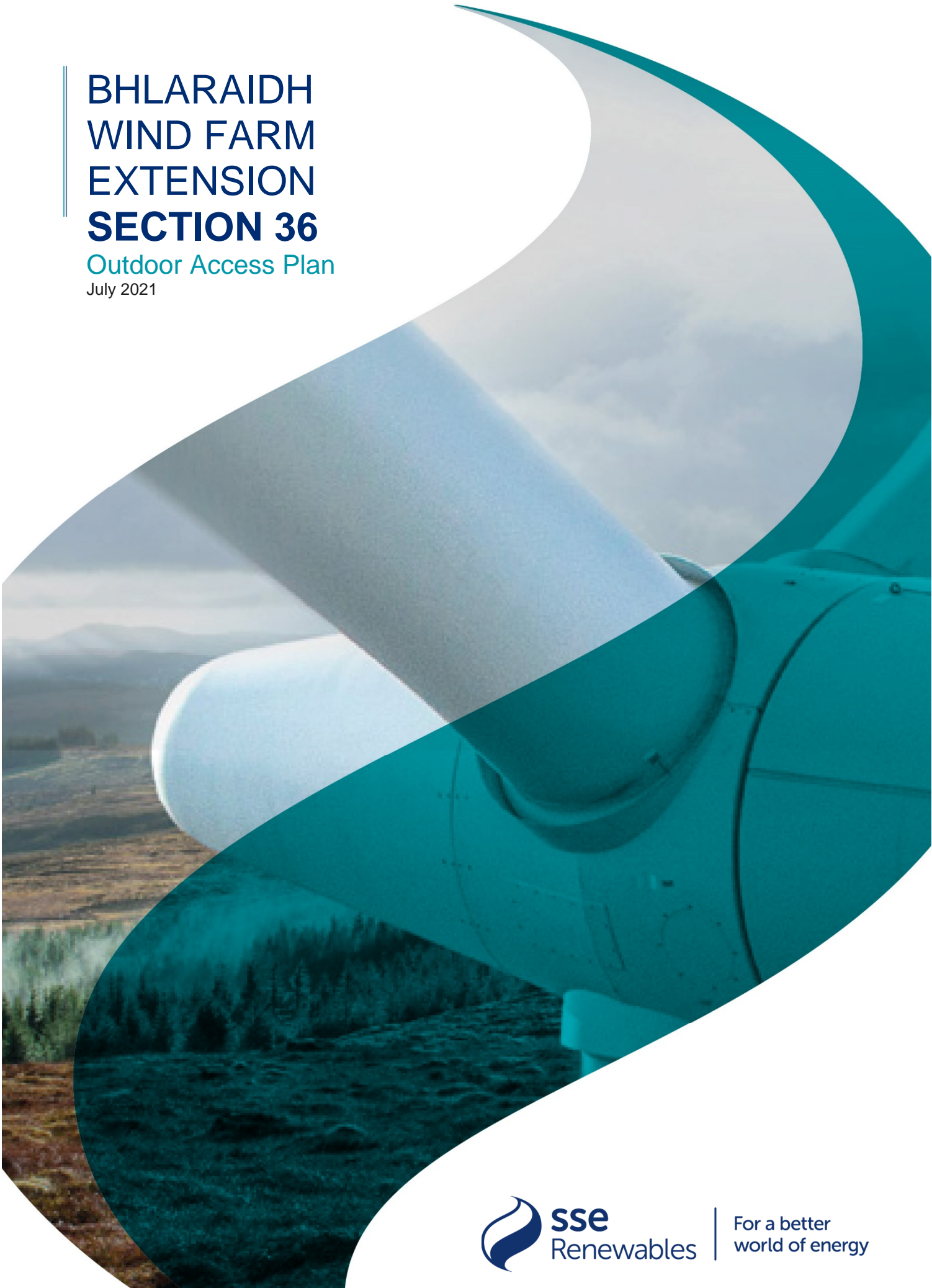


BHLARAI DH
WIND FARM
EXTENSION
SECTION 36

Outdoor Access Plan

July 2021



sse
Renewables

For a better
world of energy

REPORT VERSIONS

Version	Author	Reviewer	Approver	Date
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

SSE Generation Limited (hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant') intends to submit an application for the Bhlairaidh Wind Farm Extension ('Proposed Development'), located on the Glenmoriston Estate, near Invermoriston, Highlands. The application will be made to Scottish Ministers via the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit (ECU) under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989. The application is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA Report) as required by the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 as amended (the EIA Regulations).

The Applicant is also seeking direction under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 ('the 1997 Act') that planning permission would be deemed to be granted in respect of the Proposed Development.

The Proposed Development is located adjacent to the operational 32 turbine Bhlairaidh Wind Farm ('Operational Development') (planning reference: 12/02556/S36).

1.2. PURPOSE, AIMS & OBJECTIVES

This Outdoor Access Plan (OAP) has been prepared to support the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) for the Proposed Development.

This Plan has been drafted in line with the requirements set out in the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) guidance, "A Brief Guide to Preparing an Outdoor access Plan"[1]. The guidance stipulates that there should be five steps set out within any OAP:

- STEP 1 - Identify the Purpose, Aims & Objectives of the OAP.
- STEP 2 - Establish the Outdoor Access Baseline affected by the development proposal.
- STEP 3 - Identify predicted development impacts and potential enhancements on the Outdoor Access Baseline.
- STEP 4 - Mitigate the predicted development impacts, and design potential enhancements.
- STEP 5 - Manage & Monitor the implementation of the OAP.

The objectives of this plan are to identify all public access routes and establish any potential conflicts, safety concerns or access restrictions to the routes that may be encountered during construction and identify mitigation and management measures.

The OAP also intends to address the following response from The Highland Council (THC) on the EIA Scoping Report¹:

"The site is on land with access rights provided by the Land Reform Scotland Act. Access rights on a core path are not enhanced but they are more protected during construction and similar activities.

¹ Bhlairaidh Wind Farm Extension, EIA Scoping Report, SSE & ITP Energised, July 2019.
Scoping Response to Energy Consents Unit, THC, 23 Aug 2019, Planning Ref 19/03373/SCOP

In line with the policies and provisions of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan a plan detailing the following should be submitted as part of the EIAR:

- Existing public non-motorised public access footpaths, bridleways and cycleways on the site and any proposed access route from the public road infrastructure; and
- Proposed public access provision both during construction and after completion of the development, including links to existing path networks (where appropriate) and to the surrounding area, and access points to water.
- Impacts of the proposed development on the core paths and proposed mitigation if any”.

The following ScotWays response to the EIA Scoping Report², highlighting local route HI71 within proximity to Proposed Development, has also been considered:

“The National Catalogue of Rights of Way (CROW) shows HI71, in part, is affected by the subjects outlined in red on Figure 1.1 Site Location Plan. This is listed in CROW as an “other route”, which means that although it does not meet all the criteria to be recognised as a right of way it is seen as an important local route”.

² Scotways, scoping response letter to ECU, 6 August 2019.

2. Outdoor Access Baseline & Potential Impacts

2.1. ACCESS ROUTES

The EIAR, Chapter 13: Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation, contains a list of Core Paths, Rights of Way and Wider Access Paths in and adjacent to the Proposed Development. These have been used as a basis for identifying where access management is required.

While there are no core paths that pass through the Proposed Development area, there are existing paths and tracks within the site boundary which may be used by walkers, cyclists and equestrians. Parts of each of these routes coincide with sections of access track used for the Operational Development, Livishie Hydro Scheme and Glenmoriston Estate. These are:

Recreational Routes ³	Description
Loch á Chràthaich to Right of Way (RoW)1 (WAN 1)	A 4x4 estate/hydro track of approximately 4km in length. Used by pedestrians and cyclists. Potentially used by equestrians.
WAN1 to Alltsigh (WAN 2)	A 4x4 estate/hydro track of approximately 15km in length. Used by pedestrians and cyclists. Potentially used by equestrians.
Path HI71	Track leading from Bhlaraidh to Loch ma Stac to River Enrick. The section of the track from Loch ma Stac to Bhlaraidh is used to service the hydro scheme and by Glenmoriston Estate. A short section (1,234m) follows part of the existing wind farm access track immediately north of Bhlaraidh settlement.

Figure 1: Public Access Paths & Management Strategy, shows the parts of the above routes in and adjacent to the Proposed Development which have been considered in this OAP.

2.2. POTENTIAL ACCESS IMPACTS

The primary access impact associated with the Proposed Development will arise during the construction phase of the project.

The short section of the H171 route which coincides with the Operational Development access track will be used by construction traffic to access the Proposed Development Turbine Development area. It is envisaged that safe access to the public will be maintained by implementing the mitigations and management strategy set out in Section 3 below. Existing public access to the path from the A887 at the Bhlaraidh settlement will be maintained. All construction traffic will access the Site via the existing site entrance further east along the A887. Public access may be restricted on the section of access track between the site entrance and the point at which H171 joins the access track during construction for safety reasons due to construction vehicle movements in and around the main site compound. However, this section of track will fully reopen and will be open to the public once the Proposed Development is constructed and is operational.

³ Identified in EIAR Table **Error! No text of specified style in document..Error! Main Document Only.**, Chapter 13 – Recreational Routes (Within 15km of the Proposed Development)

It is envisaged that public access along WAN1 and WAN2 routes will be maintained during construction, however path segregation may be required in some areas close to construction areas and public may require to be escorted across working areas where safety concerns are raised. Signage will be put in place at key locations along the paths to provide advance notification of any restrictions.

Temporary restriction of seasonal estate activities may also be required, e.g deer stalking, during construction, and to mitigate this, the Applicant and construction contractor(s) will work closely with the estate managers to limit disruption, with temporary diversions put in place if required.

Access to the hydro-electric facilities for maintenance and servicing will be maintained, however a communication plan will be put in place to ensure all construction site rules are communicated to hydro personnel to allow safe access for vehicles which may require to pass through active construction areas.

It is not anticipated that any permanent access restrictions will be put in place during the operational phase of the Proposed Development, however the operation of the Proposed Development may lead to Health and Safety (H&S) implications due to adverse weather and some localised temporary restrictions due to H&S exclusion zones which may be required for some routine maintenance and / or lifting operations.

3. ACCESS MANAGEMENT & MITIGATION

3.1. GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Applicant is committed to enabling day to day access where this does not compromise the safety of the general public or construction staff. It is envisaged that with the correct management strategy, signage and site rules, access can be maintained to the routes identified in Section 2.

The Outdoor Access Plan and appropriate warnings will be communicated to the local community prior to the commencement of construction works via the Community Liaison Group (CLG), the Proposed Development's website and local mailing list. Where additional restrictions or diversions are required outwith the outlined plan below, these will also be communicated via the same method.

The Applicant intends to keep existing access open throughout construction, as far as possible, subject to the safety mitigation measures outlined below. It is not intended to close or divert any existing local access during the operation of the Proposed Development once constructed.

Access arrangements and management strategies in the OAP will be monitored throughout construction and reviewed at regular project Health & Safety meetings by the Principal Contractor. Any changes to the OAP will be communicated to the CLG.

The Applicant will seek to minimise any negative impact on public access during construction (e.g. by allowing escorted safe access if required) and maximising the benefits post construction by providing suitable signs, gates and other access furniture to accommodate public access during the operational phase.

3.2. MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 1: H171 WALKING ROUTE

The small section of the River Enrick to Bhlaraidh walking route (H171) shown in Figure 1 within Management Strategy area 'MS1' will require management to allow safe access to the public while construction is underway.

It is proposed to segregate the existing route along the western side of the access track where possible. The segregated walkway will be way-marked to guide the public and appropriate cordons will be put in place to ensure sufficient segregation between walkers and construction traffic. The following additional measures will be implemented to ensure safe access can continue:

- Warning signage, as set out in "Signage Guidance for Outdoor Access: A Guide to Good Practice [2]", indicating the likelihood of construction traffic will be placed at regular intervals along the route (see Appendix 1 - Sample Pedestrian Warning Sign).
- A site information leaflet will be posted at regular intervals, informing members of the public 'what to do' if site traffic is encountered (see Appendix 2 - Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Site Information Leaflet).
- The potential for walkers, cyclists or equestrians on site, and in particular on the identified access routes, will be highlighted to all site personnel at site induction and regularly in tool box talks.
- Speed limit of construction traffic on tracks to be set to 15 mph with appropriate signage highlighting this.
- Site rules will dictate hazard lights are to be switched on by construction traffic vehicles while using site tracks.
- Warning signage for construction staff highlighting that members of the public may be utilising routes (see Appendix 1 – Sample Construction Staff Warning Sign).

3.3. MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2: WIDER ACCESS NETWORKS WAN1 AND WAN2

The sections of Wider Access Network routes, WAN1 and WAN2 shown on Figure 1 within Management Strategy area 'MS2' will remain open, however paths may require to be locally diverted around construction areas, and in some cases the public may require to be escorted around busy construction areas. The following measures will be implemented and communicated to ensure public safety:

- Gates to be positioned at the approximate positions indicated on Figure 1 during the construction phase of the Proposed Development. The purpose of the gates is to demarcate the start of the construction area and signage is to be displayed at each gate setting out any specific restrictions and / or general site access rules and precautions. Signage to also include a site contact number for further information or to arrange safe passage where required.
- Warning signage as set out in "Signage Guidance for Outdoor Access: A Guide to Good

Practice [2]" indicating the likelihood of construction traffic to be placed at regular intervals along the walking route. See Appendix 1 - Sample pedestrian warning sign.

- Warning signs are also to be strategically placed at points where core paths cross construction tracks or in areas where there are a large amount of construction activities occurring at any one time.
- In addition, signage will be provided on WAN2 advising that as the route approaches the construction area from the east, an alternative route exists via H171 (south to Invermoriston and then east to join H171).
- A site information leaflet will be posted at regular intervals, informing members of the public 'what to do' if site traffic is encountered. (See Appendix 2 - Bhlairaidh site information leaflet).
- Speed limit of construction traffic on tracks to be set to 15 mph with appropriate signage highlighting this.
- The potential for walkers, cyclists or equestrians on site, and in particular on the identified access routes, will be highlighted in the site induction and regularly in tool box talks.
- Site rules will dictate that the hazard lights on construction / operations vehicles are to be switched on while using site tracks.
- Warning signage for construction staff highlighting that members of the public may be utilising routes (see Appendix 1 – Sample Construction Staff Warning Sign).

3.4. WIND FARM ACCESS TRACKS

Access for construction of the Proposed Development will utilise the Operational Development wind farm access tracks and existing hydro access tracks. Operational access rules will apply to both construction and the general public on these existing tracks to ensure no harm to users from construction traffic.

Upon completion of the construction of the Proposed Development, the public will again be able to fully access these existing tracks, as well as the new tracks constructed on the Proposed Development. Existing access gates will be maintained to limit unauthorised vehicular access (joyriders etc) however; access by foot, bicycle and horse will be maintained.

Signage will be installed setting out the Operational site rules (similar to the Dunmaglass Wind Farm photo below). Way-marking signs will also be installed advising the public of where access routes lead.

This signage will be in place for the lifetime of the Proposed Development with a purpose to highlight to the public the risks of accessing the site. Additional temporary signage may be deployed where required to advise on any temporary restrictions due to operational maintenance activities and ongoing Glenmoriston Estate activities (shooting etc).



Photo: Example of Operational Wind Farm Site Information Sign

4. Monitoring

Access via the site by the general public will be monitored throughout construction. Contractors and sub-contractors will review all risks associated with public access through or near construction areas in all risk assessments and method statements, which shall be reviewed and approved by the Principal Contractor prior to commencement of construction activities in any area.

Signage, site induction information and tool box talk will be regularly reviewed and updated depending on levels of monitored public access across the site throughout construction.

5. Conclusion

As stated throughout this document, the Applicant aims to maintain access to the Operational Development and the local path networks (H171, WAN1 and WAN2) during the construction phase. It is believed this can be achieved through the above management strategies while ensuring the safety of the public and construction staff.

6. References

1 – A Brief Guide to Preparing an Outdoor access Plan, (SNH, 2010)

Accessed online: 15/6/21,

<https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2017-06/B639282%20-%20A%20Brief%20Guide%20to%20Preparing%20Outdoor%20Access%20Plans%20-%20Feb%202010.pdf>

2 - Signage Guidance for Outdoor Access : A Guide to Good Practice (Paths for All, 2010)

Accessed online: 15/6/21, <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/signage-guidance-outdoor-access-guide-good-practice>

APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE PEDESTRIAN AND CONSTRUCTION STAFF WARNING SIGNS



Warning!

Wind Farm
Construction Traffic
Ahead

For further information or in an emergency
please call: *Site manager, Tel No*



Warning!

This track is used by the
public.
Be vigilant!

For further information or in an emergency
please call: *Site manager, Tel No*

APPENDIX 2: EXAMPLE BHLARAI DH WIND FARM EXTENSION SITE INFORMATION LEAFLET

Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension

SSE Renewables are building an 18 turbine extension to the existing Bhlaraidh Wind Farm on Glenmoriston Estate.

While construction works is in progress the existing public access routes remain open, but may be subject to diversions or other safety/public protection measures. **Please adhere to all signposted diversions, cordons and warnings.**

Please be aware that the Estate is operating as normal during the construction work. This includes potential farming, forestry, shooting and deer stalking activities.

Please **keep dogs on a lead** to avoid risks to livestock and wild animals.

Be Safe!

If you can access an areas where construction works are happening **please take responsibility for your own safety:**

- **Stay away** from all machinery, excavations and stored materials.
- Do not attempt to pass vehicles without being sure that the driver has seen you – **stop well back and wait for a clear signal** from the driver before passing.
- Vehicles on site may be carrying heavy or wide loads. Be aware that the vehicle drivers have a blind spot.

Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension



Construction Phase Access and Safety Information

