Agenda Item	6.3
Report No	PLN/059/26

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: North Planning Applications Committee

Date: 25 November 2026

Report Title: 25/02418/S36: Energiekontor UK Ltd
Land 3.4KM NE Of Taigh Na Dreoilín, Lairg

Report By: Area Planning Manager - North

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Coille Linne Wind Farm - Erection and operation of a wind farm for a period of 35 years, comprising up to 15 wind turbines, six turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 230m and nine turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 200m (as amended), battery energy storage system (BESS) and associated infrastructure.

Ward: 01 – North, West and Central Sutherland

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 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 Coille Linne Wind Farm with Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure. The indicative generating capacity of the wind farm is 108 Megawatts (MW) while the indicative storage capacity of the BESS facility is 5MW.

1.2 The proposed development, as amended, comprises:

- 15 wind turbines:
  - 6 turbines up to 230m to blade tip (T7, T9, T11, T13, T14 and T15); and
  - 9 turbines up to 200m to blade tip (T1 - T6, T8, T10 and T12).
- Visible spectrum aviation lighting fitted to the hubs of 6 turbines along the array perimeter (T1, T4, T6, T9, T12 and T15.)
- Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) compound, measuring 17.5m x 30m;
- A permanent crane hardstanding area 240m x 78m, at each turbine location;
- 6.01km of new access tracks with a typical running width of 6m, with localised widening for passing places, laydown areas and turning heads for articulated vehicles;
- 4.93km of existing upgraded access tracks;
- Onsite substation compound measuring 90m x 90m;
- Electrical and communication underground cables, running primarily alongside the onsite access tracks;
- Up to 3 onsite borrow pits, to be restored following construction; and
- 1 temporary construction compound measuring 100m x 50m.

1.3 The project does not have a finalised, formal grid connection offer at the Gate 2 stage, from the National Energy System Operator (NESO) under the reformed electricity grid process. From discussions with Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) the applicant anticipates that the connection point would be to an existing overhead line (OHL) on steel lattice towers that passes through the southern part of the application site.

1.4 The applicant has held two rounds of public consultation with events held at Lairg Community Centre in August 2024 and January 2025, 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).

1.5 The applicant utilised the Major Pre-application Advice Service (THC reference 24/01143/PREMAJ). This was for a larger proposal than the current application, with 17 turbines to 250m height to blade tip. The Council's pre-application advice noted concerns regarding the scale and composition of turbines and the extent of the associated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), into parts of the Ben Klibreck and Loch Choire Special Landscape Area (SLA) and the Northwest Sutherland and Assynt-Coigach National Scenic Areas (NSAs).

1.6 The application is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), dated June 2025, the contents of which has been informed through EIA Scoping. The EIAR contains the following technical chapters: Landscape and Visual; Cultural Heritage; Ecology; Ornithology; Geology, Hydrology and Peat; Noise; Traffic and Transport, Socio-economics and Tourism; Forestry; and Other Issues. The application is also accompanied by figures and visualisations, technical appendices, a Pre-Application Consultation Report, an EIA Non-Technical Summary (NTS) and a Design and Access Statement.

1.7 Since the application's submission in June 2025, the proposal has been amended through the submission of Further Environmental Information (FEI), primarily in response to concerns raised by Council Officers regarding landscape and visual impact. Further information was provided in relation to a revised layout of the proposals, amending the proposals from 15 turbines at up to 250m blade tip height, to:

- 9 turbines to up to 200m blade tip height (a 50m height reduction);
- 6 turbines to up to 230m blade tip height (a 20m reduction);
- Relocation of T3 and T5 to a lower point on site, between the 210 - 220m contours Above Ordnance Datum (AOD); and
- Realignment of an access track and an associated turning head in the southern part of the site, south of T15.

Determination Procedure

1.8 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.

1.9 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.

1.10 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.

1.11 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 north of Loch Shin, some 22km north of Lairg and 16km south-east of Altnaharra. It is proposed to take access via the A838 public road between Lairg and Laxford Bridge, for the West Coast. The 663-hectare (ha) site is primarily commercial forestry.

2.2 The site topography generally slopes downhill to the east, toward the River Fiag, that partially defines its eastern boundary and is the destination of drainage across the site. There are several other watercourses and unnamed tributaries within the site and surrounding area. The summit of Meall Odhar forms the highest point within the site, located in the northwest. Turbines are proposed to be situated across the site with the highest being located between the 210 and 220m contours AOD.

2.3 There are no residential properties within the site boundary. The closest to the proposed turbine array, Fiag Lodge, is located some 2.8km to the southwest of the nearest turbine.

Environmental Designations and Habitats

2.4 The application site does not form part of any natural heritage designation. The applicant's assessment has scoped in the following designated sites, all located within 5km of the application site:

Designation	Distance to Site Boundary	Qualifying Interests
Flow Country World Heritage Site (WHS)	Immediately adjacent to west.	Blanket bog and peatland habitats
Caithness and Sutherland peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Immediately adjacent to west.	Blanket bog, Depressions on peat substrates, Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds, Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix, Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels, Marsh saxifrage, Transition mires and quaking bogs
Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Protection Area (SPA)	Immediately adjacent to west.	Red-throated diver (breeding), Black-throated diver (breeding), Hen harrier (breeding), Golden eagle, Merlin (breeding), Short-eared owl (breeding), Golden plover (breeding), Wood sandpiper (breeding), Dunlin (breeding), Greenshank (breeding - migratory), Wigeon (breeding - migratory), Common scoter (breeding - migratory)
Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands RAMSAR	Immediately adjacent to west.	Blanket bog, Mire, Oligotrophic lochs, Sphagnum lindbergii, Sphagnum majus, Bog orchid, Hammarbya paludosa, Oreodytes alpinus, Otter Lutra lutra, Freshwater

		pearl mussel Margaritifera margaritifera
Strath Duchally Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Immediately adjacent to west.	Blanket bog
Cnoc an Alaskie SSSI	1.2km northeast	Blanket bog
Strath an Loin SSSI	1.8km south	Blanket bog

2.5 Habitats present across the application site mainly comprise confer plantation woodland, although peatland habitats, including blanket bog, predominate in the western and northwestern parts.

2.6 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, with there being localised pockets of peat in excess of 3.5m in depth.

2.7 Evidence of otter and common lizard 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: golden plover, whooper swan, greenshank, osprey and golden eagle. Collison risk modelling was undertaken for golden eagle and white-tailed eagle.

Landscape Designation, Wild Land, and Landscape Character

2.8 The application site does not form part of any landscape designation. Landscape designations assessed within the applicant's 45km study area comprise:

Designated Landscape	**Distance and Direction from the Proposed Development**
National Scenic Areas (NSA)	
Assynt - Coigach NSA	9.5km west
North – West Sutherland NSA	18km northwest
Kyle of Tongue NSA	19km north
Dornoch Firth NSA	33km southeast
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	

SLA 8 - Ben Klibreck and Loch Choire	9.5km east
SLA 7 - Bens Griam and Loch nan Clar LLA	28km northeast
SLA 2 - Eriboll East and Whiten Head	28km north
SLA 18 - Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glencalvie	28km south
SLA 9 - Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth	36km southeast
SLA 1 - Oldshoremore, Cape Wrath and Durness	37km north
SLA 3 - Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra LLA	45km northeast

2.9 The applicant's assessment identifies the following Wild Land Areas (WLA) in proximity.

Wild Land Area	**Distance and Direction from the Proposed Development**
WLA 37. Foinaven - Ben Hee	Immediately adjacent to north
WLA 34. Reay – Cassley	1km west
WLA 35. Ben Klibreck – Armine Forest	8km east

2.10 The host Landscape Character Type (LCT) is Sweeping Moorland and Flows 134. Other surrounding LCTs from within views of the turbines would be obtained include:

- 135 - Rounded Hills Caithness and Sutherland;
- 138 – Lone Mountains;
- 139 – Rugged Mountain Massif;
- 142 – Strath - Caithness and Sutherland.

Built and Cultural Heritage

2.11 No designated heritage assets are present within the site. Within 10km of the application site, one scheduled monument is present; Cnoc Olasdail, hut circles

and field systems (SM4375), in addition to 2 Category C listed buildings; Crask Bridge Over Chraisg Burn (LB8017) and Allt a' Chraisg Bridge Over Allt A' Chraisg (Burn) (LB7153).

Cumulative Development

2.12 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 study area. The cutoff date for the applicant's original assessment was May 2025, with the cutoff date for the FEI being June 2026.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

On Site Planning History

3.1	13 Sep 2024	24/03086/SCOP: Fiag Wind Farm - Erection and operation of a wind farm for a period of 35 years, comprising of up to 22 wind turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 230m, battery energy storage system (BESS), access tracks, borrow pits, substation, control building, and ancillary infrastructure.	EIA Scoping Response Issued

Pertinent Energy Related Developments in Immediate Surrounding Area

3.2	9 Nov 2026	25/03578/FUL: Cassley 132kV Substation Extension - demolition of control building, platform extension, and erection and operation of substation building, plant equipment, drainage, temporary construction compound, laydown area(s), landscaping and ancillary infrastructure	Pending Consideration
3.3	29 Oct 2026	26/01496/FUL: Widen the running surface of the A838 public road at two corners to accommodate delivery of turbine blade components to the consented Sallachy Wind Farm	Planning Permission Granted
3.4	23 Oct 2026	26/00589/FUL: Construction and operation of single turbine with associated infrastructure and ancillary works (Sallachy Windfarm)	Planning Permission Granted
3.5	18 Dec 2025	24/01643/S36: Shinness Wind Farm - Erection and operation of a wind farm for a	Section 36 Electricity Act

		period of 40 years, comprising of 15 (as amended) wind turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 200m, battery energy storage system (BESS), access tracks, borrow pits, substation, control building, and ancillary infrastructure.	Raise Objection
3.6	17 Mar 2025	24/04118/S42 - Sallachy Wind Farm - Application under Section 42 for non-compliance with Conditions 15 (Construction Traffic Management Plan) and 25 (Removal of Redundant Turbines) and to amend wording of Conditions 1, 3(i) and 12 of planning permission 21/01615/FUL	Planning Permission Granted
3.7	5 May 2022	21/01615/FUL: Sallachy Wind Farm - Erection and Operation of a Wind Farm for a period of 30 years, comprising of 9 Wind Turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 149.9m, access tracks, temporary borrow pits and construction compound, substation compound, and ancillary infrastructure.	Planning Permission Granted

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.1 Advertised: EIA Development advertisements:

- EIA Report:
  - Northern Times: 27 June and 4 July 2025
  - The Herald: 27 June 2025
  - Edinburgh Gazette: 27 June 2025
- Further Environmental Information Report:
  - Northern Times: 21 August 2026
  - Edinburgh Gazette: 21 August 2026

Representation Deadline: 5 August 2025 for the EIA Report and 21 September 2026 for the Further Environmental Information Report.

Representations: 117 objections received by the ECU

4.2 Material considerations raised are summarised, but not limited to, the following:

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

b) The competency of the information contained within the EIA Report, including, but not limited to, that relating to the carbon balance calculations and power rating quoted for the proposed BESS;
c) The completeness of the EIA project as a whole;
d) Residential and community amenity impacts including from noise and shadow flicker as well as risk to community health and safety from pollution events and emergencies considering the proposed BESS;
e) Siting, layout, and design considerations including proximity to the River Fiag;
f) Landscape and visual impact including cumulative impacts and effects on NSAs, WLAs, effects from specific viewpoints, and concerns with red aviation safety lighting in relation to dark skies;
g) Ecological effects including cumulative effects on ornithological interests, biodiversity, fisheries, habitats, and habitat management;
h) Impacts on peatland habitats and forestry;
i) Impacts on cultural heritage assets more generally and perceived limitations of the applicant's mitigation for these impacts;
j) Impacts on the local transport network during the construction phase, particularly in regard to the A838;
k) Impacts on designated sites for natural heritage, including the Flow Country World Heritage Site (WHS);
l) Cumulative impacts in terms of the above, with respect to other proposals in the wider area;
m) Socio-economic impacts including employment opportunities, and effects on tourism and recreational interests; and
n) Contribution to national and international renewable energy targets.

4.3 Non-material considerations raised are summarised but not limited to, the following:

a) The need for the development;
b) Pre-application consultation process for nearby residences and workplaces (procedural matter);
c) Community benefit funding;
d) Impact on property values;
e) Curtailment;
f) Preference for other types of energy generation;
g) Preference for renewable energy generation to be located closer to areas of peak electricity demand;
h) Motivations of the developer and landowner; and
i) Mental health impact on the local community (beyond residential, visual and landscape impact matters which are material).

4.4 Representations 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 **Lairg Community Council (host)** did not respond to the consultation request.

5.2 **Creich Community Council object** primarily on the basis of the potential health and safety impacts of the proposals. Other concerns related to the capacity of the local road network to absorb the construction traffic required and the landscape and visual effects, including cumulative effects of the proposals with other energy generation and transmission infrastructure, resulting in an 'industrialisation' of the character of the rural area. Additionally, the Community Council questioned the robustness of the EIA Report, especially, but not limited to, in relation to the detailed results of the applicant's carbon emissions and savings calculations.

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

- Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra;
- Durness; and
- Scourie.

5.4 **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.

5.5 **Ecology Team** does not object. The Ecology team initially objected to the proposals based on a lack of detail around the applicant's biodiversity enhancement measures, particularly in relation to peatland. Following the FEI submission, this objection was withdrawn on the basis that the peatland restoration proposed now meets the national policy criteria. The necessary biodiversity enhancement may be secured via a conditioned, finalised Habitat Management Plan (HMP), should the proposals achieve consent.

5.6 **Environmental Health Team** do not object subject to conditions to limit operational noise emissions from the wind turbines and proposed BESS. An Operational Overhead Line Noise Assessment may also be required in relation to the proposed grid connection infrastructure. Environmental Health does not require a noise re-assessment based on the more recent Assessment and Rating of Wind Turbine Noise (ARWTN) guidance

5.7 **Flood Risk Management Team** does not object and have no specific comments.

5.8 **Forestry Team** does not object to the application. The Forestry Team provided comments on the applicant's felling and replanting strategy and requested

conditions to secure a compensatory planting plan and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) in respect of the finalised abnormal loads transport route to site.

5.9 **Historic Environment Team (Archaeology)** does not object. The applicant's supporting information is considered to provide an appropriate level of information and assessment. An archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) can be secured in advance of the commencement of development, through planning condition.

5.10 **Historic Environment Team (Conservation)** does not object and has no specific comments.

5.11 **Landscape Officer objects** to the application primarily due to unacceptable significant adverse cumulative effects. Should the application Shinness Wind Farm be consented, the combined effect of the proposed development and Shinness would give rise to detrimental cumulative effects on landscape character, and views from the A838 and A836, as well as on views from several hill summits. In particular, the scale, extensive lateral spread and separation distance between the two developments would result in detrimental combined, additional and sequential cumulative effects. Collectively, the developments would fundamentally alter the perception and experience of the landscape, such that wind energy developments across the wider area would cease to be perceived as an occasional or peripheral influence and would instead become a defining characteristic of the landscape and the area would be perceived unequivocally as a 'wind farm landscape'.

In relation to the proposed development on its own, despite the large horizontal extent of the turbine layout, the reduction in height and simpler design has resulted in an amended scheme which responds reasonably well with the receiving and surrounding landscape. Whilst it appears prominent in some views and results in significant effects up to 10 km, the number of receptors affected overall would be limited and the east-west intervisibility between the Assynt – Coigach NSA and Ben Klibreck – Loch Choire SLA would remain strong. The proposed development would appear as a distinct, linear scheme of two rows from many locations that broadly respects the design of other operational and consented wind farms in the surrounding area such as the consented Sallachy Wind Farm (single row of turbines) and the operational Creag Riabhach Wind Farm (broadly four rows of turbines) and when experienced in views by local residents, users of the A838 and A836, and recreational users.

5.12 **Transport Planning Team** do not object subject to conditions to secure a Road Mitigation Schedule of Works for the A838 and a detailed design of the proposed access of this route, a load assessment of structures on the construction traffic

route, a Section 96 legal agreement to cover wear and tear, a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), and an Abnormal Indivisible Load (AIL) Assessment.

Consultations Undertaken by Energy Consents Unit

5.13 **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".

5.14 **British Telecom** do not object. The proposals should not cause interference with BT's current and presently planned radio network.

5.15 **Defence Infrastructure Organisation** do not object subject to conditions to secure its prior approval of an appropriate aviation lighting scheme as well as details of turbine locations and height, construction equipment heights, and the dates of development commencing and the first operation of the development for aviation charting purposes in the interests of aviation safety.

5.16 **Fisheries Management Scotland** do not object and advises the decision maker to seek the views of the Kyle of Sutherland District Salmon Fishery Board as the local qualified organisation.

5.17 **Health and Safety Executive** do not object and have no further comment.

5.18 **Historic Environment Scotland** (HES) do not object. The proposals, as amended by FEI, would remain visible in views from the Cnoc Olasdail, hut circles and field systems Scheduled Monument (SM4375) and the Ord, chambered cairns, cairns, settlements, and field systems (SM1812). Impacts on the setting and cultural significance of these monuments are not considered significant and the proposals do not otherwise, raise historic environment issues of national importance.

5.19 **Ironside Farrar (Peat Advisor)** do not object on the grounds of peat landslide hazard risks but requires further comments and clarification from the applicant in response to their comments on the Peat Landslide Hazard Risk Assessment (PHLRA).

5.20 **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.

5.21 **Kyle of Sutherland District Salmon Fisheries Board objects**, citing the risks of the development, in terms of potential runoff into the water environment, considering the volume of peat present on site requiring to be excavated and the proximity of the River Fiag, in light of its importance for salmon stocks.

5.22 **Mountaineering Scotland** do not object to the proposals and do not raise further comments.

5.23 **National Air Traffic Services (NATS)** do not object as the proposal does not conflict with any NATS safeguarding criteria.

5.24 **NatureScot** does not object. It has considered the proposal's impacts in relation to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC, SPA and Ramsar. It advises that the Scottish Government as the competent authority is required to undertake Habitats Regulations Appraisals (Appropriate Assessments) in respect of these sites. Further comments are provided in relation to the proposal's proximity to the Flow Country WHS, Strath Duchally SSSI, impacts on the Assynt-Coigach NSA, and Wild Land Areas (WLA) 37, Foinaven – Ben Hee and 34, Reay – Cassley.

5.25 **RPSB** does not object, subject to limitations being conditioned on micrositing infrastructure into the surrounding designated sites; the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC, SPA and Ramsar, Flow Country WHS and Strath Duchally SSSI. RSPB provided further comments and guidance related to ornithological interests and habitat restoration.

5.26 **Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)** does not object. SEPA had initially objected to the application on the basis of the proposed location of turbines and some parts of the onsite access tracks, on deep peat. Following further peat probing and changes to the layout, as reflected in the FEI, this objection was withdrawn, subject to conditions focussed on peatland protection and the water environment.

5.27 **Scottish Forestry** did not respond to the consultation.

5.28 **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 by the development.

5.29 **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 1989 that the Development Plan is just one of several considerations, and therefore Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 which requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, is not engaged. That said, the application still requires to be assessed against all policies of the Development Plan relevant to the application, all national and local policy guidance, and all other material considerations relevant to the application.

Planning Considerations

7.4 The key considerations in this case are:

a) Compliance with the Development Plan and Other Government 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;

o) Grid Connection; and

p) 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 and Other Government 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, should be given 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 criteria, which are designed to assist the application of HwLDP policy in judging the final balance of benefits versus disbenefits of any given scheme. Appendix 7 of this report provides an assessment against the 10 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. A substantial number of onshore wind farm applications are 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 108MW of installed capacity in addition to 5MW 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 EIAR Chapter 15 (as amended by FEI) estimates a total loss of 257,168 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 should be minimised through the provision of on-site energy storage. The scheme is estimated, over its intended lifespan of 35 years, to produce annual carbon savings of 80,133 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 estimated payback time

of the proposed development is 3.2 years, based on a grid mix of sources including fossil fuels, renewable energy and nuclear.

7.13 The proposed development anticipates a construction phase of 18 months and an operational lifetime of 35 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 EIAR Socio-Economic Statement, the applicant has estimated that the construction cost of the development will be up to £194.4 million. Following correspondence with Officers, the applicant calculates that the development will result in the following socio-economic benefits in Highland;

- Construction Phase:
  - £3.78 million GVA and 68 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs.
- Operational Phase:
  - £6.8 million GVA and 1.6 FTE jobs.

These economic contributions are minor, positive and beneficial but are not considered to be significant overall 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. However, as Members are aware, community benefits are not material to this assessment.

Construction Impact

7.16 The applicant anticipates that the wind farm construction period will be 18 months. There are likely to be some adverse impacts caused by construction traffic and disruption, particularly when abnormal loads are being delivered to site. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) can be secured by condition to manage the impacts upon the local road network throughout the construction period. EIAR Chapter 12: Traffic and Transport, as updated by FEI, 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 community councils 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 be in place during the construction phase, as secured via condition. The CEMP would control potentially polluting activities and prevent adverse impacts on river catchments, water supply catchments, and the environment during construction. The Principal Contractor would implement measures outlined within the CEMP, as agreed with consultees including SEPA, NatureScot and THC. 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 the normal working hours recognised by the Council, from 08:00 - 19:00 Monday to Friday and Saturday 08:00 to 13:00. No working is proposed on Sundays and public holidays although 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 more generally, 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 overall and noted that, as the separation distance between the application site is some 2.8km from the nearest noise sensitive receptor, construction noise impacts are unlikely to be significant.

7.21 The applicant has requested a micrositing allowance of up to 100m for wind turbines and associated infrastructure including tracks and other hardstanding. Micrositing is acceptable within reason to address unforeseen onsite constraints.

To that end, a lower, 50m limit is considered standard for turbines to ensure that the final installation does not deviate substantially to what has been assessed, in particular with regard to landscape and visual impacts, meaning that turbines should also not be microsited on to noticeably higher elevations of ground (no more than 5m AOD against those locations assessed). These limits may be controlled through condition, along with a requirement to ensure that works are not microsited within areas covered by natural heritage designations and that any movement from the consented locations is 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 areas, verges, turbine base edges and the site borrow pit areas 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 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 4 of the EIAR (as amended by the FEI) describes the factors that led to selection of the site. In this respect, key considerations were that the site benefits from a strong wind resource. Further factors included but were not limited to: the site's separation from the Assynt Coigach NSA and residential properties, the presence of adequate access to deliver turbine components, and the proximity of suitable gird connection infrastructure nearby.

7.25 Given the attraction of Highland for renewable energy generation proposals and the support provided in Policy through NPF4, a key challenge relates to accommodating multiple wind farm schemes in relatively close proximity and the potential for visual clutter as well as the need to reinforce the appropriateness of each development for its location. In determining major energy generation proposals, the Council has sought that newer schemes should avoid unduly undoing the mitigation achieved by those existing. 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.

7.26 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.

7.27 The cumulative effects of the proposed development with these newer schemes at the scoping stage has been assessed as part of the EIAR, as amended by FEI. 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.

7.28 Not only is consideration of how the siting, 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.

7.29 The proposed development was subject to several revisions since the initial scoping layout, incorporating 22 turbines, as submitted to the ECU during June 2024. Following scoping, 5 turbines were removed, resulting in a 17 turbine post scoping layout. The design was further revised through two separate iterations, to achieve a more cohesive and compact layout, considering key locations including VP1: A838 near Fiag Bridge, VP4: A838 near Sithean Dubh Mor, VP5: A836 near Crask Inn, VP6: Maovally and VP9: A838 near West Shinness Lodge, that resulted in the original EIAR layout, of 15 turbines, at a height of 250 m each to blade tip. Following consultation with the Council where concerns were raised in relation to the scale of the development, the applicant amended the layout through FEI reducing the height of all turbines, with Turbines T1-T6, T8 and T10 now up to 200 m blade tip height and Turbines T7, T9, T11 and T13-T15, up to 230 m to blade tip height.

7.30 The layout of the proposed development follows from the linear turbine composition and spacing patterns implemented at recent developments in the area, in the context of which, it would be seen in most views. This includes the consented Sallachy, located on the opposite, southern side, of Loch Shin. As noted within the Officers viewpoint appraisal in Appendix 6 of this report, this generally results in the impression of a coherent, linear layout, from many viewpoints. The design rationale, following discussion with Officers, seeks to avoid inconsistent turbine spacing, large gaps, turbine outliers, or excessive overlapping, or 'stacking', of turbines to minimise visual clutter and ensure a balanced composition within the landscape, minimising the potential effects on views from surrounding receptors. There are exceptions to this where the proposed development could not achieve this design rationale, particularly from the north and south including VP7: Ben Hee and VP8: Arscaig for example.

7.31 As the following sections set out, the proposed development as amended through FEI, will result in some significant residual landscape and visual effects, as is the case with all wind farms. However, the revised proposals generally, respond positively to the concerns raised by Officers and the statutory consultees, during the assessment process. The revised design results in a notable reduction in the scale of the development and its proportions, following the reduction in turbine heights (200 / 230 m to blade tip) from those originally submitted with the EIAR (250 m to blade tip). It also includes relocation of two turbines by approximately 200 m. The location of the proposed development, within a forested landscape, with some screening of the development components from the A838 route to the west due to landform and forestry, provides some further mitigation in this respect, however it is acknowledged that forestry is subject to cyclical felling and will change during the lifetime of the proposed development, affecting visibility of the turbines and other components.

7.32 For landscape and visual receptors in the surrounding area, the design of the development, its relationship with the surrounding landscape and features and consequently, the nature of its landscape and visual impacts, may be demonstrated by visuals from the cardinal points at:

- North – VP2 (Loch Fiag 2.4 km distant from the nearest proposed turbine). This viewpoint is located on elevated forested moorland and is representative mainly of recreational users of the outdoors and visitors to Fiag Lodge. All of the proposed turbines would appear prominent with hubs and towers visible from this location. The turbine bases would be screened by forestry however with forestry felling, some of the bases and access tracks would be visible. Whilst the turbines would overlap with the distant hills of the Reay – Cassley WLA, there is no overlap with any distinct landmark hills / lone mountains which would have a sufficient visual separation with the turbines from this location.

- East – VP5 (A836 near Crask 6.4 km distant from the nearest turbine). This viewpoint looks westward from the A836, which also forms part of the cycle route between Inverness and John O' Groats. All of the proposed turbines would be visible from this location to varying degrees, with their visibility influenced by intervening landform. They would generally be backclothed by, and appear below, the Ben More Assynt massif, thereby reducing their perceived scale and limiting their visual prominence in the context of the wider landscape and the intervisibility with the Assynt–Coigach NSA beyond. This east-west intervisibility is also relevant when viewed from VP13: Ben Klibreck.

- South – VP1 (A838 near Fiag Bridge, 1 km distant from the nearest turbine). This viewpoint looks north westward across the application site from A838 public road, close to the proposed access junction. The turbines would be very readily apparent at this location with T15 appearing particularly dominant due to its proximity to the receptor. Forestry felling would result in more visibility of the other turbines, including access tracks seen in the distance. Nevertheless, this is a transient view for users of this route, which is predominantly single track.

- West – VP12 (Ben More Assynt, 13.9 km distant from the nearest proposed turbine). This viewpoint, representative of hillwalkers, is taken from the summit of Ben More Assynt within the Assynt – Coigach NSA and Reay – Cassley WLA. The proposed turbines would be backclothed by rising landform behind, with their apparent scale slightly reduced by distance. Nevertheless, they would remain noticeable due to their lateral spread and position within the landscape, particularly in the context of Ben Klibreck beyond. The design changes to the proposals would not materially alter the strong eastward intervisibility with the Ben Klibreck – Loch Choire SLA.

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

7.34 As such, 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 LCTs; 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, rotor diameters, and direction of rotor spin, are experienced by receptors and what effects these have on receptors such as the enjoyment of the view qualities, amongst others, are key in the assessment of landscape and visual effects.

7.35 Such consideration includes understanding the visual separation between schemes, which is important in order to allow receptors to experience and appreciate the character of the landscape and any special natural, architectural, cultural, and historic features in between. Care and attention are therefore required regarding design, siting and location to avoid detrimental impacts. NatureScot's Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape Guidance Versions 3a (2017) notes that it can be particularly challenging to accommodate multiple wind farms in an area and so advances wind farm design objectives of limiting visual confusion and reinforcing the appropriateness of each development for its location.

7.36 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 in order to allow receptors to experience and appreciate the character of the landscape and any special natural, architectural, cultural, and historic features in between. Care and attention are therefore required regarding design, siting and location to avoid detrimental sequential effects on important routes in the wider area.

7.37 These considerations are of particular salience given the high pressure for wind energy development across the wider area. The landscape of the site provides some relief from wind energy development as seen in the hills surrounding Loch Shin. The introduction of the proposed development at the northern end of the host Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT (Strath Fiag / Tirry LCA) would create a landscape with wind farms where wind farms would become a key characteristic of this landscape. This change must further be considered in the context of the existing, consented and emerging wind farm development within and surrounding the host landscape. While existing operational and consented schemes are principally located around the fringes of the host landscape, the application Shinness Wind Farm would introduce development into its central area. The proposed development, particularly in combination with the application Shinness Wind Farm, would therefore represent a significant escalation in the scale, extent

and geographical spread of wind energy development across the LCT. Given the scale and extensive lateral spread of both developments, their combined influence would result in very significant cumulative effects on landscape character, the pattern and perception of wind farm development, and views across the wider area. Critically, the cumulative outcome would be an alteration of the host landscape, such that wind farm development would become its defining characteristic and the area would be perceived unequivocally as a 'wind farm landscape'.

7.38 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. As with all wind farm development, there remains potential for significant residual landscape and visual effects that require further consideration even though mitigation is, or should be, embedded into the design. Any assessment must pay particular attention to the specific hosting and neighbouring LCTs of the receiving landscape along with the landscape composition they engender, as well as any landscape designations in the wider area, susceptible receptors, as well as public views and the amenity of residents, recreational, and road user receptors. The assessments that follow generally set out that despite the large horizontal extent of turbine layout, the reduction in turbine height and simpler design of the proposed development has resulted in an amended scheme which responds reasonably well with the receiving and surrounding landscape on its own. Whilst it appears prominent in some views, the east-west intervisibility between the Assynt – Coigach NSA and Ben Klibreck – Loch Choire SLA remains strong. The proposal would, however, result in additional and combined significant cumulative effects although it would appear as a distinct, linear scheme of two rows from many locations that broadly respects the design of other operational and consented wind farms in the surrounding area such as the consented Sallachy Wind Farm (single row of turbines) and the operational Creag Riabhach Wind Farm (broadly four rows of turbines) and when experienced in views by local residents, users of the local roads network, and recreational users. Viewpoints VP5: A836 near the Crask, VP6: Maovally, VP12: Ben More Assynt and VP13: Ben Klibreck are good examples that illustrate the two-row linearity of the scheme in relation to the aforementioned schemes.

7.39 A micrositing allowance of 50m may be conditioned for turbines, BESS, and ancillary infrastructure, which would be used to avoid or minimise environmental, or engineering constraints identified during pre-construction ground investigation or construction phase excavation works. These constraints may include any areas of deeper peat, higher elevations of ground, watercourse buffers, Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) and cultural heritage assets.

7.40 The final design of the turbine (colour and finish), aviation lighting, ancillary electrical equipment, landscaping and fencing etc. would also be agreed with the Planning Authority at the time of project procurement, which can be secured by condition. While indicative drawings for these elements are set out in the application, turbine manufacturers regularly update the designs that are available, thereby necessitating the need for some flexibility in the approved design details.

Ancillary Infrastructure

7.41 The applicant has identified that a grid connection will be required, as discussed in more detail above, and has applied for a substation and sealing end compound to facilitate this, in the southern part of the application site. Connection to the grid will be the subject of a separate application and consenting process, the implications of which, are more thoroughly discussed in the later 'Other Material Considerations' section of this report.

7.42 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 should 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.

7.43 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, design and layout elements such as 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.

7.44 In terms of design of the infrastructure on the site including the BESS facility, substation and support building, access tracks, borrow pits and temporary compounds, these appear to have been located to reduce landscape, visual, and other environmental effects, particularly from low-lying receptors such as the A836 and A838 where intervening landform and forestry have aided to minimise the effects. However, some sections of access track would be visible from more elevated receptors such as hilltops. Forestry felling would also result in access tracks and other components of the proposed development being visible from some low-lying receptors as seen in VP1: A838 near Fiag Bridge, VP2: Loch Fiag and VP4: A838 near Sithean Dubh Mor. Once the wind farm has been commissioned, the site restoration would involve forestry felling, landscaping and

replanting disturbed areas that are not required for the ongoing operational phase of the development. This will include the landscaping and re-profiling of the access track verges and reinstatement of disturbed areas adjacent to the substation, the temporary construction areas and around the crane hardstandings and turbine foundations. A programme of reinstatement monitoring will be implemented in the first few years of operation to document the success of revegetation of these areas. In relation to the proposed borrow pits, a restoration scheme can be secured by condition.

Landscape and Visual Effects

Landscape Character Effects

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

- effects on the Landscape Character Type (LCT) as a whole, as well as the specific unit of the LCT (referred to as the Landscape Character Area (LCA)), and on neighbouring LCTs; and
- direct and indirect effects on landscape designations.

7.46 As noted, most of the application site and all infrastructure lies within Landscape Character Type LCT 134 – Sweeping Moorland and Flows. This LCT occurs only in the very north of the Scottish mainland within central and northeast Sutherland, mostly comprising a single large area of this type extending from Loch Shin towards the north coast. This landscape consists of a gently sloping and undulating landform, punctuated by lochs and meandering rivers, with peatlands interspersed by forestry and pockets of improved grazing. The NatureScot LCT description describes a landscape typically of a simple composition of moorland and mire, promoting high exposure, extensive visibility, and views to uninterrupted skylines. Given the widespread nature of the LCT, the area containing the application site has been assessed in terms of the local 'Strath Fiag / Tirry' LCA unit. The sensitivity to change of this LCA is assessed as medium, being a relatively large-scale landscape whose character is influenced more locally to the application site, by commercial forestry, A class roads, and electricity transmission infrastructure. Parts of this LCA falls within the UNESCO Flow Country World Heritage Site and overlaps with other national natural heritage designations, including SSSIs and SPAs. GLVIA 3 Box 5.1 and NatureScot's Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Guidance (Methodology) (May 2022) recognise that conservation interests can contribute to landscape value. In this context, the extensive areas of blanket bog habitat are an important component of the landscape's sense of place, particularly within the more westerly parts of the LCA. The Flow Country is also actively promoted as a landscape for people to experience and appreciate, with information available online and some physical infrastructure in place to support public access and interpretation. Furthermore,

parts of this LCA fall within the Foinaven–Ben Hee WLA. Although not a formal landscape designation, the presence of the WLA reflects the valued qualities of wildness and indicates a higher landscape value in this area. Nevertheless, the overall sensitivity of this LCA is agreed as Medium, recognising the increased sensitivity of areas within and around the WLA near the application site, but considering that this does not warrant elevating the overall sensitivity of the LCA to a higher category.

7.47 Otherwise, the application site is located directly to the north of an area of LCT 135: Rounded Hills, Caithness and Sutherland (Loch Shin Rounded Hills LCA unit. This LCA includes all of Loch Shin at its northern and eastern end, and several 'rounded' hills southwest of Loch Shin including Beinn Sgeireach. This LCA comprises an upland landscape of modest sized rounded hills above 200 m AOD with a ground cover of heather moorland and as noted above, includes Loch Shin.

7.48 The applicant's assessment of landscape effects, as presented in the EIAR and supplemented by the FEI, concludes that significant adverse effects would arise on the host LCT 134 (Strath Fiag / Tirry LCA unit), assessed as Moderate within 5–8 km of the site, and parts of LCT 135 (Loch Shin Rounded Hills LCA unit), assessed as Major / Moderate within 5 km and Moderate up to 8 km of the site. Officers broadly agree with this assessment; however, they consider that effects on LCT 134 within and around the site, extending to approximately 5 km, would be slightly greater, resulting in Major / Moderate adverse significant effects. Officers do not fully agree that the intervening forestry would substantially reduce the influence of the proposals on this part of the landscape.

7.49 Collectively, as previously noted, the proposed development would contribute to an increase in wind farm development within the wider landscape. However, the changes specifically attributable to the proposed development on its own would be largely localised, with the site positioned between an existing wind farm to the east and a consented wind farm to the west. The proposed development would also be experienced within the context of a large-scale, open and forested moorland landscape. Importantly, the proposed development would avoid the introduction of wind farms into the more exposed central part of this landscape type (as arising from the Shinness Wind Farm, at appeal, for example), thereby limiting the overall extent of landscape change. Taking these factors into account, Officers are satisfied that the proposed development on its own, would result in an overall landscape composition that remains within an acceptable range of effects.

7.50 The introduction of the proposed development at the northern end of the host LCT would create a landscape with wind farms where wind farms would become a key characteristic of this landscape. However, this change should also be considered

in the context of the existing, consented and emerging wind farm development within and around the host LCT. The consented Chleansaid Wind Farm occupies its eastern edge, while the application-stage Shinness Wind Farm is situated within its central area. Furthermore, the operational Creag Riabhach Wind Farm extends partially into the north-eastern edge of the LCT, with the consented Strath Tirry and Sallachy wind farms located in close proximity. The combined cumulative influence of these developments, particularly with the proposed development and Shinness Wind Farm, would be especially pronounced given their scale and extensive lateral spread. Collectively, these developments would alter the perception and experience of the landscape, such that wind farms would no longer represent an occasional or peripheral influence but would instead become a defining characteristic of the host LCT. Consequently, the landscape character would be transformed into one that would be perceived as a 'wind farm landscape'.

Effects on Designated Landscapes

7.51 The proposed development is not situated within any landscape designations. The closest nationally important landscape designation to the application site is the Assynt - Coigach NSA, located some 9.5 km to the west at its nearest point. The NSA is noted in NatureScot's designation as a landscape 'unparalleled in Britain' known for its "steep hills with idiosyncratic profiles rise from hummocky surroundings in some of the most rugged and spectacular scenery in Scotland." The strange and spectacular shapes of the seven distinctive lone mountains west of the Moine Thrust are amplified by the surrounding low cnocan and moorland landscape. The Munro of Ben More Assynt lies in the east of the NSA and differs in character being bulkier and more connected to the surrounding moorland slopes to the south and east. Within this context, the proposals would be visible from its north-eastern fringes and from higher peaks including from Ben More Assynt (VP12) at 13.8 km distance and Beinn Leoid (VPA) at 13.2 km distance. Beyond 15 km, the theoretical visibility of the proposed development becomes very limited.

7.52 While not objecting to the proposals on landscape or visual grounds, NatureScot's consultation response raises concern that the proposed development would result in a weakening of 2 of the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of the NSA including SLQ 8: 'Significant tracts of wild land', and SLQ 10: 'A still, quiet landscape under a constantly changing sky' due to the encroachment of large-scale turbines and intensification of adverse effects. NatureScot identifies that the motion of the proposed turbines would add a dynamic element to the current stillness of the landscape, adding a noticeable artificial element. The turbines would become the focus of views to the east from the summit, ridges and east facing slopes of the Ben More Assynt massif where the size of the turbines would appear as an obvious marker of human activity, detracting from the wild character

of the NSA. The Sallachy Wind Farm located closest to the NSA and Ben More Assynt, when built, will appear as a further, obvious sign of human activity. They further note that the proposed development would add to the cumulative, consented and operational scenario intensifying the presence of human elements. Critically however, NatureScot note that under the scenario once the Sallachy Wind Farm is operational, they do not consider that these effects would be to the degree that they would have a significant adverse effect or cumulative effect on the SLQ's, or that the development would affect the overall integrity of the designation. Officers are generally in agreement with NatureScot's assessment relative to the NSA, with the wind farm not having a significant effect on this nationally important resource, however, Officers note that there would be significant combined cumulative visual effects from Ben More Assynt and Beinn Leiod within the NSA, which is addressed further in the visual effects section of this report.

7.53 Turning to regionally important landscapes, no part of the proposals is located within one of the Council's many Special Landscape Areas (SLA). The closest is the Ben Klibreck and Loch Choire SLA 9, 9.5km to the east of the site. The Special Qualities (SQ) of the SLA include its distinctive mountains, the prominent mountain ridge of Ben Klibreck being a key feature, endowed with a strong sense of wildness considering the absence of constructed tracks over the hill. The area also has exceptional panoramic views from high ridges and summits in clear conditions, extending to the northern coastline and beyond and taking in neighbouring peaks including Ben Hope and Ben Loyal.

7.54 The applicant's assessment notes that the proposals may influence the appreciation of mountains within the SLA, from distant surrounding locations. Views from within the SLA towards peak to the west would incur some adverse effects, however, these are overall, not considered to be significant. Officers consider that the proposed development would have some effect on two of the four SQs of the SLA – 'Distinctive Mountains' and 'Extensive Views from Peaks and Summits'. Officers agree that there would be no effect on the 'Secluded Glen with Network of Tracks' and 'Historic Landscape' SQs of the SLA. In relation to 'Distinctive Mountains', it is agreed that the proposals would not physically alter the sense of wildness derived from the absence or the topography at Ben Klibreck. However, it is acknowledged that the proposal may influence the appreciation of mountains from select distant locations surrounding the SLA, often seen in the context of the existing Creag Riabhach Wind Farm adjacent to the SLA. In relation to 'Extensive Views from Peaks and Summits', Views from Ben Klibreck are illustrated in VP13 (Ben Klibreck), where the visual effect is agreed as Moderate and not significant, however, Officers note that there would be significant combined cumulative visual effects from this summit which is addressed further in the visual effects section The valued views towards the 'northern coastline and beyond, taking in neighbouring peaks including Ben Hope and Ben Loyal' would

be unaffected by the proposed development. The proposed turbines would be located within a forested moorland landscape to the southwest where existing and consented wind farms are present. Whilst the proposed development would add a third layer of wind farm development when seen from the summit, the proposed turbines would not be seen as an incongruous element in this part of the view. The westward intervisibility with the Assynt – Coigach NSA would continue to remain strong. Officers therefore agree that there would be no significant effects on the SQs of the SLA and no compromise on the integrity or objectives of the designation.

Effects on Wild Land

7.55 In relation to Wild Land, no element of the proposed development is within a Wild Land Area (WLA) although the application site borders WLA 37 - Foinaven – Ben Hee. Further WLAs extend to the east and west of the site, with WLA 35: Ben Klibreck – Armine Forest, 8 km east and WLA 34: Reay – Cassley, around 1 km to the west. The applicant has not included a Wild Land Assessment within the EIAR or FEI quoting NPF4 Policy 4(g) where developments outwith WLAs are not a significant consideration. The applicant however noted in the scoping report that an assessment of WLAs within 20 km would be included in the LVIA. NatureScot did not request a Wild Land Assessment in their scoping opinion.

7.56 NatureScot notes in their consultation response that wind farms are not currently an obvious artificial feature in the current baseline. The proposed development in this respect, in combination with the Sallachy Wind Farm, will bring human development into the less developed and more remote landscapes around Loch Shin resulting in cumulative effects. The inclusion of aviation lighting, as discussed in more detail below, on 6 of the application turbines would add a new and obvious human element in the hours of darkness, resulting in a significant and adverse effect on the sense of remoteness, sanctuary and solitude experienced within the southern part of WLA 37. However, NatureScot does not consider that these effects would be to the degree that they would affect the integrity of the WLA overall. Officers agree with this conclusion.

Visual Effects

7.57 The Council considers visual effects 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 of this report. Unsurprisingly, as visual assessment combines objective and subjective aspects through the application of professional judgement, there are differences between the applicant's assessment and the Officers appraisal undertaken.

7.58 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 between 5 and 10 km. Beyond this distance there will be more intermittent visibility.

7.59 Whilst a large-scale wind energy scheme would be expected to result in significant visual effects, the Council, through the OWESG, also acknowledges that significant effects does not automatically translate to unacceptable effects. Following a review of the applicant's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), there are some areas of difference between Council Officers and the applicant.

7.60 Consideration of each viewpoint based on the applicant's methodology is contained within Appendix 6 of this report, as is a summary of the applicant's assessment and Officer's appraisal of the assessment, which highlights the differences and any concerns with regard to visual impact.

7.61 Technical Appendix 6.5 of the FEI, includes a visual assessment from each of the 20 LVIA Viewpoints (and four additional viewpoints). Most viewpoints are considered to be used by receptors of medium - 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 sensitivity of visual receptors is broadly agreed, as was identified by the applicant with the exception for receptors along the A838 and A836 where tourists, cyclists and other recreational users also use these routes, have a higher susceptibility to change, as recognised by GLVIA 3.

7.62 There is agreement with the geographical extent of Significant visual effects, extending out to up to 10 km distance, however the proposal would extend some of these Significant effects into a separate area further to the north and west within the landscape. There is agreement that eight of the selected representative viewpoints would be Significant, occurring at the following locations:

- VP1 (A838 near Fiag Bridge) (Moderate);
- VP2 (Loch Fiag) (Major);
- VP4 (A838 near Sithean Dubh Mor) (Moderate);
- VP5 (A836 near Crask Inn) (Major / Moderate);
- VP6 (Maovally) (Major / Moderate);
- VP7 (Ben Hee) (Moderate);
- VP8 (Arscaig) (Moderate); and
- VP10 (Ben Sgeireach) (Moderate).

The applicant has however under-assessed the level of effect at VP1 (A838 near Fiag Bridge), VP4 (A838 near Sithean Dubh Mor), VP8 (Arscaig) and VP10 (Ben Sgeireach) which are assessed by Officers as Major / Moderate at all four locations; nevertheless, the effect for these receptors are agreed to be Significant. These receptors are limited to users of the A838 and A836, recreational users at

Loch Fiag, residents at Arscaig in the south, and hilltops in the north, southwest and south. In addition, there is disagreement with the applicant on the Significance of effect at VP9: A838 near West Shinness Lodge which would be subject to Significant (Moderate) adverse effect as detailed in Appendix 6 of this report.

7.63 The applicant has also under-assessed the level of effect at VP12 (Ben More Assynt), VP14 (A836 near An t-Sron) and VP15 (The Ord) which are assessed by Officers as Moderate at all three locations, nevertheless, the effect is agreed as not significant.

7.64 The amended design of the proposal has been successful in avoiding Significant effects from a number of other important locations / receptors including: Ben More Assynt (VP12); The Ord (VP15); Ben Klibreck (VP13); users of the A838 to the west / northwest of the site (VP3); those on this route and the A836 beyond 10 km, particularly from the southeast; and residents at Lairg and Torrobole (VP16). Although, there will be some significant cumulative effects from some of these locations as outlined below and in Officers' viewpoint appraisal, in Appendix 6 of this report.

7.65 Cumulatively, the proposal would result in additional Significant cumulative effects from nine viewpoints under all three cumulative scenarios including:

- VP1 (A838 near Fiag Bridge);
- VP2 (Loch Fiag), VP4 (A838 near Sithean Dubh Mor);
- VP5 (A836 near Crask Inn);
- VP6 (Maovally);
- VP7 (Ben Hee);
- VP8 (Arscaig);
- VP9 (A838 near West Shinness Lodge); and
- VP10 (Ben Sgeireach)

Critically, there would be further Significant combined cumulative effects for people at 11 viewpoints, including:

- VP4: A838 near Sithean Dubh Mor – proposal, Sallachy and Shinness (Major);
- VP5: A836 near Crask Inn – proposal, Sallachy, Achany Extension and Shinness (Major / Moderate);
- VP6: Maovally – proposal, Sallachy, Achany Extension and Shinness (Major);
- VP7: Ben Hee – proposal, Sallachy, Creag Riabhach and Shinness (Major / Moderate);
- VP8: Arscaig – proposal, Sallachy and Shinness (Major / Moderate);

- VP9: A838 near West Shinness Lodge – proposal, Sallachy and Shinness (Major / Moderate);
- VP10: Ben Sgeireach – proposal, Sallachy, Achany Extension and Shinness (Major);
- VP12: Ben More Assynt – proposal, Sallachy, Achany Extension and Shinness (Major / Moderate to Moderate);
- VP13: Ben Klibreck – proposal, Creag Riabhach, Chleansaid and Shinness (Major);
- VP15: The Ord – proposal, Shinness, Lairg, Lairg II, Garvary and Balblair (Major); and
- VPA: Beinn Leoid – proposal, Sallachy, Achany Extension and Shinness (Major / Moderate to Moderate).

7.66 As noted above, the main interaction with the proposal is the consented Sallachy Wind Farm and explicitly Shinness Wind Farm at application stage. The latter results in Significant combined effects from all 11 additional viewpoints. Collectively, these wind farm developments (particularly Shinness and Collie Linne, given their siting, lateral spread and scale), would serve to result in wind farms being seen as a notable feature in several views particularly from the A838, A836 and surrounding hilltops.

Effects on Transport Routes

7.67 The applicant's FEI assessment of effects on roads, railways, promoted tourist routes and cycle routes, found that receptors travelling on the A838 and the A836 would experience significant visual effects including cumulative effects. The effects on receptors travelling on the A839 and the Moray Firth Tourist Route have been assessed as not significant.

7.68 In relation to the A838, this route is a single-track road with passing places connecting from Tongue in the northwest and closely following the shores of Loch Shin until it joins the A836 in the southeast. It is a principal route through the northwest Highlands and is well used by residents, tourists, cyclists and other recreational users, afforded by its scenic views, particularly along the shores of Loch Shin in the south, and Loch More, Loch a Ghriama and Loch Merkland further north. The route is located approximately 850 m south of the nearest proposed turbine (T15). VP1 (A838 near Fiag Bridge), VP3 (A838 near Overscaig Hotel), VP4 (A838 near Sithean Dubh Mor) and VP9 (A838 near West Shinness Lodge) are located on this route. The applicant has also undertaken a sequential route assessment reported in the LVIA with supporting wirelines from 10 locations along the route (FEI Volume 4). The applicant has assigned a Medium sensitivity to this route. As noted in the viewpoint appraisal in Appendix 6 of this report, Officers have assigned a High-Medium sensitivity to this route.

7.69 The applicant assesses Significant visual effects for receptors travelling northwest on the A838 between Alltnacaorach and west of Fiag Bridge affecting 6.1km of the route noting that this equates to an approximate travel time of 6 minutes assuming an average speed of 40 mph. The conclusions of the assessment notes that Significant effects would extend up to 8 km however, there is no clear indication of this, as the effect at West Shinness Lodge is assessed by the applicant as not Significant. No Significant effects have been assessed for receptors travelling southeast. Officers consider that Significant effects would affect up to 8.5 – 9 km of the route for receptors travelling northwest as far as West Shinness Lodge as seen in VP9 which is assessed in Appendix 6 of this report. The extent of Significant effects would equate to up to 9 minutes for road users. Tourists and cyclists, however, are likely to experience these significant effects over a more prolonged period, reflecting their slower pace of travel and greater duration of their appreciation of their surroundings. Whilst there is no disagreement on the effects for receptors travelling southeast, forestry felling associated with Leathad Fiag during the lifetime of the proposed development may increase the extent of visibility of the turbines however the effect would remain not significant.

7.70 Cumulative effects with existing and consented wind farm developments would occur along the route when travelling northwest, particularly in relation to Sallachy. These would give rise to Significant sequential, rather than combined, cumulative effects, with Significant effects arising from both developments being experienced in succession. Should Shinness Wind Farm, that the Council has objected to, be consented by Scottish Ministers, this would exacerbate this effect resulting in Major adverse and Significant cumulative effects, with all three developments contributing to the cumulative experience of wind farm development over approximately 15–16 km of the route for receptors travelling northwest. Of the three developments, Shinness would have the greatest influence on views along the route, representing the most impactful development, in terms of its prominence and extent of visibility. The proposed development would have the next greatest influence, further contributing to cumulative effects experienced by receptors travelling northwest. When travelling southeast, the cumulative effect of the proposed development would not be Significant, as it would be positioned behind the direction of travel. However, Significant cumulative effects would remain as a result of Sallachy and Shinness, with Shinness having the greatest influence on views. Lairg II and Garvary would also be visible in the distance in the direction of travel.

7.71 In relation to the A836, this route is also a single-track road with passing places from Dalchork (north of Lairg) to Tongue and is a major route in the north Highlands. The route also forms part of the National Cycle ‘Far North Way’ / Inverness to John O’Groats Cycle Route (formerly NCN Route 1, which now terminates further south at Tain) and is also part of the EuroVelo 12 North Sea

Cycle Route. The road is sometimes used as part of a ‘cycle friendly’ alternative NC500 route. The route north of Lairg is also one of the main road routes through the Flow Country UNESCO site, with the Flow Country Partnership highlighting the road as a main route for experiencing the Flow Country landscape, and which includes points of interest including the viewpoint at Crask (VP5). The route is located approximately 5 km east of the proposed development. VP5 (A836 near Crask Inn), VP11 (A836 Rhian Bridge) and VP14 (A836 near An t-Sron) are located on this route. The applicant has also undertaken a sequential route assessment reported in the LVIA with supporting wirelines from 10 locations along the route, within FEI, Volume 4. The applicant has assigned a High / Medium sensitivity for cyclists and Medium sensitivity to other road users. As noted in the viewpoint appraisal in Appendix 6 of this report, Officers have assigned a High-Medium sensitivity to this route for all users.

7.72 The applicant assesses Significant effects for northbound and southbound receptors affecting 1.5 km of the route noting that this equates to an approximate travel time of 1.5 minutes in either direction assuming an average speed of 40 mph. These effects are not disputed, however, Officers note that tourists and cyclists are likely to experience these Significant effects over a more prolonged period, reflecting their slower pace of travel and greater duration of their appreciation of their surroundings. Although these Significant effects would occur along a relatively short section of approximately 1.5 km of the route, the proposed development would be largely backclothed by distant hills, with the turbines positioned below the Ben More Assynt massif and some partially screened by intervening landform, as illustrated in VP5 (A836 near the Crask). Owing to the setback of more than 5 km from the route, the reduction in scale of the proposed development and the oblique nature of views towards the turbines, these effects would not translate into unacceptable Significant effects on the route as a whole. The remainder of the route would not experience Significant effects due to a combination of intervening landform, vegetation / forestry and limited extent of visibility of the turbines.

7.73 In terms of cumulative effects, existing and consented wind farm developments are sequentially visible along this route when travelling in both directions, with the greatest influence arising from Creag Riabhach, Strath Tirry, Chleansaid, Lairg II and Garvary. Should the application Shinness Wind Farm be consented, it would become the most prominent and influential wind farm development experienced along this route, intensifying the cumulative effects and resulting in Major adverse and Significant cumulative effects. Shinness would have the greatest influence, being visible over an approximately 9–10 km stretch of the route between Dalchork and Crask, compared with the proposed development, which would affect approximately 1.5 km of the route. Although the extent of the route affected by the proposed development would be limited, it would nevertheless contribute to significant cumulative effects when considered alongside other wind farms that

would be visible from the route. The addition of the proposed development to the wider group of cumulative wind farms, including Shinness, would therefore substantially increase the overall extent and influence of wind farm development on the visual experience of receptors travelling along this route.

Effects on Recreational Users of the Outdoors

7.74 The applicant identifies no Significant visual effects from any surrounding Core Paths including Core Path SU16.03 Ord Hill, SU16.10 Loch Craggie and SU16.05 Loch Shin Hide. This is owing to separation distances and routing of these with the closest Core Path being SU 16.05, Loch Shin Hide, located approximately 16 km southeast of the proposed development. These effects are agreed.

7.75 In relation to promoted routes and long-distance routes, the Inverness to John ’o Groats cycle route overlaps with the A836 and is assessed as part of the route where Significant effects (including cumulative effects) have been assessed for approximately 1.5 km of the route near the Crask. Other routes have been assessed as not significant. These effects are agreed.

7.76 The applicant identifies Significant visual effects (including cumulative effects) for receptors on several hill summits in the area as part of its viewpoint assessment, as assessed at VP6 (Maovally), VP7 (Ben Hee) and VP10 (Ben Sgeireach). While all of the proposed turbines would be prominently visible in views from these closer range summits, within 10 km of the application site, this would be mainly in the context of panoramic views including other wind energy developments. In all cases, the proposed turbines would mainly be back clothed by high ground behind and would generally present a coherent and suitably contained array as a result of the amended scheme of the proposed development presented in the FEI. Effects from VP12 (Ben More Assynt), VP13 (Ben Klibreck) and VP15 (The Ord), and other distant hilltops are assessed as not Significant in relation to the proposed development which are agreed. However, Significant combined cumulative effects have been identified by Officers for these viewpoints in Appendix 6 of this report.

7.77 The applicant has not assessed Scotways Scottish Hill Tracks or Heritage Paths in the LVIA. Of relevance, Significant visual effects (Major / Moderate) would result on receptors of the Scottish Hill Track 341 / 342 and the Strath Tirry to Badanloch Tracks affecting 3-4 km of the route where they overlap each other from The Crask east along Strath a’Chraisg to north of Cnoc a’ Ghiubhais. Significant sequential cumulative effects (Major) would also be experienced on this route as a result of the proposed development, Creag Ribhach, Chleansaid, Strath Tirry and Shinness wind farms.

Effects on Residential Receptors

7.78 There are no residential properties within the site boundary with the closest to the proposed turbine array being Fiag Lodge, located some 2.8 km to the southwest of the nearest turbine. The applicant's Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA), as updated through FEI Technical Appendix 6.6 concludes that one of the seven properties (Property 1 – Taigh Na Dreoilin / East Overscaig) identified within the 4 km RVAA study area would experience Significant visual effects (Moderate). This detached property located southwest of the A838, comprises three separate buildings, with the western building having elevations facing northeast and southwest whilst the southeastern building has a southeast elevation. The northeastern building appears not to have any facades and is assumed to be an outbuilding, garage or similar. The wider property is set within a relatively large rectangular deer fenced area, made up of mostly moorland, apart from select areas adjacent to the access track. Currently, there are no views of existing turbines in the direction of the proposed development. Vegetation surrounding the property and within the land surrounding is very limited, providing an open aspect. The property would, consequently, have theoretical visibility of 12 of the proposed turbines with 5 hubs visible at 3 km distance to the nearest turbine from its northeastern and southeastern elevations. Due to the set back of the property from the plantation northeast of the A838, southern parts of the proposed development have the potential to be clearly visible. However, expansive views in other directions would not be affected. The remaining six properties are assessed in the RVAA as not Significant, which is agreed. In all cases, the applicant's assessment concludes that these residential visual effects would not breach the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold (RVAT) which is agreed by Officers.

7.79 While not within the RVAA study area, Significant visual effects (Major / Moderate) have been assessed by the applicant at Alltnacaorach, an individual property adjacent to the Allt na Caorach watercourse, located on elevated ground adjacent to the A838, approximately 4.7 km to the southeast of the nearest proposed turbine. The property is orientated to face both northeast and southwest and therefore, the proposed development would be clearly noticeable at an oblique angle and would also, be partly obscured by coniferous forestry and landform. These effects are agreed. Officers also consider that this property would not breach the RVAT given the distance to the proposed development. However, the application Shinness Wind Farm would have the most effect on this property given the extent of visibility and close distance resulting in Significant cumulative effects which would also result in a breach to the RVAT due to Shinness.

7.80 The applicant's assessment also considers that Significant visual effects including cumulative effects would result for residents in the settlement of Shinness / West Shinness, consisting of a small group of properties along and off the A838 some

8.5 km to the southeast of the application site. The greatest visibility would be incurred for properties in the northeastern part of the settlement, which have a more open aspect, similar to or slightly greater than the views in VP9 (A838 at West Shinness). It is however, noted that most of the residential properties within the settlement, are orientated in a southwesterly direction, facing Loch Shin, rather than towards the application site. The effects on the settlements of Achnairn, Tirryside and Lairg are assessed as not Significant considering the amended scheme of the proposed development presented in the FEI. These effects are agreed.

Cumulative Visual Effects

7.81 The cumulative effects of the proposed development with other consented and proposed (application stage) developments have been reported in the preceding sections above. As noted previously, the applicant has included existing / operational wind farms within its main assessment. Whilst the approach of including operational wind farms to the baseline is not disputed, it should be noted that these wind farms are time limited and not permanent features in the landscape, and the effect on any receptor which includes their consideration would be of a temporal nature. The applicant's CLVIA is based on three scenarios. Scenario 1 assumes that all other consented/under construction wind farms are operational. Scenario 2 assumes that all schemes in planning are also operational. Scenario 3 assumes that all schemes currently in scoping and at pre application, where information is available, are also operational.

7.82 The closest existing / operational wind farm to the proposed development is Creag Riabhach, 7 km northeast. The consented Sallachy Wind Farm is 3 km southwest and the application Shinness Wind Farm is proposed to be situated 5 km southeast, on the eastern side of Loch Shin between the A838 and A836. That proposal is presently undergoing Public Local Inquiry ahead of its determination by Scottish Ministers.

7.83 In summary, under Scenario 1, the main interaction of the proposed development would be with the consented Sallachy Wind Farm, with one further turbine to its western extent, recently having also been permitted under planning permission 26/00589/FUL. The consented Sallachy Wind Farm is anticipated to begin construction in the coming months. Under Scenarios 2 and 3 the main interaction of the proposed development would be with the application stage Shinness Wind Farm. Neither the current application, nor either of these other proposals, are directly associated with an existing cluster of existing / operational wind energy sites, the closest being the Rosehall / Achany cluster some 14.8 km to the southeast. For the most part, due to the location and visual separation, there will not be any notable inter-relationship between the proposed development, and other existing / operational and consented schemes within the study area, with

the exception of Sallachy where there would be some Significant cumulative effects particularly along the A838 and closer range hilltops. Otherwise, whilst the proposed development would reduce the degree of visual separation between wind energy developments in the area, it would still retain an appropriate level of separation, allowing it to be appreciated and experienced within its own setting without adversely affecting the setting of other wind energy developments.

7.84 Conversely, however, should the application for Shinness Wind Farm be consented, the combined effect of Shinness and the proposed development would give rise to unacceptable cumulative landscape and visual effects. In particular, the scale, extensive lateral spread and separation distance between the two developments would result in detrimental combined, additional and sequential cumulative effects. Collectively, the developments would fundamentally alter the perception and experience of the landscape, such that wind energy developments across the wider area would cease to be perceived as an occasional or peripheral influence and would instead become a defining characteristic of the landscape. In these circumstances, the proposed development would not be supported by Officers.

Effects of Aviation Lighting During Hours of Darkness

7.85 The FEI updates the hours of darkness assessment presented in the LVIA. The applicant's assessment focuses only on visual effects and the Assynt – Coigach NSA and excludes an assessment during the hours of darkness on other landscape receptors including landscape character and SLAs. The lighting strategy for the FEI has been agreed with the CAA which proposes medium intensity 'steady' red aviation lights (2000 candela) at six of the 15 turbines (T1, T4, T6, T9, T12 and T15) along the array perimeter with no tower lights. The lighting strategy also includes implementation of intensity reduction mitigation and vertical directional intensity mitigation. As is now commonplace, the proposed aviation lights have inbuilt mitigation as they are designed to switch between 2000 and 200 candela depending on visibility conditions. 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 15 of the turbine hubs for purposes of safety for low flying military aircraft, but this is not perceptible to the general public without special equipment.

7.86 All residential properties included in the immediate 4 km study area of the applicant's RVAA in FEI Technical Appendix 6.6, are situated at a lower elevation to the visible aviation lights. Therefore, the visible aviation lights would be perceived at a lower intensity due to the vertical directional mitigation incorporated into the lighting. Domestic lighting at the residential properties could also reduce the susceptibility of residential receptors, as their vision would be less adapted to

the dark. Officers agree that there would be no significant effects during the hours of darkness at any of these properties. However, Significant effects during the hours of darkness would be experienced from one property, Alltnacaorach, located just beyond the 4 km RVAA study area off the A838 where it would also experience Significant cumulative effects with the aviation lights of the application Shinness Wind Farm.

7.87 Significant visual effects during the hours of darkness are reported in the applicant's assessment from Viewpoints 1 (A838 near Fiag Bridge), 2 (Loch Fiag) and 4 (A838 near Sithean Dubh Mor), all within 5 km of the nearest turbine and consequently, with closer range, more open views of the turbine hubs and consequently, all six of the proposed visible aviation lights. This equates to receptors of the A838 and recreational users of Loch Fiag experiencing Significant effects during the hours of darkness. No settlements and other roads or recreational receptors of the outdoors have been assessed to experience Significant effects. Whilst Officers broadly agree with these conclusions, the receptors with some sensitivity during the hours of darkness would be people engaged in outdoor activities where the dark environment contributes to the experience, and which may include overnight campers and walkers at dusk/ dawn, in particular popular hilltops such as Ben More Assynt, Ben Kilbreck, Ben Hee and The Ord for example. Officers conclude that effects of aviation lighting would not be sufficient to result in Significant effects, particularly with the presence of other lit existing or consented wind energy schemes in the wider landscape which would be visible e.g. Chleansaid. However, there is potential for some significant cumulative effects during the hours of darkness, if the applications for Shinness Wind Farm and Achany Extension Wind Farm Variation are consented, adding further lights to this relatively dark baseline.

7.88 More widely, lighting effects would be most notable from elevated areas within the Assynt - Coigach NSA and WLAs 37 Foinaven – Ben Hee and 34 Reay – Cassley. As previously noted, NatureScot considers that the proposed turbine lighting, when experienced from within the NSA, would diminish the current feeling of an open and remote landscape during the hours of darkness, where other sources of light are not readily apparent. With respect to WLAs, visible turbine lighting would result in a Significant and adverse effect on the sense of remoteness, sanctuary and solitude experienced within the southern part of WLA 37. However, in both cases, NatureScot does not consider that these hours of darkness effects would be to a degree that they would affect the integrity of the relevant designation and as such, Officers consider the effects overall, are within acceptable limits.

Natural Heritage (Including Ornithology)

Designated Sites

7.89 The site is adjacent to the Flow Country WHS, sharing a common boundary. The applicant has submitted a UNESCO Heritage Site Impact Assessment Toolkit in this respect, completing the screening exercise. None of the proposed turbines are located within the WHS designation, although the wider site red line boundary overlaps part of the WHS to the north, within the applicant's proposed peatland restoration area. 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. The development area is located down hydraulic gradient of the WHS and it is considered that this will mitigate against any potential impacts to water flow / quality within the WHS and nearby surface watercourses that may result from the development works.

7.90 NatureScot advises that, with the mitigation proposed for the qualifying habitats of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the proposals will not result in significant impacts to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Flow Country World Heritage Site (WHS); blanket bog habitat, which is co located within the boundary of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC, Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar to the west of the site and otherwise, extends up to the eastern bank of the River Fiag, to the east. In this respect, it is notable, as above, that that the designated area of the WHS is located mainly on higher ground surrounding the developable area of the application site. As such, the proposed development area is located down topographical and hydraulic gradient of the designation. Potential impacts from dust emissions during construction, may be addressed through mitigation techniques, to be agreed as part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

7.91 The application site is located directly to the east of the part of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar, all of which share a common boundary. The SAC is protected for its peatland habitats, otter and marsh saxifrage, the SPA for its breeding upland and peatland birds and the Ramsar site is protected for its peatland habitats, breeding birds, freshwater pearl mussel, otter, rare plant species and water beetle. Although no infrastructure is proposed within these sites, the red line boundary incorporates part of this designation within its proposed peatland restoration area.

7.92 In relation to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC, Nature Scot advises that the proposals will not adversely affect the integrity of the site or the interests of blanket bog and otter, provided that the finalised project Habitat and Peat Management Plan details are agreed with Nature Scot and that further mitigation measures are implemented around excavations and operations in proximity to watercourses, through the Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP).

7.93 In relation to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA, Nature Scot advise that the proposals will not adversely affect the integrity of the site or the interests of golden eagle, red-throated diver, black-throated diver, golden plover, dunlin, greenshank, and merlin, provided that no peatland restoration activities take place within the bird breeding season 15th March – 15th August to avoid disturbance to breeding birds and that toolbox talks are tabled within the CEMP and provided to all new staff on the potential presence of protected species and any measures that need to be undertaken.

7.94 NatureScot does not consider that the proposals would have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of blanket bog, otter and golden eagle, red-throated diver, black-throated diver, golden plover, dunlin, greenshank, and merlin in relation to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Ramsar, provided the mitigation measures for the SAC and SPA are followed, as defined above.

7.95 The status of these sites 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 the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC, SPA and Ramsar, before it can be consented (commonly known as Habitats Regulations Appraisal). Consequently, the Energy Consents Unit, as competent authority, is required to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of the sites' conservation objectives for their respective qualifying interests.

7.96 NatureScot considers that significant impacts on the Strath Duchally Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), protected for its blanket bog and breeding waders (dunlin, golden plover, and greenshank), may be avoided, referring to the mitigation for the co located Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and SPA, as discussed above.

Protected Species

7.97 The application site has been subject to protected species survey, undertaken during 2024. The surveys revealed the presence of otter and common lizard. Bat surveys were undertaken on the site during 2024 and recorded several species passing across the site, including common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrel and brown long eared bat. The survey data suggest that bat roosts are unlikely to be present

on site. As bat species considered at 'high' collision risk were recorded transiting the site, the applicant has proposed mitigation in the form of minimum 50m buffers between turbine locations and woodland edges.

Ornithology

7.98 In relation to ornithology, the applicant's assessment focussed on red throated diver, black throated diver, pink footed goose, white tailed eagle, osprey, golden eagle, goshawk, merlin, golden plover, dunlin and greenshank. The EIAR, as supplemented by FEI, considers the residual significance level of identified effects on bird species during construction, operation, and decommissioning, either individually or cumulatively, would not be significant, provided that mitigation was embedded during the construction and decommissioning phases to avoid disturbance to adult birds or nests. NatureScot is generally in agreement with these conclusions, as are the Council's Ecology Team, who accept that the applicant's proposed preconstruction nesting bird checks and Breeding Bird Protection Plans will be suitable mitigation, as secured via condition. Additionally, RSPB has not objected to the application and are content with the proposed mitigation, subject to micrositing restrictions secured via condition, such that no development is permitted within the surrounding natural heritage designations, including the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA, SAC, SSSI, Ramsar site and WHS. Further advice is provided to the Scottish Ministers in terms of further preconstruction surveys to inform collision risk modelling for golden and white - tailed eagle and osprey and to the applicant, in scoping the finalised Habitat Management Plan.

Habitats and Biodiversity Enhancement

7.99 The application site mainly comprises commercial conifer plantation, although peatland habitats predominate in the western and northwestern parts and some marshy grassland is present in the northeast, along the course of the River Fiag. Of the peatland habitats, some areas of blanket bog onsite are considered to meet the criteria to be of national importance for nature conservation.

7.100 The applicant has submitted an Outline Habitat Management Plan (OHMP), as EIAR Technical Appendix 8.3, 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. With respect to habitats, a total of 4.99ha of wet modified bog and 0.29ha of blanket bog, with a combined loss of 5.28ha. Using the 1:11 ratio drawn from NatureScot's guidance, the applicant proposes a total 61 ha of peatland restoration through the plan, to be delivered within the northwestern part of the application site, partly within the WHS boundary. Measures to offset the loss of blanket bog and wet modified bog habitat will involve a reduction of herbivore impacts, preventing further erosion and drainage of bog habitats and increasing active sphagnum

forming bog habitat. Ditch and gully blocking will also be carried out to raise the water table, decrease runoff and reduce oxidisation of bare peat.

7.101 The plan also includes measures for long term monitoring and management of habitats across the site, together with measures to protected mammal and fish species within the peatland restoration area. Peatland restoration measures will also provide an ornithological benefit, by increasing the condition of the habitats required for breeding wader species. The Outline HMP also includes a draft deer management plan, to avoid undermining the restoration activities through trampling and grazing pressure.

7.102 Following further clarification from the applicant, the Council's Ecology Team removed their initial holding objection to the proposals and consider the peatland restoration proposed through the OHMP adequate. The Ecology Team now consider the applicant's information robust enough to permit the finalised enhancement measures to be detailed through a revised, detailed HMP, as secured via condition. As such, it is considered that a suitable level of biodiversity enhancement is embodied within the proposals, that habitats onsite will be left in a demonstrably better state than without intervention. As a result, the proposals are overall in compliance with the requirements of NPF 4 Policy 3.

Forestry

7.103 Through Chapter 14 of the EAIR, as updated by the FEI, the applicant presents their assessment of the impacts of the proposals on forestry. Woodlands on the site were mainly planted between 1982 and 1985. Areas of woodland will require clearance for turbine locations, access tracks and the proposed BESS and substation. To accommodate most site infrastructure, wider 'management felling' will be required, due to the age and current tree height, to establish a wind firm boundary in anticipation of windblow. These areas will then be replanted with mixed conifer species to establish a localised 'keyhole' for infrastructure within the woodland cover, with exception of T9 which may be accommodated via keyhole felling form the outset. Overall, the proposals will result in a permanent loss of 37.4 ha of forestry, with replanting of 221.4 ha.

7.104 In their consultation response, the Forestry Officer did not object to the proposals, subject to conditions limiting the felled area to that assessed by the applicant and securing a compensatory planting plan to balance the area of permanent loss. In this regard, the applicant has committed to providing compensatory planting, with the composition and location to be agreed with Scottish Forestry. By condition, Officers would also seek that no management felling shall take place until a long-term Forest Plan has been approved by Scottish Forestry in consultation with the Council.

7.105 The applicant's assessment of the route to site for abnormal loads, as presented through Technical Appendix 12.1, identifies several locations on the A9 and A839 route, where tree felling and pruning would potentially be required to accommodate these movements. This section of the route has seen previous use for delivery of windfarm components and some of the felling identified has already been carried out. The Forestry Officer recommends a further condition in this regard, to secure an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) identifying the final tree works necessary for consideration and approval of the Council.

Built and Cultural Heritage

7.106 The applicant's cultural heritage assessment is presented in Chapter 7 of the EIAR, as updated by the FEI. The applicant's assessment of impacts on designated assets utilises a search area of 10km from the application site boundary and 1km from the site boundary for non-designated assets. The Council's Historic Environment Record (HER) data, shows no assets present within the site boundary.

7.107 The proposed development would be visible in views from the Cnoc Olasdail, hut circles and field systems Scheduled Monument (SM4375) and the Ord, chambered cairns, cairns, settlements, and field systems (SM1812). HES does not consider that the impacts on the setting and cultural significance of these monuments will be significant and the proposals do not otherwise, raise historic environment issues of national importance, as is also agreed by Officers.

7.108 Highland Council's internal Historic Environment Team otherwise, has no objections to the proposed development, in terms of those asset within their remit, subject to the submission of a detailed archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation which can be secured by condition.

Roads, Transport and Access

7.109 The applicant has highlighted, in Chapter 12 of the EIAR, as updated through FEI, the expected traffic and transportation impacts of this development, particularly through the construction phase. The Port of Entry for turbine components is to be either Nigg or Invergordon, with these being routed to site thereafter via the A9 Trunk Road, A839 at the Mound and A836 from Lairg, to the site entrance on the A838.

7.110 The site access junction will upgrade an existing forestry junction and track, some 100m west of the Fiag Bridge. The Council's Transport Planning Team are overall, satisfied, from the applicant's outline drawings, including a general arrangement and visibility plan, that the detailed design of the access, including requirements for surfacing and drainage, can be secured via planning condition.

7.111 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 Chapter 12 that the maximum total additional two-way daily HGV movements, during the entire construction period, excluding those relating to the grid connection, would be 118, during month 9 of the construction phase.

7.112 The Transport Planning Team are generally satisfied with the findings of the applicant's assessment of the cumulative traffic impacts of the proposals, based on a projected start date during 2029. Cumulative impacts in real terms, however, depend heavily on overlap between the construction periods of different projects which share elements of the construction traffic routing, the timings of which, can be challenging to predict accurately. Cumulatively, peak traffic impacts in terms of HGV movements on the A838, may be higher than those projected for the development of the proposed windfarm in solus, due to the potential impacts of the Cassley 132kV Substation Extension under 25/03578/S36 and the consented Sallachy Wind Farm, under 24/04118/S42 and additional turbine, under 26/00589/S36. Traffic volumes would decrease considerably outside the peak period of construction, however, without mitigation, A838 users, including residents, are expected to experience significant effects overall, during the construction phase. This situation will be further influenced by the relative lack of route choices within the sparsely populated, rural area.

7.113 In this respect, the applicant proposes mitigation, primarily, the formation of a Community Liaison Group and the delivery of a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP). In principle this type of mitigation is accepted subject to detailed consideration, as secured via condition. The Community Liaison Group should, in this respect, incorporate a wide geographical scope considering the importance of the A838 to access the West Coast. The CTMP should also ensure communication between the applicant and other developers sharing the construction traffic route, to work collaboratively to address local access requirements.

7.114 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, with the nearest element of this being the A9, at the Mound, some 37km to the southeast.

7.115 In their consultation response, the Council's Transport Planning Team did not raise an objection to the proposals overall. Transport Planning did, however, raise concerns over the condition and capacity of elements of the local road network, most strongly with respect to the condition and capacity of the A838, which is structurally limited in terms of some of its bridges and retaining walls and is of an inadequate width to accommodate abnormal indivisible loads, such as turbine blades, in some sections. Trasport Planning, request via condition, a schedule of

road mitigation works on this route, including an engineering assessment of carriageway strength and an associated strengthening programme, alongside a scheme of widening works and works to improve provision of passing places enroute. In this respect, it is noted that similar mitigation has already been secured via condition in relation to the consented Sallachy Wind Farm, as evidenced by planning permission, 26/01496/FUL, among other potential applications, if required. Some of the improvement works are being delivered by the developer of this project and so, the condition should allow flexibility on what additional works are required to accommodate the Coille Linne proposals and as to which developer ultimately, delivers these.

7.116 Transport Planning also requires more standard conditions to secure a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and Abnormal Load Assessment. Through the CTMP condition, the applicant must 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. The CTMP condition should include a requirement for coordination with the Sallachy Wind Farm, the Cassley 132kV Substation Extension and others utilising the same construction access route, to mitigate the potential for cumulative effects.

7.117 In terms of wider public access, the site is known to currently, have a low level of public recreational use. No established core paths are present on site or in the wider surroundings. The Council's Access Officer requires that a Recreational Access Management Plan (RAMP) be secured via condition, 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.

Water, Flood Risk, Drainage and Peat

7.118 The results of the applicant's hydrological, flood risk, drainage and peat assessments are outlined in Chapter 10 of the EIAR as amended by the FEI. The site generally drains to the east, toward the River Fiag, that partially defines its eastern boundary. There are several other watercourses and unnamed tributaries within the site and surrounding area. 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 contractor and prior to the start of development or works.

7.119 Scottish Water has confirmed that there are none of their drinking water catchments or other water abstraction sources, which are designated as Drinking Water Protected Areas under the Water Framework Directive, in the area that may be affected by the proposed development.

7.120 Of the 4 Private Water Supplies (PWS) identified with 4km of the application site boundary, the closest PWS is at Carrachan, 3.1km to the west of the application site. Given the separation distance PWS abstractions are considered unlikely to be impacted by the proposed development. Environmental Health have not raised further concerns in this respect.

7.121 The proposed development site was assessed for its potential for Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE's). No groundwater dependent NVC communities were identified within the site directly and it is considered otherwise, that GWDTE's in the surrounding area are not likely to be impacted by the proposed development, due to separation distance from the proposed infrastructure.

7.122 The local Kyle of Sutherland District Salmon Fisheries Board raised concerns with the proposal's potential impacts on the River Fiag, in terms of pollution from runoff from the site during construction, which is characterised by peat and, soils with a significant peat content. SEPA's initial concerns with the proposals, based on the location of site infrastructure relative to watercourses and areas of deep peat, have however, now been addressed in the FEI layout, which was supported by further peat probing carried out by the applicant. Deep peat, generally ranging from 0.5 m to above 1.5m, is present across the site. There are localised pockets in excess of 3.5 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 mapping. Overall, a total of approximately 119,913m^3 of peat is expected to be extracted, 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, Technical Appendix 10.3, the finalisation of which can be conditioned.

7.123 A Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessment has been submitted alongside the application, which identifies that, providing the tabled mitigation measures are followed, the site is of generally low risk to peat instability. The document was reviewed through 2 iterations by the Scottish Government's peat stability consultant. Further points of clarification are required; however, it is anticipated otherwise, that adherence to a finalised version of this document, can be secured through condition.

Noise and Shadow Flicker

7.124 Predicted operational noise levels are expressed in the applicant's EIAR Chapter 11, as amended by the FEI. The applicant's operational noise impact assessment relates to the effects of the wind turbine generators and considers these effects on 7 noise sensitive receptor assessment locations (NALs), the closest being Fiag Lodge, some 2.8km southwest of the nearest turbine.

7.125 Given the separation distance between the proposed turbines and NALs, the applicant's assessment concluded that operational noise impacts from the proposals, including cumulatively with the consented Sallachy Windfarm, some 3km distant, would generally be within acceptable limits as expressed within the 1997 ETSU-R-97 UK Government Guidance and superseding 2026 Assessment and Rating of Nosie from Wind Turbines guidance (ARWTN). This situation is complicated in that a separate planning permission, 26/00589/FUL, has recently been granted for an additional turbine on the Sallachy Windfarm. Environmental Health otherwise, raised no objections to the proposals on operational or construction noise grounds and have provided further advice on how compliance with the assessed limits may be achieved via condition. Further assessment may also be required, related to the proposed grid connection, once the form of this is understood.

7.126 Impacts of shadow flicker were addressed through Chapter 15 of the EIAR, as supplemented by the FEI. As no residential receptors are present within 1.78km, or 11 rotor diameters of the proposed turbines, 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.

Telecommunications, Aviation and Radar

7.127 No 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.

7.128 There are no unresolved objections from aviation interests. Under the revised FEI scheme, the proposals will be fitted with 6 visible spectrum aviation warning lights along the array perimeter on the hubs of Turbines T1, T4, T6, T9, T12 and T15. The proposed aviation lights are able to switch between 2,000 and 200 candela depending on visibility conditions. 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 15 of the turbine hubs for purposes of safety for low flying military aircraft, but this is not perceptible without special equipment.

7.129 The MOD requests a condition which secures submission of a finalised aviation safety lighting scheme detailing how the development would be lit throughout its operational life to maintain civil and military aviation charting and safety management measures, with the specified information submitted to the MOD 14 days prior to the commencement of works on site.

Decommissioning and Aftercare

7.130 The applicant has sought permission to operate the windfarm for 35 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.

7.131 The requirements to decommission at its end of life is relatively standard and straight forward, with any request for re-powering to be considered through the submission of a future application. It is important to ensure that any approval of this project secures by condition a requirement to deliver a draft Decommissioning and Restoration Plan (DRP) for approval prior to the commencement of any development and ensure an appropriate financial bond is put in place to secure these works.

7.132 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

7.133 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 of development 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 scope for further redesign or re-powering without requiring a full fresh consent, leading to inadequate application fee / resource to reappraise any such future proposal.

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

7.135 Given proposed associated BESS on site, a fire safety management plan, along with finalised design, materials, access, along with details of water supply and contaminated water storage could be secured by condition should the application be granted consent.

Grid Connection

7.136 The associated grid connection for this scheme, along with other renewable energy developments, was not previously considered by the Planning Authority and ECU, through the screening and scoping process, as forming part of the overall 'project' in EIA terms. This previous position has since 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 parts.

7.137 As previously set out, the project does not have a finalised, formal grid connection offer at the Gate 2 stage, from the National Energy System Operator (NESO) under the reformed electricity grid process. From discussions with Scottish and Southern Electricity networks (SSEN) the applicant anticipates that the connection point would be to an existing overhead line (OHL) on steel lattice towers that passes through the southern part of the application site. The proposals are therefore unusual, in that, all of the grid connections infrastructure may be accommodated within the red line application site. It is considered by Officers 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. 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.

7.138 Scottish Government Planning Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impacts Assessment Regulations, sets out the approach to multistage consents relative to the EIA process. Building from European case law, in cases such as these proposals, where a consent procedure comprises more than one stage involving a principal decision and the other an implementing decision which cannot extend beyond the parameters set by the principal decision, the European Court of Justice has made clear that the effects which a project may have on the environment must be identified and assessed at the time of the procedure relating to the principal decision. Applied to proposal for wind energy generation under Section 36 of the Electricity Act, the key question becomes whether the environmental assessment of the Section 36 application is capable of assessing the effects of the grid connection as part of the overall EIA project, both in terms of additional effects arising from the grid connection and cumulative effects between the connection and the associated wind farm.

7.139 Council Officers consider the applicant has provided a satisfactory assessment of the cumulative environmental effects of the wind farm and grid connection, to the degree that the EIAR, as supplemented by the FEI, captures the environmental effects of the Coille Linne Wind Farm as a whole project. None of the statutory consultees have objected, based on the additional effects associated with the grid connection.

7.140 It is considered that there is sufficient information within the AIR to determine the range of sensitive receptors that could potentially be impacted by likely significant effects as a result of the grid connection. However, there is insufficient information to conclude on the extent of likely significant effects. This is because the Grid Connection, as presented in Chapter 5 of the applicant's FEI Written Statement and FEI Figure 5.1, otherwise, constitutes a desktop exercise, with further, dedicated design (connection form and routing) survey work remaining to be undertaken in the event that the application is consented by Scottish Ministers, and the project offered a Gate 2 connection by NESO. Only at this stage, would a definitive technical view be expected from SSEN, as to whether the outline connection arrangements tabled by the applicant at this stage, would be technically feasible or if a different arrangement, possibly involving further elements offsite, would be required.

7.141 On the above basis, it is considered that a multi-stage condition may reasonably be applied to a consent for the wind farm pursuant to Regulation 4 at Paragraph 6 of the EIA Regulations. This condition would allow Scottish Ministers to consent

the Wind Farm if so minded, but prevent construction works commencing on the project until such a time as the grid connection is consented, following a full appraisal of its environmental effects.

7.142 The suggested wording for the condition is provided below with the wording considered to ensure that environmental effects are appropriately assessed no matter the consenting route (i.e., whether through the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), or the Electricity Act 1989), and, in the event that all or part of the eventual grid connection is progressed through permitted development. This is important as the condition requires to cover any eventuality including that the siting, design, and means of connection change during the next design stage. Members are asked to note that the suggested condition may be refined following discussions with the ECU, the applicant, consultees, and the grid operator.

Grid Connection: Multi-Stage Condition

7.143 (1) No development shall commence until:

a. Details of the grid connection for the development hereby permitted, together with environmental information, as informed by appropriate survey work, and assessing whether the grid connection is likely to give rise to any significant environmental effects, whether individually or cumulatively with the development hereby permitted, along with details of any mitigation proposed, have been submitted to, and approved by, the Highland Council or Scottish Ministers. This shall include, but not be limited to, the following environmental matters:
    i. landscape and visual effects;
    ii. Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Ramsar;
    iii. Strath Duchally Site of Special Scientific Interest;
    iv. ornithology and protected species;
    v. impacts on the water environment including means and methods of all water crossings;
    vi. designated cultural heritage assets and archaeology;
    vii. habitats including peatland habitats and groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems;
    viii. impacts on trees and woodland;
    ix. private water supplies;
    x. road, transport, traffic and access including public access impacts;
    xi. impacts on noise sensitive receptors; and,
    xii. impacts on any other sensitive receptor as identified during the course of design and survey works; and

b. any necessary planning permission, deemed planning permission and consent required for the grid connection has been granted under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and/or the Electricity Act 1989.

(2) No part of the development hereby permitted shall be connected to the grid connection unless works on the grid connection are carried out in accordance with any necessary consents and the approved details.

Reason: Since the development hereby permitted and its grid connection have been found to comprise a single project, this condition ensures that likely significant effects of the grid connection itself and in combination with the development hereby permitted are identified, assessed and taken into account before the Highland Council or Scottish Ministers gives consent for any part of the project to proceed.

Non-Material Considerations

7.144 Several objections submitted against the application make specific appeals to Human Rights and mention of mental health effects. In terms of Human Rights, Members are reminded that planning legislation and policy in Scotland must take account of provisions within the Scotland Act 1998, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equalities Act 2010, and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Scottish planning legislation states that the purpose of planning is "to manage the use and development of land in the long-term public interest". It is section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 that sets out the statutory process of determining applications for generating stations with capacity above 50MW. The process is designed to facilitate sound decisions that are fair and legal. To that end, the legislation sets out the rights of applicants and third parties alike within the process of determining applications, which includes the right to notification, consultation, and engagement. Officers are satisfied that these statutory rights have been applied in the processing of this application in so far as the process is managed on behalf of Scottish Ministers by the ECU, including this consultation made to the Council as the Local Planning Authority. Further information and advice on the rights of applicants and third parties within the Scottish planning system is available on the Planning Aid Scotland website at the following link: https://www.pas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/7.-Rights-andChallenges-in-the-Scottish-Planning-System-04-2023.pdf

7.145 Mental health as a material planning consideration is specifically mentioned in NPF4 Policies 14 Design, quality and place, and 21 for Play, recreation and sport, while consideration of the issue is implied under Policy 23 Health and Safety, which seeks to improve outcomes for health and wellbeing in addition to protecting people and places from environmental and physical harm. The former policies advocate for improved opportunities for play, socialising, relaxation, and

physical activity in line with the designing for healthy outcomes quality of the 6 qualities of Successful Places. These healthy outcomes are listed as 1) lifelong wellbeing, 2) healthy and active lifestyles, 3) accessibility and inclusion, 4) social connectivity; and, 5) environmentally positive places (see NPF4 Annex D).

7.146 The purpose of planning for these outcomes is to improve the collective physical and mental health of our communities. The current proposal for a renewable energy generating station would not be detrimental to any of these healthy outcomes and, indeed, is also supported under the designing for sustainable outcomes quality of Successful Places. On that basis, individual claims against mental health impacts as a result of a development (whether at application stage through to its eventual construction) are private matters for the individuals concerned rather than strategic land use matters of public interest, which again, is the proper remit of the planning system.

7.147 Other non-material considerations raised in public representations have been summarised in Part 4 of this report, above.

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. The Habitat Management Plan Area is understood to be within the developer's control. No legal agreement is required should consent be granted

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 108MW of renewable energy capacity, and 5MW of battery storage, towards Scottish Government targets and play a role in the route to a net zero Scotland.

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 As noted in the report, the siting, layout and design of the proposals is considered broadly successful, in responding to the scale and character of the host landscape, to create a cohesive layout, such that general collective landscape effects on the local landscape composition are within acceptable limits. The proposed development would appear as a distinct, linear scheme of two rows from many locations, which broadly respects the design of other operational and consented wind farms in the surrounding area. In that way, the report has set out that the proposals will not, on their own, be significantly detrimental to the integrity of nearby landscape designations, including the Assynt-Coigach National Scenic Area, or the Ben Klibreck and Loch Choire Special Landscape Area.

9.4 Additionally, it is considered that the proposals, in solus, retain a suitable setback from the communities of Achnairn, Tirryside and Lairg, while the reduction in height of all turbines in the amended design, ensures that, while prominent, the turbines will present a reasonably balanced composition overall and not result in a dominant visual effect when viewed by these communities and other receptors in the surrounding area. Similarly, other visual impacts, including on transport and recreational receptors, are within acceptable limits including when experienced in combination and sequentially with other existing and consented wind energy development in the wider landscape, as well as when experienced during hours of darkness.

9.5 It is also important to consider the combined effects of the proposed development with other wind farm development in planning. Should the Shinness Wind Farm, which the Council has objected to and is currently with the DPEA Reporter at Public Local Inquiry, be consented, the combined effect of Shinness and the proposed development would result in unacceptable cumulative landscape and visual effects. In particular, the scale, extensive lateral spread and separation distance between the two developments would alter the perception and experience of the landscape, such that wind energy developments across the wider area would cease to be perceived as an occasional or peripheral influence and instead would become a defining characteristic of the landscape. As such, considering the uncertainty over this scenario, Officers are currently unable to support the proposals and as such, they are considered contrary to NPF4 Policy 11 e) (ii) and HwLDP Policy 67.

9.6 Should Shinness not proceed however, Officers are of the view that the landscape and visual impacts arising from the proposed development are within acceptable limits and could therefore otherwise be supported given its wider energy, socio-economic and overall environmental benefits. Subsequently, the cumulative landscape and visual impacts constitute the only recemented reason for objection, which is advised to be subsequently withdrawn in the event that Shinness Wind Farm is refused.

9.7 Otherwise, 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 peat, telecommunications, aviation and radar, as well as decommissioning and aftercare, would generally, also be within acceptable limits subject to the developer's compliance with conditions requested by consultees.

9.8 Significant weight has been given to the global climate and nature crises in this assessment. However, the significant cumulative landscape and visual impacts are at present, considered to outweigh the proposal's benefits and contributions to mitigate both crises and as such, are sufficient reason to recommend the Council Raise Objection to the application.

9.9 This application has been assessed against the provisions and 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.

9.10 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

1. 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 to withdraw the Council's objection in the event that Shinness Wind Farm (THC reference 24/01643/S36) is refused.

2. 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.

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. Should the Shinness Wind Farm be consented, the combined effect of the proposed development and Shinness would give rise to unacceptable cumulative effects on landscape character. The scale, extensive lateral spread and separation distance between the two developments would result in detrimental combined effects that would collectively, fundamentally alter the perception and experience of the host Sweeping Moorland and Flows Landscape Character Type (Strath Fiag / Tirry Landscape Character Area), such that wind energy developments across the wider area would cease to be perceived as an occasional or peripheral influence and would instead become a defining characteristic of the landscape and the area would be perceived unequivocally as a 'wind farm landscape'. As such, the application fails to demonstrate compliance with NPF4 Policy 11 e) (ii) and HwLDP Policy 67.

2. The application does not accord with the provisions of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989, by virtue of not demonstrating sufficient regard to the desirability of, and failing to reasonably mitigate effects detrimental to, conserving physiographical features of special interest. Should the Shinness Wind Farm be consented, the combined effect of the proposed development and Shinness would give rise to unacceptable cumulative effects on views from the A838 and A836, as well as on views from several hilltops, as most evident from Viewpoints 4 (A838 near Sithean Dubh Mor), 5 (A836 near Crask Inn), 6 (Maovally), 7 (Ben Hee), 9 (A838 near West Shinness Lodge), 10 (Ben Sgeireach), 12 (Ben More Assynt), 13 (Ben Klibreck), 15 (The Ord) and A (Beinn Leoid). As such, the application fails to demonstrate compliance with NPF4 Policy 11 e) (ii) and HwLDP Policy 67.

Signature: Bob Robertson

Designation: pp Area Planning Manager - North

Authors:	Michael Kordas - Principal Planner
	Rohan Sinha – Principal Landscape Officer (Landscape and Visual Sections)
Background Papers:	Documents referred to in report and in case file.
Relevant Plans:	Plan 1 - FEI Figure 1.1a Site Location / Boundary Plan
	Plan 2 - FEI Figure 4.1a FEI Revised Layout
	Plan 3 - FEI Figure 4.2 Indicative Wind Turbine (230m)
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

No representations received by the Council.

Representations received by the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit can be accessed via www.energyconsents.scot

Appendix 2 - Cumulative Wind Farm Developments

Reference and Name	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	No. of Turbines	Blade Tip Height (m)
Existing wind energy development within 20 km			
Creag Riabhach	7	22	125
Achany	16	19	100
Rosehall	17	19	90
Lairg	22.5	3	100
Kilbraur	35.0	19	115
Kilbraur Extension	35.0	8	125
Gordonbush Extension	38.5	11	149.9
Gordonbush	39.5	35	121
Strathy South	41.5	35	200
Beinn nan Oighrean	42.0	2	80
Beinn Tharsuinn	42.0	16	80
Coire na Cloiche	42.5	13	84.5–99.5
Bettyhill Phase 1	45.5	2	149.9
Consented wind energy development within 20 km			
Sallachy	**3**	**10**	**149.9**
Creag Riabhach Extension	8	3	149.9
Achany Extension	10.5	18	149.9

Reference and Name	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	No. of Turbines	Blade Tip Height (m)
Strath Tirry	13	4	135
Chleansaid	14	16	200
Strath Oykel	22.5	11	200
Lairg II	23.0	10	150–200
Garvary	24.0	24	180
Meall Buidhe	25.0	8	149.9
Bettyhill Phase 2	44.5	10	149.9
In planning wind energy development within 20 km			
Shinness	5	16	200
Sallachy Extension	6	1	149.9
Allt An Tuir	17	9	200
Coille Beith	23.0	11	200
Inveroykel	23.5	20	200–230
Acheilidh	27.0	12	200–230
Balblair	28.5	7	149.9–200
Creachan	38.5	13	180–200
Scoping / Pre-Application Wind Energy Development Within 20 km			
Invercassley	15	22	230

Reference and Name	Distance from Proposed Development (km)	No. of Turbines	Blade Tip Height (m)
Fionn	19	29	230–250
Creag Dhubh	19	27	200
Ruith Cnoc	23.0	42	220
Garvary II	25.0	16	200
Braelangwell	26.5	17	220
Pollie Hill	28.5	13	200
Kinlochbervie Renewable Energy	33.5	18	200
Beinn Tharsuinn - Repower	40.0	31	180
Glasa	41.5	27	250

- **Bold** are wind farms have either changed status or were not included in the applicant's cumulative list.
    - 26/00589/FUL granted planning permission for an additional turbine at Sallachy Windfarm

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, although the site is not located within any of these study areas.

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)
- 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 relevant to the delivery of major renewable energy developments in a number of documents. This includes the Highland Council Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments (July 2016).

Other International and National Legislation, Policy, and Guidance

A3.9

- The Flow Country World Heritage Site Management Plan (July 2026)
- Managing Natural World Heritage (2012)
- Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2025)
- UNESCO Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context (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)

- Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA), Landscape Institute (March 2019)
- Scottish Forestry Woodland Creation Application Guidance (November 2017)
- Health and Safety Guidance for Grid Scale Electrical Energy Storage Systems' (UK Government, Mar 2024)
- Scottish Government Planning Guidance: Battery Energy Storage Systems (March 2026)
- National Fire Chiefs Council's guidance - Guidance on Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System planning (Nov 2022) ('the NFCC guidance') and a related draft revision (Jul 2024) approved for publication (Dec 2025).

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

National Policy

A4.1 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) forms part of the Development Plan and was adopted in February 2023. It comprises three parts:

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

A4.2 **Part 1 - The Spatial Strategy** sets out that we are facing unprecedented challenges and that we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to future impacts of climate change. It sets out that 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.

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

i) the objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the areas will not be compromised; or
ii) any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental, or economic benefits of national importance.

A4.7 Similarly, sites designated in Development Plans for local nature conservation or Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) are protected in NPF4 Policy 4 unless the development will not result in significantly adverse effects on its qualities or its integrity, or, these effects are clearly outweighed by social, environmental, or economic benefits of at least local importance.

A4.8 The most significant policy change for Natural Places introduced by NPF4 Policy 4 is with regard to Wild Land Areas (WLA). This policy now states that renewable energy developments that support national targets will be supported in WLAs and that buffer zones around WLAs will not be applied, so that effects of development outwith WLAs will not be a significant consideration.

A4.9 Policy 7 includes a consideration of World Heritage Sites, and although the Flow Country World Heritage Site is inscribed as a natural property rather than an historic asset or place, it falls under the provision of Policy 7 l), which states that

development proposals affecting a World Heritage Site will only be supported where their Outstanding Universal Value is protected and preserved. Officers are content that the proposals achieve this, following consultation with Nature Scot.

A4.10 Policy 11 intent is to “encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore. This includes energy generation, storage, new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure and emerging low-carbon and zero emissions technologies including hydrogen and carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS)”. It specifies that the principle of all forms of renewable, low-carbon, and zero emission technologies is supported (with the exception of wind farm proposals located in National Parks or National Scenic Areas) including ‘enabling works, such as grid transmission and distribution infrastructure’ which encompasses this application.

A4.11 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. In this respect, the application is considered contrary to Policy 11 e) (ii) in relation to the significant cumulative visual impacts incurred.

A4.12 This includes a broad range of matters similar to those to be assessed under HwLDP Policy 67 including landscape and visual impacts. It advises that where impacts are localised and / or appropriate design mitigation has been applied such effects will generally be considered acceptable. While the adopted NPF4 reflects a stronger presumption in favour of all national scale energy developments, judgment is still required at the project level to ensure proposals do not have unacceptable landscape and visual impacts even if the contribution to national renewable energy targets is considerable.

A4.13 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.

A4.14 Additionally, whilst the generality of HwLDP's topic policies are superseded by those in NPF4, HwLDP policies that offer greater detail than NPF4 or that are tailored to Highland circumstance (and are not wholly incompatible with NPF4) are still relevant and applicable. In particular, Policy 67 Renewable Energy and its related Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance is relevant. Also, relevant, is Policy 57 Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage in terms of protection of the setting of scheduled monuments.

A4.15 In terms of HwLDP Policy 67, whilst the proposed development would contribute towards meeting renewable energy generation targets and generally have a positive effect on the local and national economy the Council has to be satisfied that it is located, sited and designed not to be significantly detrimental overall, either individually or cumulatively with other developments, having regard in particular to any significant effects on the following:

- Natural, built and cultural heritage features;
- Visual impact and impact on the landscape character of the surrounding area (the design and location of the proposal should reflect the scale and character of the landscape and seek to minimise landscape and visual impact, subject to any other considerations);
- Amenity at sensitive locations, including residential properties, workplaces and recognised visitor sites (in or outwith a settlement boundary); and
- The amenity of users of any Core Path or other established public access for walking, cycling or horse riding.

A4.16 **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 off-shore electricity generation, including electricity storage, from renewables exceeding 50 megawatts capacity;

A4.17 This brings the application under the 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. As has already been set out, cumulative visual effects are significant and adverse across a broad range of

receptors within a broad area and are judged to be not within acceptable limits with visual effects encroaching on the level of visual residential and community amenity. Biodiversity enhancement, built and cultural heritage resources, roads, proposals for decommissioning, restoration and aftercare can adequately be dealt with by condition, however.

Highland wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP)

A4.18 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".

A4.19 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.

A4.20 Policy 69 – Electricity Transmission Infrastructure states that 'proposals for overground, underground or sub-sea electricity transmission infrastructure (including lines and cables, pylons/ poles and vaults, transformers, switches and other plant) will be considered having regard to their level of strategic significance in transmitting electricity from areas of generation to areas of consumption'. Subject to balancing with this consideration, and taking into account any proposed mitigation measures, the Council will support proposals which are assessed as not having an unacceptable significant impact on the environment, including natural, built and cultural heritage features.

A4.21 Although HwLDP Policy 67 and Policy 69 are considered compatible with NPF4 Policy 11, NPF4 expresses greater support for renewable energy projects outwith National Parks and NSAs and requires greater weight to be attributed to the twin climate and biodiversity crises in the decision-making process, whilst still recognising that a balancing exercise must still be carried out.

Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan)

A4.22 No specific policies apply however, that the CaSPlan does identify Special Landscape Areas (SLA) within the plan.

Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG)

A4.23 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.

A4.24 The OWESG approach and methodology to the assessment of proposals is applicable and is set out in the OWESG Para 4.16 - 4.17. It provides a methodology for a judgement to be made on the likely impact of a development on assessed "thresholds" in order to assist the application of HwLDP Policy 67. The 10 criteria are particularly useful in considering visual impacts, including cumulative impacts. An appraisal of how the proposal meets with the thresholds set out in the criteria is included in Appendix 7 of this report.

Landscape Sensitivity Study

A4.25 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)

A4.26 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 10.9 GW (Quarter 2, 2026). 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.

A4.27 Like the previous iteration of the Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement, the document recognises that balance is required and that no one technology can allow Scotland to reach its net zero targets. The document is clear that in achieving a balance, environmental and socio-economic benefits to Scotland must be maximised. In taking this approach, this echoes Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy.

A4.28 The document recognises that there may be a need to develop onshore wind energy development on peat. Priority peatland is present on the site, and it is considered that a Peat Management Plan and the Habitat Management Plan, which shows adequate compensation, can be secured by condition.

A4.29 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.

A4.30 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.

A4.31 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.

A4.32 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 effects of the development both singularly and cumulatively with existing, consented and other proposed wind farm developments.

A5.2 FEI Chapter 6 updates the LVIA in the EIAR and includes an updated assessment of the proposed development on landscape character, designated landscapes including the Assynt – Coigach NSA and Ben Klibreck – Loch Choire SLA, and visual receptors including viewpoints. An updated sequential assessment on the A836 and A838 routes, Hours of Darkness Assessment on the NSA and visual receptors, cumulative assessment and a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment has also been undertaken. The design changes to the proposal are set out in FEI, Chapter 4: The Revised Proposed Development.

A5.3 A total of 20 viewpoints (16 main and four additional locations) across the detailed study area of 45 km have been assessed in the EIAR, however. Viewpoints are representative of a range of receptors including communities and residential receptors, recreational users of the outdoors and road users including tourists.

A5.4 In relation to the viewpoint visualisations, Viewpoint 1: A838 near Fiag Bridge, Viewpoint 2: Loch Fiag and Viewpoint 4: A838 near Sithean Dubh Mor also illustrate visibility of the revised proposed development with forestry felling within the site. Wirelines have also been illustrated for four additional viewpoints (A-D) including Beinn Leoid, Ben Hope, Ben Loyal and Càrn a' Choin Deirg. Comparative wirelines illustrating the EIAR and FEI layouts are also submitted from all viewpoints.

A5.5 The expected bare earth visibility of the development, which has informed the scoped in effects and list of viewpoints, can be appreciated from several LVIA 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 visual receptors.

A5.6 The information submitted with the EIAR and FEI is considered sufficient to allow the Council to come to a reasoned conclusion on the likely landscape and visual effects of the revised proposed development.

A5.7 The methodology for the LVIA which includes the CLVIA is split across various documents in the FEI including LVIA Assessment Criteria in Technical Appendix 6.1, Volume 4 ZTV and Visualisation Information in Technical Appendix 6.2, Volume 4 and Assessment Methodology and Scope set out in the main chapter (6) of the LVIA. This broadly follows the guidance out in *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* Third Edition (GLVIA3). The FEI LVIA

adopts the same methodology as the EIAR. 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 assessed significant effects following the combination of judgements based on the sensitivity of the receptor against the magnitude of change.

A5.8 The sensitivity of the receptor (landscape or visual) is defined by the receptor's susceptibility to the change brought about by the proposed development against the importance (value) of the landscape resource / view.

A5.9 The EIAR and FEI LVIA methodology advises that the sensitivity of landscape receptors reflects its susceptibility to change, and the value associated with it. It further notes that this varies depending on the physical and perceptual attributes of the landscape including but not necessarily limited to: scale; degree of openness; landform; existing land cover; landscape pattern and complexity; the extent of human influence in the landscape; the degree of remoteness/wildness; perception of change in the landscape; the importance of landmarks or skylines in the landscape; inter-visibility with and influence on surrounding areas; condition; rarity and scenic quality of the landscape, and the value placed on the landscape including any designations that may apply.

A5.10 For visual receptors, the EIAR and FEI LVIA methodology notes that sensitivity varies depending on a number of factors such as the occupation of the viewer, their viewing expectations, duration of view and the angle or direction in which they would see the site. Whilst most views are valued by someone, certain viewpoints are particularly highly valued for either their cultural or historical associations and this can increase the sensitivity of the view. The Council, however, considers recreational users moving through the landscape at slower speeds such as cyclists as well as passengers in vehicles to also have a higher sensitivity to change.

A5.11 Whilst the LVIA provides an assessment of susceptibility and value for various receptors in its assessment, the methodology has not fully described the criteria for susceptibility and value and how these are brought together to define the sensitivity of a receptor. The methodology simply defines the sensitivity criteria for both landscape and visual receptors as very high, high, medium, low or very low along with interim levels of high / medium or medium / low.

A5.12 Judgement of magnitude of change is based on an assessment of factors, including: size and scale of effect; geographical extent of the effect, and duration and reversibility as set out in GLVIA3. However, as set out in the LVIA methodology, the approach taken in assessing the magnitude of change in the LVIA is solely on the scale or size of impact. It further notes that the LVIA also describes the duration and reversibility of the impact before drawing a conclusion on significance. Magnitude of change for both landscape and visual receptors is

defined in the LVIA as very high, high, medium, low and very low. Duration is defined as long-term (over 5 years), medium-term (between 1 and 5 years) and short-term (less than 1 year). Reversibility of change is defined as permanent (impact is non reversible) or non-permanent (impact is reversible).

A5.13 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 has not been specifically defined in the LVIA methodology but has been generally considered in the assessment.

A5.14 According to the definitions provided in Technical Appendix 6.1, Table 1, effects of major and major / moderate correspond to significant effects. Where 'moderate' effects are predicted, the LVIA advises that professional judgement has been applied to ensure that the potential for significant effects arising has been appropriately considered. Those effects classified as moderate / minor, minor or negligible are considered to be not significant.

A5.15 It is important to note that the baseline against which the solus effects of the proposed development has been assessed in the LVIA includes all operational wind farms. Whilst the approach of including operational wind farms to the baseline is not disputed, it should be noted that these wind farms are time limited and not permanent features in the landscape, and the effect on any receptor which includes their consideration would be of a temporal nature. Consideration of operational 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 proposed development that is reduced in the applicant's assessment where wind farm developments already exist. For visual receptors, the presence of operational and under construction turbines in views reduces the size and scale of the effect of the proposed development and therefore the magnitude of change for the in-solus visual assessment is itself a judgement of cumulative effects.

A5.16 The cumulative landscape and visual assessment (CLVIA), therefore considers the additional effects that might arise as a result of the proposed development if the other consented or under construction, in-planning and scoping schemes were also operational and formed part of the baseline landscape. In addition, this

cumulative assessment also includes a further consideration of the overall totality of the effect, when the proposed development is considered alongside the other operational or proposed schemes across the study area. Three Scenarios are considered in the cumulative assessment as follows:

- Scenario 1 - assumes that all other consented/under construction wind farms are operational;
- Scenario 2 - assumes that all schemes in planning are also operational. (In reality, it is possible that all other schemes that are in planning may not be approved and constructed but this scenario assumes all planning schemes are operational as this presents the 'worst case'); and
- Scenario 3 – assumes that all schemes currently in scoping and at pre application, where information is available, are also operational. In reality, it is possible that scoping schemes may not be progressed at all, be progressed with a different number and blade tip height of turbines in a different, may not be approved and constructed but this scenario assumes all schemes are operational as this presents the 'worst case'.

A5.17 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 guidance 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 proposed development extends or intensifies a landscape effect, or it fills an area such that it alters the landscape resource, or, where the interaction between the proposed development and other wind farms is such that the effect is greater than it should otherwise be.

A5.18 Similarly, more significant cumulative visual effects are considered to occur where the proposal would extend or intensify a visual effect, where the proposed development fills an area such that it alters the character of the view/visual amenity, and / or, where the interaction between the proposed development 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 proposed development lengthens the time over which an effect is experienced for receptors moving through the landscape.

A5.19 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 proposed development, and do not necessarily equate to unacceptable effects.

A5.20 The summary of the applicant's assessment and officer appraisal of this assessment, which highlights the differences and any concerns with regard to visual effect, can be found in Appendix 6.

A5.21 A key part of the of the Council's assessment of landscape and visual effects is a consideration of the proposed development 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. Furthermore, landscape and visual effects of the proposed development may be reversible as the scheme would be capable of being decommissioned as stated within the EIAR. However, as set out in Policy 11 (f) of NPF4, wind farm sites should be suitable in perpetuity, and it is therefore considered reasonable to assess the duration of all landscape and visual effects as non-reversible in that context.

Appendix 6 - Viewpoint Visual Assessment Appraisal (day-time effects)

Scenario 1 = In addition to operational, consented / under-construction + the revised proposed development
Scenario 2 = In addition to operational, consented / under-construction + applications + the revised proposed development
Scenario 3 = In addition to operational, consented / under-construction + applications + scoping + pre applications + the revised proposed development
Note - Operational wind farms are included as part of the baseline in the solus assessment.

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Viewpoint 1: A838 near Fiag Bridge Distance: 1km Looking: northwest	App	Medium	High	**Moderate**	**Significant**	Scenario 1: High Scenario 2: High Scenario 3 High	Scenario 1: Moderate Scenario 2: Moderate Scenario 3 Moderate	Scenario 1: **Significant** Scenario 2: **Significant** Scenario 3 **Significant**
	THC	High-Medium	Very High	**Major to Major / Moderate**	**Significant**	Scenario 1: Very High Scenario 2: Very High	Scenario 1: Major to Major / Moderate Scenario 2:	Scenario 1: **Significant** Scenario 2: **Significant**

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
						<u>Scenario 3</u> Very High	Major to Major / Moderate <u>Scenario 3</u> Major to Major / Moderate	<u>Scenario 3</u> **Significant**
	<u>Baseline</u> As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: representative of views from the A838 where open views are possible to the southwest across Loch Shin. Views become limited however to the north-west and north by coniferous forestry and landform at Leathad Fiag, as well as by rising land to the north-east and east, including by Cnoc an Laoigh. Native trees and vegetation align the A838 providing a naturalistic setting to the road and providing separation from the commercial forestry beyond. Overhead powerlines with associated pylons are visible on the skyline to the north and east. Distant views are possible towards higher land to the south and west beyond Loch Shin and with glimpses of Ben More Assynt and Meall an Aonaich beyond. **Operational Development** – Successive views of Lairg **Consented Development** – Successive views of Sallachy, Garvary, Lairg II, and Achany Extension. **In Planning / Scoping Development** – Successive views of Shinness, Acheilidh, Sallachy Extension, Balblair and Garvary II <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by road users. Susceptibility: Road users are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change. However, road also used by cyclists, recreational and tourist users with a higher susceptibility.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Value: Medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations. Overall High-medium sensitivity for all road users. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as Very High. The proposal will introduce very large turbines into an area previously afforded respite from this type of development and would appear very tall with T15 appearing dominant. Some stacking would be evident with turbines T8 and T10. Overall, however, the development presents a coherent layout with turbines mainly arranged in 2 perceptible rows. Large parts of forestry within the site will be felled in accordance with the proposed Forestry Plan as illustrated in the visualisation. Felling of this forestry will result in more of the turbines being visible and prominent. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be Major to Major / Moderate and Significant in comparison to the applicant's Moderate level of effect. <u>Cumulative effects</u> Scenario 1 – No simultaneous views with other projects in any scenario projects. Whilst consented developments would further change the baseline conditions, introducing additional turbines into views, the magnitude of change is judged to remain at very high owing to the closer proximity of the proposed turbines. Scenario 2: As above Scenario 3: As above The proposal is expected to make the greatest contribution in terms of additional and combined cumulative effects (Major to Major / Moderate) at this location.							
	App	High	High	**Major**	**Significant**	<u>Scenario 1</u>:	<u>Scenario 1</u>:	<u>Scenario 1</u>:

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Viewpoint 2: Loch Fiag Distance: 2.4km Looking: south						High Scenario 2: High Scenario 3 High	Major Scenario 2: Major Scenario 3 Major	**Significant** Scenario 2: **Significant** Scenario 3 **Significant**
	THC	High	Very High	**Major**	**Significant**	Scenario 1: Very High Scenario 2: Very High Scenario 3 Very High	Scenario 1: Major Scenario 2: Major Scenario 3 Major	Scenario 1: **Significant** Scenario 2: **Significant** Scenario 3 **Significant**
	Baseline As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: representative of those visiting Fiag Lodge and by those visiting Fiag Loch and the area of wild land. Views are relatively open due to the elevated moorland setting and views over the nearby loch; however, most distant views are contained by the network of hills and elevated land surrounding Fiag Loch. The exception to this is when looking along the River Fiag valley to the south, where coniferous forestry is located on both sides of the river. Views towards distant hills are possible on the skyline to the south, beyond areas of forestry and woodland. Within WLA 37. Foinaven – Ben Hee.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Operational and Consented Development –Simultaneous views of operational Achany, Rosehall, and Coire na Cloiche, consented Achany Extension and Sallachy **In Planning / Scoping Development** – simultaneous views of in-planning Inveroykel and Creachan, simultaneous views of scoping/ pre-application Braelangwell, Beinn Tharsuinn Repower, Inveroykel, and Fionn. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by recreational users of the outdoors. 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 as located within a landscape designated for its remoteness and its scenic qualities. Overall Sensitivity of High is agreed. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as Very High. The proposal will introduce very large turbines into a view from within a Wild Land area previously afforded respite from this type of development and would appear very tall. Overall, however, the development presents a coherent layout with the turbine array forming a coherent linear row, avoiding stacking. Turbines T1 and T3 would be prominent outliers. Large parts of forestry within the site will be felled in accordance with the proposed Forestry Plan as illustrated in the visualisation. Felling of this forestry will result in visibility of the full extent of some of the turbines including access tracks, crane pads and areas of hardstanding (and borrow pit during construction). The remaining areas of forestry that are not proposed to be felled would screen the remainder of the turbine bases and access tracks. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u>							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Whilst Officers consider the magnitude to be Very High (High by the applicant), they consider that the level of effect would be Major and Significant, which is agreed. <u>Cumulative effects</u> Scenario 1 – Whilst consented developments would further change the baseline conditions, introducing additional turbines into views, the magnitude of change is judged to remain at very high owing to the closer proximity of the proposed turbine. Scenario 2 – As above. Scenario 3 – As above. The proposal is expected to make the greatest contribution in terms of additional and combined cumulative effects (Major) at this location.							
Viewpoint 3: A838 near Overscaig Hotel Distance: 3.4km Looking: east	App	Medium / high	Medium / low	Moderate / minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Medium / low <u>Scenario 2</u>: Medium / low <u>Scenario 3</u> Medium / low	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Moderate / minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Moderate / minor <u>Scenario 3</u> Moderate / minor	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3</u> Not significant

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	THC	Medium-high / high	Medium / low	Moderate to Moderate / minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Medium / low <u>Scenario 2</u>: Medium / low <u>Scenario 3</u> Medium / low	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Moderate to Moderate / minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Moderate to Moderate / minor <u>Scenario 3</u> Moderate to Moderate / 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 FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: representative of views from the A838 and from residents within Overscaig. Views towards the Site are obscured by rising landform to the east of the road and intervening coniferous forestry. Views towards Loch Shin are glimpsed due to intervening residential properties within Overscaig and the vegetation surrounding these properties. Intermittent vegetation aligns both sides of the road which also serves to limit outward views. Overhead powerlines with associated pylons are visible on the skyline and above commercial forestry to the south-east, with wooden poles seen in the foreground. Distant glimpsed views are possible towards higher land to the west beyond Loch Shin.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Operational and Consented Development - Simultaneous views of operational Lairg, simultaneous views of Garvary and Lairg 2. Successive views of Sallachy. **In Planning / Scoping Development** –Simultaneous views of Shinness and Acheilidh. Successive views of Sallachy Extension. Scenario 3 As Simultaneous views of Creag Dhubh (scoping) <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by residents and road users. Susceptibility: Residents are normally considered to be of high susceptibility to changes in views, with road users considered to be of medium susceptibility however road also used by cyclists, recreational and tourist users with a higher susceptibility Value: Medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations. Overall High sensitivity agreed however road users are assessed as Medium-high. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as Medium/ low. The proposed development will introduce very large turbines into an area previously afforded respite from this type of development, although the perception of height is somewhat mitigated by distance and intervening topographical screening features. The development presents a mix of views of turbines to blade tip and hub height, with stacking evident on T14 and T15. Overall, however, the proposed array reads coherently as two rows of turbines, one in front of the other. The presence of overhead line transmission infrastructure in the view, at a similar apparent scale to the proposed turbines, is also noted. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u>							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Consider that the level of effect would be Moderate and not significant for residents, which is agreed. For road users, Officers consider the effect to Moderate / Minor and not significant due to the higher sensitivity assessed. <u>Cumulative effects</u> Scenario 1 – Sallachy would essentially change the baseline conditions, introducing turbines into views currently largely void of operational wind energy developments. Owing to the proximity of the Sallachy turbines and the revised development to the viewer, the magnitude of change is judged to remain at Medium/ low. Scenario 2 – As above Scenario 3 – As above							
Viewpoint 4: A838 near Sithean Dubh Mor Distance: 4.7km Looking: northwest	App	Medium	High / medium	**Moderate**	**Significant**	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Medium <u>Scenario 2</u>: High / medium <u>Scenario 3</u> High / medium	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Moderate <u>Scenario 2</u>: Moderate <u>Scenario 3</u> Moderate	<u>Scenario 1</u>: **Significant** <u>Scenario 2</u>: **Significant** <u>Scenario 3</u> **Significant**
	THC	Medium-High	High / medium	**Major / Moderate**	**Significant**	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Medium <u>Scenario 2</u>:	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Major / Moderate	<u>Scenario 1</u>: **Significant** <u>Scenario 2</u>:

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
						High / medium Scenario 3 High / medium	Scenario 2: Major / Moderate Scenario 3 Major / Moderate	**Significant** Scenario 3 **Significant**
	Baseline As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of views from the A838. Views from the road are open, with the road crossing moorland; however, there are no views towards Loch Shin due to intervening landform, despite being around 1km from the eastern edge. Land gently undulates to the west of the road due to small watercourses crossing the land, with views possible towards coniferous forestry within the Site, as well as hills such as Ben More Assynt and Ben Klibreck on the skyline. Land gently rises to the east, which in combination with sparse areas of plantation limit outward views. An overhead powerline with associated pylons follows the A838 in this location, seen on the skyline to the northeast and south-east of the road. **Operational Development** – Successive views of Achany. **Consented Development** – Simultaneous views with Sallachy. Successive views of Achany Extension. **In Planning / Scoping Development** – Simultaneous views of Sallachy Extension. Successive views of Shinness and Invercassley (scoping) Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced by road users							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Susceptibility: Road users are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change however road also used by cyclists, recreational and tourist users with a higher susceptibility. Value: Medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations. Sensitivity is assessed as Medium-high for all road users compared to the applicant's assessment of Medium. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as High / medium, as agreed. The proposal will introduce very large turbines into a view previously afforded respite from this type of development and would appear very tall. Overall, however, the development presents a coherent layout with the turbine array forming a linear row, avoiding stacking for the most part, with the exception of Turbines T11 and T5. Large parts of forestry within the site will be felled in accordance with the proposed Forestry Plan as illustrated in the visualisation. Felling of this forestry will result in visibility of the full extent of some of the turbines including access tracks, crane pads and areas of hardstanding. The remaining areas of forestry that are not proposed to be felled would, in combination with intervening landform, screen the remainder of the turbine bases and access tracks. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be Major / Moderate and Significant. <u>Cumulative effects</u> Scenario 1 – Achany Extension would marginally extend the lateral extent of the existing Achany development in distant views. Sallachy would increase the influence of wind farms in the view owing to their closer proximity to the viewer. As a result, the magnitude of change is judged to reduce to medium. Scenario 2 – Sallachy Extension would be experienced as a legible extension to a consented development. Shinness would add further turbines in the same landscape character type as the revised development, at proximity to the viewer, resulting in a High / medium magnitude of change.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Scenario 3 – As above. Receptors at this location would also experience significant combined cumulative effects (Major) due to the proposal, Shinness and Sallachy.							
Viewpoint 5: A836 near Crask Inn Distance: 6.4km Looking: west	App	High / medium to Medium	High / medium	**Major /moderate**	**Significant**	Scenario 1: Medium Scenario 2: High /medium Scenario 3 Medium	Scenario 1: Moderate Scenario 2: Major / moderate Scenario 3 Major / moderate	Scenario 1: **Significant** Scenario 2: **Significant** Scenario 3 **Significant**
	THC	High / medium	High / medium	**Major /moderate**	**Significant**	Scenario 1: High / Medium Scenario 2: High / Medium Scenario 3 High / Medium	Scenario 1: Major / Moderate Scenario 2: Major / moderate Scenario 3	Scenario 1: **Significant** Scenario 2: **Significant** Scenario 3 **Significant**

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
							Major / moderate	
	Baseline As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of views from the A836 and forms part of the John O'Groats Cycle Route. Views from the road are open in nature, with the road crossing moorland close to the River Tirry. There is limited vegetation, apart from some scattered areas of plantation forestry. Views toward elevated land is possible in all directions, including towards Creag an Lochain and Meall nan Con to the north-west and Ben More Assynt and Ben Leoid to the west. Most of the Site is obscured by intervening landform including Cnoc a Mhaoil Ruaidh and Cnoc an Ulbhaidh. Glimpses of blade tips of the Creag Riabhach Wind Farm are possible on the skyline, partly obscured by coniferous forestry either side of the road. **Existing Development** – Successive views of operational Creag Riabhach. **Consented Development** – Simultaneous views with Sallachy. Successive views of Creag Riabhach Extension, Meall Buidhe, and Achany Extension. **In Planning / Scoping Development** – Simultaneous views with Sallachy Extension. Successive views with Shinness, Inveroykel, and Coille Beith Simultaneous views with Invercassley and Fionn. Successive views with Creag Dhubh, and Glasa (scoping). Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced by road users. Susceptibility: Road users are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change, but High is acceptable in terms of cyclists. Tourists also use this road.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Value: Medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations. Sensitivity is considered by Officers as High / medium for cyclists, as agreed which will also apply to all other road users along this single track road. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC High / medium, as agreed. The Proposed development will introduce very large turbines into an area previously afforded respite from this type of development and would appear very tall. Overall, however, the development presents a coherent, linear layout, mostly avoiding stacking, with most of the turbines back clothed by topography to hub height. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be Major / moderate and Significant due to the proximity and extent of visibility of the turbines. <u>Cumulative Effects</u> Scenario 1 – Creag Riabhach Extension would marginally extend the lateral extent of the existing Creag Riabhach development in distant views. The other consented developments would add further turbines into distant views, with Sallachy increasing the influence of wind farms in the view owing to their closer proximity to the viewer. MoC will however remain as High/Medium given prominence of the proposed development. Scenario 2 – Sallachy Extension would be experienced as a legible extension to a consented development. Shinness would add further turbines in the same landscape character type as the revised development. MoC would be High / medium. Scenario 3 – As above Receptors at this location would also experience significant combined cumulative effects (Major / moderate) due to the proposal and Shinness and to a lesser degree, with Sallachy and Achany Extension.						

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Viewpoint 6: Maovally Distance: 7.7km Looking: east	App	High	High / medium	**Major / moderate**	**Significant**	Scenario 1: Medium Scenario 2: High / medium Scenario 3 Medium	Scenario 1: Moderate Scenario 2: Major / moderate Scenario 3 Moderate	Scenario 1: **Significant** Scenario 2: **Significant** Scenario 3 **Significant**
	THC	High	High / medium	**Major / moderate**	**Significant**	Scenario 1: Medium Scenario 2: High / medium Scenario 3 Medium	Scenario 1: Moderate Scenario 2: Major / moderate Scenario 3 Moderate	Scenario 1: **Significant** Scenario 2: **Significant** Scenario 3 **Significant**
	Baseline As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5:viewpoint is representative of walkers visiting the peak of Maovally and the area of wild land. Views from the peak are open and panoramic in nature, with views over the surrounding landscape. Views towards the Site are partly							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	obscured by coniferous forest covered land which rises up from the edge of Loch Shin. Views toward Lairg are obscured by foreground landform. Views towards hills including Ben More Assynt are possible to the west across Glen Cassley. Within WLA 34. Reay – Cassley. **Operational Development –** Simultaneous views of operational Strathy South, Creag Riabhach, Gordonbush, Gordonbush Extension, Kilbraur, and Kilbraur Extension. Successive views with Lairg, Achany, Rosehall, Coire na Cloiche, Beinn Tharsuinn, and Beinn nan Oighrean. **Consented Development** - Simultaneous views of Creag Riabhach Extension, Chleansaid, Sallachy and Strath Tirry. Successive views with Garvary, Lairg 2, Achany Extension, Strath Oykel, and Meall Buidhe. **In Planning / Scoping Development** - Simultaneous views of Shinness and Sallachy Extension. Successive views with Acheilidh, Balblair, Allt An Tuir, Creachan, Inveroykel, and Coille Beith. Simultaneous views of Creag Dhubh. Successive views of Garvary II, Braelangwell, Beinn Tharsuinn Repower, Invercassley, Fionn, Glasa, and Ruith Cnoc <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by recreational users of the outdoors. Susceptibility: Recreational users are normally considered to have a high susceptibility to change as attention/interest is likely to be focused on the landscape. Value: High value as viewpoint is located within a landscape designated for its remoteness and its scenic qualities. Overall Sensitivity is agreed as High. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as High / medium. The proposed turbines would occupy a horizontal extent of approximately 30- 40 degrees, albeit would mainly be back clothed by land rising further to the east of the revised development, including Ben Klibreck. The turbines would otherwise, be							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	read as a relatively well spaced horizontal array, although with some clustering evident on Turbines T2 and T3, T10 and T11 and T12 and 13. Forestry felling would have a limited effect in terms of any change in magnitude from this location. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be Major moderate and significant which is agreed. <u>Cumulative Effects</u> Scenario 1 – Creag Riabhach Extension would marginally extend the lateral extent of the existing Creag Riabhach development in views. The other consented developments would add further turbines into the view, with Sallachy increasing the influence of wind farms in the view. A reduction in MoC to medium can be accepted. Scenario 2 – No change to main assessment. Scenario 3 – Scoping/preapplication developments would further change the baseline conditions, introducing additional turbines into views, and increasing the influence of wind farms in the view. As Scenario 1. Receptors at this location would also experience significant combined cumulative effects (Major) primarily due to the proposal, Sallachy, Shinness and Achany Extension.							
Viewpoint 7: Ben Hee Distance: 8.6km	App	High	Medium	**Moderate**	**Significant**	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Medium <u>Scenario 2</u>: Medium <u>Scenario 3</u>	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Moderate <u>Scenario 2</u>: Moderate <u>Scenario 3</u>	<u>Scenario 1</u>: **Significant** <u>Scenario 2</u>: **Significant** <u>Scenario 3</u>

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Looking: south						Medium	Moderate	**Significant**
	THC	High	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>: **Significant** <u>Scenario 2</u>: **Significant** <u>Scenario 3</u> **Significant**
	<u>Baseline</u> As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of walkers visiting the peak of Ben Hee and the area of wild land. Views from the peak are open and panoramic in nature, with views over the surrounding landscape. Views towards the site are seen beyond Fiag Loch and to the west of Glen Fiag. Within WLA 37: Foinaven – Ben Hee. **Operational Development** - Simultaneous views of operational Creag Riabhach, Kilbraur, Kilbraur Extension, ,Lairg, Beinn Tharsuinn, Beinn nan Oighrean, Coire na Cloiche, Achany, and Rosehall. Successive views of Gordonbush, Gordonbush Extension, Bettyhill Phase 1, and Strathy South. **Consented Development** - Simultaneous views of consented Creag Riabhach Extension, Chleansaid, Strath Tirry, Garvary, Lairg 2, Achany Extension, Meall Buidhe, Strath Oykel, and Sallachy. Successive views of Bettyhill Phase 2.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	In Planning / Scoping Development - Simultaneous views of in-planning Acheilidh, Shinness, Balblair, Creachan, Inveroykel, Allt An Tuir, Coille Beith, and Sallachy Extension. Simultaneous views of scoping/ pre-application Creag Dhubh, Garvary II, Beinn Tharsuinn Repower, Braelangwell, Glasa, Invercassley, Fionn, and Ruith Cnoc. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by recreational users of the outdoors. 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 as viewpoint is located within a landscape designated for its remoteness and its scenic qualities. Overall Sensitivity is agreed as High. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC Medium as agreed. The proposed development would be clearly visible from this panoramic summit viewpoint. The proposed turbine array would, however, be relatively well contained horizontally and would be back clothed by land beyond the site however the composition would appear poor due to overlapping turbines and one turbine appearing to disrupt the almost two straight lines of the scheme. Large parts of forestry within the site will be felled in accordance with the proposed Forestry Plan. Felling of this forestry will result in visibility of the full extent of many of the turbines including access tracks, crane pads and areas of hardstanding being visible. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be Moderate and Significant, as agreed. <u>Cumulative Effects</u>							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Scenario 1 – Consented developments would further change the baseline conditions, introducing additional turbines into views. No change to main assessment owing to the panoramic nature of available views, and the closer proximity of the proposed development, can be accepted. Scenario 2 – As above. Scenario 3 – As above. Receptors at this location would also experience significant combined cumulative effects (Major / moderate) primarily due to the proposal Shinness, Creag Riabhach and Sallachy.							
Viewpoint 8: Arscaig Distance: 8.6km Looking: northwest	App	High	Medium	**Moderate**	**Significant**	Scenario 1: Medium / low Scenario 2: Medium Scenario 3 Medium / low	Scenario 1: Moderate Scenario 2: Moderate Scenario 3 Moderate	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: **Significant** Scenario 3 Not significant
	THC	High	Medium	**Major / Moderate**	**Significant**	Scenario 1: Medium Scenario 2: Medium Scenario 3 Medium	Scenario 1: Major / Moderate Scenario 2: Major / Moderate	Scenario 1: **Significant** Scenario 2: **Significant** Scenario 3 **Significant**

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
							<u>Scenario 3</u> Major / Moderate	
	<u>Baseline</u> As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of residents scattered along the south-western edge of Loch Shin, as well as those walking along the shoreline and visiting the wild land area. Views towards the site are possible over Loch Shin and filtered in part by scattered vegetation along the shoreline of the loch. The site is visible on the western side of Glen Fiag, which is covered in coniferous plantation, with some northern parts obscured by intervening landform. Ben Hee and other local peaks are visible on the distant skyline. Within WLA 34. Reay – Cassley **Operational Development** – Successive views with Lairg. **Consented Development** - **S**imultaneous views with consented Sallachy. Successive views with Chleansaid, Strath Tirry, Garvary, and Lairg 2. **In Planning / Scoping Development** - Simultaneous views with in-planning Shinness. Successive views with Acheilidh. Successive views of scoping/ pre-application developments Creag Dhubh, and Garvary II. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced mainly by local residents. Susceptibility: Residents have a high susceptibility to change in views from their properties. Value: High value as viewpoint is located within a landscape designated for its remoteness and its scenic qualities. Overall Sensitivity is agreed as High.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	MoC Considerations Consider the MoC as Medium which is agreed. The proposed turbines will extend visibility of wind energy development into an area previously offered respite from this. Most will extend above the skyline on the background topography. The array would, however, appear reasonably compact in its horizontal extent, although stacking would be apparent on Turbines T1, T4, T7, T9, T11and T13. Whilst some forestry felling would be visible, it would have a limited effect on the magnitude of change. Level of Effect Considerations Consider that the level of effect would be Major / Moderate and Significant due to the focus of the view and the prominence of the turbines, in comparison with the applicant's assessment which is Moderate and Significant. Cumulative Effects Scenario 1 – Consented developments would further change the baseline conditions, introducing additional turbines into views, at closer proximity to the viewer. However, in contrast to the applicant's assessment, this is not considered to reduce the magnitude of change, which remains medium, (significant). Scenario 2 – Acheilidh and Shinness would introduce further turbines into the view, increasing the influence of wind farms in the view. As Shinness and the revised development would be located in a different part of the landscape than the consented developments, the magnitude of change is judged to be Medium. Scenario 3 – Creag Dhubh further change the baseline conditions, introducing additional turbines into views, and increasing the influence of wind farms in the view. However, the magnitude of change is judged to reduce to medium (significant) given Creag Dhubh turbines would appear in a different aspect of the view not overlapping with the proposed development. Receptors at this location would also experience significant combined cumulative effects (Major / Moderate) primarily due to the proposal Shinness and Sallachy.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Viewpoint 9: A838 near West Shinness Lodge Distance: 8.7km Looking: northwest	App	High / medium	Medium to Medium / low	Moderate to Moderate / minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Low – Scenario 2: Medium / low Scenario 3 Medium / low	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Moderate / minor Scenario 3 Moderate / minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3 Not significant
	THC	High / Medium - high	Medium	**Moderate**	**Significant**	Scenario 1: Medium Scenario 2: Medium Scenario 3 Medium	Scenario 1: Moderate Scenario 2: Moderate Scenario 3 Moderate	Scenario 1: **Significant** Scenario 2: **Significant** Scenario 3 **Significant**
	Baseline							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of views from the A838, and of residents of Achnairn and residential properties aligning the road. Outward views from the road are afforded through intermittent gaps in roadside vegetation along both sides of the A838, as well as between vegetation surrounding residential properties and the gently rising landform to the east. Some views are also possible towards Loch Shin to the east and south-east, as well as glimpses towards higher ground beyond the loch, including to Ben More Assynt. **Operational Development -** Successive views of Lairg, and Achany **Consented Development** - Simultaneous views with consented Sallachy. Successive views of Garvary, Lairg 2 and Achany Extension. **In Planning / Scoping Development** - Simultaneous views with in-planning Shinness and Sallachy Extension. Successive views of Acheilidh, and Balblair. Successive views of Garvary II, and Invercassley. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by residents and road users. Susceptibility: Road users have a medium susceptibility to change whereas residents have a higher susceptibility. Tourists, cyclists and recreational users along this route will also have higher susceptibility. Value: Medum value can be accepted due to lack of designations. Overall Sensitivity is considered to be High by Officers, in the case of residents and Medium-High for road users <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as Medium (with or without felling). The proposed turbines would be partially screened by intervening landform (and some vegetation / forestry); however, the most visible turbines (T12 and T15) would appear stacked and would also overlap with Beinn Leoid in the background, potentially creating a visual distraction for receptors travelling in the direction of travel.						

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Level of Effect Considerations Consider that the level of effect would be Moderate and Significant due to the extent of visibility in the direction of travel as set out above. Cumulative Effects Scenario 1 – Consented developments would further change the baseline conditions, introducing additional turbines into views, at closer proximity to the viewer but in a different part of the view. The MoC would remain Medium and the effect would be Significant. Scenario 2 – Sallachy Extension would be experienced as a legible extension to a consented development. Shinness would introduce further turbines into the view, increasing the influence of wind farms. As Shinness and the revised development would be located in a different part of the landscape than Sallachy, the magnitude of change is judged to remain Medium, as in the main assessment and the effect would remain Significant. Scenario 3 – As above. Receptors at this location would also experience significant combined cumulative effects (Major / Moderate) primarily due to the proposal Shinness and Sallachy.							
Viewpoint 10: Ben Sgeireach Distance: 9.7km	App	High	Medium	**Moderate**	**Significant**	Scenario 1: Medium / low Scenario 2: Medium Scenario 3 Medium / low	Scenario 1: Moderate Scenario 2: Moderate Scenario 3 Moderate	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: **Significant** Scenario 3 Not significant

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Looking: north	THC	High	Medium	**Major / Moderate**	**Significant**	Scenario 1: Medium Scenario 2: Medium Scenario 3 Medium	Scenario 1: Major / Moderate Scenario 2: Major / Moderate Scenario 3 Major / Moderate	Scenario 1: **Significant** Scenario 2: **Significant** Scenario 3 **Significant**
	Baseline As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of walkers visiting the peak of Ben Sgeireach and the area of wild land. Views from the peak are open and panoramic in nature, with views over the surrounding landscape, including the surrounding moorland. Views towards the site are seen above Loch Shin and below Fiag Loch, Bee Hee, and other nearby hills. Visibility is partly obscured along Glen Fiag by intervening landform, obscuring northern parts of the site. Within WLA 34. Reay – Cassley **Operational Development –** Simultaneous views of operational Creag Riabhach. Successive views of Gordonbush, Gordonbush Extension, Lairg, Kilbraur, Kilbraur Extension, Achany, Rosehall, Coire na Cloiche, Beinn Tharsuinn, and Beinn nan Oighrean. **Consented Development** - **S**imultaneous views of consented Sallachy and Creag Riabhach Extension. Successive views of Chleansaid, Strath Tirry, Garvary, Lairg 2, Strath Oykel, Meall Buidhe, and Achany Extension.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	In Planning / Scoping Development - Simultaneous views of in-planning Shinness and Sallachy Extension. Successive views of Acheilidh, Balblair, Creachan, Inveroykel, Allt an Tuir, and Coille Beith. Successive views of Pollie Hill, Creag Dhubh, Garvary II, Braelangwell, Beinn Tharsuinn Repower, Glasa, Invercassley, Fionn, and Ruith Cnoc <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by recreational users of the outdoors 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 as viewpoint is located within a landscape designated for its remoteness and its scenic qualities. Overall Sensitivity is agreed as High. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as Medium, as agreed. The proposed development would be clearly visible from this panoramic summit viewpoint. The proposed turbine array would, however, be relatively well contained horizontally and would be back clothed, for the most part, by land beyond the site. Forestry felling would be partially visible but would have a limited effect at this distance. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be Major / Moderate and Significant due to the scale and prominence of the turbines. <u>Cumulative Effects</u> Scenario 1 – Consented developments would further change the baseline conditions, introducing additional turbines into views. Sallachy and Achany Extension would increase the influence of wind farms in views owing to their closer proximity to the viewer. However, the addition of							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	the proposed development would remain as Medium magnitude (Significant) as Sallachy is partially screened and Achany Extension is behind the viewer and seen in a different direction. Scenario 2 – In-planning developments would further change the baseline conditions, introducing additional turbines into views. Shinness would increase the influence of wind farms in the middle distance. As Shinness and the revised development would be located in a different part of the landscape many of the operational and consented developments, the magnitude of change is judged to rise back to judgement in main assessment as agreed. Scenario 3 – The Invercassley, Fionn, and Ruith Cnoc developments would further change the baseline conditions, introducing additional turbines into views, and increasing the influence of wind farms owing to their closer proximity to the viewer. Nevertheless, the MoC would remain Medium (significant). Receptors at this location would also experience significant combined cumulative effects (Major) primarily due to the proposal, Shinness, Sallachy, and Achany Extension, the latter which is located behind the viewer.							
Viewpoint 11: A836 Rhian Bridge Distance: 10.9km	App	High / medium to Medium	Very low	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Very low Scenario 2: Very low Scenario 3 Very low	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3 Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3 Not significant
	THC	High-medium	Very Low	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1:	Scenario 1:	Scenario 1:

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Looking: northwest						Very Low Scenario 2: Very low Scenario 3 Very Low	Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3 Minor	Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3 Not significant
	Baseline As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of views from the A836 and forms part of the John O'Groats Cycle Route. The road is located close to Rhian Bridge, near to where the River Tirry and Abhainn Sgeamhaidh meet. The road is set within a network of coniferous plantation which is continually being clear felled and re-planted, with the woodland west of the A836 being recently felled. Outward views are relatively well contained by the gently undulating landform surrounding the road, as well as the network of coniferous plantations. Glimpses of higher hills are however possible in all directions from the road. **Operational Development –** Successive views of Lairg, Coire na Cloiche, Beinn Tharsuinn, Beinn nan Oighrean, Achany, and Rosehall. **Consented Development** - Successive views of Chleansaid, Strath Tirry, Garvary, Lairg 2 Resubmission, Meall Buidhe, and Achany Extension. **In Planning / Scoping Development** - Simultaneous views with in-planning Shinness. Successive views of Acheilidh, Balblair, Creachan, and Inveroykel. Successive views of Creag Dhubh, Garvary II, Beinn Tharsuinn Repower, Braelangwell, Glasa, Invercassley, and Fionn. Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced by road users.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Susceptibility: Road users are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change, but High is acceptable in terms of cyclists. Tourists and other recreational users along this route will also have higher susceptibility. Value: Medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations. Sensitivity is considered by Officers as High- medium for road users. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as Very Low which is agreed. Although all 15 proposed turbines would be theoretically visible, coniferous forestry in the fore and middle grounds would filter views, and these would be limited to blade tips. Views would be oblique from the A836 route, further filtering views. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be Minor and not significant, which is agreed. <u>Cumulative Effects</u> Scenario 1 – Consented developments would further change the baseline conditions, introducing additional turbines into views. Chleansaid and Strath Tirry would increase the influence of wind farms in views owing to their closer proximity to the viewer. Scenario 2 – MoC remains very low due to distance and lack of visibility of revised development owing to screening, and with Shinness being more prominent in closer proximity to the viewpoint. Scenario 3 – As Scenario 2.							
Viewpoint 12: Ben More Assynt	App	High	Medium / low	Moderate / minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Low	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Moderate / minor	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Distance: 13.8km Looking: east						<u>Scenario 2</u>: Medum / low <u>Scenario 3:</u> Medium / low	<u>Scenario 2</u>: Moderate / minor <u>Scenario 3:</u> Moderate / minor	<u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3:</u> Not significant
	THC	High	Medium	Moderate	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Medium <u>Scenario 2</u>: Medum <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 FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of walkers visiting the peak of Ben More Assynt and the area of wild land. Views from the peak offer open and panoramic views over the surrounding landscape in all directions. The site is visible							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	above Loch Shin and coniferous forestry on rising land to the east of the loch. Views towards other hill ranges are possible, including Ben Klibreck to the east of the site, seen on the skyline. Within Assynt Coigach National Scenic Area and WLA 34. Reay – Cassley. **Operational Development** - Simultaneous views of operational Bettyhill Phase 1, Strathy South, Creag Riabhach, Gordonbush, Gordonbush Extension, Kilbraur, Kilbraur Extension, and Lairg. Successive views of Achany, Rosehall, Coire na Cloiche, Beinn Tharsuinn, and Beinn nan Oighrean. **Consented Development** - Simultaneous views of consented Creag Riabhach Extension, Sallachy, Chleansaid, Strath Tirry, and Lairg 2. Successive views of Garvary, Achany Extension, Strath Oykel, and Meall Buidhe. **In Planning / Scoping Development** - Simultaneous views of in-planning Shinness, Sallachy Extension, and Acheilidh. Successive views of Balblair, Allt An Tuir, Inveroykel, Creachan, and Coille Beith. Simultaneous views of scoping/ pre-application Pollie Hill, and Creag Dhubh. Successive views of Garvary II, Braelangwell, Invercassley, Beinn Tharsuinn Repower, Fionn, Glasa, Ruith Cnoc, and Kinlochbervie. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by recreational users of the outdoors 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 as viewpoint is located within a landscape designated for its remoteness and its scenic qualities. Overall Sensitivity is agreed as High. <u>MoC Considerations</u>							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Consider the MoC as Medium. The proposed turbines will be back clothed by rising ground behind, with their apparent scale slightly reduced by distance nevertheless they will still be noticeable given their lateral spread and position in the landscape. The array will appear coherent and linear, with some stacking on Turbines T2 and T3 and T10 and T11. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be Moderate and not significant. <u>Cumulative Effects</u> Scenario 1 – Consented developments would add further turbines into the view, with Sallachy and Achany Extension increasing the influence of wind farms in the view owing to their closer proximity to the viewer. Nevertheless, the proposal would appear separate and distinct, remaining noticeable and MoC would remain Medium. Scenario 2 – In planning developments would add further turbines into the view. Sallachy Extension would be experienced as a legible extension to a consented development. Shinness would add further turbines in the same landscape character type as the revised development. The resulting change would continue to remain Medium. Scenario 3 – As above. Whilst there would be no significant effects as a result of the proposal, there would be significant combined cumulative effects (Major / moderate to Moderate) due to the combination of Sallachy, the proposal, Shinness and Achany Extension in particular.							
Viewpoint 13: Ben Killbreck	App	High	Low	Moderate / minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Low / very low <u>Scenario 2</u>: Low	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>:	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Distance: 14km Looking: west						<u>Scenario 3:</u> Low	Moderate / minor <u>Scenario 3:</u> Moderate / minor	<u>Scenario 3:</u> Not significant
	THC	High	Medium-Low	Moderate / minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Medium-Low <u>Scenario 2</u>: Medium-Low <u>Scenario 3:</u> Medium-Low	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Moderate / minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Moderate / minor <u>Scenario 3:</u> Moderate / 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 FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of walkers visiting the peak of Meall nan Con at Ben Klibreck and the area of wild land. Views from the peak offer open and panoramic views over the surrounding landscape in all directions. The site is							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	visible which is perceptible due to the coniferous forestry; however, most of Loch Shin is obscured by landform. Views towards other hill ranges are possible, including Ben More Assynt to the west of the site, seen on the skyline. Within Ben Klibreck and Choire Special landscape Area (SLA) and WLA 35. Ben Klibreck – Armine Wild Land Area **Operational Development** - Simultaneous views of operational Achany, Rosehall, and Creag Riabhach. Successive views of Strathy South, Gordonbush, Gordonbush Extension, Kilbraur, Kilbraur Extension, Lairg, Coire na Cloiche, Beinn Tharsuinn, and Beinn nan Oighrean. **Consented Development** - Simultaneous views of consented Meall Buidhe, Strath Oykel, Achany Extension, Sallachy, and Creag Riabhach Extension. Successive views of Chleansaid, Garvary, Lairg 2 and Strath Tirry. **In Planning / Scoping Development** - **S**imultaneous views of in-planning Inveroykel, Shinness, Coille Beith, Allt An Tuir, and Sallachy Extension. Successive views of Acheilidh, Balblair, and Creachan. Simultaneous views of scoping/ pre-application Invercassley, Fionn, Ruith Cnoc. Successive views of Kinlochbervie, Pollie Hill, Creag Dhubh, Garvary II, Beinn Tharsuinn Repower, Braelangwell, and Glasa. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by recreational users of the outdoors 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 as viewpoint is located within a landscape designated for its remoteness and its scenic qualities. Overall Sensitivity is agreed as High. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as Medium-Low. The proposed turbines will be back clothed by rising ground behind, with their apparent scale slightly reduced by distance nevertheless they will be noticeable due to their lateral spread as a third layer of wind farm development beyond the							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	operational Creag Riabhach Wind Farm and below the Ben More Assynt massif. The array will appear coherent and linear, associated with forestry, with some stacking on Turbines T2 and T3 and T13 and T14. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be Moderate / minor and not significant. <u>Cumulative Effects</u> Scenario 1 – Consented developments would add further turbines into the view, with Chleansaid and Sallachy increasing the influence of wind farms in the view. Nevertheless, the magnitude of change would remain Medium-Low. Scenario 2 – In-planning developments would add further turbines into the view. Sallachy Extension would be experienced as a legible extension to a consented development. Shinness would add further turbines in the same landscape character type as the revised development, which would appear in the middle-distance. The magnitude of change would therefore remain to judgement in main assessment, as agreed. Scenario 3 – As above. Whilst there would be no significant effects as a result of the proposal, there would be significant combined cumulative effects (Major) due to the combination of Creag Riabhach, Shinness, Chleansaid and the proposal, in particular.							
Viewpoint 14: A836 near An t-Sron Distance: 16.7km	App	High / medium to Medium	Low	Moderate / minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Low / very low <u>Scenario 2</u>: Low <u>Scenario 3:</u>	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Moderate / minor <u>Scenario 3:</u>	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3:</u>

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Looking: northwest						Low	Moderate / minor	Not significant
	THC	High-medium	Medium-Low	Moderate	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Medium-Low <u>Scenario 2</u>: Low <u>Scenario 3:</u> Low	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Moderate <u>Scenario 2</u>: Moderate / minor <u>Scenario 3:</u> Moderate / 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 FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of views from the A836 and forms part of the John O'Groats Cycle Route. Vegetation aligns most of the road, with woodland and rising land limiting outward views to the east. Vegetation is however more sporadic in nature to the west of the road and with falling land towards Loch Shin. Occasional outward views are possible over the loch and towards the site. Views towards the site from the A836 are at an oblique angle to the direction of travel, with any outward views being fleeting and incidental whilst travelling along the national speed limit road. Distant views of Ben More Assynt and Ben Klibreck are possible on the skyline, located either side of the site.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Operational Development - Simultaneous views of operational Creag Riabhach. **Consented Development** - Simultaneous views of consented Sallachy, Creag Riabhach Extension, and Strath Tirry. Successive views of Chleansaid. **In Planning / Scoping Development** - Simultaneous views of in-planning Shinness and Sallachy Extension. Successive views of Creachan. Successive views of Beinn Tharsuinn Repower, and Braelangwell. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by road users. Susceptibility: Road users are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change, but High is acceptable in terms of cyclists. Tourists and other recreational users along this route will also have higher susceptibility. Value: Medium value can be accepted due to lack of designations. Sensitivity is considered by Officers as High / medium for all road users. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as Medium-low. All proposed turbines would be visible, mostly on the skyline as seen from this viewpoint. The proposed turbines would appear relatively clustered together, with T1, T4, and T7, as well as T5 and T13, appearing stacked from the viewpoint. Due to the oblique angle of the view for road users along the A836 and the fleeting and incidental nature of the view, it is agreed that the proposed development would overall, not appear prominent but would be noticeable. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be Moderate and not significant. <u>Cumulative Effects</u>							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Scenario 1 – Consented developments would add further turbines into the view, with Sallachy introducing turbines into views largely void of visibility of operational turbines; albeit, at distance. Nevertheless, the magnitude of change is judged to remain. Scenario 2 – Shinness would appear more prominent from this location especially in the winter months thereby reducing the MoC to Low. Scenario 3 – As above.							
Viewpoint 15: The Ord Distance: 19.2km Looking: north	App	High	Low	Moderate / minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Low – very low Scenario 2: Low Scenario 3: Low – very low	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Moderate /minor Scenario 3: Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	THC	High	Low	Moderate	Not significant	Scenario 1: Low Scenario 2: Low Scenario 3: Low	Scenario 1: Moderate Scenario 2: Moderate Scenario 3: Moderate	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Baseline As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of walkers visiting The Ord and of those visiting the chambered cairn at the peak of the hill. The Ord forms the destination to short walks from Lairg. Views from the peak are open and panoramic in nature, offering views over the surrounding landscape, including north westward along Loch Shin, towards the town of Lairg to the north-east as well as towards surrounding higher ground. In views to the south, the lower slopes below the moorland covered enclosing rounded hills, along with the valley floor of the Achany Glen create a notable geographic and topographic feature. However, it is the open and expansive view over Loch Shin, across the sweeping moorland and flows to the rugged mountain massif of Ben Hee (and upper parts of the Ben More Assynt massif) and the lonely mountain of Ben Klibreck to the north that provides the drama and interest in the view when experienced from this location. The site is visible on the western edge of Glen Fiag, below hills including Ben Hee. Views are seen in context of the telephone mast occupying the hill adjacent to the chambered cairn. **Operational Development** - Simultaneous views of operational Creag Riabhach. Successive views of Lairg, Coire na Cloiche, Beinn Tharsuinn, Beinn nan Oighrean, and Achany. **Consented Development** - Simultaneous views of consented Sallachy, Creag Riabhach Extension, and Strath Tirry. Successive views of Chleansaid, Garvary, Lairg 2, and Meall Buidhe. **In Planning / Scoping Development** - Simultaneous views of in-planning Shinness. Successive views of Acheilidh, Balblair, Creachan, and Inveroykel. Successive views of Creag Dhubh, Garvary II, Beinn Tharsuinn, Braelangwell, and Glasa. Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced by recreational users of the outdoors							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	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 as viewpoint is located within a landscape designated for its remoteness and its scenic qualities. Overall Sensitivity is agreed as High. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as Low. Turbines are sited in the most interesting and dramatic section of the view when experienced from the Ord. Some turbines would be skylined in the western part of the array, namely T10, T12, T14 and T15. However, the horizontal extent of the array would be relatively contained, although some stacking of turbines would be apparent on T15 and T8, T3 and 13, and T1 and T9. The turbines would be visible beyond the loch, overlapping with Ben Hee in the background and potentially competing with its landform for visual prominence. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be Moderate and not significant. <u>Cumulative Effects</u> Scenario 1 – Consented developments would add further turbines into the view. Garvary and Lairg 2 would increase the influence of wind farms in the view owing to their closer proximity to the viewer, nevertheless the proposal is in a different direction and the MoC would remain Low. Scenario 2 – Whilst Shinness would appear more prominently than the proposal in the same field of view, the addition of the proposal would still appear noticeable and distinct from Shinness with the magnitude remaining as low. Scenario 3 – The scoping/ preapplication developments would further change the baseline conditions, introducing additional turbines into views, and increasing the influence of wind farms, nevertheless the MoC would remain Low.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Whilst there would be no significant effects as a result of the proposal, there would be significant combined cumulative effects (Major) due to the combination of Shinness and the proposal to the north. Lairg, Lairg II and Garvary to the east would also contribute to these significant combined effects from the summit. Cumulatively, the schemes would result in the encircling and enclosing of the settlement of Lairg and Loch Shin creating a wind farm landscape.							
Viewpoint 16: Torroble Distance: 21.5km Looking: northwest	App	High / medium	Low	Moderate / minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Low / very low <u>Scenario 2</u>: Very low <u>Scenario 3:</u> Very low	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Moderate / minor <u>Scenario 3:</u> Moderate / minor	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3:</u> Not significant
	THC	High / medium	Low	Moderate / minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Low <u>Scenario 2</u>: Low <u>Scenario 3:</u> Low	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Moderate / minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Moderate / minor <u>Scenario 3:</u>	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3:</u> Not significant

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
							Moderate / minor	

<u>Baseline</u>

As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of views from those travelling along the minor road and residents within the crofting settlement of Torroble, which is located to the south-east of Lairg. The minor road is locally elevated to the east of the River Shin valley, where land falls gently, allowing views towards Lairg, Loch Shin, and hills in the distance. Some views to the north and east are partly filtered by vegetation aligning the minor road, with some residents having limited outward views due to vegetation surrounding their properties. Land continues to rise to the west of the minor road and with vegetation aligning the road, this limits outward views.

Operational Development - Simultaneous views of operational Achany, Rosehall, and Creag Riabhach. Successive views of Lairg.

Consented Development - **S**imultaneous views of consented Sallachy, Creag Riabhach Extension, and Strath Tirry. Successive views of Chleansaid, Garvary, Lairg 2, Strath Oykel, and Meall Buidhe.

In Planning Development - Simultaneous views of in-planning Shinness. Successive views of Acheilidh, Inveroykel, and Coille Beith. Successive views of Creag Dhubh, Garvary II.

<u>Sensitivity Considerations</u>

Represents views experienced by residents and road users.

Residents have a high susceptibility to change in views from their properties. Road users are normally considered to have a medium susceptibility to change.

Value: Medium value is accepted due to lack of designations.

Overall Sensitivity is agreed as High for residents and Medium for road users in this location.

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	MoC Considerations Consider the MoC as Low which is agreed. Some turbines would be skylined in the western part of the array, namely T10, T12, T14 and T15. However, the horizontal extent of the array would be relatively contained, although some stacking of turbines would be apparent. Level of Effect Considerations Consider that the level of effect would be Moderate / minor and not significant. Cumulative Effects Scenario 1 –Consented developments would increase the influence of wind farms in the view owing to their closer proximity to the viewer. Nevertheless, the proposal being distinct the MoC would remain Low. Scenario 2 – No change to main assessment. Scenario 3 – As above.							
Viewpoint A: Beinn Leoid Distance: 13.1km	App	High	Low	Moderate / minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Low Scenario 2: Low Scenario 3: Low	Scenario 1: Moderate / minor Scenario 2: Moderate / minor Scenario 3:	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Looking: southeast							Moderate / minor	
	THC	High	Medium-Low	Moderate / minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Medium-Low Scenario 2: Medium-Low Scenario 3: Medium-Low	Scenario 1: Moderate / minor Scenario 2: Moderate / minor Scenario 3: Moderate / minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	Baseline As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of walkers visiting the peak of Beinn Leoid and the area of wild land. Due to its elevated location, views from the summit of Beinn Leoid are open and panoramic across the surrounding landscape in all directions. The site is visible beyond the intervening peak of Meallan a Chuail in the foreground, partly obscured by intervening landform west of Glen Fiag. Clear views are possible along the length of Loch Shin, including distant glimpses of Lairg. **Operational Development** - Simultaneous views of operational Creag Riabhach, Gordonbush, Gordonbush Extension, Kilbraur, Kilbraur Extension, Lairg, Achany, Rosehall, Beinn Tharsuinn, Beinn nan Oighrean, and Coire na Cloiche.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Consented Development - **S**imultaneous views of consented Creag Riabhach Extension, Chleansaid, Strath Tirry, Garvary, Sallachy, Lairg 2, Achany Extension, Strath Oykel, and Meall Buidhe. **In Planning Development** - Simultaneous views of in-planning Shinness, Acheilidh, Sallachy Extension, Balblair, Allt An Tuir, Inveroykel, and Creachan. Successive views of Coille Beith. Simultaneous views of scoping/ pre-application Pollie Hill, Creag Dhubh, Garvary II, Braelangwell, Beinn Tharsuinn Repower, and Invercassley. Successive views of Glasa, Fionn, and Kinlochbervie. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by recreational users of the outdoors 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 as viewpoint is located within a landscape designated for its remoteness and its scenic qualities. Overall Sensitivity is agreed as High. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as Medium-Low. The proposed development would be clearly visible from this panoramic summit viewpoint. The proposed turbine array would, however, be relatively well contained horizontally, be back clothed by land beyond the site and would present a regular, balanced linear form, although stacking would be apparent on Turbines T10 and T13. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be Moderate / minor and not significant. <u>Cumulative Effects</u> Scenario 1 –No change to main assessment.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Scenario 2 – As above Scenario 3 – As above. Whilst there would be no significant effects as a result of the proposal, there would be significant combined cumulative effects (Major / Moderate to Moderate) due to the combination of Sallachy, Achany Extension and the proposal.							
Viewpoint B: Ben Hope Distance: 24.8km Looking: southwest	App	High	Very low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Very low <u>Scenario 2</u>: Very low <u>Scenario 3:</u> Very low	<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	Very low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Very low <u>Scenario 2</u>: Very low <u>Scenario 3:</u> Very low	<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

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Baseline As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of walkers visiting the peak of Ben Hope and the area of wild land. Due to its elevated location, views from the summit of Ben Hope are open and panoramic across the surrounding landscape in all directions. Site is mostly obscured by intervening landform, including higher ground to the east of Ben Hee, namely Creag Dhubh Mhor and Creag Dhubh Bheag. Views toward Loch Shin are also obscured. **Operational Development** - Simultaneous views of operational Creag Riabhach, Lairg, Beinn Tharsuinn, Beinn nan Oighrean, Coire na Cloiche, Achany, and Rosehall. Successive views with Bettyhill Phase 1, Strathy South, Gordonbush, and Gordonbush Extension. **Consented Development** - **S**imultaneous views of consented Garvary, Strath Tirry, Lairg 2, Creag Riabhach Extension, Strath Oykel, Meall Buidhe, Achany Extension, and Sallachy. Successive views of Bettyhill Phase 2. **In Planning Development** - Simultaneous views of in-planning Acheilidh, Balblair, Shinness, Creachan, Inveroykel, Allt An Tuir, and Coille Beith. Simultaneous views of scoping/ pre-application Creag Dhubh, Garvary II, Beinn Tharsuinn Repower, Braelangwell, Glasa, Invercassley, Fionn and Ruith Cnoc Successive views of Kinlochbervie. Sensitivity Considerations Represents views experienced by recreational users of the outdoors. 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 as viewpoint is located within a landscape designated for its remoteness and its scenic qualities. Overall Sensitivity is agreed as High.						

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	MoC Considerations Consider the MoC as Very low, as agreed. The proposed turbines will be back clothed by rising ground behind, with their apparent scale reduced considerably by distance and partially screened by higher terrain in front. Level of Effect Considerations Consider that the level of effect would be Minor and not significant. Cumulative Effects Scenario 1 – No change to main assessment. Scenario 2 – As above. Scenario 3 – As above.							
Viewpoint C: Ben Loyal Distance: 26.1km Looking: southwest	App	High	Very low	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1: Very low Scenario 2: Very low Scenario 3: Very low	Scenario 1: Minor Scenario 2: Minor Scenario 3: Minor	Scenario 1: Not significant Scenario 2: Not significant Scenario 3: Not significant
	THC	High	Very low	Minor	Not significant	Scenario 1:	Scenario 1:	Scenario 1:

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
						Very low <u>Scenario 2</u>: Very low <u>Scenario 3:</u> Very low	Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 3:</u> Minor	Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 3:</u> Not significant
	<u>Baseline</u> As described in FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of walkers visiting the peak of Ben Loyal, specifically the southernmost peak called Beinn Bheag, and the area of wild land. Due to its elevated location, views from the summit of Ben Loyal are open and panoramic across the surrounding landscape in all directions. The site is glimpsed above intervening landform seen between higher land associated with Ben Klibreck and Ben Hee. Views toward Loch Shin are also obscured. **Operational Development** - Simultaneous views of operational Creag Riabhach, Achany, and Rosehall. Successive views of Bettyhill Phase 1, Strathy South, Gordonbush, and Gordonbush Extension. **Consented Development** - Simultaneous views of consented Strath Oykel, Meall Buidhe, Creag Riabhach Extension, Achany Extension, and Sallachy. Successive views of Bettyhill Phase 2. **In Planning Development** - Simultaneous views of in-planning Creachan, Inveroykel, Shinness Allt An Tuir, Coille Beith, and Sallachy Extension. Simultaneous views of scoping/ pre-application Creach Dhubh, Braelangwell, Glasa, Invercassley, Fionn, and Ruith Cnoc. Successive views of Pollie Hill. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u>							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Represents views experienced by recreational users of the outdoors 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 as viewpoint is located within a landscape designated for its remoteness and its scenic qualities. Overall Sensitivity is agreed as High. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as Very low, as agreed. The proposed turbines will be back clothed by rising ground behind, with their apparent scale reduced considerably by distance and partially screened by higher terrain in front. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be Minor and not significant. <u>Cumulative Effects</u> Scenario 1 – No change to main assessment. Scenario 2 – As above Scenario 3 – As above.							
Viewpoint D: Càrn a' Choin Deirg	App	High	Very low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Very low <u>Scenario 2</u>: Very low	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Minor <u>Scenario 2</u>: Minor	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Not significant <u>Scenario 2</u>: Not significant

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
Distance: 29.8km Looking: northeast						<u>Scenario 3:</u> Very low	<u>Scenario 3:</u> Minor	<u>Scenario 3:</u> Not significant
	THC	High	Very low	Minor	Not significant	<u>Scenario 1</u>: Very low <u>Scenario 2</u>: Very low <u>Scenario 3:</u> Very low	<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 FEI Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.5: viewpoint is representative of walkers visiting the peak of Càrn a' Choin Deirg and the area of wild land. Due to its elevated location, views from the summit of Càrn a' Choin Deirg are open and panoramic across the surrounding landscape in all directions. The site is barely perceptible at this distance, mostly obscured by intervening landform, including higher land to the south-west of Loch Shin and seen below the peaks of Ben Hope and Ben Loyal on the distant skyline. **Operational Development** - Simultaneous views of operational Creag Riabhach, Achany, and Rosehall. Successive views of Lairg, Gordonbush, Gordonbush Extension, Kilbraur, Kilbraur Extension, Coire na Cloiche, Beinn Tharsuinn, and Beinn nan Oighrean.							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Consented Development - Simultaneous views of consented Sallachy, Creag Riabhach Extension, Achany Extension, Strath Oykel, Strath Tirry, Chleansaid, and Meall Buidhe. Successive views of Garvary, and Lairg 2. **In Planning Development** - Simultaneous views of in-planning Coille Beith, Allt an Tuir, Shinness, and Inveroykel. Successive views of Acheilidh, Balblair, and Creachan. Simultaneous views of scoping/ pre-application Fionn, Invercassley, Creag Dhubh, and Pollie Hill. Successive views of Garvary II, Braelangwell, Beinn Tharsuinn Repower, Glasa, and Ruith Cnoc. <u>Sensitivity Considerations</u> Represents views experienced by recreational users of the outdoors 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 as viewpoint is located within a landscape designated for its remoteness and its scenic qualities. Overall Sensitivity is agreed as High. <u>MoC Considerations</u> Consider the MoC as Very low, as agreed. The proposed turbines will be back clothed by rising ground behind, with their apparent scale reduced considerably by distance and partially screened by higher terrain in front. <u>Level of Effect Considerations</u> Consider that the level of effect would be Minor and not significant. <u>Cumulative Effects</u> Scenario 1 – No change to main assessment. Scenario 2 – As above							

			Revised Proposed Development (Solus assessment which includes operational wind farms as part of the baseline)			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)	Cumulative Magnitude of Change	Additional Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor)	Significance
	Scenario 3 – As above.							

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

1	Relationship between Settlements/Key locations and wider landscape respected.	Turbines are not visually prominent in the majority of views within or from settlements/Key Locations or from the majority of its access routes. ---------- The nearest settlement of size is Lairg. Theoretical visibility will not be widespread within this settlement, and the intervening topography generally limits the potential for long ranging views of the proposals. Otherwise, significant daytime visual effects would result for receptors in Shinness, however, most of the residential properties within the settlement, are orientated in a south-westerly direction, facing Loch Shin, rather than towards the application site. The array is designed for its hosting Sweeping Moorland and Flows landscape character type and presents a broadly cohesive layout for its location. The applicant has worked with Officers to reduce the heights of all turbines and to reduce the dominance of the array. **It is concluded this mitigation brings the proposals, in solus, within the threshold for this criterion.**
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. ---------- The site is not covered by a landscape sensitivity study that cites key gateway locations. The A838 is a principal route across North Highland, connecting to the West Coast. Significant in solus visual effects would be incurred along an up to 8.5 – 9 km section of this route for receptors travelling northwest, although these would be extended should Shinness Wind Farm, at appeal, be consented.

		The A836 route forms part of the National Cycle 'Far North Way' / Inverness to John O'Groats Cycle Route (formerly NCN Route 1 and, is also one of the main roads through the Flow Country WHS. Significant in solus visual effects would be incurred along an up to 1.5km section for both north and southbound receptors. Should Shinness Wind Farm be consented, it would become the most prominent and influential wind farm development experienced along this route, intensifying the cumulative effects over a significantly greater distance of some 9-10km. **It is considered that at present this threshold is not met, in terms of cumulative effects only.**
3	Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected	The development does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting. ---------- Significant in solus visual effects are anticipated from some closer range hill summits, within 10km distance to the site, including Maovally, Ben Hee and Ben Sgeireach. From higher summits, including those within the Assynt Coigach NSA, the turbines generally appear lower in the landscape and are back clothed by terrain. Cumulatively, Officers identify Significant combined effects from a wider range of hill summits including Ben More Assynt, Ben Klibreck, The Ord and Beinn Leoid. **It is considered that at present this threshold is not met, in terms of cumulative effects only.**
4	The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected.	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways. ---------- The applicant's assessment considers that significant sequential visual effects in solus, would not be incurred from the majority of the recreational routes within the study area, with the exception of parts of the John O' Groats Cycle Route. Views for cyclists over this section would generally be oblique and where viewed, the proposed turbines would be set behind the intervening landform. As such, the overall amenity of the route will remain intact.

		Should the Shinness Wind Farm at appeal be consented, it would become the most prominent and influential wind farm development experienced along a greater distance of some 9-10km along this route, resulting in Major adverse and Significant cumulative effects. As per discussion on Criterion 2 above, Shinness would represent the dominant contributor to cumulative effects along this section of the route, significantly increasing the extent and influence of wind farm development on the visual experience of receptors travelling along the route. **It is considered that at present this threshold is not met, in terms of cumulative effects only.**
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 ---------- **As per discussion on Criterion 2 above, it is considered that at present this threshold is not met, in terms of cumulative effects only.**
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 major part of the application site is mainly located within an area identified as Group 3: Areas with potential for wind farm development, within the spatial framework within the Council's Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance. The proposal, in solus, would contribute to an increase in wind farm development within the wider landscape. However, the changes specifically attributable to the proposed development would be largely contained, with the

		site positioned between an existing wind farm to the east and a consented wind farm to the west. The proposals would appear as a distinct, linear scheme of two rows from many locations that broadly respects the design of other operational and consented wind farms in the surrounding area such as the consented Sallachy Wind Farm (single row of turbines) and the operational Creag Riabhach Wind Farm (broadly four rows of turbines) The proposed development would be experienced within the context of a large-scale, open and forested moorland landscape and would, importantly, avoid the introduction of wind farms into the more exposed central part of the host landscape type. Should the Shinness Wind Farm be consented, against an objection form the Council, the scale, extensive lateral spread and separation distance between the two developments would result in detrimental combined effects, outside of a recognised 'cluster' of wind energy development. The developments would fundamentally alter the perception and experience of the landscape, such that wind energy developments across the wider area would cease to be perceived as an occasional or peripheral influence and would instead become a defining characteristic of the landscape and the area would be perceived unequivocally as a 'wind farm landscape'. **It is considered that at present this threshold is not met, in terms of cumulative effects only.**
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 ---------- The development would be the first of its type within the area of Sweeping Moorland and Flows north of Loch Shin and would be part of the drive to introduce large turbines to more remote locations to the northwest of Lairg. Generally, there will not be any notable inter-relationship between the proposed development, and other existing / operational and consented schemes within the study area, with the exception of Sallachy where there would be some Significant cumulative effects particularly along the A838 and closer range hilltops. Otherwise, whilst the proposed development would reduce the degree of visual separation between wind energy developments in the area, it would still

		retain an appropriate level of visual separation, allowing it to be appreciated and experienced within its own setting without adversely affecting the setting of other wind energy developments. Should the Shinness scheme to the southeast be approved, the developments in combination would significantly alter the experience of the landscape, as per discussion of Criterion 6 above. **It is considered that at present this threshold is not met, in terms of cumulative effects only.**
8	The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected	The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected --- The development in solus, proposes a newer generation of larger scaled turbines. There will be an inevitable effect of reducing the sense of landscape scale and distance, however, this will not be as pronounced given it would take place in the context of a scaled landscape, in the host Sweeping Moorland and Flows type. The mitigation offered in reducing the heights of all turbines reduces their perceived dominance from views. Taller turbines would have a more pronounced effect on reducing the perception of scale and distance in the hosting landscape, Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT (Strath Fiag / Tirry LCA). Should the Shinness Wind Farm be consented, the extensive lateral spread and separation distance between the two developments would fundamentally alter the perception and experience of the landscape, as per discussion on Criteria 6 and 7, above. **It is considered that at present this threshold is not met, in terms of cumulative effects only.**
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. --- As per comments for Criteria 6 and 7. **It is considered that at present this threshold is not met, in terms of cumulative effects only.**

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. Turbines are associated with the hosting Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT (Strath Fiag / Tirry LCA). The proposals, in solus, are not considered to overly dominate the wider landscape composition, even as they do introduce a new feature. T Should the Shinness scheme to the southeast be approved, the developments in combination would, however, significantly alter the experience of the landscape, such that wind farms would no longer represent an occasional or peripheral influence but would instead become a defining characteristic of the host Landscape Character Type, as per discussion of Criteria 6 and 7 above. **It is considered that at present this threshold is not met, in terms of cumulative effects only.**

EnergieKontor

Coille Linne Wind Farm

Office England:
4330 Park Approach
Leeds
LS15 8GB

Office North Scotland:
44 Elliot Street
Glasgow
G3 8DZ

Office South Scotland:
31 Dewar Place Lane
Edinburgh
EH3 8EF

www.energiekontor.co.uk

Figure 1.1a: Site Boundary

Key:

Site Boundary

0 0.5 1 km

N

Drawn by: HARE
Date: 02/06/2026

Scale: 1:20,000 @ A3
Revision: 1

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EnergieKontor

[Project Name] Wind Farm

Office England: 4330 Park Approach Leeds LS15 8GB

Office North Scotland: 44 Elliot Street Glasgow G3 8DZ

Office South Scotland: 31 Dewar Place Lane Edinburgh EH3 8EF

www.energiekontor.co.uk

FEI Figure 4.1a: FEI Revised Layout

Key:

- Site Boundary
- Turbine Locations
- Crane Pads
- Turning Heads
- Borrow Pit Search Areas
- 132kV Substation
- Construction Compound
- 5MW Battery Storage Compound

Tracks

- FEI New Track Layout
- Relocated South Track
- Existing Track Amendments

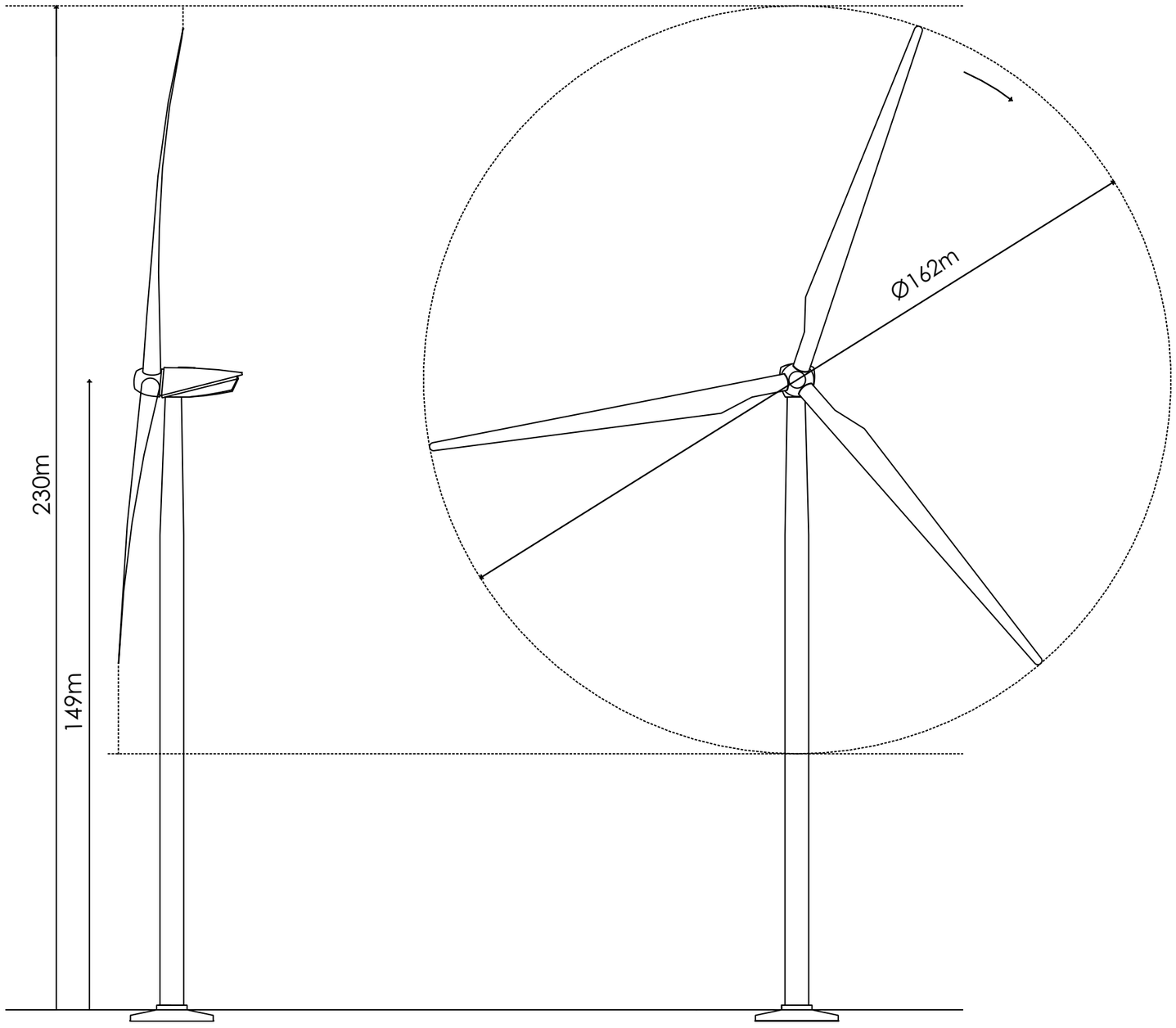
N

0 0.5 1 km

Drawn by: HARE Scale: 1:20,000 @ A3

Date: 24/06/2026 Revision: 1

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EnergieKontor

Coille Linne Wind Farm

Office England:
4330 Park Approach
Leeds
LS15 8GB

Offices Scotland:
44 Elliot Street
Glasgow
G3 8DZ
T:+44 (0)141 354 6544

31 Dewar Place Lane
Edinburgh
EH3 8EF
T:+44 (0)131 600 0850

www.energiekontor.co.uk

FEI Figure 4.2:
Typical Turbine Elevation

NOTES:

For indicative purposes only

0 10 20 30 40 50 m

Drawn By: HARE Scale: 1:1000 Date: 29/05/2026