

TECHNICAL APPENDIX 7.9: APPRAISAL OF THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL'S CRITERIA FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF ONSHORE WIND PROPOSALS

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1. Technical Appendix 7.9: Appraisal of The Highland Council's Criteria for the Consideration of Onshore Wind Proposals

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Highland Council Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG) details The Highland Council (THC) policy and guidance on measures to be considered for the design and assessment of onshore wind farms. In relation to landscape and visual amenity it identifies ten criteria to be used by the Council as a framework and focus for assessing proposals. This Technical Appendix provides analysis of the Proposed Development in relation to these criteria.

1.1.2 The ten criteria are outlined in Table 1.1.1:

Table 1.1.1: OWESG Criteria for the Consideration of Onshore Wind Farm Proposals

Criterion	Threshold
<p>Criterion 1. Relationship between Settlements / Key locations and wider landscape are respected. (the extent to which the proposal contributes to perception of settlements or key locations being encircled by wind energy development)</p>	<p>Development should seek to achieve a threshold where turbines are not visually prominent in the majority of views within or from settlements / key locations or from the majority of its access routes.</p>
<p>Criterion 2. Key Gateway locations and routes are respected. (the extent to which the proposal reduces or detracts from the transitional experience of key Gateway Locations and routes)</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Criterion 3. Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected (the extent to which the proposal affects the fabric and setting of valued natural and cultural landmarks)</p>	<p>The development does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting.</p>
<p>Criterion 4. The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected. (the extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of key recreational routes and ways (e.g. Core Paths, Munros and Corbetts, Long Distance Routes etc.))</p>	<p>Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways.</p>
<p>Criterion 5. The amenity of transport routes is respected. (the extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of transport routes (tourist routes as well as rail, ferry routes and local road access))</p>	<p>Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of transport routes.</p>

Criterion	Threshold
<p>Criterion 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p>The proposal contributes positively to existing pattern or objectives for development in the area.</p>
<p>Criterion 7. The need for separation between developments and / or clusters is respected. (the extent to which the proposal maintains or affects the spaces between existing developments and/ or clusters).</p>	<p>The proposal maintains appropriate and effective separation between developments and/ or clusters</p>
<p>Criterion 8. The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected. (the extent to which the proposal maintains or affects receptors' existing perception of landscape scale and distance).</p>	<p>The proposal maintains the apparent landscape scale and/or distance in the receptors' perception</p>
<p>Criterion 9. Landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is respected. (the extent to which the landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is affected by the proposal).</p>	<p>Proposal relates well to the existing landscape setting and does not increase the perceived visual prominence of surrounding wind turbines.</p>
<p>Criterion 10. Distinctiveness of Landscape character is respected. (the extent to which a proposal affects the distinction between neighbouring landscape character types, in areas where the variety of character is important to the appreciation of the landscape).</p>	<p>Integrity and variety of Landscape Character Areas are maintained.</p>

1.1.3 An analysis of the Proposed Development in relation to these criteria is presented in section 1.3 of this Technical Appendix.

Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

1.1.4 Section 5.2 of the OWESG also includes the Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity study which identifies Key Views, Key Routes, and Gateways as well as Landscape Character Area sensitivities and guidance. These aspects are considered in section 1.2 of this Technical Appendix and feed into the analysis of the criteria.

1.2 Appraisal of Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways

1.2.1 Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways are detailed in Table 1.2.1, Table 1.2.2 and Table 1.2.3 which identify those of potential relevance to the Proposed Development and potential for effects.

Table 1.2.1: Appraisal of Key Views included in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

Key View	Appraisal	Potential Effects
Loch Ness West – End-to-end views over Loch Ness looking south-west;	The ZTV suggests that there would be no or very little view of the Proposed Development from locations offering this view which are between 30 and 35km from the Proposed Development.	No
Loch Ness East – End-to-end views over Loch Ness looking north-east;	The ZTV suggests that there would be no view of the Proposed Development from locations offering this view, in and around Fort Augustus.	No
Urquhart Castle from Loch – Water-level views looking up at castle;	There would be only a very small area in Urquhart Bay where the Proposed Development may theoretically be perceived in the same view as Urquhart Castle from water level. The possible tips visible, at nearly 25 km away, would be unlikely to affect the focus or value of the castle in the view.	No
Urquhart Castle Land Based – Generally elevated views looking towards the castle from above;	It is unlikely that the Proposed Development would be perceived in views towards the castle from land areas. If seen, at over 25 km distance, the small tips visible would be unlikely to affect the focus of the castle in the view.	No
Loch Ness from Urquhart Castle – Views primarily towards the north-east and Urquhart Bay;	The Proposed Development would not be visible from Urquhart Castle (refer to VP20 in Technical Appendix 7.7 and Figure 7.9.20.1).	No
Great Glen from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh – Principal views are north-east and south-west up and down the Great Glen;	The Proposed Development would not be seen in the principal views north-east and south-west but would be seen in the southern to south-eastern view and in combination with the existing Stronelairg and Corriegarth developments. The Proposed Development viewed from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh is assessed as VP3 in Technical Appendix 7.7 and Figure 7.9.3.1-7.9.3.3. This effect is considered to be Minor – Moderate and not significant.	Yes, but not significant.
Loch Tarff 'Local Hero' location – Passing place east of Loch Tarff with view west-north-west;	The Proposed Development would not be visible in this view or from this location.	No

Key View	Appraisal	Potential Effects
A87 viewpoint above Loch Garry – Panoramic views easily accessible by tourists across Great Glen east;	This view is represented by VP14: A87, Loch Garry, in Technical Appendix 7.7 (See Figure 7.9.14.1-7.9.14.3). The effect on this view is considered to be Minor and not significant.	Yes, but not significant
A887 views west – sequence of westward views forms a significant transitional experience.	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No

Table 1.2.2: Appraisal of Key Routes included in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

Key Route	Appraisal	Potential Effects
A82	The A82 is assessed as Route R1 in Technical Appendix 7.7: Visual Assessment Tables and Figure 7.6.2. The visual effect is considered to be Negligible.	Yes, but not significant
B862 Stratherrick	The B862 is assessed as Route R3 in Technical Appendix 7.7: Visual Assessment Tables and Figure 7.6.2. The visual effect is considered to be Negligible.	Yes, but not significant
B851 Strathnairn and Loch Ness side	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from this route.	No
A9	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from the A9.	No
A833 Glen Convinth	Limited theoretical visibility from a small part of the A833 at over 25km distant is considered unlikely to lead to any noticeable degree of effect.	No
A831 Glen Urquhart	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from the A831.	No
A887 Glen Moriston	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from the A887.	No
A87 above Loch Garry	The view from this route is represented by VP14: A87, Loch Garry, in Technical Appendix 7.7: Visual Assessment Tables (See Figures 7.9.14.1-7.9.14.3, and Figure 7.5). The effect is on this view is considered to be Minor and not significant. This would affect a very short section of this route which is not considered in Technical Appendix 7.7 due to lack of visibility within the detailed study area (20km) and consequential unlikelihood of significant effect.	Yes, but not significant
B861 Tombreck – Inverness	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from this route.	No
B852 South Loch Ness shore	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from South Loch Ness shore.	Yes, but not significant

Key Route	Appraisal	Potential Effects
	This route is assessed in whole as Route R2 in Technical Appendix 7.7: Visual Assessment Tables. The visual effect is considered to be Negligible.	
Dunain – Blackfold – Abriachan	The ZTV indicates very limited theoretical visibility from this route but within forestry. At over 35km distance any perceptible effect is unlikely.	No
Minor Road – Caiplich (UC1072)	The ZTV indicates very limited theoretical visibility from this route. At over 30km distance any perceptible effect is unlikely.	No
Minor Road Bunloit	The assessment of this area is represented by VP2: Great Glen Way, Balbeg, and Residential Receptor Location RRL1 in Technical Appendix 7.7: Visual Assessment Tables. The effect in both assessments is considered to be Minor.	Yes, but not significant
Great Glen Way	The Great Glen Way is assessed as route R4 in Technical Appendix 7.7: Visual Assessment Tables and Figure 7.6.2. The effect is considered to be Minor.	Yes, but not significant
Great Glen Canoe Trail	There would be extremely limited visibility of the Proposed Development from the Great Glen Canoe Trail, limited to a very small area near Urquhart Castle. It is considered very unlikely that this would lead to any noticeable visual effect. This route is scoped out of visual assessment in Table 1.4.2 of Technical Appendix 7.2: Landscape and Visual Scoping Appraisal.	No
Caledonian Canal and lochs	There would be extremely limited visibility of the Proposed Development from the Caledonian Canal, limited to a very small area of Loch Ness near Urquhart Castle. It is considered very unlikely that this would lead to any noticeable visual effect. This route is scoped out of visual assessment in Table 1.4.2 of Technical Appendix 7.2: Landscape and Visual Scoping Appraisal.	No

Table 1.2.3: Appraisal of Gateways included in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

Gateway	Appraisal	Potential Effects
Drumadrochit – sense of arrival at Great Glen	There would be no view of the Proposed Development on arrival at the Great Glen from Strath Urquhart. The role as a gateway would therefore not be affected.	No
A887 / A87 Bunloyne junction transitional corridor	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from this junction or the transitional corridor of the A887.	No

Gateway	Appraisal	Potential Effects
A87 above Loch Loyne	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from this location.	No
A9 at Inches – arrival at Inverness and Moray Firth	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from this location.	No
Abriachan – Aird to Great Glen when travelling south-east	The ZTV suggests very minimal theoretical visibility from this location. It is unlikely that the limited and distant tips visible to the south would affect the sense of gateway to the south-east.	No
Moniack Mhor – views to Beaully strath	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from this location.	No
Loch Dochfour – transition between loch-side and farmland.	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from the A82 in this area.	No
Invermoriston – sense of arrival at Great Glen	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from Invermoriston.	No
Fort Augustus – arrival at Loch Ness	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from Fort Augustus.	No
Dores – arrival at Loch Ness	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from or around Dores	No
Invergarry – sense of arrival at Great Glen.	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from Invergarry. Approaching from Glen Garry, there would limited visibility of the Proposed Development, represented by VP14: A87, Loch Garry in Technical Appendix 7.7: Visual Assessment Tables and Figure 7.5. The effect on this VP is considered to be minor.	Yes, but not significant.

Landscape Character Guidance

1.2.2 The Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity study contained within the OWESG identifies sensitivities of landscapes around Loch Ness to wind farm development and provides guidance for their siting. The Proposed Development would be located within OWESG Landscape Character Area (LCA) 6: Monadhliath Ridge and Tops, Rolling Uplands - Inverness. This area is identified as having:

- No scope for small or medium turbines;
- Limited scope for micro turbines where closely associated with buildings; and
- Limited scope for additional large turbines within the existing pattern.

1.2.3 The following recommendations are provided for the siting of wind turbines within this LCA:

1.2.4 Turbines should

- Not breach skyline when viewed from north side of Loch Ness;
- Be set back from Key Routes;
- Preserve mitigation established by current schemes;

- Maintain the landscape setting of each existing scheme;
- Avoid coalescence with current positioning; and
- Respect spacing and scale of existing development pattern.

1.2.5 OWESG LCA 6 is assessed in the LVIA as National Landscape Character Type (LCT) 221 – Rolling Uplands – Inverness (see Table 1.2.4 of Technical Appendix 7.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types. See also Figure 7.3.3). The assessment has concluded that the landscape effect to this area would be generally minor and not significant, but that there would be a localised moderate significant effect largely relating to direct effects but also relating to indirect effects close to the Proposed Development. However, the recommendations in the OWESG have greater significance to the landscape and visual effects of the Great Glen Area, and hills on its western edge. This area is mostly covered by the assessment for LCT 225 – Broad Steep-sided Glen (included in OWESG as LCA LN19) (see Table 1.2.1 of Technical Appendix 7.3, and Figure 7.3.3) with high ground on the edges covered partially by the assessments for LCT 222 – Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness (included in OWESG as LCA LN10) (see Table 1.2.3 of Technical Appendix 7.3), and LCT 220 – Rugged Massif – Inverness (included in OWESG as LCA LN5) (see Table 1.2.5 of Technical Appendix 7.3). For these three areas, the assessment has concluded that the effect would be Negligible.

1.2.6 Analysis of the recommendations for siting wind turbines is provided in Table 1.2.4.

Table 1.2.4: Analysis of Recommendations for Siting Turbines in OWESG LCA 6

Recommendation	Analysis
Turbines should not breach skyline when viewed from north side of Loch Ness.	The turbines of the Proposed Development would generally not breach the skyline when seen from the north / west side of Loch Ness and would generally not be visible from the loch-side or forested containing slopes. However, from highest areas of ground on this side of the loch such as the high slopes and summits of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh and Burach Cairn, blades would be seen above the skyline in combination with existing blades of Stronelaig Wind Farm. The operational Corriegarth Wind Farm and further to the north east, the operational Dunmaglass Wind Farm can also be seen as separate clusters, with turbines breaching the skyline. The anticipated construction of both the consented Dell Wind Farm and the consented Aberarder Wind Farm would also lead to a context whereby blades are seen above the skyline from these areas reducing the effect of the addition of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would appear distant from these locations and is unlikely to affect the appreciation of the Great Glen, and the effect, represented by VP2:Great Glen Way, Balbeg, and VP3: Meall Fuar-mhonaidh (see Technical Appendix 7.7 and Figures 7.9.2.1 – 7.9.2.3 and 7.9.3.1 – 7.9.3.3) is not anticipated to be significant.
Turbines should be set back from Key Routes.	The Proposed Development is not located close to any of the Key Routes which are summarised in Table 1.2.2.
Turbines should preserve mitigation established by current schemes.	The Proposed Development would be located adjacent to the Stronelaig Wind Farm and would be set within the same 'bowl' landform which limits the extent of visibility with the surrounding areas – particularly to the Great Glen. However, some of the proposed turbines would be located in areas where turbines were previously removed for the Stronelaig development for mitigation

Recommendation	Analysis
	<p>purposes at the time, in order to avoid blades appearing above the skyline in views from the Great Glen. Nevertheless, it is considered that the Proposed Development still adheres to the principles of these mitigation measures as it leads to very few long term significant effects which are generally localised to an area close to the Proposed Development site. As indicated by Figure 7.8.4: Cumulative ZTV: Proposed Development with Stronelairst, there is a small area to the west of Loch Ness around Balbeg and Inchterrach where the Proposed Development would increase visibility. However, the effect in this area, as represented by VP2: Great Glen Way, Balbeg (see Technical Appendix 7.7 and Figures 7.9.2.1 – 7.9.2.3) is not considered to be significant and visibility would be largely limited by tree cover. On higher ground to the west of the Great Glen around Meall Fuar-mhonaith (see Technical Appendix 7.7 and Figures 7.9.3.1.1 – 7.9.3.3), there would be an increased number of turbines visible, slightly increasing the field of view affected and adding some additional blades above the skyline. However, this would still be seen in the context of the existing Stronelairst turbines which affect the view and would form part of the same cohesive turbine grouping. This is therefore considered unlikely to lead to any significant landscape or visual effect. The anticipated addition of the consented Dell Wind Farm which is set higher than Stronelairst and slightly out of the 'bowl' would further affect this baseline view, leading to a greater precedent of turbine blades above the skyline, as detailed in Technical Appendix 7.8: Cumulative Visual Assessment Tables, Table 1.2.3). In addition to this, the consented Aberarder Wind Farm which is located further north, and would be seen in combination with the operational Dunmaglass Wind Farm, would also further affect the baseline view, leading to a greater precedent of turbine blades being seen above the skyline in views from the Great Glen (see Figures 7.9.3.1.1 – 7.9.3.1.3).</p> <p>Elsewhere, there would be new visibility in some areas to the south, which is considered to lead to localised significant visual effects to a few infrequently obtained high level views around Strath Mashie. In other areas there may be an increased number of turbines visible. However, these would be seen in the context of the Stronelairst turbines and are considered unlikely to lead to any significant effects, other than very close to the Proposed Development. However, the focus of the mitigation established for Stronelairst, to minimise views of turbines from the lower level loch side and the A82, within the Great Glen, would be preserved.</p>
<p>Turbines should maintain the landscape setting of each existing scheme.</p>	<p>The Proposed Development would be located close to the existing Stronelairst Wind Farm and within the same 'bowl' landform which limits the extent of visibility. It is considered that this would not adversely affect the setting of the Stronelairst Wind Farm as it would form a cohesive group with the existing wind farm when seen from almost all locations and would generally not lead to any significant increase in landscape and visual effect, other than in a few positions where the new turbines would be closer to the viewer and would lead to a significant effect in their own right, rather than as an addition to Stronelairst.</p>

Recommendation	Analysis
Turbines should avoid coalescence with current positioning.	<p>The Proposed Development would not lead to any coalescence of existing wind farm groupings and would reflect the pattern of existing development clusters within the LCT / LCA, particularly when viewed from the Great Glen where the existing influence of wind farms comprises groupings of turbines seen within low points and side valleys of the eastern landscape.</p> <p>In some views there may be slight stacking of individual turbines with existing Stronelaig turbines but in these views the turbines are either distant (over 10km away), which would reduce the perceptibility of this effect, or the existing Stronelaig turbines are already prominent, reducing the sensitivity of the existing view. The design of the Proposed Development layout has sought to minimise this effect as far as possible as well as maintain a balanced distribution of turbines when seen from key viewpoints (see Chapter 2: Site Selection and Design Evolution and Appendix 2.1: Design and Access Statement).</p>
Respect spacing and scale of existing development pattern	<p>The Proposed Development would maintain the existing distribution of wind farm groupings within the LCT / LCA and reflects the pattern of existing development clusters, particularly when viewed from the Great Glen where the existing influence of wind farms comprises groupings of turbines seen within low points and side valleys of the eastern landscape. Although when combined with the existing Stronelaig Wind Farm, it would create a larger grouping of turbines than other developments within this LCT / LCA, due to the position within the 'bowl' landform, this would seldom be evident, other than from a few elevated locations within around 5 - 6km from the Proposed Development. This is particularly the case for views obtained from in and around the Great Glen. Even from the highest ground on the western side of the Great Glen, Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, the nature of the topography is such that this turbine grouping would appear more like two separate smaller clusters (see Figure 7.9.3.3). The scale and spacing of other operational wind farms in the area such as Dunmaglass and Corriegarth, would be respected, as illustrated by VP3: Meall Fuar-mhonaidh Figures 7.9.3.1.1-7.9.3.1.3.</p>

1.3 Analysis of Criteria

Criterion 1. Relationship between Settlements / Key locations and wider landscape are respected.

- 1.3.1 The Proposed Development would not be visible from the majority of the main settlements within the study area. Where visible, from residential areas, it is considered unlikely to lead to any significant visual effects.
- 1.3.2 There would be no effect from most key locations (viewpoints and gateways detailed in Table 1.2.1, Table 1.2.2 and Table 1.2.3). Limited effects may be experienced to views from a few locations including, A87 above Loch Garry and the Great Glen viewed from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh but these would not be significant.
- 1.3.3 The assessment of routes has identified that there would be temporary significant visual effects only on views from two recreational routes which pass through the Proposed Development. No roads or other routes which provide the main access routes to

settlements would be significantly affected and there would be no longer term significant effects on any routes.

- 1.3.4 It is therefore concluded the threshold for this criteria would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development.

Criterion 2. Key Gateway locations and routes are respected

- 1.3.5 The majority of Key Gateway locations and routes would not be affected by the Proposed Development. As detailed in Table 1.2.2 there would be some degree of visual effect on a small number of the Key Routes, including the Great Glen Way and a minor road at Bunloit but these effects would not be significant.

- 1.3.6 As detailed in Table 1.2.3, only one of the Key Gateways would be potentially affected by the Proposed Development: Invergarry. This effect is represented by VP14: A87, Loch Garry (see Technical Appendix 7.7 and Figure 7.9.14.1 – 7.9.14.3. However, this effect would be not significant.

- 1.3.7 It is therefore concluded that the threshold for this criteria would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development, because not part of it would overwhelm or detract from the key elements of these routes and gateway points.

Criterion 3. Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected

- 1.3.8 Valued natural landmarks referred to under this criteria are considered to comprise, geological features such as the Great Glen, key landmarks within the landscape such as Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, and important lochs such as Loch Ness, Loch Oich and Loch Lochy and other features which comprise the Special Qualities of designated landscapes. Valued cultural landmarks are considered to comprise important and popular cultural sites such as Urquhart Castle, and other designated cultural heritage sites.

- 1.3.9 It is considered that the Proposed Development would not diminish the prominence or disrupt the setting to any natural or cultural heritage landmarks. Key landmarks within the Great Glen such as Urquhart Castle viewed from Loch Ness or land based viewpoints, and Meall Fuar-mhonaidh viewed from the Great Glen would not be affected, as detailed in Table 1.2.1. There would be no significant effects to the setting of any cultural heritage sites (see Chapter 12: Cultural Heritage).

- 1.3.10 It is therefore concluded that the threshold for this criteria would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development.

Criterion 4. The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected

- 1.3.11 The Proposed Development would not lead to any significant effects on any of the recreational Key Routes identified in the OWESG. The visual assessment has identified that there would be a temporary significant effect to two recreational routes which pass through the Proposed Development site. Route R7: Scottish Hill Track 235: Laggan to Whitebridge and Route R10: Monadhliath Way (see Technical Appendix 7.7, Table 1.1.2 and Figure 7.6.2). However, this effect would be during the construction phase only and the longer term effect is considered to be not significant, due to the existing prominence of the Stronelaig turbines seen from the parts of these routes affected, and the resultant viewing expectations of those using these routes.

- 1.3.12 A temporary significant effect during construction on the view from one Munro summit included as a VP has been identified (VP9: Geal Charn (Monadhliath) (see Technical

Appendix 7.7 and Figures 7.9.9.1 – 7.9.9.3)) but the long term effect on this VP is not considered significant due to the existing prominence of the Stronelaig wind turbines from this location. However, a significant operational effect has been identified to the view from one Corbett included as a VP (VP7: Carn a' Chuilinn (see Technical Appendix 7.7 and Figures 7.9.7.1 – 7.9.7.3)) and this is representative of a type of view which may be obtained from other nearby summits, such as the Corbett Gairbeinn, to the south of the western cluster. Whilst there may be a visual effect on recreational users around these summits, there are no established paths in this area and therefore these are not considered to be key routes. This reflects the visual effect on views from a relatively small area which is already affected to some degree by Stronelaig and would not significantly affect the recreational amenity of these hills (see Chapter 15: Land Use and Recreation).

- 1.3.13 It is considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded, because none of the identified Key Routes would be affected, and it is not considered that the visual appeal of any of the other hills summits or routes would be overwhelmed by turbine development in the longer term.

Criterion 5. The amenity of transport routes is respected

- 1.3.14 As detailed in Table 1.2.2, the majority of Key Routes would not be affected by the Proposed Development. There would be some degree of visual effect on a small number of the Key Routes, such as the A87 and a minor road at Bunloit but these effects would not be significant.
- 1.3.15 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded.

Criterion 6. The existing pattern of Wind Energy Development is respected

- 1.3.16 This criterion cites the following considerations to be taken into account:
- Turbine height and proportions,
 - density and spacing of turbines within developments;
 - density and spacing of developments;
 - typical relationship of development to the landscape;
 - previously instituted mitigation measures; and
 - Planning Authority stated aims for development of area.
- 1.3.17 As detailed in Table 1.2.4, there would be some increased effect on landscape character and views as a result of the Proposed Development comprising, in some areas, a greater number of turbines seen within views, a larger number of blades extending above the skyline and a greater perceived spread of development. However, the location of the Proposed Development adjacent to the existing Stronelaig Wind Farm, is considered to minimise the degree of these effects. The Proposed Development is in general considered to reflect the existing pattern of wind farm development within the Rolling Uplands – Inverness LCT (OWESG LCA 6), particularly as perceived from the Great Glen area and slopes on the western side of Loch Ness. The design of the Proposed Development turbine layout reflects the density of turbines in other developments, and the positioning of the Proposed Development within the same landform 'bowl' as Stronelaig and generally maintains the design objectives of Stronelaig, particularly when considered in addition to the anticipated consented development of Dell. When seen from other areas, particularly within the Great Glen, the Proposed Development forms a cohesive group of

turbines with Stronelairg which are mostly evenly distributed and maintain the space between Stronelairg and other turbine clusters such as Corriegarth.

- 1.3.18 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded, as it is considered that the Proposed Development forms a well-located wind farm site which enables the generation of renewable energy with the minimum of significant landscape and visual effects. The Proposed Development respects the pattern of existing development with Rolling Uplands – Inverness LCT (OWESG LCA 6) and the objectives laid out for this area (as detailed in Table 1.2.4).

Criterion 7. The need for separation between developments and / or clusters is respected

- 1.3.19 As detailed in Table 1.2.4, the Proposed Development would be located adjacent to the existing Stronelairg Wind Farm and would appear as a cohesive grouping with these existing turbines. It would be situated in the same 'bowl' landform and would maintain a strong landscape buffer between the nearest existing development of Corriegarth. The existing pattern of development clusters and open spaces would therefore be maintained, particularly when seen from the Great Glen area.
- 1.3.20 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development.

Criterion 8. The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected

- 1.3.21 The Proposed Development would be formed of slightly larger turbines than those of Stronelairg, to which it would be adjacent. This difference in scale may be perceived from a small number of VPs and landscape areas close to the Proposed Development, and from some VPs the larger turbines may appear to bring turbines slightly closer to the viewer. This may slightly reduce a perceived scale of the landscape in some locations which would contribute to landscape and visual effects. However, it would not affect the overriding perception of expansive scale within the landscape and would be only a small contributory factor to any of the limited significant effects which are experienced. This effect would not be experienced from any of the Key Viewpoints (see Table 1.2.1), Key Routes (see Table 1.2.2) or Gateways (see Table 1.2.3).
- 1.3.22 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development because the apparent landscape scale and distance perceived by receptors is likely to be maintained.

Criterion 9. Landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is respected

- 1.3.23 As detailed in Table 1.2.4, the Proposed Development would be located close to the existing Stronelairg Wind Farm and within the 'bowl' landform which limits the extent of visibility. It is considered that this would not adversely affect the setting of the Stronelairg Wind Farm or the consented Dell Wind Farm as it would form a cohesive group with these existing and proposed wind farms when seen from almost all locations and would generally not lead to any significant increase in landscape and visual effect, other than a few positions where the new turbines would be closer to the viewer and would lead to a significant effect in their own right, rather than as an addition to Stronelairg or Dell.
- 1.3.24 The Proposed Development would not encroach on any other existing wind energy developments (such as Corriegarth) and would therefore not be detrimental to the setting of these.

- 1.3.25 Overall, it is considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded because the design and layout of the Proposed Development respects the original design objectives of the Stronelaig development and does not adversely affect the setting of any other site.

Criterion 10. Distinctiveness of Landscape character is respected

- 1.3.26 The Proposed Development is anticipated to lead to some very localised effects on landscape character close to the Proposed Development within the hills and plateaux of the Monadhliath, largely within 2km of the Proposed Development and not more than 8km away, and generally affecting small, discrete parts of the landscape. Significant effects would occur in the form of direct effects from the presence of turbines, substation, hardstanding and access tracks, and LiDAR positions, and indirect effects within a small number of localised areas due to the appearance of turbines within close proximity, where other similar development is not already influential, thereby locally affecting qualities of remoteness and wildness.
- 1.3.27 These localised effects would occur within adjacent and similar upland LCTs / LCAs where existing wind energy development is already a characteristic of parts of the landscape and the wider effect on these LCTs / LCAs is therefore considered to be not significant. Surrounding LCTs / LCAs would not be significantly affected and the complexity and variety of landscape character experienced within the study area would therefore be retained.
- 1.3.28 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development.

1.4 Summary and Conclusions

- 1.4.1 The analysis of the THC criteria for the consideration of onshore wind farm proposals has taken account of the anticipated landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development detailed in Chapter 7 of the EIA Report, and in particular, the effects on the Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways identified in the OWESG, and the recommendations for OWESG LCA 6 (LCT 221 – Rolling Uplands - Inverness) included in the Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity study. This has concluded that there would be no significant effect on any of the Key Views, Key Routes or Gateways, that the layout and design of the Proposed Development is broadly in line with the LCA 6 recommendations and that the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development, although locally significant would not lead to the threshold for any of the ten THC criteria being exceeded.
- 1.4.2 The Proposed Development is therefore considered to be in broad conformity with THC's criteria for the consideration of onshore wind farm proposals.