauly 400kV OHL pylons would be an obvious addition and would increase the existing influence of pylons upon views looking broadly westwards from the viewpoint. The pylons would run close to the proposed turbines in views to the southwest. There would be a clear increase in the influence of built structures upon the view. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by visitors to the monuments. Susceptibility: Visitors have a high susceptibility to change in views of cultural assets and other attractions, as views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the visitor experience of these assets. Value: High value is apparent given the presence of the heritage asset and dedicated parking area and interpretation panels. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as large. The proposed turbines would introduce close-range and large-scale wind development that would become prominent features within the view for the first time at this location. In comparison with the existing Rumster Mast and overhead line towers, the turbines would be distinguished by their substantially greater scale and the movement of their rotating blades. The duration is long term and reversible.							

			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>Level of Effect Considerations</u> The applicant has under-assessed the magnitude and level of effect at this location. Officers consider that it will result in a major adverse level of effect that would be significant. The proposed development would alter the character of the view from one defined by open moorland to one in which large-scale development with moving blades become the dominant visual elements. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – Cumulative change in view would not differ to any appreciable degree from the effects of the proposed development in isolation given the prominence of it in isolation and the screening by terrain of the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Additional turbines in planning would be located in the opposite direction to the proposals. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 3 - 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be a major presence increasing the influence of pylons looking west from the Viewpoint and running close to the proposed turbines in the southwest. Significant cumulative visual effects agreed.						

			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 6: Public road near Badlipster, Camster Distance: 8.0km Looking: southwest	App	Medium	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	THC	Medium	Medium	Moderate	Not significant	Scenario 1: Medium Scenario 2: Medium Scenario 3: Medium	Scenario 1: Moderate Scenario 2: Moderate Scenario 3: Moderate	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	Baseline As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: 360-degree panorama over a large expanse of moorland and bog land. Large forestry plantations are evident, from passing place at side of the C1029 public road.							

			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 – Golticlay Wind Farm clearly visible on the southern skyline. Existing turbines along the A9 clearly visible to the west. Camster turbines are very prominent to the east. Burn of Whilk turbines visible to the east but appear smaller in scale than Camster. Other existing turbines are distant features. **Consented Development** – Camster 2 turbines would be well screened by landform. Consented turbines to the west and north would be distant minor features. **In Planning Development** – Achlachan Extension, Tormsdale and Watten turbines would represent a limited increase in the spread of the cluster along the A9 in views to the west. Other in planning wind energy developments would be a distant and minor presence. Spittal to Beauly 400kV OHL pylons would be a minor presence on the southwestern and western skyline <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced mainly by road users. Susceptibility: Travellers on roads are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change. Value: Medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations and otherwise, remoteness and lack of distinction of location. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as medium. The proposed turbines would form a notable westward extension to the Golticlay Windfarm and would appear of a similar scale to the existing turbines. Turbines T2 and T5 would be prominently stacked within the composition, increasing the perceived density of turbines and contributing to localised visual clutter at the western edge of the array. The duration is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> The applicant has under-assessed the magnitude and level of effect at this location. Officers consider that it will result in a moderate adverse level of effect which would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6.							

			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
	Future Baseline Effects Scenario 1 – The proposal would read as a horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Additional turbines in planning would be located in the opposite direction to the proposals. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 3 - 400kV OHL pylons would be a minor presence on the south-western and western skyline. Agree that their presence would not result in any additional effects. Not significant.							
Viewpoint 7: A9 Tacher Distance: 6.4km Looking: southeast	App	Medium	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	THC	Medium	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: 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
	Baseline As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: viewpoint located on the A9 roadside. Adjacent line of electricity pylons are the most prominent features, contrasting with the surrounding landscape of moorland and bog. **Existing Development -** Golticlay Windfarm prominent along southeastern skyline. Cluster of turbines along the A9 are highly prominent immediately north of the viewpoint. Buolfruich turbines are well screened by landform to the south-east. Other existing developments are distant and minor presences in the view**.** **Consented Development:** Consented developments with theoretical visibility would be very distant presences in views to the west and north-west. **In Planning Development:** Achlachan Extension and Tormsdale and Watten would be added to the cluster along the A9, increasing the influence of this upon views to the north. Other developments in planning would be distant and minor presences. Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be introduced along the A9 immediately adjacent to the viewpoint, across the central field of view. Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced mainly by Trunk Road users. Susceptibility: Travellers on roads are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change. Value: Low to medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations and otherwise, remoteness and lack of distinction of location. MoC Considerations Consider the MoC small. Turbine 1 would be visible to hub height but would remain contained within the horizontal extent of the Golticlay Wind Farm, appearing of a similar scale to the existing turbines. The remaining proposed turbines would be visible only to blade tip and would be largely screened by the intervening landform. Although they would extend the theoretical visibility of wind energy development notably westwards across the field of view, this would remain within the existing visual containment provided by the high-voltage transmission line.						

			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>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor adverse level of effect which is not significant. Agreed. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would read as a horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Additional turbines in planning would mainly be located in the opposite direction to the proposals. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 3 - 400kV OHL pylons would become a central feature to the view but located along an existing pylon route, increasing the overall prominence of pylons in the foreground of the view and reducing the influence of background features. 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 8: Track by Loch a' Cherigal Distance: 11.1km Looking: southeast	App	High	Small	Minor – moderate	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor – moderate Scenario 2: Minor – moderate Scenario 3: Minor – moderate	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	THC	High	Small	Moderate	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor - Moderate Scenario 2: Minor – moderate Scenario 3: Minor – moderate	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: 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
	Baseline As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: 360-degree panoramic views looking out across the Flow Country from a single-track road that leads to Strathmore Lodge and Loch More. The view is across the flat peatland. **Existing Development -** Golticlay Wind Farm visible along southeastern skyline. Cluster of turbines along the A9 prominent in views to east. Other existing development more distant and minor presences in the view. **Consented Development:** Consented development would be a distant and minor presence in the view. **In Planning Development:** Achlachan Extension and Tormsdale would increase the prominence of turbines clustered along the A9. Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be a minor presence on the skyline to the southeast and east. Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced mainly by road users, albeit on a minor road with many passing places and opportunities to stop to observe views into WLA 36 and the Flow Country WHS to the south. Agree sensitivity is high. Value: High value can be accepted due to presence of designations to the south and nature of route and presence of features on site to facilitate the use of the location as a viewpoint. MoC Considerations Consider the MoC medium to small. Proposals will notably increase the horizontal extent of large turbines to the south, mostly to hub height, although the proposed turbines would continue to read as an extension to the Golticlay Windfarm and will appear of a similar scale. Turbine array will remain bookended by the Rumster Mast, which is more prominent in views from this location than visualisations may allude. The duration is long term and reversible. Level of Effect Considerations The applicant has under-assessed the magnitude and level of effect at this location. Officers consider that it will result in a moderate adverse level of effect which would be 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
	Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would read as a horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Additional turbines in planning would mainly be located in the opposite direction to the proposals. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 3 - 400kV OHL pylons would be distant feature to southeast and east. Not significant.							
Viewpoint 9: Mybster (old garage) Distance: 13km Looking: south	App	High	Small	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Small <u>Scenario 2</u>: Small <u>Scenario 3</u>: Small	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 3</u>: Minor	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: Not significant
	THC	High	Small	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Small <u>Scenario 2</u>: Small <u>Scenario 3</u>: Small	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 3</u>: Minor	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</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
	Baseline As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: looks south from roadside at former garage between Mybster and Spittal over a flat agricultural landscape. The background is defined by low hills due south and by the prominent landforms of Scaraben and Morven to the south-east. Photograph is taken in low lighting conditions late on a summer evening. **Existing Development -** Golticlay Windfarm has a limited presence on the southern skyline. Existing cluster of turbines along the A9 is prominent to south closer to the viewpoint. Existing turbines at Camster are visible to the south-east. Other existing developments are distant and minor presences. **Consented Development:** Camster 2 and Slickly would be the most evident additions. **In Planning Development:** Achlachan Extension and Tormsdale would increase the prominence of turbines clustered along the A9. Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be a minor presence on the skyline to the southeast and east. Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced by nearby properties. Susceptibility: Residents have a high susceptibility to change in views from their properties, albeit most properties typically present gable to the proposed development rather than a front or end view. Value: Low to medium value due to lack of designations and proximity of existing turbines intervening in wider views across the Flow Country landscape. However, officers consider the value to be higher. MoC Considerations Consider the MoC as small given the considerably less prominence of the proposed turbines compared to existing turbines closer to the viewpoint. The duration is long term and reversible.						

			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>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor adverse level of effect that would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would read as a horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm, viewed behind existing proposals much closer to the viewpoint. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - 400kV OHL pylons would be distant feature to southeast and east. 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 10 Watten Railway Crossing: Distance: 15.2km Looking: south	App	Medium	Small	Minor	Not significant.	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Small <u>Scenario 2</u>: Small <u>Scenario 3</u>: Small	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 3</u>: Minor	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: Not significant
	THC	Medium	Small	Minor	Not significant.	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Small <u>Scenario 2</u>: Small <u>Scenario 3</u>: Small	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 3</u>: Minor	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: Not significant
	<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: 360-degree panoramic view located close to the level crossing north of Watten (on the B870). **Existing Development –** Golticlay Windfarm has a limited presence on the southern skyline The cluster of turbines south of the A882 is clearly visible to the south-east of the viewpoint, with the Camster and Burn of Whilk turbines also clearly visible to the south. The cluster of turbines along the A9 is theoretically visible. Cogle Moss turbines clearly visible to the east. Other existing developments are distant and minor presences.							

			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: Consented Camster 2 turbines would fill the gap between the A886 cluster and Burn of Whilk/Camster. **In Planning Development:** Cairnmore Hill turbines would be distant features very well screened by landform. Other turbines in planning would be distant and minor presences. Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be a minor presence on the skyline to the west. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced mainly by rail users. Susceptibility: Travellers on rail routes are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change. Value: Low to medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations and otherwise, remoteness and lack of distinction of location. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC small. Proposed turbines would extend the Golticlay Windfarm to the west linearly and would read as of a similar scale. Existing separation between Golticlay and A9 Cluster turbines would not be notably reduced. The duration is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor adverse level of effect which would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would read as a horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - 400kV OHL pylons would be distant feature to west. 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: Loch Hempriggs Distance: 15.5km Looking: west	App	Medium	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: No effect	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: No effect	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: No effect
	THC	Medium	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: No effect	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: No effect	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: No effect
	Baseline As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: Expansive panoramic view from the side of the A99 close to Loch Hempriggs. **Existing Development –** Golticlay Windfarm has a limited presence on the southern skyline The cluster of turbines south of the A882 is clearly visible to the northwest of the viewpoint, with the Burn of Whilk turbines also visible to the west. Camster turbines are screened by landform. Other existing developments are distant features.							

			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: Consented Camster 2 turbines would fill the gap between the A886 cluster and the existing Camster turbines. Other consented development would represent a distant feature. **In Planning Development:** Most in planning developments would be distant features**.** The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons are not predicted to be visible from this location. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced mainly by road users. Susceptibility: Travellers on roads are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change. Value: Low to medium value due to lack of designations and otherwise, remoteness and lack of distinction of location. However, officers consider the value of the view as medium given it is of a reasonable scenic quality. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as small. The proposed turbines would represent a very limited northward extension of the Golticlay Windfarm and would appear of a similar scale to the existing turbines. The duration is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor adverse level of effect which would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would read as a minor horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree 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
	Scenario 3 - The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons are not predicted to be visible from this location. Not significant							
Viewpoint 12: Tesco Car Park Wick Distance: 18.8km Looking: southwest	App	Medium	Small	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Small <u>Scenario 2</u>: Small <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect
	App	Medium	Small	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Small <u>Scenario 2</u>: Small <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect
	<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: Panoramic view south-west from supermarket car park at the north-western edge of Wick. The view is over a gently undulating, farming landscape. **Existing Development –** Golticlay Windfarm has a limited presence on the southwestern skyline. The cluster of turbines south of the A882 and the Camster turbines are prominent to the west, with the cluster of turbines along the A9 a distant presence to the rear of this. The Burn							

			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
	of Whilk turbines are visible to the south-west partially screened by landform. The cluster of offshore turbines is theoretically visible to the southeast. **Consented Development:** The consented turbines at Camster 2 would be added to the existing clusters visible to the west and would result in a limited intensification of the influence of these. **In Planning Development:** Achlachan Extension and Tormsdale would be a limited addition to the A9 cluster. Swarclett would be a very limited background presence to the north-west. The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons are not predicted to be visible from this location. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by road users and day to day shoppers. Susceptibility: Travellers on roads and shoppers are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change. Location is unlikely to be visited for the views available. Value: Medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations and lack of distinction of location. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC small. The proposed turbines would represent a very limited extension of the Golticlay Windfarm and would appear of a similar scale to the existing turbines. The duration is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor adverse level of effect which would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6.							

			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
	Future Baseline Effects Scenario 1 – The proposal would reads as a minor horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons are not predicted to be visible from this location. Not significant							
Viewpoint 13: A99 Keiss Distance: 24.3km Looking: southwest	App	Medium - high	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: No effect	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: No effect	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: No effect
	THC	Medium - high	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: No effect	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: No effect	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: No effect

			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
	Baseline As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: Expansive panoramic views out to sea and along a gently undulating coastal farmland. The Viewpoint is located at the edge of Keiss. View presented as wireline only, by agreement with the Council Officers. **Existing Development –** Golticlay Windfarm has a limited presence on the southern skyline. The cluster of turbines south of the A882 and the Camster turbines are visible to the southeast at a distance. The cluster of offshore turbines is theoretically visible to the south. **Consented Development:** The consented turbines at Camster 2 would be added to the existing clusters and would result in a limited intensification of the influence of these. he consented turbines at Slickly and Hollandmey would increase the influence of turbines on the northern skyline. **In Planning Development: T**he presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the views available. The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons are not predicted to be visible from this location. Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced by residents and road users. Susceptibility: Residents have a high susceptibility to change in views from their properties, albeit most properties typically present gable to the proposed development rather than a front or end view. Value: Medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations and as most houses in the settlement look out to sea rather than inland. MoC Considerations Consider the MoC small. The proposed turbines would be positioned in the background of the Golticlay Windfarm and would appear of a similar scale, within a large-scale landscape already characterised by wind turbines of a comparable apparent scale. The duration is long term and reversible.							

			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>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor adverse level of effect which would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would read as a minor horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons are not predicted to be visible from this location. 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 14: Lyth Distance: 22.9km Looking: south	App	Medium	Small	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Small <u>Scenario 2</u>: Small <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect
	THC	Medium	Small	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Small <u>Scenario 2</u>: Small <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect
	<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: Expansive, panoramic views southwards from minor road to the south of the settlement of Lyth. The Viewpoint reflects the views available to road users. The view is across an open and low-lying agricultural landscape, with occasional small shelterbelts, woodlands and hedgerow remnants. **Existing Development –** Golticlay Windfarm has a limited presence on the southern skyline. The existing cluster of turbines south of the A882, and the Camster and Cogle Moss turbines are visible on the southern skyline. The cluster along the A9 are also visible further 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: Consented Camster 2 turbines would be visible in the same field of view as the A882/Camster cluster and would intensify the influence of this group of turbines. **In Planning Development: T**urbines in planning would be distant and minor presences. The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons are not predicted to be visible from this location. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced mainly by road users. Susceptibility: Travellers on roads are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change. Value: Low to medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations and otherwise, remoteness and lack of distinction of location. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC small. The proposed turbines would form a notable linear westward extension to the Golticlay Windfarm and would appear of a similar scale to the existing turbines. The existing separation between the Golticlay Windfarm and the A9 cluster would not be appreciably reduced from this location. The duration is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor adverse level of effect which would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would read as a horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons are not predicted to be visible from this location. 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 15: Hill of Olrig Distance: 24.6km Looking: southeast	App	High	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	THC	High	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	Baseline As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: View from a modest hill summit (141 m AOD), with transmission masts nearby. The Viewpoint affords panoramic views northwards towards the coast with Orkney beyond, and south and west over Caithness. View presented as wireline only, by agreement with the Council Officers.							

			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 – Golticlay Windfarm a limited presence on the southern skyline. A series of existing developments are visible in different directions, all located distant. **Consented Development:** Addition of consented developments would incrementally increase the influence of these existing clusters of turbines. **In Planning Development: T**urbines in planning would be distant and minor presences. The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be a minor presence on the southern skyline. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced mainly by recreational users. Viewpoint is from a hilltop affording views out across the landscape, and these views will be amongst the principal reasons for any visit. The transmission masts on the hill are obvious detractors, but do not prevent outward views 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: Medium to high value can be accepted considering location on a hill summit with nearby core paths. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC small. The proposed turbines would form a linear extension to the Golticlay Windfarm and would appear of a similar scale to the existing turbines. The existing Halsary turbines would remain more prominent within the foreground, occupying a similar horizontal extent to the proposed turbines. The duration is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor adverse level of effect that would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6.						

			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
	Future Baseline Effects Scenario 1 – The proposal would reads as a horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - - 400kV OHL pylons would be a distant feature to the south. Not significant.							
Viewpoint 16: Ben Dorrery Distance: 19.8km Looking: southeast	App	High	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	App	High	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: 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
	Baseline As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: A view from a modest hill summit (244 m AOD) east of Loch Shurrery and west of Scotscalder Station. The hill hosts a transmission mast and the associated compound, with an access road leading to these features. View presented as wireline only, by agreement with the Council Officers. **Existing Development –** Golticlay Windfarm has a limited presence on the southeastern skyline. A series of existing developments are visible in different directions, all located distant. **Consented Development:** Addition of consented developments would incrementally increase the influence of these existing clusters of turbines. **In Planning Development: T**urbines in planning would be distant and minor presences. Tormsdale turbines would be the most evident and would extend the spread of turbines formed by the clusters south of the A882 and along the A9. The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be a minor presence on the southeastern skyline. Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced mainly by recreational users. 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. Value: Medium to high value can be accepted given location on hill summit and nearby core paths.						

			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>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as small. The proposed turbines would form a linear westward extension to the Golticlay Windfarm and would appear of a similar scale to the existing turbines. The existing separation between the Moray West and Buolfruich turbines would not be notably reduced from this location. The duration is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor adverse level of effect that would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would reads as a horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - - 400kV OHL pylons would be a distant feature to the southeast. 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 17: Ben Allisky Distance: 14.5km Looking: east	App	High	Small	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Small <u>Scenario 2</u>: Small <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect
	THC	High	Small	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Small <u>Scenario 2</u>: Small <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: No effect
	<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: 360-degree panoramic view from hill summit (349m AOD) located within the Flow Country. The views north and east are across a low-lying landscape that is predominantly moorland and peatland. Photograph is taken in cloudy, low light conditions.							

			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 – Golticlay Windfarm has a limited presence on the eastern skyline. A series of existing developments are visible in different directions, all located distant. **Consented Development:** Addition of consented developments would incrementally increase the influence of these existing clusters of turbines. **In Planning Development: T**urbines in planning would be distant and minor presences. The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons are not predicted to be visible from this location. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced mainly by recreational users. 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. Value: High value can be accepted given presence in the Flow Country. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as small. The proposed turbine would result in a very limited linear extension of the Golticlay Windfarm's horizontal spread, with only a single turbine extending beyond the existing array. It would appear of a similar scale to the existing turbines. The duration is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor adverse level of effect which would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6.					

			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
	Future Baseline Effects Scenario 1 – The proposal would reads as a limited horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - - The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons are not predicted to be visible from this location. Not significant							
Viewpoint 18: Overcraig Hill Distance: 18.6km Looking: northeast	App	High	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: No effect	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: No effect	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: No effect
	THC	High	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: No effect	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: No effect	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: No effect

			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
	Baseline As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: 360-degree view from access track running through a remote part of the Flow Country. **Existing Development –** Golticlay Windfarm has a limited presence on the northeastern skyline. A series of existing developments are visible in different directions, all located distant. **Consented Development:** Addition of consented developments would incrementally increase the influence of these existing clusters of turbines, to a very limited extent. **In Planning Development: T**urbines in planning would be distant and minor presences. The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons are not predicted to be visible from this location. Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced mainly by recreational users. 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. Value: High value can be accepted given presence in the Flow Country and nearby natural heritage designations. MoC Considerations Consider the MoC as small. The proposed turbines would result in a limited northward linear extension to the horizontal extent of the Golticlay Windfarm and would appear of a similar scale to the existing turbine array. The duration is long term and reversible.						

			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>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor adverse level of effect which would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would read as a horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - - The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons are not predicted to be visible from this location. 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 19: A9 Newport Distance: 16.7km Looking: northeast	App	Medium – high	Small	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Small <u>Scenario 2</u>: Small <u>Scenario 3</u>: Small	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 3</u>: Minor	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: Not significant
	THC	Medium – high	Medium to Small	Moderate	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Medium <u>Scenario 2</u>: Medium <u>Scenario 3</u>: Medium	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Moderate <u>Scenario 2</u>: Moderate <u>Scenario 3</u>: Moderate	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: Not significant
	<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: View north-eastwards along the North Sea coast from near the bus stop on the A9 at Newport. The view is over the coastal farmland and the sea itself. The television mast at Rumster Forest and the line of pylons that runs inland close to the A9 are visible.							

			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 – Golticlay Windfarm has a limited presence on the northeastern skyline. The existing turbines at Burn of Whilk are distant features on the northeastern skyline, and the extensive cluster of offshore turbines are visible out to sea to the east. The Buolfruich turbines screened by landform and other existing turbines are minor structures that are not visible due to distance. **Consented Development:** Berriedale and Dunbeath turbines would be visible to the north-east, Other consented turbines would be minor structures which would not be visible. **In Planning Development:** Hill of Lychrobbie would be visible to the northeast. The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons would run inland from this point at relatively close range, but screened by landform to the right-hand side, or west of the view. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by residents and road users. Susceptibility: Residents have a high susceptibility to change in views from their properties, albeit most properties typically present gable to the proposed development rather than a front or end view. Value: Medium - high value can be accepted due to presence on trunk route with attractive coastal views. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC medium to small. The proposed turbines would extend wind energy development notably westwards and further inland, representing a logical extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. The turbines would appear of a similar scale to the existing array. The duration is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> The applicant has under-assessed the magnitude and level of effect at this location. Officers consider that it will result in a moderate adverse level of effect that would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6.							

			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 – The proposal would read as a minor horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree 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: Scaraben Distance: 18km Looking: northeast	App	High	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	THC	High	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: 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
	Baseline As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: 360-degree expansive panoramic views from the summit of a prominent ridge located in south-western Caithness. Views north and east are across the low-lying landscape of the Flow Country and the wider Caithness landscape, with the North Sea beyond. **Existing Development –** Golticlay Windfarm has a limited presence on the northeastern skyline. A series of existing developments are visible in different directions, all located distant. **Consented Development:** Addition of consented developments would incrementally increase the influence of these existing clusters of turbines, to a very limited extent. **In Planning Development: T**urbines in planning would be distant and minor presences. The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be a minor presence on the eastern skyline. Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced mainly by recreational users. 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. Value: High value can be accepted given presence in the Flow Country, nearby natural heritage designations and location on a summit. MoC Considerations Consider the MoC as small. The proposed turbines would represent a limited addition to a large-scale landscape where multiple windfarms are present and more noticeable. The duration is long term and reversible.						

			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>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor adverse level of effect which would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would read as a horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - - 400kV OHL pylons would be distant feature to the east. 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 21: Grey Cairns of Camster Distance: 6.3km Looking: southwest	App	High	Small	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Small <u>Scenario 2</u>: Small <u>Scenario 3</u>: Small	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 3</u>: Minor	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: Not significant
	THC	High	Small	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Small <u>Scenario 2</u>: Small <u>Scenario 3</u>: Small	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 3</u>: Minor	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: Not significant
	<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: View from lay-by/ parking area at the side of minor road, which facilitates access to the Grey Cairns (a pair of reconstructed Neolithic tombs). The Viewpoint is set on the valley side above the Cairns and is located in such a way that long-distance views are available over the Cairns to the south-west, with longer views in other directions restricted by the forested landform.							

			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 – Golticlay Windfarm is a prominent, although partially visible feature on the southern skyline. Camster turbines prominent to the north. **Consented Development:** The consented Camster 2 turbines would be visible to the rear of Camster, with other consented developments being distant and minor additions. **In Planning Development:** Most consented developments would be screened by forestry from this location. The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be a minor presence on the western skyline. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced mainly by visitors to the Cairns. Susceptibility: Visitors are normally considered to have a high susceptibility to change as views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience. Value: High value can be accepted given viewpoint at a designated heritage asset and visitor attraction. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as small. The proposed turbines would represent a limited northward addition to the horizontal extent of the Golticlay Windfarm, with the majority positioned behind the existing turbines. They would appear of a similar scale to the existing array. The duration is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a minor adverse level of effect which would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would read as a horizontal extension to the Golticlay Windfarm. As such, agree 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
	Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - - 400kV OHL pylons would be distant feature to the west. Not significant.							
Viewpoint 22: A9 Roadside Distance: 20km Looking: south	App	Medium	No change	No Change	Not significant	N/A	N/A	N/A
	THC	Medium	No change	No Change	Not significant	N/A	N/A	N/A
	As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: View from minor road that runs west from the A9 at Roadside (the Viewpoint is close to the junction). The focus of the view is south-west and west across the agricultural landscape of northern Caithness, with Morven and Scaraben as distant skyline features. The proposed development would be wholly screened by landform.							

			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 23: Minor road off A9, Braehungie Distance: 3km Looking: northeast	App	Medium	Medium	Moderate	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Medium <u>Scenario 2</u>: Medium <u>Scenario 3</u>: Medium	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Moderate <u>Scenario 2</u>: Moderate <u>Scenario 3</u>: Moderate	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: Not significant
	THC	Medium	Medium	Moderate	**Significant**	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Medium <u>Scenario 2</u>: Medium <u>Scenario 3</u>: Medium	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Moderate <u>Scenario 2</u>: Moderate <u>Scenario 3</u>: Moderate	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: Not significant
	<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: View looking north along the upper reaches of the Latheron valley and the open expansive landscape of the Flow Country from the C1065 local road. **Existing Development –** Golticlay Windfarm screened from view by the intervening landform. The Buolfruich turbines are prominent on the western skyline, and the single turbine at New Black is also visible.							

			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: Consented Berriedale and Dunbeath turbines would also be visible in views to the south. **In Planning Development:** Hill of Lychrobbie turbines would be added to southward views, in the opposite direction to the proposed development. The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be visible at short range immediately north of the Viewpoint and would increase the existing influence of pylons upon views looking north and west from the Viewpoint. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced mainly by road users. Susceptibility: Travellers on roads are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change. Value: Low to medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations and otherwise, remoteness and lack of distinction of location. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC medium. The proposed turbines would introduce large-scale structures into an area of the view where wind turbines have previously been absent. However, this would occur within a landscape context that already accommodates other large scale features of a similar apparent scale, including the Rumster Mast directly adjacent to the west of the view and the nearby overhead line transmission pylons. Nevertheless, due to the prominence and extent of visibility of T6, the effect would be significant. The duration is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> The applicant has under-assessed the level of effect at this location. Officers consider that the effect would be Moderate adverse and significant for the reasons set out above. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would not interact appreciably with other developments. As such, agree 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
	Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - - 400kV OHL pylons would be visible at short range immediately north of the viewpoint and would increase the existing influence of pylons upon views looking north and west from the Viewpoint. Presence of the pylons at close range may reduce the visual prominence of the proposed turbines. Agree not significant.							
Viewpoint 24: A9, Braehungie Distance: 2.9km Looking: north	App	Medium	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	THC	Medium	Small	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Small Scenario 2: Small Scenario 3: Small	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: 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
	Baseline As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: View looking north along the corridor of the A9 and the open expansive landscape of the Flow Country from the junction of the A9 with the C1065 local road, to the east of Viewpoint 23, at a higher elevation. **Existing Development –** Golticlay Windfarm is screened from view by the intervening landform. The Buolfruich turbines are prominent on the western skyline, and the single turbine at New Black is also visible. **Consented Development:** Consented Berriedale and Dunbeath turbines would also be visible in views to the south. **In Planning Development:** Hill of Lychrobbie turbines would be added to southward views, in the opposite direction to the proposed development. The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be visible at short range immediately north of the Viewpoint, and would increase the existing influence of pylons upon views looking north and west from the Viewpoint. Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced mainly by road users Susceptibility: Travellers on roads are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change. Value: Low to medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations and otherwise, remoteness and lack of distinction of location. MoC Considerations Consider the MoC as small. The proposed turbines would extend large turbines into an area of the view where these have previously been absent, but only to a single blade tip. The duration is long term and reversible. Level of Effect Considerations Consider that it will result in a minor adverse level of effect which would be 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
	Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would not interact appreciably with other developments. As such, agree not significant. Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - - 400kV OHL pylons would be visible at short range immediately north of the viewpoint and would increase the existing influence of pylons upon views looking north and west from the Viewpoint. Presence of the pylons at close range may reduce the visual prominence of the proposed turbines. Agree 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 25: A9, near Latheronwheel Distance: 8.1km Looking: north	App	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Negligible <u>Scenario 2</u>: Negligible <u>Scenario 3</u>: Negligible	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Negligible <u>Scenario 2</u>: Negligible <u>Scenario 3</u>: Negligible	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: Not significant
	THC	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Negligible <u>Scenario 2</u>: Negligible <u>Scenario 3</u>: Negligible	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Negligible <u>Scenario 2</u>: Negligible <u>Scenario 3</u>: Negligible	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u>: Not significant
	<u>Baseline</u> As described in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 4.5 Effects on Viewpoints: View looking north-east from the A9 to the south of Latheronwheel. The view is over the coastal farmland and the sea itself. The television mast at Rumster Forest and the line of pylons that runs inland close to the A9 are visible.							

			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 – Golticlay Windfarm has a very limited presence in the north. Burn of Whilk turbines would be visible to the north-east in views along the coast. The extensive cluster of offshore turbines would be visible to the south-east relatively distant. Other existing developments would be screened by landform. **Consented Development:** Consented Berriedale and Dunbeath turbines would also be visible in views to the west at close range. **In Planning Development: H**ill of Lychrobbie turbines would be visible to the west, either side of Berriedale and Dunbeath, and would be a conspicuous addition to the view. The Spittal to Beauly 400kV Overhead Line pylons would be a minor presence in inland views to the west and north. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced mainly by road users. Susceptibility: Travellers on roads are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change. Value: Medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations and otherwise, remoteness and lack of distinction of location. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as negligible. The proposed turbines would extend large turbines into an area of the view where these have previously been absent, but only to 2 blade tips. The duration is long term and reversible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that it will result in a negligible level of effect which would be not significant. Hours of darkness - visible aviation lighting on Turbines 1, 4 and 6. <u>Future Baseline Effects</u> Scenario 1 – The proposal would not interact appreciably with other developments. As such, agree 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
	Scenario 2 – Presence of additional developments in planning would not give rise to any appreciable change in the influence of wind turbines upon the view. Agree not significant. Scenario 3 - - 400kV OHL pylons would be visible at short range immediately north of the viewpoint and would increase the existing influence of pylons upon views looking north and west from the viewpoint. Presence of the pylons at close range may reduce the visual prominence of the proposed turbines. Agree not significant.							

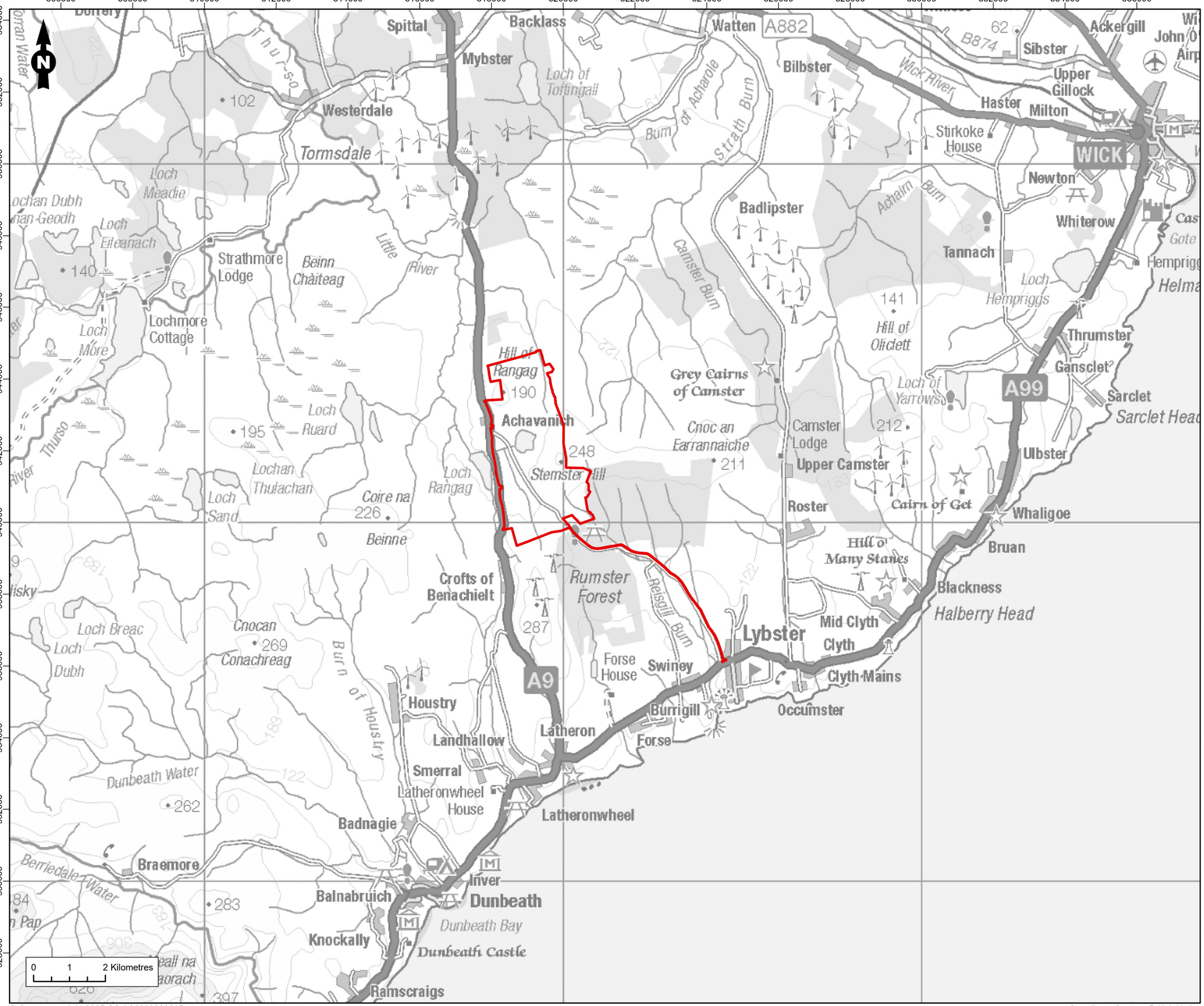
Appendix 7 - Assessment against Landscape and Visual Assessment Criteria contained within Section 4 of the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance

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 is Lybster. At present other onshore wind energy schemes can be seen on the approach to Lybster. In addition, there will be visibility of off-shore turbines. However, the orientation of the settlement and the houses within it acts to limit views toward wind energy developments including the proposed wind farm. To the north of Lybster, especially from properties located in Roster, most principal views will look to the west towards the development. Although the rising intervening landform will provide a degree of screening, the proposals will still be prominent within the view, albeit as an extension to the Golticlay 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 from approximately 18km distant, as identified from Viewpoint 19 (Newport) on the A9. When travelling this north, one has travelled through the enclosed landscapes around Berridale where the landscape opens out. At this point one would be able to appreciate the vastness of the Caithness Flows at the same time as views along the coast and the turbines will be a stark new feature. The impact is somewhat mitigated by the presence of other wind energy development, however and the intermittent nature of the views, punctuated by sections with vegetation and topographical screening. The threshold for this criterion is met.
3	Valued natural and cultural	The development does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting.

	landmarks are respected	---------- The lone mountains of Morven and Scaraben are the key natural landmarks. There is a clear visual impact from the summit of both of these hills, albeit it is more pronounced from Scaraben due to it being closer to the development. In addition, as one has full view of the development, which appears from here as an engineered rather than designed layout, the visual impact is more pronounced. However, when looking toward the hill, from places where receptors are likely to see the hills, the development would not sit in front of the hills, therefore not affecting the setting of the lone mountains. The application red line site area contains the Achkinloch Stone Setting (SM420) and Achkinloch Chambered Cairn (SM419), both of which are located on the south side of Loch Stemster. The proposed turbines would introduce several large-scale and moving features across the skyline directly into one of the most significant key features of the stone setting SM420: views along the alignment of the stone setting out through the open end to the south-southeast. They would also become the most prominent features across the hillside to the south in views from the stone setting and towards it from throughout the topographic bowl surrounding the monument and the Loch of Stemster. The turbines would also directly affect views of, and the relationship between, the stone setting and the cairn, SM419. The proposed turbines would be substantially more visible than those already consented in the area, which would only be visible as tips and would not appear directly along the axis of the setting. Thus, by dominating and substantially altering these key factors of both monuments, the proposals would result in a significant adverse impact on the integrity of their setting. It is considered that the threshold for this criterion is **not** met.
4	The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected.	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways. ---------- The turbines will be visible from the North Coast 500 route but would not be dominant features given that they are set back from the route. As the route is predominantly travelled from Inverness in a clockwise direction the turbines will be visible for a limited period on the A99 south of Wick, however for a longer period if the route is travelled in an anticlockwise direction. Overall, it is not

		considered the character of the route will be undermined. Some core paths in the area will have visibility of the scheme. Overall, it is considered that while there will be some impacts, the threshold has been met as the turbines would not overwhelm, or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of the recreational routes and ways in the area. The threshold for this criterion is 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 of this criterion is achieved, as addressed more directly 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 Landscape Character Type. There is visual separation between most schemes. The proposed development will reduce the visual separation between wind energy developments but 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 threshold for this criterion is therefore met.
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 for this criterion is met, taking into account the degree of separation of the proposed development from other existing and proposed windfarms in the area.
8	The perception of landscape	The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected ----------

	scale and distance is respected	Where the turbines appear with other wind energy developments, they appear behind other wind energy development but in the distance, beyond at least one layer of topography. 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 which it is situated on or behind. It is considered that the threshold for this criterion 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. ---------- For the avoidance of doubt this does not relate to landscape designations. Consideration should be given to the variety of landscape character as one travels through the area and how that changes and transitions as one moves through the area. Overall, it is considered that the threshold is met, considering the assessment of the landscape impacts of the development undertaken and that the development generally respects the host LCT.



Legend

Site Boundary

Figure Title
Site Location

Project Name
Golticlay Extension Wind Farm

Project No./Filery ID
1620017092

Date	Figure No.	Revision
October 2025	1.2	1.0

Prepared By	Scale
RS/KB	1:100,000 @A3

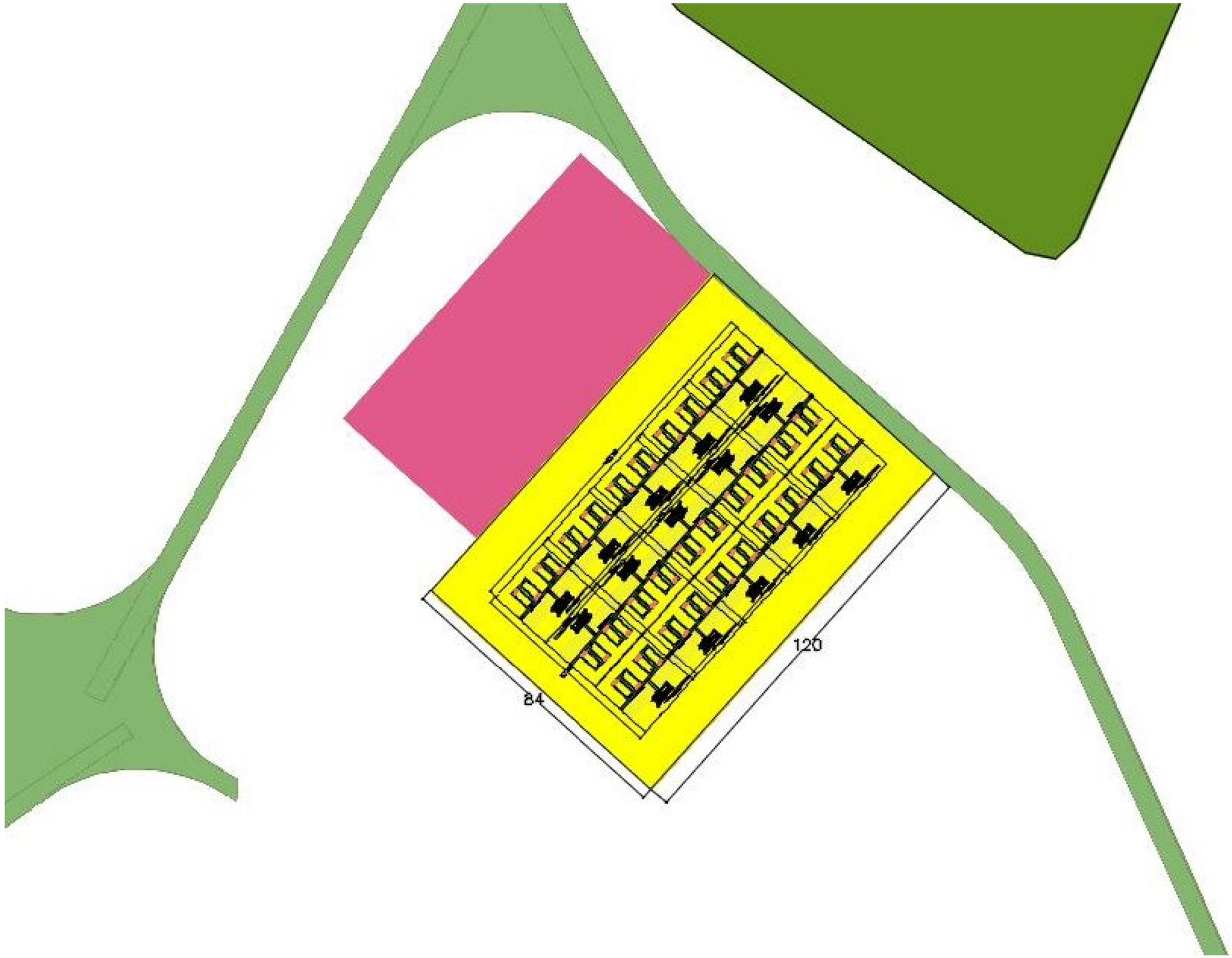
Client
RWE

RAMBOLL

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

1620017092-RAM-MA-ZZ-00083_SiteLocation_01.pagx



Legend

- Access Tracks
- Temporary Construction Compound and Permanent BESS
- Borrow Pits
- Substation

Figure Title
Typical BESS Compound Layout

Project Name
Golticlay Extension Wind Farm

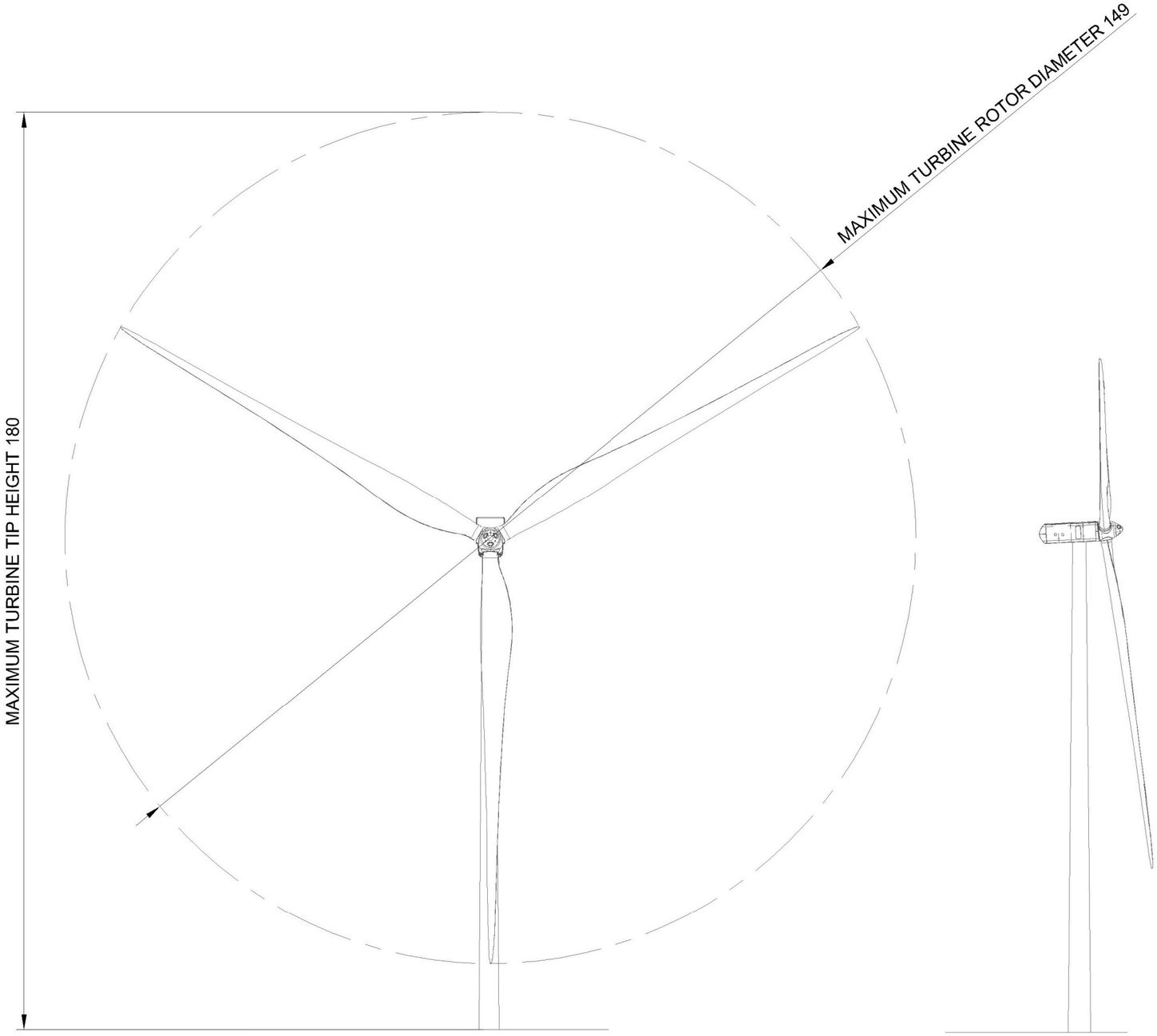
Project No./Filery ID
1620017092

Date	Figure No.	Revision
November 2025	2.8	1.0

Prepared By	Scale
KB	NOT TO SCALE

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TURBINE ELEVATION

TURBINE PROFILE

Notes

1. Turbine dimensions are indicative and show maximum tip height and rotor diameter of proposed development.
2. Dimensions are in meters (m), unless stated otherwise.
3. Drawing not to scale.

Figure Title
Typical Wind Turbine Elevations

Project Name
Golticlay Extension Wind Farm

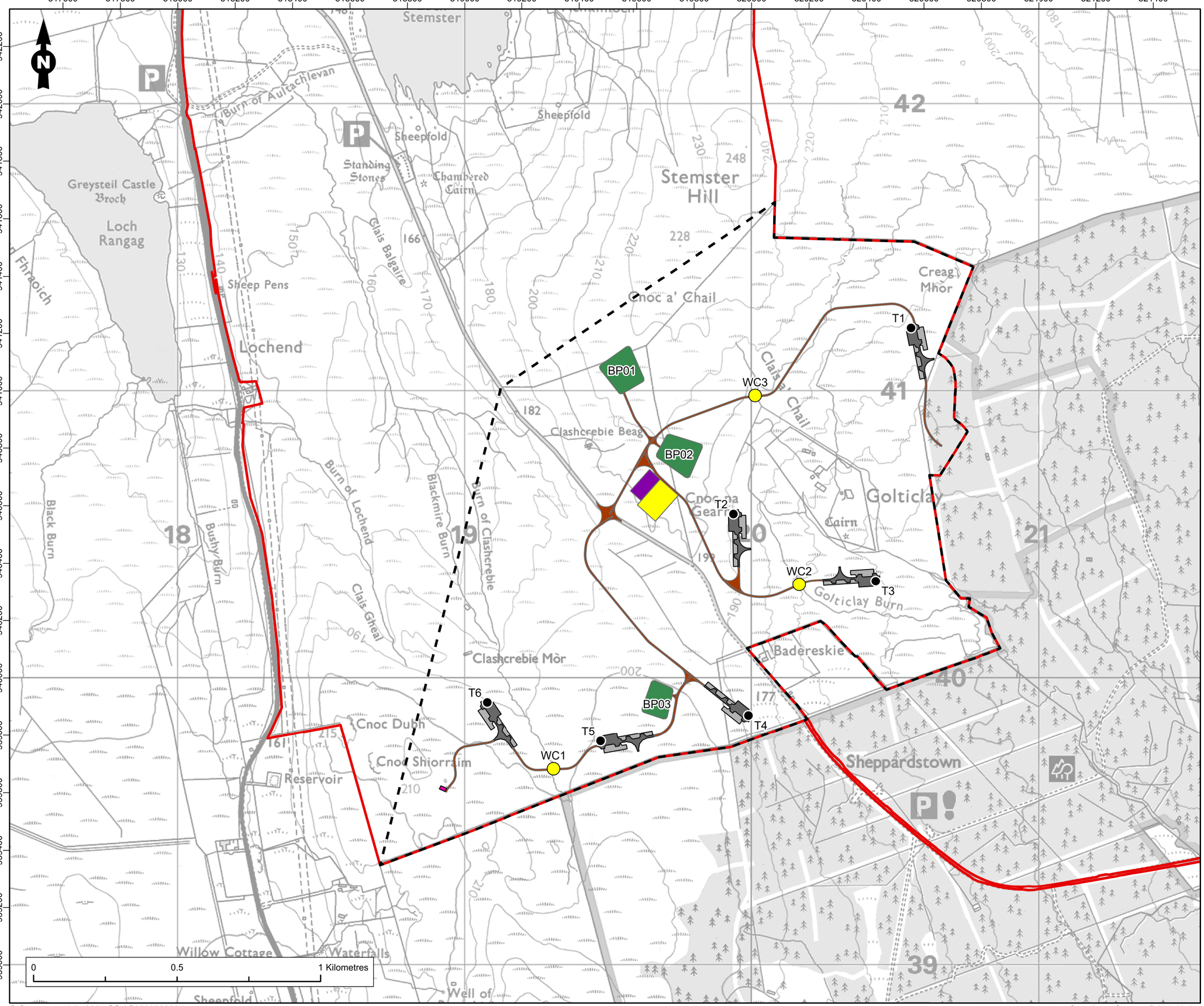
Project No./Filery ID
1620017092

Date	Figure No.	Revision
November 2025	2.2	1.0

Prepared By	Scale
RS	NOT TO SCALE

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Legend

- Site Boundary
- Developable Area
- Turbine
- Watercourse Crossing
- Met Mast
- Access Tracks
- Laydown Area
- Hardstanding
- Temporary Construction Compound and Permanent BESS
- Borrow Pits
- Substation

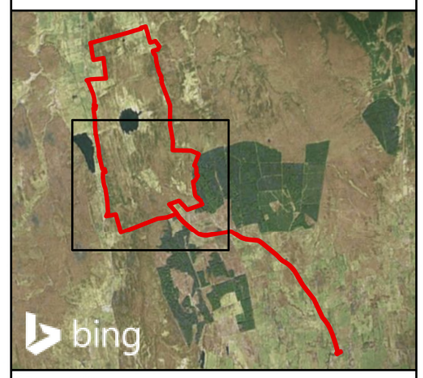


Figure Title
Proposed Development Layout

Project Name
Golticlay Extension Wind Farm

Project No./Filery ID
1620017092

Date	Figure No.	Revision
November 2025	2.1	1.0

Prepared By	Scale
RS/KB	1:12,500 @A3

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