

TECHNICAL APPENDIX 14.2: DRAFT OUTDOOR ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

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14. Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan

14.1 Introduction

14.1.1 This Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan has been prepared to detail how existing public access would be managed during the construction and operation of the proposed Achany Extension Wind Farm (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development').

14.2 Methodology

14.2.1 This Plan has been prepared in line with the requirements set out in the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), now NatureScot, guidance document 'A Brief Guide to Preparing an Outdoor Access Plan' (2010)¹.

14.3 Outdoor Access Baseline

14.3.1 As set out in Chapter 14: Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism, the Proposed Development is located in a remote area, which is not well-known for walking or rambling, with no official paths, cycle paths or recreation routes located within the Site.

14.3.2 The Proposed Development has some recreational value in its seasonal use for game shooting and fishing. It is known that some of the estate cottages are let out at times for such activities.

14.3.3 The location of the Proposed Development is approximately 4.5km north of the village of Rosehall and approximately 11km west-north-west of Lairg.

14.3.4 Lairg is a popular centre for outdoor activities, with forest walks, mountain bike trails and opportunities for angling. A review of recreational routes and paths, which help encourage tourism and recreational behaviour in the area has been undertaken as part of the baseline review in Chapter 14: Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism (See Section 14.6). This analysis has shown there are no official recreational routes or paths in the vicinity of the Proposed Development.

14.3.5 **Figure 14.1** (See Volume 3: Figures) shows recreational routes and core paths in the surrounding area to the Proposed Development. This figure illustrates that although there are no official routes within the Site boundary, there are number of core paths within 5km of the Site. The Highland Council's (THC) Interactive Core Paths Map² indicates that the following Core Paths are within 5km of the Proposed Development:

- Sika Trail Cycle Route SU21.02 – off-road cycle route following the Rosehall Wind Farm access track north of the B839 around 1.5km west of the Proposed Development access;
- Braemore – Achany SU16.08 – unsurfaced track linking Achany to the A839 approximately 1.5km east of the Achany Wind Farm access junction; and

¹ A Brief Guide to Preparing an Outdoor Access Plan, Scottish Natural heritage (2010). Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2017-06/B639282%20-%20A%20Brief%20Guide%20to%20Preparing%20Outdoor%20Access%20Plans%20-%20Feb%202010.pdf> [access 24th January 2020]

² https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1225/countryside_farming_and_wildlife/161/outdoor_access/4

- Gruids Wood Track SU16.09 – unsurfaced track linking the A839 and B864 approximately 3km east of the Achany Wind Farm access junction.

14.3.6 A short section of National Cycle Route 1 (NCR1), which follows the A836 to the east of Ardgay and the A839, is located within 5km of the Site.

14.3.7 Figure 14.1 also highlights other hill tracks and mountain routes in the area, none of which are in 5km of the Proposed Development, and in most cases are outside the 10km buffer. The visual assessment (Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual Amenity) also identified other national routes and trails, including the North Coast 500, the Moray Firth Tourist Route, NCR1 and the Cape Wrath Trail within the wider study area. However, all of these were deemed too distant to experience access impacts.

14.4 Potential Access Impacts

Construction Phase

14.4.1 The primary access impact associated with the Proposed Development would arise during the construction phase of the project. A typical construction period for a wind farm of this size is estimated to be approximately 18 months.

14.4.2 The Proposed Development would use the existing Achany Wind Farm access tracks, passing places, borrow pit and operational building and storage infrastructure where possible. However, the Proposed Development would require new tracks to the turbines which could impact estate activities in the short term. While access to such activity could be disrupted by construction activity, any restrictions would be short-term and temporary.

14.4.3 There may also be some disruption during construction works to users of the A839, specifically near the Achany Wind Farm site entrance. During the construction phase every effort would be made to ensure accesses to existing routes and trails is maintained. Furthermore, any construction effects are expected to be short-term and temporary. However, to ensure the safety of the public, some additional measures may be required. Further details of the management strategy are presented in section 14.5 of this Plan.

14.4.4 There would be no direct impact on other recreational routes or trails within the wider area during the construction phase.

Operational Phase

14.4.5 Potential access impacts during the operational phase include operational site monitoring, turbine servicing and maintenance, maintaining site access tracks and bridges, maintaining drainage ditches and repairing gates and fences.

14.4.6 Additional impacts would include ice throw and lightning during adverse weather and ongoing estate activities (shooting etc.).

14.5 Access Arrangements

General Access Arrangements

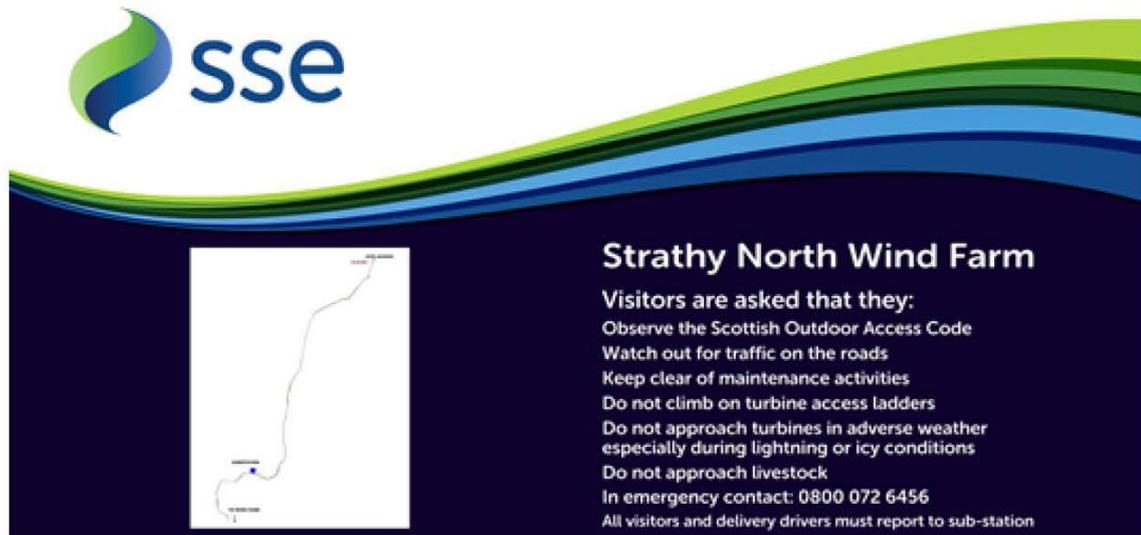
14.5.1 Prior to commencement of the construction works, access arrangements and appropriate warnings would be communicated to the local community via the community liaison group, wind farm website and local mailing list.

- 14.5.2 From time to time, short term restrictions on access may be required where there is no safe alternative. These restrictions would be communicated via the same method.
- 14.5.3 SSE would liaise with the landowners to minimise the disruption to estate run activities where possible.
- 14.5.4 Where appropriate, warning signage indicating the likelihood of construction traffic will be placed at regular intervals along the track (see Plate 14.2.1).

Plate 14.2.1: Example Pedestrian Warning Sign



- 14.5.5 During construction, access will be restricted to the general public on safety grounds. Access gates are already installed at the site entrance to Achany Wind Farm to limit unauthorised vehicles from entering the Site.
- 14.5.6 Signage will be put in place where the Proposed Development entrance meets the A839 with a purpose to highlight to the public the risk of entering the Proposed Development.
- 14.5.7 In the longer term, signage would be put in place for the lifetime of the wind farm with the purpose of highlighting 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.) (see Plate 14.2.3). There are already several signs relating to road safety on-site in place at the Site entrance for the operational Achany Wind Farm, including a site map and a 15 mph speed limit sign. These signs would be updated as required to reflect the addition of the Proposed Development.



14.6 Conclusions

- 14.6.1 SSE aims to maintain access during construction of the Proposed Development and by implementing the management strategies set out in section 14.5 of this Plan, it is believed that this can be achieved while ensuring the safety of the public and construction staff.