

**CHAPTER 15: LAND USE AND RECREATION**

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Figure 15.1: Land Use and Recreation

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## **15. Land Use and Recreation**

### **15.1 Executive Summary**

- 15.1.1 An assessment of potential effects on land use and recreation has been undertaken for the Proposed Development. The assessment considers existing land uses which may be physically or indirectly affected by construction and operation of the Proposed Development. It also considers the potential to which recreational activities which currently take place may be deterred.
- 15.1.2 The assessment has concluded that the Proposed Development would result in temporary effects to sections of three recreational routes (Scottish Hill Track 235, the Monadhliath Trail and the route to access the Corbett Carn a' Chuilinn) through conflict with construction of access tracks or their use by construction traffic. These effects are anticipated to be Moderate and temporary, reducing to non-significant levels during operation of the Proposed Development. However, the employment of mitigation measures, including a Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan, would ensure accesses to the existing walking routes are maintained while ensuring the safety of the public and construction staff.
- 15.1.3 All other effects are anticipated to be not significant and no long term significant effects to land use and recreation are predicted.

### **15.2 Introduction**

- 15.2.1 This Chapter provides a general description of land use and recreation within the study area and presents an assessment of the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on land use and recreational.
- 15.2.2 The Chapter should be read in conjunction with Appendix 15.1: Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan, and also Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual Amenity Chapter 13: Access, Traffic and Transport, and Chapter 14: Socio-economics and Tourism.
- 15.2.3 The assessment has been undertaken by two senior environmental consultants at ASH design + assessment Ltd who are both members of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA).

### **15.3 Scope of Assessment**

- 15.3.1 The assessment considers existing land uses which may be physically or indirectly affected by the construction and operation of the Proposed Development. It also considers the potential to which recreational activities which currently take place may be deterred.

#### **Study Area**

- 15.3.2 The study area for both the land use and recreational assessments is based on the area where direct and indirect effects may occur as a result of the Proposed Development infrastructure. Based on the nature of the potential effects this has been set as a 15km buffer around the Proposed Development footprint, (see Figure 15.1: Land Use and Recreation).

**Scoping and Consultation**

- 15.3.3 The Scoping Opinion for the Proposed Development has identified key issues to be considered within the assessment. Issues of relevance to Land Use and Recreation are outlined in Table 15.1.

**Table 15.1: Scoping and Consultation Responses Relevant to Land Use and Recreation**

| <b>Consultee</b>                                     | <b>Summary of Consultation</b>   | <b>Comment / Action Taken</b>  |
|--|--|--|
| The Highland Council                                 | Providing public access on the tracks up and into the hills as a benefit of the Proposed Development should be considered.   | Consideration of maintaining access for members of the public is assessed in paragraphs 15.7.12 to 15.7.22 and mitigation is set out in paragraphs 15.8.3 to 15.8.7 and Technical Appendix 15.1.   |
|  | The draft Access Management Plan should include consideration of the Corbett's of Carn a' Chuilinn and Gairbeinn; the Creag Meagiadh Munros; and the Corrieyairack Pass. The public right of way through the site's eastern extremity is sometimes used by those undertaking The Great Outdoors Challenge.                             | Effects on recreational walking routes and trails are discussed in paragraphs 15.7.12 to 15.7.22. Mitigation to ensure access to existing routes is set out in paragraphs 15.8.3 to 15.8.7. A Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan is included in Technical Appendix 15.1. |
| Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)                      | In line with the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, the Applicant should have due regard to the potential use of the area for recreation by the general public when designing and planning the development, including the proposed access routes and additional tracks, which may increase the perceived recreational value of the area. | Effects on recreational walking routes and trails are discussed in paragraphs 15.7.12 to 15.7.22. A Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan is included in Technical Appendix 15.1.   |
|  | Access should not be restricted unless necessary for health and safety or other overriding reasons. Where access needs to be restricted at any time, clear signage following the Scottish Outdoor Access Code branding guidelines is recommended.  | Consideration of maintaining access for members of the public is discussed in paragraphs 15.8.3 to 15.8.7. A Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan is included in Technical Appendix 15.1.  |
| Mountaineering Scotland                              | The EIA Report should include an assessment focused on specific sections of tourism and recreation market that published evidence suggests is impacted by wind farm development.   | Effects on recreation are discussed in paragraphs 15.7.12 to 15.7.27. Effects on tourism are considered in Chapter 14: Socio-economics and Tourism.  |
| Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways) | The National Catalogue of Rights of Way shows that right of way HI109 is affected by the Proposed Development site. This forms part of the longer Glen Markie Track.   | This is considered in paragraph 15.7.12. A Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan is included in   |

| Consultee                                 | Summary of Consultation   | Comment / Action Taken  |
|---|---|---|
|   |   | Technical Appendix 15.1. See also Figure A15.1 and A15.2.   |
| Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council | The Scoping Report does not reference the newly finished South Loch Ness Trail or the proposed Loch Ness 360 route.   | These trails are considered in paragraph 15.6.18 and assessed in paragraph 15.7.15. See also Figure 15.1. |
| Visit Scotland                            | Consideration of effects on tourism (visually, environmentally and economically) should be identified and considered in full.   | This is considered in Chapter 14: Socio-economics and Tourism.  |
|   | It is recommended that an independent tourism impact assessment should be carried out which should be geographically sensitive and should consider the potential impact on any tourism offerings in the vicinity. |   |

## 15.4 Legislation, Policy & Guidance

15.4.1 The assessment has taken account of national, regional and local policy and guidance relating to land use and recreational amenity relevant to the proposal. Detailed information on planning policy is contained within Chapter 6: Planning Policy and Context, as well as the Planning Statement which accompanies the EIA Report. The following provides a summary with respect to Land Use and Recreation.

### National

- The Third National Planning Framework for Scotland (NPF3) (2014);
- Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) (2014); and
- Scottish Land Use Strategy 2016 – 2021 (LUS2).

15.4.2 While it has been superseded by the Scottish Planning Policy document, detailed guidance on considering tourism and recreation effects can be found in planning advice note (PAN) 45. This provided advice to planning authorities on developing supplementary guidance for the development of wind farms. In considering tourism and recreational interests, PAN 45 refers specifically to a research report commissioned by the Scottish Government (Glasgow Caledonian University et al., 2008). This research suggested a range of issues that planning authorities may wish to consider in order to minimise any adverse local effects including:

- the location of a proposed development in relation to tourist routes, including designated cycling and walking routes;
- the relative scale of recreation and tourism in the area i.e. local and national;
- views from accommodation in the area;
- the potential positive tourism issues associated with the development;
- the views of tourist organisations i.e. local tourist businesses or VisitScotland;
- the visitor population whose recreational interests may be affected;
- be aware of ‘double counting’ tourist and recreational interests which have already been taken into consideration because an area is otherwise designated; and

- consider likely significant effects within an environmental effect assessment.

15.4.3 Each of these issues is addressed in either this Chapter, or Chapter 14: Socio-economics and Tourism.

#### Regional

- The Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP), 2012;
- The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan, 2015 (IMFLDP) (currently under review);
- The West Highland and Islands Proposed Local Development Plan, 2019 (WestPlan); and
- Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan, 2015 (CNPLDP).

15.4.4 The HwLDP forms the key element of spatial planning policy for the Proposed Development. The key policy of relevance to the land use and recreation within the study area comprises Policy 57: Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage which classifies various features within the study area as of local / regional importance, national importance and international importance and attributes policy constraints to each level. Within the study area identified features of relevance to land use and recreation are anticipated to be of local importance, although it is recognised that there may be some areas of cultural heritage or recreation interest which are of national importance.

15.4.5 For areas of local importance, the policy states:

*“...we will allow developments if it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that they will not have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, amenity and heritage resource.”*

15.4.6 For areas of national importance, the policy states:

*“...we will allow developments that can be shown not to compromise the natural environment, amenity and heritage resource. Where there may be any significant adverse effects, these must be clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance. It must also be shown that the development will support communities in fragile areas who are having difficulties in keeping their population and services”.*

15.4.7 Other key policy in the HwLDP of relevance to the land use and recreation within the study area include: Policy 77 – Public Access and Policy 78 – Long Distance Routes.

15.4.8 The Highland Council has produced Supplementary Guidance for Onshore Wind Energy development in the Highlands: the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (2016) (OWESG). This includes the spatial framework and sets out how important features and assets identified in the HwLDP are expected to be safeguarded in relation to onshore wind energy development.

15.4.9 The first stage of the Guidance identifies areas where wind farms would not be acceptable; the second identifies areas requiring significant protection. The areas of Highland that are not covered by stage 1 and stage 2 are those which fall in stage 3; within these areas, appropriate proposals are likely to be supported subject to detailed consideration against identified policy criteria.

15.4.10 The OWESG provides further guidance on measures to be considered for the design and assessment of onshore wind farms. In relation to landscape and visual it identifies ten criteria to be used by the Council as a framework and focus for assessing proposals. Two of these criteria are relevant to this Chapter; Criterion 4: The amenity of key

recreational routes and ways, and Criterion 5: The amenity of transport routes. This Chapter has taken account of these criteria by considering the effects of the Proposed Development on recreation.

## 15.5 Methodology

15.5.1 The assessment has involved the following key tasks:

- Consultation through the scoping process with statutory agencies concerned with recreational interests in the area;
- Site survey and recording;
- Reference to relevant Local Development Plans and other literature to obtain baseline information; and
- Evaluation of impacts based on land take, severance and disruption during construction.

### Baseline Conditions

15.5.2 A review was undertaken of a range of published documents and internet based information to provide data on existing land uses and recreational activities of the study area.

15.5.3 The recreation baseline review included a review of websites as listed in section 15.11.

### Assessment of Land Use and Recreational effects

15.5.4 The establishment of the degree of effect is based on the evaluation of sensitivity of the land use or activity which may be affected, and the potential magnitude of change which may occur as a result of the Proposed Development.

15.5.5 Sensitivity concerns the potential for land use resources or recreational activities to be affected by the Proposed Development. Land use or recreational activities have been evaluated for their sensitivity based on a four point scale as set out in Table 15.2.

**Table 15.2: Sensitivity Criteria**

| Sensitivity | Criteria  |
|-------------|---|
| High        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land used for a unique purpose, important in the local context, which would be very difficult to relocate; or</li> <li>• Important recreational routes or resources within the area of the Proposed Development.</li> </ul>  |
| Medium      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land important to its current use which would be possible, but difficult to maintain elsewhere; or Less frequently used recreation routes or resources which represent a common resource locally within or adjacent to the area of the Proposed Development; or more important routes or resources within the nearby context.</li> </ul> |
| Low         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A relatively common land use within the local context which is not closely linked to the location and would be able to relocate within the local area; or</li> <li>• Less frequently used recreation routes or resources within the nearby context; or more important routes or resources within the broader wider context.</li> </ul>   |

| Sensitivity | Criteria   |
|-------------|--|
| Negligible  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A common land use type in the local area which is not directly linked to the location and could easily be maintained elsewhere; or</li> <li>Less important or infrequently used recreation routes or resources within the broader wider context.</li> </ul> |

15.5.6 Magnitude of effect concerns the degree of change which would be expected to take place to existing land use resources or recreational activities. Magnitude has been measured on a four point scale as set out in Table 15.3.

**Table 15.3: Criteria for Magnitude of Change**

| Magnitude of Change | Criteria  |
|---------------------|---|
| High                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land take resulting in complete loss of an area of land which relates to a single land use; or</li> <li>Complete loss or obstruction to a route or amenity resource.</li> </ul>  |
| Medium              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land take leading to notable loss of an area of land which is important for a particular land use; or</li> <li>Partial loss or direct disruption to a route or amenity resource, compromising but not preventing the ability of an activity to take place; or, indirect (visual) effects which may compromise enjoyment of a recreational activity.</li> </ul> |
| Low                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land take leading to a small scale loss of an area of land used for a particular land use; or</li> <li>Minimal disruption to a route or amenity resource which does not affect the ability of an activity to take place; or, indirect (visual) effects but which are unlikely to reduce enjoyment of a recreational activity.</li> </ul>                       |
| Negligible          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land take does not affect the ability of existing land use to continue; or</li> <li>Minimal indirect (visual) effects which are very unlikely to affect enjoyment of a recreational activity.</li> </ul>   |

### Significance of Effect

15.5.7 The degree of effect significance is calculated by comparison of the magnitude of impact to the land use or recreational resource in relation to its sensitivity. Effect significance is assessed using the criteria set out in Table 15.4.

**Table 15.4: Significance of Effect Criteria**

| Effect Rating | Criteria   |
|---------------|--|
| Major         | Where the Proposed Development would prevent an existing land use or activity from continuing, or the loss of amenity would result in that land use or activity being deterred.                                  |
| Moderate      | Where the Proposed Development would lead to a notable disruption to an existing land use, preclude its continuation for a protracted period of time, or would lead to a notable loss of recreational amenity or |

| Effect Rating | Criteria  |
|---------------|---|
|               | enjoyment, but would not prevent the activities from continuing to take place in the longer term.   |
| Minor         | Where the Proposed Development may compromise an existing land use or recreational activity but would not affect its ability to continue to take place or would have a small but recognisable influence on the recreational amenity or enjoyment. |
| Neutral       | Where the Proposed Development would have no discernible influence on existing or intended land use activities and there is no discernible loss of recreational amenity or enjoyment.   |

15.5.8 For the purposes of this assessment impacts of Moderate or Major are considered to be significant.

15.5.9 The assessment considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on land use and recreational activities during both the construction phase and the longer term operation.

#### **Limitations to the Assessment**

15.5.10 There are no recognised standards, guidelines or methodologies for assessing wind farm effects on land use and recreation for the purposes of an EIA. Therefore, in order to identify and assess the significance of predicted effects, the assessment has been based on a professional judgement of the degree of change resulting from the proposals.

## **15.6 Baseline Conditions**

### **Land Use**

#### The Site

15.6.1 The site itself is located within a large scale, high level plateau which is surrounded by a series of high summits and ridges, providing a degree of distant enclosure. The plateau area is composed primarily of moorland and is strongly influenced by the turbines and network of access tracks of the operational Stronelairg Wind Farm and the dam, reservoir, tracks and smaller intake of the Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme.

15.6.2 The major land uses throughout the 15km study area are shown on Figure 15.1 and described further below.

#### Moorland

15.6.3 In the northern, southern and eastern extents of the study area land is at a higher elevation and is predominately moorland. These areas are often part of large sporting estates, managed for stalking and shooting and the mountains within these areas are popular with hill walkers.

#### Agriculture

15.6.4 Land along the flat bases of the Great Glen in the western extent of the study area is predominately under small scale agricultural use, largely used for improved pasture for sheep and cattle with a small number of fields used for arable crops. This includes the area adjacent to the Caledonian Canal between Invergarry and Fort Augustus.

### Forestry and Woodland

- 15.6.5 Small areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland exist within the site boundary running parallel with the existing access track along the Allt Doe, and also adjacent to (but outwith), the area used for the lower Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme and Stronelaireg Wind Farm site compound.
- 15.6.6 Woodland and forest is generally found along the lower slopes of the glen, either side of Loch Ness in the western extent of the study area, and in narrow strips along the edges of lochs and watercourses.

### Infrastructure

#### *Transport*

- 15.6.7 The nearest public road to the Proposed Development is the B862, which starts in Fort Augustus and ends in Inverness.
- 15.6.8 Other transport routes that run through the study area include:
- A Roads: the A82 (which runs along the Great Glen between Fort William and Inverness); the A887 (which connects the A82 at Invermorriston to the A87 at Bun Loyne); the A86 (which runs from Spean Bridge to Kingussie); the A889 (which joins the A9 to the A86); and a short section of the A9 near Newtonmore.
  - B Roads: the B862 (which runs between Fort Augustus and Inverness via Whitebridge), and the B852 (which runs between Dores and Whitebridge via Foyers).
- 15.6.9 The Caledonian Canal is also well used by people travelling by boat along the Great Glen between Fort William and Inverness.

#### *Other Development*

- 15.6.10 The Proposed Development is located adjacent to the Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme and the operational Stronelaireg Wind Farm. Ancillary structures associated with these developments, including substations, are visible in the surroundings. There are several other wind farms within the study area at varying stages of development.
- 15.6.11 There are frequent overhead lines in the area, most being low level woodpole lines connecting to settlements. There is a larger steel lattice overhead line (Beauly – Denny 400kV overhead line) crossing the study area along the Corrieyarick Pass / General Wade's Military Road to the south of the Proposed Development.

### Water Bodies

- 15.6.12 There are several waterbodies within the site boundary including the Glendoe reservoir which forms part of SSE's Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme, Lochan Iain, Dubh Lochan and Loch na Lairige. There are also several watercourses that run through the site boundary including River Tarff, Allt na Feithe, Gobhlaich, Cochan Uilleim and Allt Mor.
- 15.6.13 The principle water bodies within the study area include Loch Ness, Loch Mhor and Loch Laggan, all large waterbodies and orientated south-west to north-east. The Caledonian Canal runs through the Great Glen interlinking Inverness to Fort William.

### Settlement

- 15.6.14 Key settlement centres are located within valleys including Fort Augustus, set at the end of Loch Ness in the Great Glen, approximately 11km to the north-west from the nearest turbine, and Newtonmore in the upper Strathspey, which is approximately 14km to the south-east from the nearest turbine. Smaller settlements comprise Laggan in Strath Mashie, and Invergarry and Invermoriston at the meeting points of their respective glens with the Great Glen. Strath Errick to the north of the Proposed Development is a broader, more elevated and undulating valley with scattered settlement, focussed around Whitebridge and Foyers. Further properties are scattered throughout these straths and glens and a few isolated lodge properties set deeper into the hills.

### Tourism

- 15.6.15 The main tourist asset in the local area is the Cairngorms National Park, which lies 2km to the east of the Proposed Development and the Great Glen to the west. There are clusters of tourism accommodation within the study area at Fort Augustus and Newtonmore.
- 15.6.16 More detailed information on tourism as a socio-economic activity is provided in Chapter 14: Socio-economics and Tourism.

### **Recreation**

- 15.6.17 This section considers recreation within the study area, as shown on Figure 15.1.

### Paths and Trails

- 15.6.18 Walking is a popular activity within the study area and there are a number of popular trails and routes. There are three long distance trails promoted by Visit Inverness Loch Ness Ltd, that passes through, or in close proximity to the Proposed Development site:

- The Monadhliath Trail is a 28 mile (45km) route that runs from the Stronelairg Wind Farm site entrance off the B862 high into the Monadhliath Mountains via the operational wind farm access track, before heading north via estate tracks to Loch Killin and then a minor public road and ending on the B862 south of Whitebridge. The route follows tracks and minor public roads and is not a waymarked trail. The trail would pass through the Proposed Development site;
- The South Loch Ness Trail was officially launched in August 2011 and is a long distance route that stretches for approximately 34 miles between Loch Tarff to Torbeck on the edge of Inverness via Whitebridge, Foyers, Inverfarigaig and Dores. In August 2018, an additional 4 km spur that links the trail from the Stronelairg Wind Farm site entrance to Bridge of Tarff (on the edge of Fort Augustus) opened, to allow access for pedestrians away from the B862 road. This extension incorporates a footpath that was provided by SSE Renewables as part of their planning consent for Stronelairg Wind Farm. The trail is used by a variety of users including both walkers and cyclists. The trail crosses the access track near the site entrance off the B862; and
- The Loch Ness 360° Trail; a long distance route that connects the Great Glen Way and the South Loch Ness Trail into one circuit around the circumference of Loch Ness. The trail crosses the Stronelairg Wind Farm access track near the site entrance off the B862.

- 15.6.19 Within the study area, other long distance trails and routes include:

- Trail of the 7 Lochs; a long distance circular route promoted by Visit Inverness Loch Ness Ltd which runs above and behind South Loch Ness;
  - The Great Glen Way; a long distance route from Fort William to Inverness; and
  - The East Highland Way; an unofficial long distance walk from Fort William to Aviemore.
- 15.6.20 The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society maintain a list of Scottish Hill Tracks that may be used by the public. Eight of these routes are within the study area of the Proposed Development and one route; Route 235 (also referred to as Right of Way (RoW) HI109), crosses the Proposed Development site, and goes from Laggan to Whitebridge.
- 15.6.21 The Corrieyairack Pass leads across the Monadhliath mountains from Laggan in Badenoch to Fort Augustus on Loch Ness. Originally built as a military road by General Wade, the route is used by hill walkers but is also becoming increasingly popular with mountain bikers. The route is also incorporated in the Scottish National Trail (an 864km long distance walk), Scottish Hill Track 236 (Laggan to Fort Augustus) (also referred to as RoW HI106) and is a candidate core path. There is an annual Corrieyairack Challenge Charity Race for runners and mountain bikers.
- 15.6.22 Under the direction of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act (2003), The Highland Council has produced Core Path Plans with the aim of creating a framework of paths linking with other access provision. There are no core paths identified within the site itself but within the study area they are mostly centred around Fort Augustus and Inchnacardoch Forest, and Foyers. Core Path IN16.01 (Kilchuimen Burial Ground and River Tarff), IN16.06 (Campsite to Fort Augustus by Caledonian Canal), IN16.17 (Fort Augustus Abbey loop), IN16.05 (Caledonian Canal from Bridge of Oich to Fort Augustus) and IN16.04 (Caledonian Canal to A82 by church) all connect to either the A82 or B862 approximately 3km west of the site entrance.

#### Hill Walking

- 15.6.23 There are seven Munros (mountains over 3,000 feet) in the area, including:
- Geal Charn (Mondahliath) is located approximately 2.9km south-east from the nearest turbine. The starting point of the main route to climb the Munro is at Garva Bridge, on General Wade's Military Road.
  - Carn Dearg, A'Chailleach and Carn Sgulain are located between 6 to 11km to the east from the nearest turbine. These three summits are often done together. This ascent is usually done from Newtonmore, or via Strath Dearn / Glen Markie Burn.
  - Carn Liath (Creag Meagaidh) is located 10km to the south from the Proposed Development with the main route commencing from Aberarder, Loch Laggan. This summit can be done with Beinn a'Chaoirinn and Beinn Teallach.
  - Creag Meagaidh is located approximately 14km to the south-west from the nearest turbine and is one of the higher mountains of the central Highlands and the usual starting point is at Aberarder, Loch Laggan.
  - Stob Poite Coire Ardair is located 13km to the south-west of the Proposed Development and can be combined with Beinn a'Chaoirinn and Beinn Teallach.
- 15.6.24 There are six Corbett's in the study area (a mountain over 2,500 feet). The closest is Meall na h-Aisre and is located approximately 2km from the nearest turbine to the south of the Proposed Development. Other Corbett's include: Carn a Chuilinn, Gairbenn, Carn Dearg (North of Gleann Eachach), Carn Dearg (South of Gleann Eachach), Carn na Saobhaidhe.

15.6.25 All of the walking routes are listed on the walkhighlands website.

#### Cycling

15.6.26 As with walking, cycling is popular within the study area and well used routes include National Route 78 – The Caledonia Way. This is a 235 mile long distance route from Campbeltown to Inverness via Fort Augustus that follows the same route as the B862 carriageway through the study area. In addition, a section of the Great Glen Cycleway passes through the study area. This is a 73 mile cycle route between Fort William and Inverness which follows along the same route as the Great Glen Way (upper route) and passes alongside the Caledonian Canal and a series of lochs including Loch Lochy, Loch Oich and Loch Ness.

#### Boating and Canoeing

15.6.27 Along the Caledonian Canal the Great Glen Canoe Trail has been established. In addition, the canal and Loch Ness are popular with cruisers and other boats travelling along the Great Glen between Fort William and Inverness.

#### Country Sports

15.6.28 The Proposed Development is located on Glendoe and Garrogie Estates where recreational activities including deer stalking and grouse shooting occur. It is now common for estates that carry out these recreational activities to also develop renewable energy schemes, indicating that they do not expect such developments to significantly impinge on these activities.

### **15.7 Assessment of Effects**

15.7.1 This section considers the potential effects on land use and recreation that could arise from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

#### **Land Use**

##### Moorland

15.7.2 There would be both temporary and permanent loss of small areas of moorland for construction of the Proposed Development. This would include land take for the construction of turbine hard standings, access tracks, site establishment areas and borrow pits. These comprise relatively small areas within an expansive resource and as described in paragraph 15.6.1, this land has already been influenced by structures for the operational Glendoe Hydroelectric scheme, Stronelaig Wind Farm and for estate management. As such, sensitivity and magnitude is considered to be Low within the site boundary and Negligible elsewhere in the study area. The anticipated effect to moorland as a land use within the site boundary is therefore considered to be **Minor** during construction and operation, and **Neutral** elsewhere.

##### Agriculture

15.7.3 The Proposed Development would not affect any areas of agricultural land in the study area. This land use has therefore not been assessed.

### Forestry

- 15.7.4 There would not be a requirement to remove any areas of forestry or woodland for construction of the Proposed Development. Existing access tracks constructed as part of the Glendoe Hydroelectric scheme and Stronelaig Wind Farm would be utilised for the Proposed Development and while increased vehicle movement during the construction phase could affect trees with dust particles in dry conditions, effects are not considered significant, especially as the Allt Doe watercourse separates the woodland from the track. There are no trees in areas where new infrastructure would be developed. This land use has therefore not been assessed.

### Infrastructure

#### *Transport*

- 15.7.5 The presence of construction related traffic has the potential to increase journey times locally during the construction period. A detailed assessment of traffic movements on the road network has been undertaken and is included in Chapter 13: Traffic and Transport. These issues are therefore not considered within this Chapter.

#### *Other Development*

- 15.7.6 It is not anticipated that there would be any potential effects to operational developments including the Stronelaig Wind Farm and Glendoe Hydroelectric scheme, or existing transmission features, as a result of construction of the Proposed Development. These features would be avoided and protected throughout the works. There may be some disruption caused by maintenance vehicles requiring access to the operational developments in proximity to the Proposed Development during the construction phase. Contractors would liaise with SSE, who own and operate Stronelaig Wind Farm and Glendoe Hydroelectric scheme, to minimise the disruption to activities where possible. Sensitivity of infrastructural land use is considered to be Low. Magnitude would be Negligible and the resultant effect during construction and operation is anticipated to be **Neutral**. The effects are not considered to be significant.

### Water Bodies

- 15.7.7 Detailed descriptions of the effects on water bodies within the study area are provided in Chapter 10: Hydrology and Hydrogeology. This subject is therefore not considered within this Chapter. Recreational use of the water environment is considered in paragraph 15.7.26 below.

### Settlement

- 15.7.8 The visual amenity assessment in Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual identifies that the vast majority of established settlements and rural properties within the study area would not receive any visibility of the Proposed Development. Five residential areas were identified as receiving theoretical visibility however none were assessed as having the potential to receive significant effects during construction or operation of the Proposed Development.
- 15.7.9 The sensitivity of settlement within the study area is therefore considered to be Low. Magnitude of effect is anticipated to be Low and the significance of effects is therefore predicted to be **Minor** (and not significant).

### Tourism

- 15.7.10 Assessment of potential effects to the tourism industry is contained within Chapter 14: Socio-economics and Tourism. Effects on individual attractions are detailed in the following section on recreation.

### **Recreation**

- 15.7.11 This section considers the potential effect of the Proposed Development on recreational amenity in the area. Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual details the anticipated visual effects associated with recreational routes and sites which have been referred to in this assessment.

### Trails and Routes

#### *Walking Routes through the Development Site*

- 15.7.12 There would be potential disruption to users of two walking routes that would interact with the proposed access tracks and has the potential to distract or disrupt recreational users. These include sections of Scottish Hill Track Route 235 (RoW HI109) and the Monadhliath Trail.
- Scottish Hill Track 235: Laggan to Whitebridge (RoW HI109); the route passes through the Proposed Development and construction of the access track has the potential to interact with this route. One of the proposed permanent Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) stations would be constructed approximately 150m to the east of this route. During construction, works would be prominent and distracting for recreational users. Longer term, given that the route already passes through an operational wind farm site, the Proposed Development is not likely to be a noticeable change along most of this route however, there are parts where turbines would be prominent to recreational users of the route., the Proposed Development would not be a very noticeable new distraction.
  - Monadhliath Trail; part of this route provides access for the Proposed Development, and construction works would be immediate and distracting for walkers with the potential for physical disruption. Proposed turbines would appear very prominent on a small part of the route but in areas where turbines are already prominent given the viewing expectation of those using this route through an existing wind farm. Parts of this route is already used by maintenance vehicles accessing the operational hydroelectric scheme and wind farm, and by estate vehicles.
- 15.7.13 Where recreational routes follow the same route as construction traffic, a management strategy would be put in place which would set out measures to ensure the safety of the public. This is discussed further in Section 15.8 (see also Technical Appendix 15.1). Therefore, whilst there may be some disruption to walkers, they would not be prevented from using these routes. Longer term, walkers would be able to pass by uninterrupted, other than by occasional maintenance traffic, as is currently the situation for Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme and Stronelairg Wind Farm.
- 15.7.14 Sensitivity for these routes is considered to be Low to Medium and magnitude of change would be Medium during construction reducing to Low during operation. The amenity effect is therefore considered to be **Moderate** (and significant) during construction for

the short sections of the routes that conflict with construction of the Proposed Development and their use by construction traffic, and **Minor** during operation.

*Walking Routes near the Site entrance*

- 15.7.15 There may be some disruption during the construction works to users of the South Loch Ness Trail and Loch Ness 360 Trail, specifically the section near the Stronelairst Wind Farm site entrance where the trail crosses the access track. Measures would be put in place during construction works to minimise disruption to walkers at this point. The additional spur that links the trail from the Stronelairst Wind Farm site entrance to Bridge of Tarff (on the edge of Fort Augustus) allows access for pedestrians away from the B862 road limiting interaction with construction vehicles. Sensitivity for these routes is considered to be Low to Medium and magnitude of change would be Low during construction reducing to Negligible during operation. The amenity effect is therefore considered to be **Minor** during construction reducing to **Neutral** thereafter.

*Other Walking Routes*

- 15.7.16 There is unlikely to be any direct effect on the recreational users of other routes, core paths or trails within the study area. Sensitivity for these routes is considered to be Low with magnitude of change anticipated to be Low. The amenity effect is therefore considered to be **Minor** and not significant.

Hill Walking

- 15.7.17 There would be a direct effect on a section of the walking route to the Corbett Carn a' Chuillin which would share access with the Proposed Development construction traffic and therefore there is potential for some disruption to walkers. Longer term, walkers would be able to pass by uninterrupted, other than by occasional maintenance traffic, as is currently the situation for Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme and Stronelairst Wind Farm.
- 15.7.18 There would be no direct effect on the walking routes of the other seven Munro's or five Corbett's within the study area.
- 15.7.19 There is potential for turbines to appear in foreground views of the Munro's Geal Charn (Monadhliath) and Carn Dearg (Monadhliath), and the Corbett's Carn a Chuillin and Meal na h-Aisre. Construction activities would also be evident in views during the construction period, particularly from the summit of the Corbett Meal na h-Aisre which would experience the Proposed Development in close proximity in both eastern and western fields of view. It is likely that these indirect effects would lead to some level of reduced amenity value and enjoyment for the recreational users of these walking routes (the visual amenity assessment from these hills is included Chapter 7 of this EIA Report).
- 15.7.20 The sensitivity of Munros and Corbett's to change are assessed as Low, as their status as a Munro or Corbett is likely to be central to people's decision to climb it.
- 15.7.21 Given the direct effects on a section of the walking route to the Corbett Carn a Chuillin with construction traffic, the magnitude of change would be Medium and the amenity effect is therefore considered to be **Moderate** (and significant) during construction and **Minor** during operation.
- 15.7.22 The magnitude of change for the Corbett Meal na h-Aisre would be Medium and Low to Medium for all other hill walking routes. There is unlikely to be any significant indirect amenity effects on the recreational users of Munros or Corbett's within the study area as

a result the Proposed Development. The recreational amenity effect is considered to be **Minor to Moderate** for the Corbett Meal na h-Aisre and **Neutral** for all other routes.

#### Cycling

- 15.7.23 National Route 78 follows the same route as the B862 and B852 carriageways in the Study Area, and during construction of the Proposed Development there may be an element of disruption for users of a short section of this route, due to increased levels of construction traffic on the road, particularly close to the site entrance and to the west where the B862 joins the A82 at Fort Augustus.
- 15.7.24 National Route 78 is 234 miles in length and any changes to small portions of the route are unlikely to have a significant effect on its overall character. This implies that the route's sensitivity to change would be Low. Magnitude of change would be Low during construction reducing to Negligible during operation; therefore, the amenity is considered to be **Minor** during construction for the short section of the route that conflicts with construction traffic, and **Neutral** thereafter.
- 15.7.25 Likewise, a short section of the Great Glen Cycleway follows the same route as the A82 through Fort Augustus and therefore there may be some disruption for users of this route during construction of the Proposed Development, although abnormal loads are not expected to use this part of the A82. Sensitivity of this route is considered to be Low with magnitude of change anticipated to be Low during construction reducing to Negligible during operation; therefore the amenity is considered to be **Minor** during construction for the short section of the route that conflicts with construction traffic, and **Neutral** thereafter.

#### Boating and Canoeing

- 15.7.26 There are not anticipated to be any effects on the use or viability of the Caledonian Canal or Loch Ness for boating or canoeing activities as a result of the Proposed Development. This recreational activity has therefore not been assessed.

#### Country Sports

- 15.7.27 It is not anticipated that the Proposed Development would impinge on recreational activities such as deer stalking or shooting; there may be some temporary disruption during construction works on the Glendoe and Garrogie Estates, but not in the longer term. The sensitivity of country sports in the local area is assessed as Low and magnitude of change would be Low during construction, reducing to Negligible during operation. The recreational amenity is therefore considered to be **Minor** during construction and **Neutral** thereafter.

#### **Planning Applications**

- 15.7.28 A search was undertaken to identify any planning applications within the last 2 years which have the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development. This search identified:
- Consent was granted in July 2019 for the conversion of a shed to provide office and workshop space, including meeting rooms for SSE's nearby Stronelairg Wind Farm (Application Ref: 19/03400/FUL). Access would be taken via a private access off the B862 to Glendoe Estate. This development would share the same access junction off the B862 as the Proposed Development.

- An application for Glenshero Wind Farm (THC Application Ref: 18/04733/S36 and ECU Ref: ECU00000517) was submitted in October 2018 for the construction of 39 turbines with a tip height of 135 m. This development would be located adjacent to the Proposed Development to the south.

## 15.8 Mitigation

- 15.8.1 Mitigation measures are proposed to ensure the minimal degree of effects to existing and proposed land uses and recreational activities. These are summarised as follows:

### Land Use

- 15.8.2 The key transport routes used during the construction phase would be the A87, A82 and B862, accessing the site from the west. Mitigation measures would be implemented during the construction phase through a Construction Traffic Management Plan (see Chapter 13: Traffic and Transport of this EIA Report) aimed at minimising the impact of construction traffic on users of these key transport routes for recreational purposes.

### Recreation

- 15.8.3 A Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan is included in Technical Appendix 15.1.
- 15.8.4 As set out in the Plan, during construction, every effort will be made to ensure access to existing recreational routes are maintained but to ensure safety of the public some additional measures may be required, including appropriate signage (on the construction access route and wider access network), implementation of site rules and setting a reduced speed limit for construction traffic. These measures would be communicated with the local community prior to construction works taking place. From time to time, short term restrictions on access may be required where there is no safe alternative.
- 15.8.5 At the site entrance off the B862, pass gates will be installed to ensure public safety for walkers, and access gates will be installed on newly constructed access tracks to limit unauthorised vehicles from entering the site.
- 15.8.6 Contractors would liaise with landowners to minimise the disruption to estate run activities where possible.
- 15.8.7 In the longer term, signage would be put in place with a purpose to highlight to the public the potential safety issues of accessing the site during adverse weather (e.g. ice throw and lightning etc.) and ongoing Estate activities (shooting etc.). These would be put in place where existing walking routes intersect with the Proposed Development (see Technical Appendix 15.1).

## 15.9 Cumulative Effects

- 15.9.1 A large attraction of the area is the experience of the landscape, including recreational activities undertaken within the landscape. Potential cumulative effects on recreation may occur if there are significant cumulative effects on the landscape and visual receptors. The landscape and visual amenity assessment provides a detailed assessment of potential cumulative effects on the landscape and visual receptors, including recreational routes (refer to Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual).
- 15.9.2 The addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative baseline scenario is not anticipated to lead to any significant recreational cumulative effects. Minor (not significant) cumulative effects are anticipated for the Monadhliath Trail and Scottish Hill Track 235 (RoW HI109), both of which pass through the operational Stronelairst Wind

Farm and the Proposed Development site, and close to both the consented Dell Wind Farm and proposed Glenshero Wind Farm. This would lead to an increased number of turbines which would be prominent in views from both walking routes and there is also potential for disruption to walkers, especially during the construction phase of each development. However, access management plans are proposed or listed as a condition of consent, for both the Dell and Glenshero developments, and an Outdoor Access Management Plan has been outlined for the Proposed Development (see Technical Appendix 15.1). These plans aim to manage recreational impacts associated with each development.

- 15.9.3 The traffic and transport assessment provides a detailed assessment of potential cumulative effects on transport routes (refer to Chapter 13 of this EIA Report) within the Study Area. It concludes that if the construction programmes for the Proposed Development, Glenshero and Dell Wind Farms overlap, there would be increased total traffic and heavy good vehicle traffic movements on the B862 at Fort Augustus by over 30%. However, the implementation of Construction Traffic Management Plans associated with each individual development would mitigate any cumulative effects and would set out measures to ensure the safety of the public using these routes for recreational purposes.

## **15.10 Conclusions**

- 15.10.1 The Proposed Development would result in no significant effects on land use within the study area; although, temporary effects to some recreational activities are anticipated. However, for the majority of activities the employment of mitigation measures would ensure that significant effects did not occur.
- 15.10.2 Potential significant effects have been identified during construction for the amenity of walking routes and trails that pass through the Proposed Development site and from disruption of construction traffic using the same routes, these include sections of the Monadhliath Trail, Scottish Hill Track 235 (RoW HI109) and the route used to access the Corbett Carn a Chuilinn. These effects are anticipated to be Moderate and temporary, reducing to non-significant levels during the operation of the Proposed Development. Mitigation in the form of an Outdoor Access Plan (see Technical Appendix 15.1) would be put in place to minimise effects as far as practicable.
- 15.10.3 All other effects are anticipated to be not significant and no long-term significant effects to land use and recreation are predicted.

**15.11 References**

OS and aerial mapping [Accessed 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019]

Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society, Scottish Hill Tracks Fifth Edition and website: <https://www.scotways.com/> [Accessed 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019]

The Highland Council Core Development Plan [Accessed 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019]

The Highland wide Local Development Plan and Supplementary Guidance [Accessed 21<sup>st</sup> November 2019]

Visit Inverness Loch Ness website: [https://www.visitinvernesslochness.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SLN-Access\\_Map\\_A2\\_2018-1.jpg](https://www.visitinvernesslochness.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SLN-Access_Map_A2_2018-1.jpg) [Accessed 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019]

Walkhighlands website: <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/> [Accessed 21<sup>st</sup> November 2019 and 21<sup>st</sup> January 2020]