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## 7. Landscape and Visual Amenity

### 7.1 Executive Summary

#### Introduction

- 7.1.1 A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken for the proposed Cloiche Wind Farm (the Proposed Development) by ASH design + assessment Ltd (ASH), Chartered Landscape Architects, in accordance with best practice guidance including the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3). This has considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development on landscape character, designated and protected landscapes, and also the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the visual amenity of those present within the landscape, including established views from residential areas, routes and recreational areas within a 40km study area. It also gives full consideration to the cumulative landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development when considered in addition to other existing and proposed wind farm developments.
- 7.1.2 The Proposed Development is located in close proximity to the operational Stronelairg Wind Farm which already results in landscape and visual effects within the study area and thereby reduces the sensitivity of the landscape and visual resource to additional wind farm development.

#### Landscape Effects

- 7.1.3 The assessment of landscape character has considered National Landscape Character Types (LCTs) identified by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Cairngorms National Park (CNP) Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The assessment of designated and protected landscapes has considered potential effects to the CNP, National Scenic Areas (NSAs), Wild Land Areas (WLAs), Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) and sites included on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes.
- 7.1.4 The vast majority of effects on landscape character, landscape designations and other protected landscapes resulting from the Proposed Development would not be significant. Significant effects would be limited to very localised effects within 2km of the Proposed Development and not more than 8km away, generally affecting small, discrete parts of the landscape.
- 7.1.5 These significant effects would lead to a very localised significant effect on one WLA (WLA 20: Monadhliath), although this would not significantly affect the Key Qualities or wildness value of this WLA overall (SNH 2017d). There would be no significant effects to the Special Qualities or integrity of any other designated or protected landscape areas (SNH 2010b).
- 7.1.6 Whilst some of these localised significant effects may affect the landscape character of a small area within the CNP, it is not considered that this would contribute to a significant effect on any CNP Special Landscape Qualities or that the integrity of the CNP would be affected.

#### Visual Effects

- 7.1.7 Twenty representative viewpoints (VPs) have formed the basis of the assessment of effects on visual amenity. The assessment also considered potential visual effects on residential areas within the study area, and transport and recreational routes.

- 7.1.8 The visual effect for the vast majority of visual receptor locations, including all residential locations, was identified as being not significant. Potential longer term significant effects were identified for two representative VPs where the Proposed Development would appear more prominent (VP7: Carn a'Chuilinn; and VP18: Loch na Lairige).

#### **Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects**

- 7.1.9 The cumulative landscape and visual assessment (CLVIA) has considered the potential landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development when added to a baseline cumulative situation of all existing and proposed wind farm development (those sites which were operational, under construction, consented or the subject of a valid planning application or appeal as of 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019).
- 7.1.10 No significant cumulative landscape effects have been identified when considering the addition of the Proposed Development to the baseline cumulative scenario of existing and proposed wind farm sites.
- 7.1.11 A significant cumulative visual effect was identified for one representative VP (VP7, Carn a' Chuilinn).

#### **Summary**

- 7.1.12 Overall, the LVIA has concluded that the Proposed Development would result in a limited number of very localised significant effects on landscape character and visual amenity, affecting discrete areas of high ground mostly within 8km and locally up to 11km of the Proposed Development. The majority of landscape and visual effects would not be significant.

## **7.2 Introduction**

- 7.2.1 This Chapter presents the findings of the LVIA for the Proposed Development. The purpose of the LVIA is to identify and describe potential significant effects which may occur as a result of the Proposed Development to views obtained by those living, working and visiting in the area, and the wider landscape resource. The LVIA has been undertaken by ASH, Chartered Landscape Architects, in accordance with best practice guidance, set out within GLVIA3 (Landscape Institute (LI) / Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), 2013). ASH is a registered practice with the Landscape Institute, the Chartered body for professional landscape architects.
- 7.2.2 The assessment is supported by Volume 4, Technical Appendices 7.1 – 7.9 and Figures / Photomontages included in Volume 3, 7.1.1 – 7.8.8, Volume 3A, 7.9.1.1 – 7.9.20.3 and Volume 3B 7.10.1.1 – 7.10.20.2 of the EIA Report.

#### **Landscape and Visual Effects**

- 7.2.3 Although closely related, landscape and visual effects differ, and are considered separately in this LVIA for clarity and robustness.

#### Landscape Effects

- 7.2.4 The character of the landscape relates to the natural processes and human activities that have been at work over time to shape the land to its present form. Factors contributing to landscape character include topography, vegetation cover, sense of space or enclosure and past and present land use. Landscape character and resources are considered to have an importance in their own right and are valued for their intrinsic qualities.

- 7.2.5 Landscape effects may occur when elements of the landscape which contribute to its key characteristics are changed.

#### Visual Effects

- 7.2.6 Visual amenity relates to the way in which people visually experience the surrounding landscape.
- 7.2.7 Visual effects may occur through the introduction into established views of new features which modify the existing structure, scale and composition of the view. Visual effects may also occur where existing features in the view are removed or altered.

#### Cumulative Effects

- 7.2.8 Cumulative effects may occur where other infrastructure of a similar type would combine with the Proposed Development to form an increased perception of landscape or visual effect. In the context of the Proposed Development, cumulative landscape or visual effects may result where the Proposed Development would lead to an increase in perception or prominence of wind turbines within particular landscapes or views.

#### **Approach to the Identification of Significant Effects**

- 7.2.9 The judgement of effects significance has been established within this LVIA through professional judgement, complemented by structured methods and criteria to evaluate landscape value and landscape, visual and cumulative sensitivity, magnitude and significance of effect. The assessment has been undertaken and verified by two experienced Landscape Professionals (Chartered Landscape Architects) at ASH, to provide a robust and consistent approach. This approach is consistent with best practice guidance (LI / IEMA, 2013, paragraph 2.23 – 2.26).
- 7.2.10 Landscape and visual effects have been expressed through a four point scale of Negligible, Minor, Moderate and Major. However, it should be noted that these criteria and levels of significance represent points on a continuum. Where required, interim ratings, such as Minor-Moderate, have been used to indicate the anticipated significance of effect.
- 7.2.11 For the purposes of the LVIA and CLVIA, effects with a rating of Moderate or greater are considered to be significant in terms of the EIA Regulations.
- 7.2.12 Landscape and visual effects may be both adverse or beneficial and this may depend on an individual's subjective opinion. Wind farms inevitably attract a spectrum of opinion from the public, ranging from adverse to beneficial reactions. However, using the precautionary principle, the LVIA has been carried out based on the assumption that all landscape and visual effects reported as a result of the Proposed Development are adverse.

### **7.3 Scope of Assessment**

- 7.3.1 The LVIA considers all aspects of the Proposed Development during the construction phase and during operation, as described in Chapter 3: Description of Development. It gives consideration to potential effects on the character of the landscape and also the visual amenity of those present within the landscape. It also gives full consideration to the potential effects of the Proposed Development on designated and protected landscapes, and to the cumulative landscape and visual effects of the Proposed

Development when considered in addition to other existing and proposed wind farm developments.

### **Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)**

- 7.3.2 As an aid to establishing the scope for the LVIA, a ZTV has been produced for the Proposed Development and is presented in Figure 7.1.1 (a larger version is provided as Figure 7.1.2). The ZTV is a computer generated diagram which uses a terrain model to indicate areas from which the Proposed Development would be theoretically visible. The ZTV for the Proposed Development has been generated using ESRI ArcGIS software based on a terrain modelled using Ordnance Survey (OS) T5 DTM data. Detailed technical information on the methods for production of ZTVs is included in Technical Appendix 7.1: Technical Methodologies for Visual Representation.

### **Study Area**

- 7.3.3 In line with current guidance (SNH 2017e, p12), the Study Area for the LVIA has been set at 40km radius from the Proposed Development site boundary (the wider study area). This is considered to be the maximum distance within which any significant landscape or visual effects may be experienced. However, following initial review and site appraisal, it was identified that the majority of significant effects would be most likely to occur within an area of approximately 20km. A smaller study area of 20km (the detailed study area) has therefore been defined for a more targeted and fine-grained assessment.
- 7.3.4 The study areas have been applied as follows:

#### Landscape Assessment

- All designated and protected landscapes within the wider study area have been given consideration within the assessment. However, following an initial appraisal, where effects are identified as unlikely, these areas have been scoped out of more detailed assessment (see Table 7.6.1).
- Following an initial appraisal of the Proposed Development, it was considered that any potentially significant effects on landscape character would be limited to the detailed study area of 20km. For this reason, the detailed assessment of effects on landscape character has been concentrated within this area.

#### Visual Assessment

- Within the wider study area, a series of 20 viewpoints (VPs) have been selected in consultation with SNH and The Highland Council (THC). These VPs form the basis of the visual assessment.
- In addition to the VP based assessment, a more targeted assessment of potential visual receptors within the detailed study area of 20km, has taken place. This has considered views from routes, including public roads, Core Paths and other established recreational routes, and views from settlements and residential areas.

#### Cumulative Landscape and Visual Assessment (CLVIA)

- 7.3.5 Following best practice (SNH, 2012, p13), all operational and consented wind farm sites, and those which are the subject of a valid planning application or appeal have been identified within a search area of 60km radius from the Proposed Development. These developments are shown on Figure 7.7.1. Within this search area, a total of thirteen wind farm sites within 40km have been identified as most likely to combine with the Proposed

Development to result in potential cumulative landscape and visual effects, as presented in Table 7.8.4 and on Figure 7.7.2: Cumulative Sites included within the Assessment. The rationale for the selection of these sites is detailed in paragraph 7.8.13. The CLVIA has considered the potential for effects to all landscape designations, and viewpoints within the wider study area and landscape character types and routes within the detailed study area, as described under paragraph 7.3.4.

- 7.3.6 All wind energy schemes with a tip height in excess of 50m have been considered in the assessment. Smaller wind turbines have not been included in the search as it is considered that turbines of this scale are usually of a domestic nature and are unlikely to be considered by the viewer in parallel to commercial scale structures.
- 7.3.7 The number of wind farm applications made or withdrawn changes frequently. Therefore, in order to inform the cumulative baseline scenario a cut-off date of the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019 has been used. All new applications, applications withdrawn or refused and addendums to current projects taken place since the cut-off date have therefore not been considered in this assessment.
- 7.3.8 Because the focus of the CLVIA is on potential significant effects, areas or viewpoints which were identified as experiencing a Negligible landscape or visual effect were scoped out of the CLVIA as it is considered that a Negligible individual effect could not contribute to a significant cumulative effect.

#### Consultation Responses

- 7.3.9 As described in Chapter 5: Scoping and Consultation, a request for a Scoping Opinion for the Proposed Development was submitted to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU) in August 2018. The Scoping Opinion was issued in December 2018. Issues raised within the Scoping Opinion of relevance to the subjects of landscape and visual amenity are addressed in Table 7.3.1.

**Table 7.3.1: Scoping Responses of Relevance to Landscape and Visual Amenity**

Consultee	Issue Raised	Action
ECU	All referenced viewpoints mentioned within consultee responses shall be considered and the final list of viewpoints agreed with the Highland Council and Scottish Natural Heritage.	The final list of VPs has been agreed with THC and SNH.
	The mitigation measures suggested for any significant environmental impacts identified should be presented as a conclusion to each chapter.	Landscape and Visual mitigation is discussed in section 7.13.

Consultee	Issue Raised	Action
THC	<p>The EIA should have greater cognisance of the THC Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance 2016 (OWESG), especially in respect of landscape and visual considerations including 10 criteria for landscape and visual aspects (pages 18-20) and landscape sensitivity appraisal for the Loch Ness area.</p>	<p>The OWESG has been given consideration throughout the LVIA. Reference is given to the Loch Ness Sensitivity study for landscape character and cumulative landscape assessment in Technical Appendices 7.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types and Areas and 7.6: Cumulative Landscape Assessment Tables. An appraisal of the 10 criteria is presented in Technical Appendix 7.9.</p>
	<p>Adherence should be made to THC 'Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Development' (2016). THC encourages use of their "single frame panoramic viewer" and animation.</p>	<p>Visualisations produced to the THC 'Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Development' (2016) are included as Volume 3B of this EIA Report and images for the panoramic viewer have been supplied. Technical details of visualisation are included in Technical Appendix 7.1: Technical Methodologies for Visual Representations.</p>
	<p>The LVIA should consider sensitivities identified in the OWESG for area LN6 Monadhliath ridge and tops and in particular the recommendations that turbines should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not breach skyline when viewed from north side of Loch Ness;</li> <li>• be set back from Key Routes;</li> <li>• preserve mitigation established by current schemes;</li> <li>• maintain the landscape setting of each existing scheme;</li> <li>• avoid coalescence with current positioning; and</li> <li>• respect spacing and scale of existing development pattern.</li> </ul>	<p>The assessment of OWESG area LN6 is included in the assessment of LCT 221 – Rolling Uplands – Inverness (see Technical Appendix 7.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types and Areas, Table 1.2.4). The recommendations identified in the OWESG for area LN6 Monadhliath ridge and tops are considered in Technical Appendix 7.9: Appraisal of The Highland Council's Criteria for the Consideration of Onshore Wind Proposals.</p>
	<p>Assessment of THC Special Landscape Areas should be undertaken.</p>	<p>Assessment of SLA's is included in Technical Appendices 7.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes and 7.6: Cumulative Landscape Assessment Tables, and summarised in sections 7.7.43 to 7.7.45 and 7.8.28 to 7.8.29.</p>

Consultee	Issue Raised	Action
SNH	<p>Latest guidance from SNH for wind farm developments on landscape, should be followed. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• map and descriptions of Wild Land Areas; and</li> <li>• up-dated guidance on standard of visualisations.</li> </ul>	<p>The latest SNH guidance has been followed. Wild Land Areas and descriptions are considered in Technical Appendices 7.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes and 7.6: Cumulative Landscape Assessment Tables, and summarised in sections 7.7.34 to 7.7.42 and 7.8.26 to 7.8.27.</p> <p>Visualisations to current SNH standards are provided as Figures 7.9.1.1 to 7.9.20.2 in Volume 3A.</p>
	<p>An assessment on the Special Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park should be included in the EIA Report and should include cumulative effects. The EIA Report should contain sufficient information and analysis for the CNP Partnership Plan policy test 1.3 (to conserve and enhance the SLQs of the CNP) to be undertaken.</p>	<p>An assessment of CNP Special Landscape Qualities is included in Technical Appendix 7.4 and summarised in section 7.7.26 to 7.7.32. Cumulative effects are considered in Technical Appendix 7.6 and summarised in section 7.8.25. The CNP Partnership Plan policy test is discussed in the Planning Statement which accompanies the Application.</p>
	<p>Detailed assessment of NSAs can be scoped out.</p>	<p>NSAs have been Scoped out (see Technical Appendix 7.2: Landscape and Visual Scoping Appraisal).</p>
	<p>The assessment of effects on wild land should be limited to WLA 19 and WLA 20 and can be included within the LVIA. However, in order for consultees to fully understand the range and significance of effects on wild land, the effects on each WLA and each relevant quality within that WLA must be clearly described and concluded. This is the approach advocated in SNH's 2017 consultative draft guidance</p>	<p>The assessment of effects on WLAs has been limited to WLAs 19 and 20. These assessments are included in Tables 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 of Appendix 7.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes and include consideration of each identified key quality and integrity of the WLA as required by SNH's consultative draft guidance (SNH, 2017a). This is summarised in sections 7.7.34 to 7.7.42. Cumulative effects are considered in Technical Appendix 7.6: Cumulative Landscape Assessment Tables and summarised in section 7.8.26 to 7.8.27.</p>

Consultee	Issue Raised	Action
	It is recommended that the wild land assessment methodology including the scope of the wild land assessment is discussed with SNH at an early stage.	The scope of the wild land assessment was agreed with SNH at Scoping stage, to comprise WLA 19: Braeroy – Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh and WLA 20: Monadhliath only, and agreement was also confirmed with SNH that the wild land assessments for the two WLAs would be included within the LVIA report. The method of assessment is broadly in accordance with the advice of SNH’s recent consultative draft guidance (SNH, 2017a), as requested.
	A cumulative assessment of effects on the landscape issues raised should be undertaken to ensure that consultees are able to differentiate between the effects as a result of the two distinct clusters of this proposal.	The cumulative landscape assessment is included in Technical Appendix 7.6: Cumulative Landscape Assessment Tables and summarised in section 7.8. The assessment enables consultees to differentiate between the effects of the two distinct clusters.
	The more recent CNP Landscape Character Assessment, 2009 should be used in preference to the previous document.	The 2009 CNP Landscape Character Assessment (Grant, 2009) has been used. Landscape character assessment of these areas is included in Technical Appendix 7.3 and cumulative assessment is included in Technical Appendix 7.6.
	Requested wirelines and cumulative ZTVs to appraise seven suggested additional viewpoints for consideration in assessment.	Following further consultation, five of these VPs were included in agreement with SNH, as summarised in Technical Appendix 7.2: Landscape and Visual Scoping Appraisal.
Cairngorm National Park Authority	A specific assessment of the effects on the special landscape qualities of the National Park should be undertaken, including cumulative effects taking into account particularly Stronelairg Wind Farm and Glenshero Wind Farm (application).	An assessment of CNP Special Landscape Qualities (SNH/CNPA, 2010) is included in Technical Appendix 7.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes and summarised in section 7.7.26 to 7.7.32. Cumulative effects are considered in Technical Appendix 7.6: Cumulative Landscape Assessment Tables and summarised in section 7.8.25.

Consultee	Issue Raised	Action
	Welcome the commitment to consider the requirement for a night time lighting assessment and would be happy to input into this process.	The selection of a turbine with tip height below 150m removes the requirement for visible aviation lighting. Any other required lighting scheme (e.g. infrared or 25 candela cardinal lighting) would be agreed with the Ministry of Defence and is very unlikely to result in any significant night-time effect. A turbine lighting assessment is therefore not included.
Mountaineering Scotland	Glenshero windfarm proposal should be included in the cumulative impact assessment.	Cumulative sites included in the detailed assessment are listed in Table 7.8.4 and include Glenshero Wind Farm.
	Viewpoint 1 should be moved to an adjacent Munro, Tom a' Choinnich, for example.	This VP was not moved as it was considered adequately representative.
	Suggested moving Viewpoint at Cairngorm Funicular to a Glen Feshie Munro which is at least 10km closer, and within the same NSA and WLA designations.	This VP was moved to Braeriach (VP10) in agreement with SNH (see Technical Appendix 7.2: Landscape and Visual Scoping Appraisal).
	Suggested dropping viewpoint on Carn Dubh and introducing an elevated well trafficked viewpoint to the southwest, on Sron a'Choire Ghairbh or Ben Tee for example.	Carn Dubh (VP5) was considered an important VP and therefore retained. VP 15 (Beainn Teallach) and VP 17 (Carn Dearg (Glen Roy)) were added to represent views from the south-west in consultation with SNH (see Technical Appendix 7.2: Landscape and Visual Scoping Appraisal).
Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council	Reference to be made to the South Loch Ness Trail that runs from Fort Augustus to Scaniport, and proposed Loch Ness 360 route	The visual effects on the South Loch Ness Trail are included as Receptor R9 (see Technical Appendix 7.7: Visual Assessment Tables). Recreational effects are discussed in Chapter 15: Land Use and Recreation. The Loch Ness 360 route is not included individually but is considered in its respective parts: the South Loch Ness Trail and Great Glen Way (Receptor R4).
John Muir Trust	The LVIA must address the issue that the addition of turbines to the areas proposed will be a material change to the design of Stronelairg and will consequently have an increased visual impact on the surrounding wild land.	The LVIA considers the Proposed Development in full and takes into account the presence and existing effects of Stronelairg Wind Farm. Assessment of effects on the Monadhliath wild land area is included in Technical Appendix 7.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes, Table 1.2.3.

Consultee	Issue Raised	Action
	In relation to cumulative impact, JMT suggest that Cloiche, Stronelaig and Glenshero should be considered as a single entity.	The cumulative assessment (see sections 7.8 and 7.12, and Technical Appendices 7.6 and 7.8) has been undertaken in accordance with relevant guidance and considers the addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative baseline.

7.3.10 Following the Scoping responses, further consultation regarding viewpoint selection was undertaken with SNH by email. A Pre-Application Meeting was also held with representatives of ECU, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), THC, SNH and the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA). Additional issues raised through these channels are summarised below:

- At Scoping stage, SNH requested wirelines for seven additional viewpoints to ascertain which should be included. Following correspondence, five of these VPs were included in order to better represent views from the south of the Proposed Development. Further detail of those VPs included and those excluded is provided in Technical Appendix 7.2: Landscape and Visual Scoping Appraisal.
- Following the Pre-Application Meeting, THC requested a viewpoint on the Great Glen Way as it passes through Portclair Forest and three VP locations were suggested by THC. As there would be no view of the Proposed Development from any of these VPs, they have not been included in the LVIA. This is detailed further in Technical Appendix 7.2: Landscape and Visual Scoping Appraisal.
- A VP at Burach Cairn was suggested for inclusion by THC if clear evidence of a path to the cairn's summit could be established, to represent those who choose to deviate from the Great Glen Way in this area. However, this VP was not included as it was considered too far away to represent views of Great Glen Way users, needing a substantial diversion of at least 3.4 km over difficult and boggy ground, and no evidence was found of a clear path to the cairn's summit, which would indicate that it is visited regularly. Further explanation of this is included in Technical Appendix 7.2: Landscape and Visual Scoping Appraisal.
- SNH requested that Stronelaig Wind Farm should be included as a baseline site on the wirelines for the Proposed Development. Stronelaig Wind Farm is therefore shown on all 53.5° field of view wirelines (Volume 3A).

#### Assumptions and Limitations

7.3.11 The LVIA and CLVIA has been subject to the following assumptions and limitations:

- The prominence of the Proposed Development in the landscape and views will vary according to the prevailing weather conditions. The LVIA has been carried out, as is best practice, by assuming the 'worst case' scenario i.e. on a clear, bright day in winter, when neither foreground deciduous foliage nor haze can interfere with the clarity of the view obtained.
- The assessment of operational effects assumes that all disturbed areas not required for the operation of the Proposed Development (laydown areas, temporary construction compounds, excavations for wind turbine foundations and borrow pits) would be successfully reinstated to reflect pre-construction vegetation types and appearance.

- ZTVs are used to inform the landscape, visual and cumulative assessments. The limitations and technical specifications for production of ZTVs are included in Technical Appendix 7.1: Technical Methodology for Visual Representation.
- The field assessment of visual effects has been undertaken from public roads, footpaths or open spaces. For residential receptors, assumptions have been made, about the types of rooms and about the types and importance of views from these rooms. For there to be a visual effect, there is the need for a viewer and therefore only buildings that are in use have been considered in the visual assessment.
- A number of existing wind farms are operational within the wider study area. It should be noted that the baseline for the LVIA considers all existing operational wind farms, as identified on Figure 7.7.2: Cumulative Sites included within the Assessment. However, the baseline for the LVIA does not include consented or application sites which are considered within the baseline for the CLVIA.
- In line with best practice, the CLVIA considers wind energy sites which are operational and consented and the subject of a current valid planning application or appeal. Sites at Scoping stage have not been considered due to the uncertainty as to whether these sites would progress and their likely nature and scale.
- Due to the uncertainty of construction activity timing for the Proposed Development and other such activity, temporary structures, tracks and activity relating to construction have not been considered within the cumulative assessment. The cumulative assessment therefore focuses on the potential effects during operation relating to the main permanent structures (wind turbines).
- Since the number of wind energy development applications made or withdrawn changes frequently, a cumulative cut-off date of 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019 has been applied to the collection of data. All new applications, applications withdrawn and addendums to current projects taken place since this period have therefore not been considered in this assessment.
- The cumulative search has considered only those wind turbine developments of 50m tip height or greater as it is considered that smaller turbines would be unlikely to result in significant cumulative effects in association with the Proposed Development.

#### **Issues Scoped out of the Assessment**

- 7.3.12 Effects arising from the process of decommissioning the Proposed Development have been scoped out since they are of a similar nature to construction issues, but of a smaller scale and shorter duration. Where the assessment refers to potential construction effects these are also considered representative of predicted decommissioning effects.
- 7.3.13 Where individual landscape and visual receptors have been scoped out of detailed assessment, these are referenced in sections 7.6 and 7.10 as relevant with further detail provided in Technical Appendix 7.2: Landscape and Visual Scoping Appraisal.

#### **7.4 Policy and Guidance**

- 7.4.1 The assessment has taken account of national, regional and local policy and guidance relating to landscape character and visual amenity relevant to the Proposed Development. Detailed information on planning policy is contained within the Planning Statement accompanying the application for the Proposed Development and Chapter 6:

Planning Policy. The following provides a summary with respect to Landscape Character and Visual Amenity.

7.4.2 The following policy documents and statements have been referred to in carrying out this assessment:

#### **National**

7.4.3 National planning policy and guidance relevant to landscape and renewable energy includes:

- National Planning Framework for Scotland 3 (NPF3);
- Scottish Planning Policy (SPP);
- Scottish Government Online Planning Guidance for Onshore Wind Turbines (last updated May 2014);
- Planning Advice Note 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (PAN 60), 2000;
- Scottish Energy Strategy: The future of energy in Scotland (2017);
- Renewable Energy and the Natural Heritage, SNH Policy Document, 2010; and
- Wildness in Scotland’s Countryside, SNH Policy Statement 02/03.

#### **Regional**

- The Highland-wide Local Development Plan, 2012 (HwLDP);
- The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan, 2015 (IMFLDP);
- The West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan, 2019 (WestPlan);
- Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan, 2015 (CNPLDP);
- Cairngorm National Park Partnership Plan, 2017;
- The Highland Council Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance, November 2016 (with addendum, December 2017) (OWESG); and
- CNPLDP Policy 7 Renewable Energy Supplementary Guidance, 2015.

#### Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP)

7.4.4 As the Proposed Development site falls within the THC Planning Authority area, the HwLDP forms the key element of spatial planning policy for The Proposed Development. Policy 61: Landscape concerns the protection of landscape qualities. This states that:

*“New developments should be designed to reflect the landscape characteristics and special qualities identified in the Landscape Character Assessment of the area in which they are proposed. This will include consideration of the appropriate scale, form, pattern and construction materials, as well as the potential cumulative effect of developments where this may be an issue. The Council would wish to encourage those undertaking development to include measures to enhance the landscape characteristics of the area. This will apply particularly where the condition of the landscape characteristics has deteriorated to such an extent that there has been a loss of landscape quality or distinctive sense of place. In the assessment of new developments, the Council will take account of Landscape Character Assessments, Landscape Capacity Studies and its supplementary guidance on Siting and Design and Sustainable Design, together with any other relevant design guidance.”*

- 7.4.5 Policy 57: Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage is also of relevance in relation to the protection of designated areas. With respect to areas of national importance (such as NSA's and WLA's), Part 2 of 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".*

- 7.4.6 With respect to areas of local/regional importance (e.g. SLA) Part 1 of this 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."*

The Highland Council Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance

- 7.4.7 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 amenity it identifies ten criteria to be used by the Council as a framework and focus for assessing proposals as outlined in Table 7.4.1.

**Table 7.4.1: OWESG Criteria for the Consideration of Onshore Wind Farm Proposals**

Criterion	Threshold
<p><b>Criterion 1.</b> <b>Relationship between Settlements / Key locations and wider landscape are respected.</b> (the extent to which the proposal contributes to perception of settlements or key locations being encircled by wind energy development)</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><b>Criterion 2.</b> <b>Key Gateway locations and routes are respected.</b> (the extent to which the proposal reduces or detracts from the transitional experience of key Gateway Locations and routes)</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><b>Criterion 3.</b> <b>Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected</b> (the extent to which the proposal affects the fabric and setting of valued natural and cultural landmarks)</p>	The development does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting.
<p><b>Criterion 4.</b> <b>The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected.</b> (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>	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways.

Criterion	Threshold
<p><b>Criterion 5.</b> <b>The amenity of transport routes is respected.</b> (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>
<p><b>Criterion 6.</b> <b>The existing pattern of Wind Energy Development is respected.</b> (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"> <li>• Turbine height and proportions,</li> <li>• density and spacing of turbines within developments;</li> <li>• density and spacing of developments;</li> <li>• typical relationship of development to the landscape;</li> <li>• previously instituted mitigation measures;</li> <li>• Planning Authority stated aims for development of area)</li> </ul>	<p>The proposal contributes positively to existing pattern or objectives for development in the area.</p>
<p><b>Criterion 7.</b> <b>The need for separation between developments and / or clusters is respected.</b> (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><b>Criterion 8.</b> <b>The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected.</b> (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><b>Criterion 9.</b> <b>Landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is respected.</b> (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><b>Criterion 10.</b> <b>Distinctiveness of Landscape character is respected.</b> (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>

- 7.4.8 An analysis of the Proposed Development in relation to these criteria is presented in Technical Appendix 7.9: Appraisal of The Highland Council's Criteria for the Consideration of Onshore Wind Proposals.
- 7.4.9 The OWESG identifies key views for the Great Glen area as follows (see Technical Appendix 7.9):
- Loch Ness West – End-to-end views over Loch Ness looking south-west;
  - Loch Ness East – End-to-end views over Loch Ness looking north-east;
  - Urquhart Castle from Loch – Water-level views looking up at castle;
  - Urquhart Castle Land Based – Generally elevated views looking towards the castle from above;
  - Loch Ness from Urquhart Castle – Views primarily towards the north-east and Urquhart Bay;
  - Great Glen from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh – Principal views are north-east and south-west up and down the Great Glen;
  - Loch Tarff 'Local Hero' location – Passing place east of Loch Tarff with view west-north-west;
  - A87 viewpoint above Loch Garry – Panoramic views easily accessible by tourists across Great Glen east; and
  - A887T views west – sequence of westward views forms a significant transitional experience.
- 7.4.10 The OWESG identifies key routes for the Great Glen as including trunk roads, B roads and minor roads within the study area, the Great Glen Way (recreational route) and waterways: the Caledonian Canal and Great Glen Canoe Trail. Detail and analysis of these routes in relation to the Proposed Development is presented in Technical Appendix 7.9.
- 7.4.11 The OWESG also includes a landscape sensitivity appraisal for wind turbine development around the Great Glen. This has been given consideration in the assessment of Landscape Character (Technical Appendix 7.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types and Areas) and Cumulative Landscape Assessment (Technical Appendix 7.6: Cumulative Landscape Assessment Tables) and is summarised in Technical Appendix 7.9.

## **7.5 Landscape Assessment: Methodology**

### **Key Stages of the Assessment**

- 7.5.1 The GLVIA3 methodology for landscape assessment involves an appreciation of the existing landscape resource, the susceptibility of its key components to accept the change proposed, and an understanding of the potential effects which could occur and how these could affect these key components. The potential to mitigate adverse effects should also be considered.
- 7.5.2 There are five key stages to the landscape assessment:
- Establishment of the baseline;
  - Appreciation of the development proposed;
  - Identification of key landscape receptors;
  - Identification of potential effects; and
  - Assessment of effect significance.

### **Establishment of the Baseline**

- 7.5.3 Establishment of the baseline conditions has been undertaken through combination of desk study and site appraisal.

#### Desk Study

- 7.5.4 The following publications and resources have been referred to:
- Relevant development plans and supplementary planning guidance as described in section 7.4;
  - The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas (SNH, 2010);
  - The Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park (SNH / CNPA, 2010);
  - Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (Horner + MacLennan and Mike Wood, 2011);
  - SNH National Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Descriptions (SNH, 2019 [online]);
  - Cairngorm National Park Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) and Descriptions (CNP, 2019 [online])
  - Highland Council Special Landscape Area Citations (Horner + MacLennan, 2011);
  - SNH Map of Relative Wildness and Attribute Mapping datasets (SNH, Natural Spaces [online]);
  - SNH Wild Land Area Maps and Descriptions (SNH, Natural Spaces [online]; and
  - Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes (Historic Environmental Scotland [online]).

#### Site Appraisal

- 7.5.5 Site visits were undertaken in July and August 2019 by a team of two Chartered Landscape Professionals to familiarise with the landscape baseline and context. Information gathered during the desk study was verified on-site and further information gathered where appropriate. The site visit fed into an appraisal of landscape designations, protected areas and LCTs and an understanding of their key characteristics and components and Special Qualities.

#### Relative Landscape Value

- 7.5.6 The relative value of the landscape is an important consideration in informing judgement of the significance of effects. Value concerns the perceived importance of the landscape, when considered as a whole and within the context of the study area. Landscape Value is established through consideration of the following factors:
- Presence of landscape designations, other inventory or registered landscapes/landscape features or identified planning constraints;
  - The scenic quality of the landscape;
  - Perceptual aspects such as wildness or tranquillity;
  - Conservation interests such as cultural heritage features or associations, or if the landscape supports notable habitats or species;
  - Recreational value; and

- Rarity, either in the national or local context, or if it is considered to be a particularly important example of a specific landscape type.

7.5.7 It should be noted that absence of a designation does not necessarily mean that a landscape or component is not highly valued as factors such as accessibility and local scarcity can render areas of nationally unremarkable quality, highly valuable as a local resource. Criteria for the allocation of perceived landscape value are outlined in Table 7.5.1:

**Table 7.5.1: Landscape Value Criteria**

Landscape Value	Criteria
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landscape is closely associated with features of international or national importance which are rare within the wider context;</li> <li>• The landscape is of high scenic quality and forms a key part of an important designated landscape or planning constraint; and/or</li> <li>• The landscape is an example of a scarce resource within the local context and is of considerable local importance for its, scenic quality, recreational opportunities or cultural heritage associations.</li> </ul>
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landscape is associated with features of national or regional importance which are relatively common within the wider context;</li> <li>• The landscape forms part of a designated landscape or is associated with other features of importance but is not rare or distinctive within the local context; and/or</li> <li>• The landscape is one of a number within the local context appreciated for its scenic quality, recreational opportunities or cultural heritage associations.</li> </ul>
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landscape characteristics are common within the local and regional context and the landscape is not associated with any particular features or attributes considered to be important; and/or</li> <li>• The landscape is of poor scenic quality and is not appreciated for any recreational or cultural associations.</li> </ul>

### **Appreciation of the Proposed Development**

7.5.8 Appreciation of the Proposed Development involves the accumulation of a thorough knowledge of the proposal, its nature, scale and location within the baseline landscape, and any peripheral or ancillary features proposed, as detailed in Chapter 3: Description of Development. Analysis of the proposed activities and changes which would take place leads to an understanding of the potential effects that may occur on the landscape resource. As part of this process, the ZTV (see Figure 7.1.1) has been consulted to inform the potential range of effects.

### **Identification of Key Landscape Receptors**

7.5.9 The identification of landscape receptors is the first step in the analysis of the potential for significant landscape effects to take place. Landscape receptors comprise key characteristics or individual features which contribute to the value of the landscape and have the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development. Landscape receptors are identified through analysis of baseline characteristics when considered in relation to the impacts which might result from a development of the type proposed.

Landscape Sensitivity

7.5.10 Landscape sensitivity considers the nature of the landscape and its ability to accommodate development of the type proposed without compromising its key characteristics and components. The appraisal of landscape sensitivity involves consideration of the sensitivity of individual landscape receptors. There are two aspects which are considered when establishing the landscape sensitivity:

- Value: The baseline value of the landscape and the contributory value of individual landscape receptors to the landscape as a whole; and
- Susceptibility to change: The ability of landscape receptors to accommodate development of the type proposed without changing the intrinsic qualities of the landscape as a whole.

7.5.11 Landscape sensitivity has been evaluated with reference to the subject areas above. A three-point scale is used as detailed in Table 7.5.2:

**Table 7.5.2: Landscape Sensitivity Criteria**

Landscape Sensitivity	Criteria
High	A highly valued landscape of particularly distinctive character susceptible to relatively small changes of the type proposed.
Medium	A reasonably valued landscape with a composition and characteristics tolerant of some degree of change of the type proposed.
Low	A relatively unimportant landscape which is potentially tolerant of a large degree of change of the type proposed.

**Identification of Potential Effects**

7.5.12 The second step in the assessment process involves the identification of potential effects which may occur as a result of the interaction of the impacts of the Proposed Development with the identified landscape receptors. The assessment takes into account direct effects upon existing landscape elements, features and key characteristics and also indirect effects which may occur secondary to changes affecting another landscape component or area. The ZTV is used as a tool to gauge the extent of potential indirect change, supported by targeted field surveys.

7.5.13 Magnitude is categorised on a four point scale detailed in Table 7.5.3:

**Table 7.5.3: Criteria for Magnitude of Landscape Change**

Magnitude of Landscape Change	Criteria
High	Notable change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area ranging to a very intensive change over a more limited area.
Medium	Perceptible change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area ranging to notable change in a localised area.
Low	Virtually imperceptible change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area or perceptible change in a localised area
Negligible	No discernible change in any landscape characteristics or components.

- 7.5.14 In recognition of the differing changes that would occur over time, two ratings for magnitude of change have been included: during the construction of the Proposed Development, and during operation.

#### Assessment of Effect Significance

- 7.5.15 Evaluation of the predicted significance of effect has been carried out through analysis of the anticipated magnitude of change in relation to the identified landscape sensitivity and using a degree of professional judgement. The assessment takes into account identified effects upon existing landscape receptors and assesses the extent to which these would be lost or modified, in the context of their importance in determining the existing baseline character.
- 7.5.16 Effect significance has been evaluated using a four point scale and using the following criteria:

**Table 7.5.4: Landscape Effect Significance Criteria**

Landscape Effect Rating	Criteria
Major	The Proposed Development is at considerable variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape and would be a dominant feature, resulting in considerable reduction in scenic quality and large scale change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.
Moderate	The Proposed Development is out of scale with the landscape, or inconsistent with the local pattern and landform and may be locally dominant and/or result in a noticeable reduction in scenic quality and a degree of change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.
Minor	The Proposed Development does not quite fit with the scale, landform or local pattern of the landscape and may be locally intrusive but would result in an inappreciable reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.
Negligible	The Proposed Development sits well within the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape and would not result in any discernible reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.

- 7.5.17 As for magnitude of change, two ratings for landscape effect have been included: during the construction of the Proposed Development, and during operation.

## 7.6 Landscape Assessment: Baseline

### Site Description and Context

- 7.6.1 The location of the Proposed Development lies towards the southern end of an extensive tract of upland moorland known as the Monadhliath, characterised by rounded hills, and flat-topped mountains to the east of the Great Glen and west of the Cairngorms. The Proposed Development site is set within a high plateau area surrounded by rounded hills which form a rough bowl shape. The character of this area is currently strongly influenced by the turbines and access tracks of the operational Stronelaig Wind Farm, and the dam, reservoir, tracks and smaller intakes of the Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme.
- 7.6.2 The wider study area is characterised by broad tracts of upland moorland hills reaching up to higher mountains to the south and east and to the far west. Deep glens, sweeping

straths and large, linear lochs cut through these upland areas providing communication and transport corridors. These glens are the main focus of settlement which comprises small villages, scattered farms and cottages and tourist developments. The busy glens and straths provide a contrast to the remote moorlands with the sheltered setting resulting in more improved pastureland, and sloping valley-sides often clothed in woodland and commercial forestry. The deep trench of the Great Glen forms the most notable glen within the study area, slicing through the upland landscape from south-west to north-east and accommodating Lochs Lochy, Oich and Ness. To the east, the broader, sweeping Strath Spey separates the Monadhliath from the Cairngorms and forms an important communication and transport corridor. Other notable glens include Glen Spean, Glen Garry, Glen Moriston and Glen Urquhart.

- 7.6.3 Existing wind farms and other infrastructure are frequently present within this landscape, mostly concentrated on the plateau areas to either side of the Great Glen, forming clusters of turbines occasionally seen from the straths and glens but more often forming a feature of the upland landscape. Nevertheless, the wider study area features some areas where there are few contemporary features present and impressions of wildness and remoteness are therefore stronger.

#### Landscape Designations

- 7.6.4 Landscapes can be ascribed an international, national, regional or local designation that recognises the importance of the landscape for its scenic interest or attractiveness. Areas of landscape may also be protected by planning policy at either a national or regional level. Designated and protected landscapes within the wider study area are shown on Figures 7.2.1 and 7.2.2. An initial scoping exercise was undertaken to review all designated and protected landscapes within the wider study area to identify those where there may be potential for significant effects. This exercise is summarised in Technical Appendix 7.2: Landscape and Visual Scoping Appraisal. Those areas identified as having the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development and therefore included in the detailed assessment are listed in Table 7.6.1.
- 7.6.5 All areas scoped out of further assessment were considered very unlikely to receive significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development. The exception is the Cairngorm Mountain NSA which has been considered within the assessment of Special Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park.

**Table 7.6.1: Designated and Protected Landscapes Included in the Assessment**

Designation Type	Scoped into Detailed Assessment	Scoped out of Detailed Assessment
<b>National Context</b>		
National Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cairngorms National Park.</li> </ul>	(none)
National Scenic Area (NSA)	(none)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ben Nevis and Glen Coe NSA;</li> <li>The Cairngorm Mountains NSA;</li> <li>Glen Affric NSA;</li> <li>Glen Strathfarrar NSA; and</li> <li>Loch Rannoch and Glen Lyon NSA.</li> </ul>
Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDL)	(none)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achnacarry GDL;</li> <li>Aldourie Castle GDL;</li> <li>Beaufort Castle GDL;</li> </ul>

Designation Type	Scoped into Detailed Assessment	Scoped out of Detailed Assessment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corroul Lodge GDL;</li> <li>• Dochfour GDL;</li> <li>• Doune of Rothiemurchus GDL;</li> <li>• Kinrara GDL; and</li> <li>• Leys Castle GDL.</li> </ul>
Wild Land Area (WLA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WLA 19. Braeroy – Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh; and</li> <li>• WLA 20. Monadhliath,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WLA 14. Rannach – Nevis – Mamores – Alder;</li> <li>• WLA 15. Cairngorms;</li> <li>• WLA 18. Kinlochhourn – Knoydart – Morar; and</li> <li>• WLA 24. Central Highlands.</li> </ul>
<b>Regional / Local Context</b>		
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA;</li> <li>• Loch Lochy and Loch Oich SLA; and</li> <li>• Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA;</li> <li>• Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA; and</li> <li>• Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA.</li> </ul>

7.6.6 Those areas which have been scoped into the detailed assessment are described below. Detailed baseline evaluation of the Special Qualities and values of each area is included in Technical Appendix 7.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes.

#### National Context

##### *Cairngorms National Park*

7.6.7 National Park is a national, statutory designation allocated to landscapes of substantially high quality in which the primary objective is the conservation and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage. The boundary of the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) is located around 1.5km to the east of the Proposed Development at its closest point.

7.6.8 Policy within CNP is provided within the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2015 and landscape character is considered within the Cairngorms National Park Landscape Character Assessment. All development proposals within CNP are expected to comply with the four Aims of the National Park outlined in Section 1 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 as follows:

- (a) To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- (b) To promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
- (c) To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public; and
- (d) To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

7.6.9 Special landscape qualities of the CNP are outlined in the document, 'The Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park' (SNH / CNPA, 2010). Special Landscape Qualities are defined as being, "...the characteristics that, individually or combined, give rise to an area's outstanding scenery".

- 7.6.10 An assessment of these Special Landscape Qualities in relation to their potential to be affected by the Proposed Development is included in Technical Appendix 7.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes.

*Wild Land Areas*

- 7.6.11 Wild Land Areas (WLA) have been defined by SNH as those areas comprising the greatest and most extensive areas of wild characteristics within Scotland. Although not a designation, these areas are given protection within the Planning System through Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) (Scottish Government, 2014b).
- 7.6.12 The presence of wildness is based on the presence and strength of four perceptual attributes identified in SNH Policy Statement 'Wildness in Scotland's Countryside' (SNH, 2002) as follows:
- A sense of sanctuary or solitude;
  - Risk or, for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety, depending on the individual's emotional response to the setting;
  - Perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities; and
  - Fulfilment from the physical challenge required to penetrate into these places.
- 7.6.13 Because these responses are very much dependant on an individual's perceptions, five physical attributes are identified as considered likely to lead to these perceptual responses being present. These are:
- A high degree of perceived naturalness in the setting, especially in its vegetation cover and wildlife, and in the natural processes affecting the land;
  - The lack of any modern artefacts or structures;
  - Little evidence of contemporary human uses of the land;
  - Landform which is rugged, or otherwise physically challenging; and
  - Remoteness and/or inaccessibility.
- 7.6.14 The WLAs have been identified by SNH covering the areas where these attributes are considered to be most strongly present using a GIS mapping exercise and site survey (the Mapping Scotland's Wildness project (SNH, Natural Spaces [online]) (see Figures 7.4.1: Map of Relative Wildness and 7.4.2: Wildness Attribute – Absence of Modern Artefacts which illustrate the outcomes of SNH's Mapping Scotland's Wildness project across the detailed study area).
- 7.6.15 Two WLAs have been identified as having potential to be affected by the Proposed Development and have therefore been included in the detailed assessment (Technical Appendix 7.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes) as follows:
- **WLA 19. Braeroy – Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh:** Located approximately 5km to the south-west of the Proposed Development this WLA comprises a range of hills and sweeping upland to the south of the Corrieyairack Pass, east of the Great Glen and north of Glen Spean, including the large mountain mass of Creag Meagaidh. This WLA is entirely within the wider study area.
  - **WLA 20. Monadhliath:** Located around 1km to the east of the Proposed Development, circling round the north and south of the eastern cluster within 2 - 3km this WLA stretches in a roughly east-north-easterly direction for around 26km encompassing a range of large rolling moorland hills and plateaux. This WLA is entirely within the wider study area.

## Regional / Local Context

### *Special Landscape Areas*

7.6.16 Planning authorities are able to designate particular landscapes considered to be of regional or local importance through the development planning process. Such areas are not considered to be statutory designations but are a material consideration to planning decisions. Within the Highland area, landscapes identified of regional importance are entitled Special Landscape Areas (SLAs). Three SLAs within the wider study area have been identified for inclusion within the detailed assessment in Technical Appendix 7.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes:

- **Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA:** Located from 9km to the south of the Proposed Development this SLA includes a diverse combination of mountain, glen, loch and woodland, focused around Strath Mashie and Loch Laggan and including the mountains, smaller upland glens and corries to the north and west including Creag Meagaidh, Glen Banchor, Ardverikie peaks and Ben Alder.
- **Loch Lochy and Loch Oich SLA:** This SLA covers that part of the Great Glen enclosing Loch Lochy and Loch Oich, the mountains to the west of Loch Lochy and the east end of Loch Arkaig. It stretches south-west from the northernmost tip which is approximately 11.25km to the west of the Proposed Development. The SLA is a diverse landscape of enclosed, steep-sided, settled and managed glen dominated by the open linear lochs, with more remote upland and mountain areas to the west.
- **Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA:** This SLA covers that part of the Great Glen which encloses Loch Ness. It includes the bounding hill slopes on the loch's western and eastern shores, the prominent hill Meall Fuar-mhonaidh on the loch's western side and the elevated interior moorland and agricultural plateau to the east of Loch Ness which contains Lochs Ashie, Duntelchaig, and Ruthven. Around 3km of the access route for the Proposed Development falls within the southern end of this SLA which extends a further 35km to the north-west.

### **Landscape Character**

7.6.17 SNH in conjunction with partner Councils, has undertaken detailed review and classification of various landscape areas and types of Scotland. This study has recently been updated to identify numbered Landscape Character Types (LCTs) on a consistent basis across Scotland (SNH, 2019 [online]). Twenty-two individual LCTs are identified within the detailed study area.

7.6.18 In addition, the CNPA have developed a separate suite of Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within the CNP area. These are detailed in the publication 'Cairngorms National Park: Landscape Character Assessment' (Grant, 2009). This separates the LCAs into two types: Upland Character Types and Lowland Character Types. As this is a more detailed categorisation of landscape character the LCAs identified by the CNPA have been used as the basis for the assessment of landscape character within the CNP.

7.6.19 An initial scoping exercise was undertaken to review all LCTs and LCAs within the detailed study area to identify those where there may be potential for significant effects. This exercise is summarised in Technical Appendix 7.2: Landscape and Visual Scoping Appraisal. Those identified as having the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development and therefore included in the detailed assessment are listed in Table 7.6.2.

**Table 7.6.2: LCTs Included in the Assessment**

Grouping	Scoped into Detailed Assessment	Scoped out of Detailed Assessment
SNH LCTs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 225. Broad Steep-Sided Glen;</li> <li>• 85. Isolated Mountain Plateau;</li> <li>• 222. Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness;</li> <li>• 221. Rolling Uplands – Inverness;</li> <li>• 220. Rugged Massif – Inverness;</li> <li>• 238. Rugged Massif – Lochaber;</li> <li>• 87. Small Craggy Knolls and Hills;</li> <li>• 236. Smooth Moorland Ridges;</li> <li>• 86. Smooth Rounded Hills – Badenoch and Strathspey; and</li> <li>• 231. Upland Glen – Inverness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 235. Broad Forested Strath;</li> <li>• 89. Broad Loch and Glen;</li> <li>• 227. Farmed Strath – Inverness;</li> <li>• 224. Farmed and Wooded Foothills;</li> <li>• 239. Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber;</li> <li>• 88. Loch and Glen;</li> <li>• 237. Rocky Moorland – Lochaber;</li> <li>• 125. Rolling Uplands – Cairngorms;</li> <li>• 123. Smooth Rounded Hills – Cairngorms;</li> <li>• 124. Summits and Plateaux – Cairngorms;</li> <li>• 289. Upland Farmed Valleys;</li> <li>• 126. Upland Glen – Cairngorms;</li> <li>• 127. Upland Strath; and</li> <li>• 226. Wooded Glen – Inverness.</li> </ul>
CNPA (Upland) LCAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ardverikie Hills;</li> <li>• The Monadhliath: South Monadhliath; and</li> <li>• The Southern Hills: South Western Glens.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Monadhliath: North Monadhliath.</li> </ul>
CNPA (Lowland) LCAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ardverikie: Glen Shirra;</li> <li>• Ardverike: Pattack Glen / Strath Mashie;</li> <li>• Cathar Mor;</li> <li>• Glen Truim: Upper Glen and Dalwhinnie;</li> <li>• Spey Headwaters: Spey Dam; and</li> <li>• Spey Headwaters: Upper Glen of the Spey.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Badenoch: Inch Marshes;</li> <li>• Badenoch: Lower Glen Banchor;</li> <li>• Badenoch: Newtonmore to Kingussie;</li> <li>• Badenoch: Upper Glen Banchor;</li> <li>• Badenoch: Upper Strath;</li> <li>• Dalwhinnie;</li> <li>• Glen Truim;</li> <li>• Kingussie;</li> <li>• Laggan;</li> <li>• Newtonmore;</li> <li>• Upper Spey Farmlands: Coul Farm Pinch Point;</li> <li>• Upper Spey Farmlands: Laggan Strath; and</li> <li>• Upper Spey Farmlands: Loch Uvie Pinch Point.</li> </ul>

- 7.6.20 Detailed baseline description of these LCTs / LCAs is included in Technical Appendix 7.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types and Areas including descriptions of key characteristics and appraisal of landscape value.

## **7.7 Landscape Assessment: Assessment of Effects**

- 7.7.1 The extent to which the Proposed Development would affect the existing landscape varies depending on the individual components of the project and the ability of the existing landscape to accommodate these various components.
- 7.7.2 This section provides an assessment of the effects that the Proposed Development would have on the LCTs / LCAs, designated and protected landscapes during the construction and operational phases, in accordance with the effects criteria outlined in Section 7.5.
- 7.7.3 The detailed assessment of effect for each LCT / LCA or designated / protected landscape is provided in Technical Appendix 7.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types and Areas, and Technical Appendix 7.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes, with the key points being summarised below. The assessment discusses effects on LCTs and LCAs first, as these conclusions form the basis for the understanding of effects on designated and protected landscapes.

### **Assessment of effects on National Landscape Character Types**

- 7.7.4 The detailed assessment of National LCTs has considered ten separate LCTs. Of these, almost all were identified as likely to have effects which would be not significant. Significant effects were identified for only one LCT: Rolling Uplands – Inverness and would be localised to only part of the LCT. The effects identified in the detailed assessment (Technical Appendix 7.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types and Areas) are summarised as follows:

#### Effects Likely to be Significant

##### *LCT 221 - Rolling Uplands – Inverness LCT (OWESG LCA LN6)*

- 7.7.5 This is a very extensive LCT covering the broad expanse of the Monadhliath outwith the CNP and is comprised of a series of heather-clad rounded hills which form broad upland undulating plateaux. Wind farms are an existing feature and are prominent, sited in the southern and western margins. The sensitivity of this LCT ranges from Low, where the landscape is characterised by existing wind turbines, to High where wild land characteristics predominate.
- 7.7.6 The Proposed Development would be located within the southern part of this LCT and would therefore directly affect it. However, all the proposed turbines would be located in areas which are already indirectly affected by the Stronelaig Wind Farm, within around 3km, and are consequently of lower sensitivity. Nevertheless, new turbines and tracks would increase the developed footprint and result in these areas becoming more strongly characterised by wind turbines.
- 7.7.7 Within the wider LCT, the Proposed Development would usually be seen in association with existing Stronelaig wind turbines. However, it could potentially increase presence of wind turbines within the context, either by occupying a greater part of the surrounding horizon, or due to the larger scale of turbines in relation to those of Stronelaig. In some cases, this may have potential to diminish the perceived scale and sense of distance. There are a few areas where the Proposed Development would not be seen in context

with Stronelairg. However, in these areas the number of turbines theoretically visible would generally be small. In the landscape to the south of the Proposed Development site, large blades above the skyline would form a new character element in some of the upper glens. Although similarly affecting lower parts of these glens, these areas are more influenced by other features such as forestry, the Beauly – Denny 400kV overhead line and the recently constructed Melgarve Substation and associated tracks, and are therefore slightly less sensitive to man-made structures. Within areas to the north-east, further from the Proposed Development, the turbines of Corriegarth Wind Farm and Dunmaglass Wind Farm would be more prominent in the landscape than the few tips or blades of the Proposed Development. However, the appearance of the Proposed Development within a different part of the surrounding landscape context, could slightly increase a perception of encirclement in some areas.

- 7.7.8 During construction, the increased activity would reduce some perceived sense of remoteness locally, but the landscape effect of this would be limited given the existing maintenance activities which take place at the operational Stronelairg Wind Farm and Glendoe Hydroelectric site.
- 7.7.9 The above effects are anticipated to lead to Medium magnitude of change. This would result in a localised **Moderate** and significant effect during both the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, limited to small areas as follows:
- During construction – within and around the Proposed Development site up to around 2km due to the increased activity, and direct effect; and
  - During operation – where turbine blades on the horizon would form a close new feature within remote glens, typically those located to the south of the Proposed Development and to the north of Gairbheinn and Creag Mhor.
- 7.7.10 Within all other parts of the LCT, the effect would be **Minor** during construction and operation and therefore not significant.

#### Effects Likely to be Not Significant

##### *Minor to Moderate Landscape Effects*

- 7.7.11 A **Minor to Moderate** (not significant) landscape effect was identified for LCT 238 – Rugged Massif – Lochaber and LCT 231 – Upland Glen – Inverness. Both of these LCTs are located to the south of the Proposed Development, covering the upper parts of Glen Spey and surrounding hill and mountains slopes. The Proposed Development would affect the landscape context to the north. This would largely be in the form of turbines and blades appearing over the northern skyline. The effect on these areas would therefore be less direct.
- 7.7.12 Within elevated areas of LCT 238 – Rugged Massif – Lochaber, turbines seen as part of a wide expansive vista from elevated areas, in combination with Stronelairg. These turbines would appear closer and larger than those of Stronelairg and would therefore give a sense of wind farm development moving slightly closer. However, they would not become sufficiently close that they would appear to be within the same landscape area as they would retain their association with Stronelairg.
- 7.7.13 Within lower elevation areas, in both LCT 238 – Rugged Massif – Lochaber and LCT 231 – Upland Glen – Inverness, turbine blades would form a new feature as Stronelairg is not intervisible with these areas. These would appear as a small number of turbine blades and tips, occasionally hubs, over the skyline of the northern glen-side. This may reduce a

sense of being further from human intervention within these limited areas. However, turbines would be seen in a part of the context where existing Beaully – Denny transmission towers, tracks, a substation and forest plantations are already present. It is considered that, as wind turbines are an element commonly associated with upland, remote landscapes in this area, the appearance of this small number of wind turbines within this context, affecting relatively small parts of this LCT, would not reduce the sense of remoteness and, within LCT 238 – Rugged Massif – Lochaber, would reflect conditions within other parts of the LCT. The effect on these LCTs is therefore considered not significant.

#### *Minor Landscape Effects*

- 7.7.14 **Minor** (not significant) effects are anticipated for LCT 85 – Isolated Mountain Plateau (Creag Meagaidh area only), LCT 236 – Smooth Moorland Ridges (OWESG LCA LN4) and LCT 222 – Rolling Uplands – Inverness (OWESG LCA LN6) (generally beyond 2km). With the exception of LCT 222 – Rolling Uplands – Inverness, which is described above in paragraphs 7.7.5 to 7.7.10, these LCTs are generally located further from the Proposed Development, with a greater influence of existing wind farm development and with relatively small areas of shared intervisibility. Within these areas, the Proposed Development may appear noticeably closer, than the Stronelaireg Wind Farm and may increase the prominence of wind turbines in the surrounding context. However, given the small areas affected and influence of existing wind turbines on the landscape, this would not lead to any noticeable reduction to scenic quality or change to landscape characteristics.

#### *Negligible Landscape Effects*

- 7.7.15 All remaining National LCTs would experience a Negligible landscape effect from the Proposed Development as it is considered that any potential intervisibility would lead to no perceptible change to landscape characteristics or scenic quality.

### **Assessment of effects on Cairngorms National Park - Landscape Character and Special Landscape Qualities**

- 7.7.16 The assessment of landscape effects on the CNP has considered potential effects on landscape character of CNP LCAs, Special Qualities and the wider landscape experience and integrity of the CNP as a whole. The Proposed Development would not be located within the CNP and potential effects would therefore relate to its appearance within the wider setting.

#### Landscape Character

- 7.7.17 Of nine LCAs within the CNP identified for inclusion within the assessment, one was identified as likely to be significantly affected on a very localised basis: The Monadhliath: South Monadhliath Upland LCA. However, the majority of lowland LCAs would not be affected and none would be significantly affected. The effects identified in the detailed assessment of landscape character within the CNP (Technical Appendix 7.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types and Areas, section 1.3) are summarised as follows:

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Landscape Character - Effects Likely to be Significant*The Monadhliath: South Monadhliath LCA*

- 7.7.18 This LCA includes the part of the Monadhliath plateau which falls within the CNP and is comprised of southerly and south-easterly orientated glens and slopes of rounded hills and long ridges with a remote, mountainous character. Sensitivity is considered to be High but Medium along the western boundary where the existing Stronelairg Wind Farm is already prominent.
- 7.7.19 The vast majority of this LCA would not be affected by the Proposed Development with effects being limited to the western boundary of the LCA (and the CNP) and only a few higher summit areas closer towards the centre in the southern part of the LCA. For many of these areas, particularly along the western ridgeline, the Stronelairg wind turbines are already a feature of the western landscape. The presence of Stronelairg establishes this ridgeline (and the edge of the LCA and CNP), which largely defines the extent of Stronelairg's visibility, as a division between a landscape which is defined by wind turbines, and one that is much more remote. As the Proposed Development would be situated within the same area, this would continue to be the case. However, the Proposed Development would increase the number of turbines present within this neighbouring landscape, and the eastern cluster would bring turbines closer to this edge, with the larger scale of the turbines compared to Stronelairg potentially emphasising this effect. This may lead to the affected parts of this edge being more closely associated with the western wind turbine influenced landscape. From this ridgeline, construction activity may also be experienced, although it is unlikely to be very more distracting given the context of the existing wind farm.
- 7.7.20 From summits and other isolated areas of intervisibility in the south of the LCA away from the western boundary, the effect would usually involve the appearance of eastern cluster blades over the skyline, ranging from single tips, likely to be barely perceptible, to larger blades. Whilst these blades would be seen with tips and blades of Stronelairg from some of the highest areas, from other areas they would be established as a new feature. The proximity and scale of these blades would be potentially distracting, and likely to affect the sense of remoteness which is obtained within these areas.
- 7.7.21 The changes to some of these isolated areas would have a Medium magnitude of change, considered to lead to a **Moderate** (significant) effect during construction and operation. However, this is considered within a context whereby the majority of the LCA would not be affected at all. When taking into account, the limited and isolated nature of these areas, the landscape effect is generally considered to be **Minor** (not significant). Significant effects are considered to result largely in relation to the eastern cluster. Occasionally more distant western cluster turbines would be seen from the highest peaks. However, these areas are usually also affected by the existing Stronelairg, Corriegarth and Dunmaglass turbines and the western cluster turbines would be more in scale with, and reflect the pattern and context of these developments.

Landscape Character - Effects Likely to be Not Significant*Minor – Moderate Effects*

- 7.7.22 A **Minor - Moderate** (not significant) effect is anticipated for one LCA: Spey Headwaters: Upper Glen of the Spey which forms the threshold of the CNP within Glen Spey. Within this LCA, some western cluster turbines of the Proposed Development would form a new

feature in the existing landscape and would appear fairly prominently on the northern horizon within an area which is often a focus of the view. However, as this LCA acts as a threshold between east and western landscapes, the Proposed Development would not necessarily appear out of place, as it would be associated with the larger scale hinterland away from the CNP. It would also be seen within a context of the existing Beauuly-Denny transmission towers. An existing access track which winds up the hill in this area already suggests a presence of development or management activities beyond the visual envelope of the glen and, whilst the Proposed Development may appear to emphasise this, it would not appear out of place. The effect on this LCA is therefore considered not significant.

#### *Minor Effects*

- 7.7.23 A **Minor** (not significant) effect has been identified for four CNP LCAs: Upland LCAs Ardverikie Hills and Monadhliath: South Monadhliath (excluding localised effects as previously discussed in paragraphs 7.7.18 to 7.7.21); and lowland LCAs Ardverikie Glen Shirra, and Spey Headwaters, Spey Dam.
- 7.7.24 Within these areas, the Proposed Development would be perceived within the north-western landscape, sometimes as a new feature of this context and sometimes in combination with existing tips and blades of Stronelaig. Whilst the Proposed Development may sometimes be noticeable within this context, it generally is considered unlikely to noticeably alter the key characteristics of the LCA or reduce scenic quality. This is due to either only small parts of the LCA being affected, a very small part of the surrounding context being affected, and / or existing influence of Stronelaig wind turbines on some parts of the LCA, establishing wind turbines as an existing, characteristic of the northern upland landscape. Within these LCAs, the Proposed Development, where intervisible, is considered to be more closely associated with the surrounding context than the LCA itself where existing characteristics would continue to predominate.

#### *Negligible Effects*

- 7.7.25 The remaining LCAs within the CNP would experience a **Negligible** landscape effect from the Proposed Development as it is considered that any potential intervisibility would lead to no perceptible change to landscape characteristics or scenic quality.

#### Special Landscape Qualities

- 7.7.26 The Proposed Development is not anticipated to significantly affect any of the CNP Special Landscape Qualities. The localised significant effects identified for small parts of the Monadhliath: South Monadhliath and non-significant effects in some other areas would lead to localised effects on a number of Special Landscape Qualities. However, when considered in the wider context of the CNP, this is not considered to lead to a significant effect on these Special Landscape Qualities. Special Landscape Qualities identified as being potentially affected are detailed in Technical Appendix 7.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes, Table 1.2.1 and summarised below:
- 7.7.27 The localised effects on the Monadhliath: South Monadhliath LCA are considered likely to affect a small number of Special Qualities which relate to the areas of openness, expansiveness and wildness / lack of development as follows:

#### *General Qualities*

- Magnificent mountains towering over moorland, forest and strath; and

- Vastness of space, scale and height.

*The Mountains and Plateaux*

- The unique plateaux of vast scale, distinctive landforms and exposed, boulder-strewn high ground.

*Wildlife and Nature*

- Dominance of natural landforms; and
- Wildness.

*Visual and Sensory Qualities*

- Layers of receding ridge lines; and
- Grand panoramas and framed views.

7.7.28 Potential more distantly obtained limited intervisibility between the Proposed Development and high-ground areas beyond this LCA may also lead to small effects on these Special Landscape Qualities. However, overall, when considering the very minimal intervisibility obtained and peripheral nature of these effects with no perceptible effect on the core mountain area of the CNP, no significant effect to any of these Special Landscape Qualities is anticipated.

7.7.29 Non-significant effects on lower lying areas around Glen Spey including the Spey Headwaters: Upper Glen of the Spey may also lead to some degree of effect on Special Landscape Qualities as follows:

*General Qualities*

- Landscapes both cultural and natural.

*Glens and Straths*

- Steep glens and high passes.

*Visual and Sensory Qualities*

- Grand panoramas and framed views.

*Culture and History*

- Dramatic, historical routes.

7.7.30 These Special Landscape Qualities largely refer to the relationship of upland and lowland landscapes and the way in which this is experienced. These effects are considered unlikely to be significant due to the very limited extent of lower lying landscapes affected and the indirect nature of effects, which would be more associated with the landscapes beyond the boundary of the CNP.

7.7.31 One further Special Landscape Quality with the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development is 'A Landscape of Opportunities', concerning recreational use. There is the potential for indirect visual and sequential effects for recreational users using routes along Glen Spey and when ascending mountains and moving across high ridgelines which may affect appreciation of the landscape. However, these effects would be minimal due to the disparate or distant nature of likely intervisibility and therefore no significant effect would occur. Visual effects on routes within the CNP are discussed in Section 7.10 and Recreational effects are discussed in Chapter 15: Land Use and Recreation.

- 7.7.32 Overall, considering the combined effects on LCAs and Special Landscape Qualities in the context of the CNP as a whole, the effect is considered to be **Minor** (not significant).

#### **Assessment of Effects on Other Designated and Protected Landscapes**

- 7.7.33 The detailed assessment of effects on designated and protected landscapes is included in Technical Appendix 7.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes. These effects are summarised in the following paragraphs with an emphasis on potential significant effects.

#### Wild Land Areas (WLAs)

- 7.7.34 Two WLAs were identified for inclusion within the assessment. A very localised significant effect was identified to one of these Areas: WLA 20. Monadhliath but in general, significant effects to wild land are considered unlikely.

#### *WLA 20. Monadhliath*

- 7.7.35 The Proposed Development would affect only small parts of this WLA. By and large areas where existing wind turbines of Stronelairig, Corriegarth and Dunmaglass are already present within the context and reduce the existing degree of wildness. Beyond around 8km, it is likely that the turbines of other wind farms would be more prominent but the Proposed Development would occasionally increase the perceived extent of surrounding wind farm development. Where Stronelairig is already a feature, this effect would be reduced, as the part of surrounding context affected would already be similarly affected. However, the Proposed Development turbines would sometimes appear closer and larger, particularly within 8km, and this may appear to bring the influence of human artefacts and contemporary land use closer, reducing the strength of wild land attributes: 'Lack of Construction or other Artefacts' and 'Little Evidence of Contemporary Land Use', and to some extent 'Perceived Naturalness'. This effect would usually be limited and considered to be not significant. However, from some areas closer to the Proposed Development, comprising a few dips and hollows to the north and north-east of the eastern cluster, and higher summits and ridges to the east, the Proposed Development would form a new feature where no other wind turbines influence the landscape creating a greater perception of active land use in neighbouring areas and leading to a more noticeable reduction in these wild land attributes.

- 7.7.36 The above effects are considered likely to lead to a perceptible (but not significant) effect on Key Qualities which relate to the broad open hills and remote interior:

- A range of massive rounded hills and plateaux that are awe-inspiring in their simplicity, openness and immense scale, and offer panoramic views to distant mountain ranges; and
- An extensive, simple interior with few human artefacts, contributing to a perceived 'emptiness' and a strong sense of naturalness, remoteness and sanctuary.

- 7.7.37 However, they are considered unlikely to perceptibly affect those relating to the glens and recreational values. When taking into account that most of the WLA would remain unaffected, this is not anticipated to lead to any significant effects on Key Qualities.

- 7.7.38 Overall, the combined effect on the Physical and Perceptual attributes and Key Qualities is considered to lead to a **Minor** (not significant) wild land effect on the Monadhliath WLA although small and limited areas closer to the development may receive a localised

**Moderate** (significant) effect. Effects would occur during both construction and operation.

*WLA 19. Braeroy – Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh*

- 7.7.39 The majority of theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development in this WLA would be within elevated areas which already feature turbines of Stronelairg, Millennium and Beinneun Wind Farms within the visual context, which reduces the strength of wildness. The Proposed Development would appear to bring development closer to these areas which may have some effect on the attributes: ‘Lack of construction or other artefacts’ ‘Evidence of Contemporary Land Use’ and potentially ‘Arresting or inspiring qualities / sense of awe’. However, this is considered unlikely to lead to a significant effect as the existing developments already reduce these wild land attributes.
- 7.7.40 From some lower areas, most notably within the pass between Braeroy and Loch Spey, turbines would form a new feature within the landscape context, but would be very few in number, affecting only a very small part of the context. From these areas, contemporary land use and features at Melgarve are evident, including forestry, substation buildings and Beauly – Denny transmission towers. These elements affect the same part of this context, thereby reducing the perceived wildness in this area, as illustrated by SNH’s Map of Relative Wildness and Absence of Modern Artefacts maps (see Figures 7.4.1 and 7.4.2) which show a reduced wildness in these areas. Therefore, whilst the Proposed Development would affect the attributes ‘Lack of construction or other artefacts’ and ‘Evidence of Contemporary Land Use’, the visual separation of the Proposed Development from the wild land area, due in part to the other development at Melgarve which interrupt the intervening view, is considered unlikely to lead to a significant effect on wild land in this area.
- 7.7.41 The majority of the WLA would remain unaffected, including the majority of areas identified by the Map of Relative Wildness as having the highest degree of perceived wildness. Where these high wildness areas are identified as being affected, this is usually due to the fact that the visual influence of Stronelairg has not been considered in the mapping, as described in the SNH methodology, Annex 4 (SNH, 2014b). If this were the case, it is considered likely that these areas would be shown to have a reduced relative wildness as described in Technical Appendix 7.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes.
- 7.7.42 The above effects are considered likely to lead to a small effect on all the Key Qualities for this WLA but are not considered sufficient to lead to a significant effect. Overall, the combined effect on the Physical and Perceptual attributes and Key Qualities is considered to lead to a **Minor - Moderate** (not significant) wild land effect during construction and operation.

Special Landscape Areas (SLAs)

- 7.7.43 Three out of six SLAs within the wider study area were identified for inclusion within the assessment. No significant effect was identified for any of these SLAs.
- 7.7.44 A **Minor** effect was identified for the Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA and Loch Ness and Duntelchaig due to localised intervisibility with the Proposed Development and occasional appearance of turbines above the skyline of surrounding hills. The smooth skyline is noted as a Special Quality element for both these SLAs but the effects would be

localised and are considered unlikely to affect the overall appreciation of these landscape areas.

- 7.7.45 A **Negligible** effect was identified for the Loch Lochy and Loch Oich SLA due to the minimal and very localised nature of effects, considered unlikely to lead to any discernible change to scenic quality or value.

### Summary of Landscape Effects

- 7.7.46 A summary of the effects on LCTs / LCAs and designated and protected landscapes is outlined in Table 7.7.1 and Table 7.7.2 below.

**Table 7.7.1: Summary of Landscape Character Effects**

LCT / LCA	Potential Effect (Not Significant)				Potential Effect (Significant)		
	Scoped out	Negligible	Minor	Minor - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Major	Major
<b>National Landscape Character Types (not including CNP area)</b>							
LCT 235. Broad Forested Strath	x						
LCT 89. Broad Loch and Glen	x						
LCT 225. Broad Steep-Sided Glen		x					
LCT 227. Farmed Strath - Inverness	x						
LCT 224. Farmed and Wooded Foothills							
LCT 239. Interlocking Sweeping Peaks - Lochaber	x						
LCT 85. Isolated Mountain Plateau		x	x				
LCT 88. Loch and Glen	x						
LCT 237. Rocky Moorland - Lochaber	x						
LCT 222. Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness		x					
LCT 221. Rolling Uplands - Inverness			x		x (L)		
LCT 220. Rugged Massif - Inverness		x					
LCT 238. Rugged Massif - Lochaber				x			
LCT 87. Small Craggy Knolls and Hills		x					
LCT 236. Smooth Moorland Ridges			x				
LCT 86. Smooth Rounded Hills – Badenoch and Strathspey		x					
LCT 289. Upland Farmed Valleys	x						
LCT 231. Upland Glen - Inverness				x			
LCT 226. Wooded Glen - Inverness	x						

LCT / LCA	Potential Effect (Not Significant)				Potential Effect (Significant)		
	Scoped out	Negligible	Minor	Minor - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Major	Major
<b>CNP Landscape Character Areas (upland)</b>							
Ardverikie Hills			x				
The Monadhliath: North Monadhliath	x						
The Monadhliath: South Monadhliath			x		x (L)		
The Southern Hills		x					
<b>CNP Landscape Character Areas (lowland)</b>							
Ardverikie: Glen Shirra			x				
Pattack Glen / Strath Mashie		x					
Badenoch: Insh Marshes	x						
Badenoch: Lower Glen Banchor	x						
Badenoch: Newtonmore to Kingussie	x						
Badenoch: Upper Glen Banchor	x						
Badenoch: Upper Strath	x						
Cathar Mor		x					
Dalwhinnie	x						
Glen Truim	x						
Glen Truim: Upper Glen & Dalwhinnie		x					
Kingussie	x						
Laggan	x						
Newtonmore	x						
Spey Headwaters: Spey Dam			x				
Spey Headwaters: Upper Glen of the Spey				x			
Upper Spey Farmlands: Coul Farm Pinch Point	x						
Upper Spey Farmlands: Laggan Strath	x						
Upper Spey Farmlands: Loch Uvie Pinch Point	x						

L – denotes that the effect would be localised to only part of the landscape resource within the detailed study area.

**Table 7.7.2: Summary of Effects on Designated and Protected Landscapes**

Designated / Protected Landscape	Potential Effect (Not Significant)				Potential Effect (Significant)		
	Scoped out	Negligible	Minor	Minor - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Major	Major
<b>National Park</b>							
Cairngorms National Park (CNP)			x				
<b>National Scenic Area (NSA)</b>							
Ben Nevis and Glen Coe	x						
The Cairngorm Mountains	x						
Glen Affric	x						
Glen Strathfarrar	x						
Loch Rannoch and Glen Lyon	x						
<b>Wild Land Area (WLA)</b>							
14. Rannach – Nevis – Mamores - Alder	x						
15. Cairngorms	x						
18. Kinlochhourn – Knoydart – Morar	x						
19. Braeroy – Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh				x			
20. Monadhliath			x		x (L)		
24. Central Highlands	x						
<b>Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs)</b>							
Achnacarry	x						
Aldourie Castle	x						
Beaufort Castle	x						
Corrour Lodge	x						
Dochfour	x						
Doone of Rothiemurchus	x						
Kinrara	x						
Leys Castle	x						
<b>Special Landscape Areas</b>							
Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor			x				
Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors	x						
Loch Lochy and Loch Oich		x					

	Potential Effect (Not Significant)				Potential Effect (Significant)		
	Scoped out	Negligible	Minor	Minor - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Major	Major
<b>Designated / Protected Landscape</b>							
Loch Ness and Duntelchaig			x				
Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel	x						
Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch	x						

L – denotes that the effect would be localised to only part of the resource within the detailed study area.

## 7.8 Cumulative Landscape Assessment

7.8.1 Cumulative landscape effects may result where a number of wind energy developments combine, increasing the prevalence of wind turbines within a landscape to an extent where they may become a defining characteristic. The likely significance of these effects relates to the number of wind developments affecting the landscape, their scale, the inter-relationship between their respective visual envelopes and the sensitivity and capacity of the particular landscape to accommodate this type of development.

### Cumulative Landscape Methodology

7.8.2 The methodology for the cumulative landscape assessment is based on that described in SNH guidance: Assessing the Cumulative Impact of Onshore Wind Energy proposed development (SNH, 2012). The assessment considers the potential for combined effects to designated landscapes and LCTs resulting from the addition of the Proposed Development to the baseline wind energy development scenario, which may be experienced both from static locations and whilst moving through the landscape (sequentially).

7.8.3 The cumulative assessment considers all those LCTs and designated / protected landscapes identified for inclusion in the detailed landscape assessment. However, areas identified as likely to have a negligible effect in the landscape assessment have not been included, as a negligible effect could not contribute to a significant cumulative effect.

7.8.4 The cumulative landscape assessment has involved five key stages:

- Evaluation of the capacity of the identified landscape to accommodate wind farm development;
- Identification and analysis of the baseline wind energy development scenario;
- Evaluation of the cumulative landscape sensitivity to change;
- Evaluation of the potential magnitude of landscape change to the baseline scenario resulting from the Proposed Development; and
- Assessment of the potential cumulative landscape effects arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to the baseline scenario.

Evaluation of Landscape Capacity

- 7.8.5 SNH guidance on cumulative assessment (SNH, 2012) describes the need for an understanding of whether the proposed wind farm crosses the threshold of acceptability for the total number of wind farms in an area. The capacity of the landscape to accommodate multiple wind farms has been evaluated using baseline data collected during the landscape assessment. Consideration has been given to the scenic quality, value and sensitivity to change of the relevant designated / protected area or LCT. Where relevant, the landscape sensitivity study for the Great Glen included within the OWESG has been consulted to inform the evaluation of the cumulative capacity value. The cumulative capacity value considers the landscape without the effect of the existing baseline sites.
- 7.8.6 A cumulative capacity value has been attributed to each area based on a three point scale from High to Low as detailed in Table 7.8.1.

**Table 7.8.1: Cumulative Capacity Value**

Cumulative Capacity Value	Description
High	The landscape has the potential to accommodate multiple wind farms / wind turbines without significant loss of key characteristics or features.
Medium	The landscape has the potential to accommodate some wind farms / wind turbines but there is the potential for key characteristics or features to be locally dominated or eroded by the presence of wind turbines.
Low	The landscape would have few opportunities for wind farm / wind turbine development which would not dominate or erode key characteristics or features.

Appraisal of the Baseline Wind Energy Development Scenario

- 7.8.7 Baseline information on operational, consented and proposed (application and appeal) wind energy developments within the 60km cumulative search area has been collected from THC and ECU planning databases and is illustrated on Figure 7.7.1. The baseline scenario has then been refined to identify those sites considered to have greater potential to result in significant effects in combination with the Proposed Development, as detailed in section 7.8.13.
- 7.8.8 The baseline scenario is described for each landscape area and considers wind farms / turbines which affect the landscape both directly and indirectly.

Evaluation of the Cumulative Sensitivity to Change

- 7.8.9 An evaluation of sensitivity to change has been attributed to each landscape designation / protected area and LCT based on analysis of the actual baseline scenario in relation to the identified capacity value of the landscape to accommodate wind farm development. This is based on a three point scale from High to Low as detailed in Table 7.8.2.

**Table 7.8.2: Cumulative Landscape Sensitivity Criteria**

Cumulative Landscape Sensitivity	Criteria
High	The baseline wind farm / wind turbine scenario is very close to or achieves the identified capacity of the area resulting in little opportunity for additional development without significant effects occurring.
Medium	The baseline wind farm / wind turbine scenario leaves some opportunity for additional development within the landscape without significant effects resulting.
Low	The baseline wind farm/wind turbine scenario leaves considerable opportunity for additional development within the landscape without significant effects resulting.

Identification of Cumulative Magnitude of Change

- 7.8.10 Magnitude of change concerns the degree of change which would occur as a result of the introduction of the proposed development into the baseline scenario. This is identified based on the consideration of the potential nature, size, scale and location of the proposed change within the context of the existing baseline scenario. The evaluation of the magnitude of change is based on the criteria outlined in the main landscape assessment (see paragraph 7.5.13).

Assessment of Potential Cumulative Landscape Effects

- 7.8.11 Assessment of potential cumulative effects is based on analysis of the relationship between the cumulative sensitivity to change and the magnitude of change and is made using a degree of professional judgement. It should be noted that the cumulative effect assessed is the result of the addition of the proposed development to the existing baseline scenario. The cumulative assessment is based upon a four point scale as detailed in Table 7.8.3.

**Table 7.8.3: Criteria for Assessment of Cumulative Landscape Effects**

Cumulative Landscape Effect	Criteria
Major	The addition of the proposed development to the cumulative baseline scenario would result in the capacity of the landscape to accommodate wind energy development being overreached and the combined appearance of wind turbines in the landscape becoming a dominant and character defining feature.
Moderate	The addition of the proposed development to the cumulative baseline scenario would increase the appearance of wind turbines in the landscape to the extent that they may become locally dominant, but the proposed development would not exceed the overall capacity of the landscape to accommodate wind energy development.
Minor	The addition of the proposed development to the cumulative baseline scenario would add to the appearance of wind turbines in the landscape but would not result in a noticeable change to key landscape characteristics.

Cumulative Landscape Effect	Criteria
Negligible	The addition of the proposed development to the cumulative baseline scenario would not result in any discernible increase in the appearance or dominance of wind turbines in the landscape.

### Cumulative Baseline Scenario

- 7.8.12 The cumulative baseline scenario comprises 22 operational, consented / under construction and proposed (application / appeal) wind developments, within 60km of the Proposed Development, as illustrated on Figure 7.7.1 and detailed in Technical Appendix 7.5: Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments within 60km. This represents the baseline situation as of November 30<sup>th</sup> 2019.
- 7.8.13 An initial appraisal of these sites in relation to the Proposed Development suggested that the potential for significant cumulative effects would be most likely to occur in relation to the Proposed Development seen in combination with sites around the Great Glen and Monadhliath. Therefore, the assessment has focused on sites within and around this area. The sites selected for inclusion are detailed in Table 7.8.4 and shown on Figure 7.7.2. This list of sites for inclusion in the CLVIA was presented at the Pre-Application Meeting in November 2019.

**Table 7.8.4: Cumulative Baseline Sites Included in the CLVIA**

Site Name	Number of Turbines	Turbine Dimensions (m)			Location and Distance from Proposed Development
		Hub Height	Rotor Dia.	Tip Height	
Operational Sites					
Beinneun (and extension)	32	81.5 / 79.5	104 / 113	133.5 / 136	22.1km to west of western cluster.
Bhlaraidh	32	83	104	135	17.8km to north-west of western cluster.
Corriegarth	23	80	80	120	8.5km north of eastern cluster.
Corrimony	5	59	82	100	23.7km to north-west of western cluster
Dunmaglass	33	75	90	120	15.2km to north-north-east of eastern cluster.
Farr	40	60	82	101	28.9km to north-east of eastern cluster.
Glen Kyllachy	20	70	80	110	28km to north-east of eastern cluster.
Millennium Group	26	77 / 87	76	115 / 125	17.3km to west of western cluster.
Stronelaig	66	69 / 76.5	112 / 117	125 / 135	Adjacent between eastern and western clusters.
Consented / Under Construction Sites					
Aberarder	12	80	100	130	17.9km to north-north-east of eastern cluster.

Site Name	Number of Turbines	Turbine Dimensions (m)			Location and Distance from Proposed Development
		Hub Height	Rotor Dia.	Tip Height	
Dell	14	65 / 80	101	115.5 / 130.5	Adjacent to western cluster north-east of northernmost turbine.
Millennium South	10	80	104	132	18.7km to west of western cluster.
Application / Appeal Sites					
Glenshero	39	76.5	117	135	Adjacent to south of eastern and western clusters.

7.8.14 The cumulative assessment assumes a baseline scenario whereby all of the wind farms included in the assessment would be operational and assesses effects resulting from the potential addition of the Proposed Development.

#### Analysis of the Cumulative ZTV

7.8.15 Cumulative ZTVs showing the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development and those of the cumulative baseline wind developments have been produced to identify areas of combined and sequential visibility (see Figures 7.8.1 – 7.8.11). These demonstrate that the cumulative baseline scenario is one of relatively widespread visibility of wind turbines but mostly focused towards the north and north-west of the wider study area. The cumulative baseline sites form several distinct clusters within the wider study area with similar extent of theoretical visibility:

- The ZTVs for Beinneun, Millennium Group and Millennium South show coverage limited to the west of the wider study area over the higher hills and mountain tops but with intervisibility within Glenmoriston, Glen Garry and parts of the Great Glen including Fort Augustus;
- Corriegarth, Dunmaglass and Aberarder show predominant theoretical visibility across the higher ground of the central and northern parts of the Monadhliath, the western sides of the Great Glen and higher slopes and summits beyond, as well as western facing slopes and summits of the Cairngorms;
- Farr and Glen Kyllachy have similar intervisibility to Corriegarth, Dunmaglass and Aberarder but this is generally more focussed within the north of the wider study area;
- Bhlaraidh shows widespread intervisibility across high ground in the north and west of the wider study area including the western Monadhliath but the nearby Corrimony has more reduced intervisibility more focused within the west of the wider study area;
- Stronelaig and Dell, located more towards the south of the Monadhliath, have less widespread intervisibility, focussed across areas of uplands mainly to the south and west, although some theoretical visibility is also indicated on the western side of Loch Ness; and
- Glenshero shows the greatest degree of intervisibility with southern parts of the wider study area. Although similar in coverage to Stronelaig to which it is located adjacent, it generally shows a more extensive degree of intervisibility across southern and eastern hills and some lower lying areas.

- 7.8.16 When considering the combined theoretical visibility of operational / under construction sites only, the Proposed Development is shown to have noticeable theoretical visibility in areas not affected by existing developments. This is focused in the south of the detailed and wider study area around upper Glen Spey and the facing hill slopes around Strath Mashie and Glen Truim and the eastern Cairngorms. The addition of consented sites to the cumulative baseline does not noticeably alter the extent of these additional areas. However, when application sites are added to the cumulative baseline these areas are noticeably reduced. This is due to the influence of Glenshero on the southern landscapes. The combined cumulative ZTV for all baseline sites shows very few small areas of additional intervisibility mainly limited to a few glens close to the Proposed Development site and small areas of summits and slopes within the south eastern hills, around Glen Feshie, Glen Tromie and Glen Truim and north of Laggan.
- 7.8.17 The Proposed Development would share a similar degree of intervisibility to Stronelaairg, Dell and Glenshero, the sites in closest proximity to its proposed location. There are very few areas where the Proposed Development would be theoretically visible which are not affected by one of these three sites.

#### **Cumulative Landscape Effects Evaluation**

- 7.8.18 The detailed cumulative assessment of LCTs and landscape designations is presented in Technical Appendix 7.6: Cumulative Landscape Assessment Tables. The following section provides a summary of the results and key issues highlighted by the assessment.

#### Landscape Character

- 7.8.19 No significant cumulative effects to LCTs / LCAs have been identified when considering the potential addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative baseline scenario. This is largely due to the position of the Proposed Development adjacent to the operational site of Stronelaairg, the consented site of Dell and the application site of Glenshero leading often to the appearance of a cohesive cluster of baseline development which would strongly define the character of the landscape in which it would be located. In adjacent landscapes where the more notable landscape effects of the Proposed Development alone would be experienced, the effect of the cumulative baseline scenario would be such that the addition of the Proposed Development to this cluster would often lead to only a perceptible or barely perceptible increased influence of wind turbine development leading to a Negligible or Low magnitude of change on landscape characteristics. This would particularly be the case in landscapes to the south of the Proposed Development which are often those with greater effects from the development alone. From these areas, the Proposed Development would usually be seen to the rear of Glenshero which would appear much more prominent, minimising the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development.

#### *Minor – Moderate Effects*

- 7.8.20 A **Minor – Moderate** (not significant) cumulative effect has been identified for The Monadhliath – South Monadhliath LCA. The Proposed Development would affect only small parts of this LCA around the western boundary and a few isolated high points beyond. It would usually be seen in the context of Stronelaairg, Dell and Glenshero but there would be a few isolated areas where the tips and blades of eastern cluster turbines would be visible where the cumulative baseline sites would not. In additional areas where only a few tips of Glenshero are perceptible above the western skyline, the Proposed

Development would add to these and increase the section of skyline affected giving an increased sense of development in the nearby western landscape, affecting the remote qualities of these parts of the LCA. However, these isolated effects would only affect very small parts of the LCA.

#### *Minor Effects*

7.8.21 A **Minor** (not significant) cumulative effect is anticipated for LCT 221 – Rolling Uplands – Inverness within which the Proposed Development would be located. Within this area, the Proposed Development would usually be seen as part of the cluster of Stronelairg, Dell and Glenshero and would not noticeably add to the influence of this cluster. However, from small areas where these developments are not intervisible, the Proposed Development would add a new feature within the context. Although other wind farm developments are usually already influential on these areas the Proposed Development would increase the part of the context where wind farm development would be perceived.

7.8.22 A **Minor** (not significant) cumulative effect is anticipated for LCT 220 – Rugged Massif – Lochaber. Within this landscape, from higher areas, the Proposed Development would be seen in the northern context in combination with Stronelairg, Dell and Glenshero and from lower areas, to the rear of Glenshero. The Proposed Development would be located to the rear of Glenshero which would be more prominent. Although the increased numbers of turbines in this northern context would be perceptible from some areas, the greater prominence of Glenshero is considered likely to minimise any noticeably increased effect on landscape characteristics resulting from the addition of the Proposed Development.

#### *Negligible Effects*

7.8.23 Cumulative effects on all other LCAs / LCTs would be **Negligible** as it is considered that there would be no perceptible increase in the influence of wind turbines on landscape character when the Proposed Development is added to the cumulative baseline scenario.

#### Designated and Protected Landscapes

7.8.24 No significant cumulative effects are predicted to any of the designated or protected landscapes included in the CLVIA.

#### *Cairngorms National Park*

7.8.25 Cumulative effects on The Monadhliath: South Monadhliath LCA and Negligible cumulative effects on all other CNP LCAs are predicted to lead to a **Minor** (not significant) cumulative effect on the CNP as a whole. Effects on The Monadhliath: South Monadhliath LCA may lead to some small effects on the Special Landscape Qualities ‘Vastness of space, scale and height’; ‘Dominance of natural landforms’; ‘Grand panoramas and framed views’; and ‘Wildness’ but these would not be significant.

#### *Wild Land Areas (WLAs)*

7.8.26 The prominence of the baseline cumulative sites and particularly Glenshero is such that no significant effect is anticipated to WLA 19. Braeroy – Glen Shirra – Creag Meagaidh. It is considered that the addition of the Proposed Development would be unlikely to further reduce the strength of wild land attributes in this WLA, other than very slightly in a few very small areas unaffected by the cumulative baseline sites. No increased effect on any

of the Key Qualities for this WLA is predicted and cumulative effect is anticipated to be **Minor** (not significant).

- 7.8.27 The cumulative effect on the character of The Monadhliath: South Monadhliath LCA is anticipated to lead to a **Minor** cumulative effect on WLA 20. Monadhliath. There would be very small areas of the WLA unaffected by any of the baseline cumulative sites where tips and blades of the Proposed Development would form a new feature and other small areas where they would add to the context, increasing a sense of surrounding development and reducing wild land attributes slightly. This is predicted to have a similar small effect on Key Qualities as for the Proposed Development alone but would not be significant.

#### *Special Landscape Areas*

- 7.8.28 Two SLAs were included in the CLVIA. A **Minor** (not significant) effect is predicted to the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA due to a likely perceived increase in turbines affecting the eastern skyline, noted as a Special Quality element, seen from some areas on the western valley-side.
- 7.8.29 The effect on the Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA would be **Negligible** due to the greater influence of Glenshero, which would result in the Proposed Development leading to no perceptible increase in the influence of wind turbines on the SLA.

#### Summary of Cumulative Landscape Effects

- 7.8.30 Table 7.8.5 provides a summary of predicted cumulative landscape effects on those LCTs / LCAs and designated and protected landscapes included in the CLVIA.

**Table 7.8.5: Summary of Cumulative Landscape Effects**

Landscape Areas included in the CLVIA	Potential Effect (Not Significant)			Potential Effect (Significant)		
	Negligible	Minor	Minor - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Major	Major
<b>National Landscape Character Types (not including CNP area)</b>						
LCT 85 - Isolated Mountain Plateau (Creag Meagaidh area only)	x					
LCT 221 - Rolling Uplands Inverness		x				
LCT 238 – Rugged Massif – Lochaber		x				
LCT 236 – Smooth Moorland Ridges	x					
LCT 231 – Upland Glen - Inverness	x					
<b>CNP Landscape Character Areas</b>						
Ardverikie Hills LCA	x					
The Monadhliath – South Monadhliath LCA			x			
Ardverikie – Glen Shirra LCA	x					
Spey Headwaters – Spey Dam LCA	x					

Landscape Areas included in the CLVIA	Potential Effect (Not Significant)			Potential Effect (Significant)		
	Negligible	Minor	Minor - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Major	Major
Spey Headwaters – Upper Glen of the Spey LCA	x					
<b>Designated and Protected Landscapes</b>						
Cairngorm National Park (CNP)		x				
WLA 19. Braeroy – Glenshirra - Creag Meagaidh Wild Land Area		x				
WLA 20. Monadhliath		x				
Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor Special Landscape Area (SLA)	x					
Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA		x				

## 7.9 Visual Assessment: Methodology

7.9.1 The GLVIA3 methodology for visual assessment identifies familiarity with the site and the extent, nature and expectation of existing views as a key factor in establishing the visual sensitivity in terms of the development proposed. The guidelines require evaluation of magnitude of change to views experienced by sensitive receptors, comprising individuals living, working, travelling and carrying out other activities within the landscape, and subsequent evaluation of effect significance. The potential to mitigate adverse effects should also be considered.

7.9.2 There are four key stages to the visual assessment:

- Establishment of the baseline;
- Appreciation of the development proposed;
- Analysis of visual receptors and potential effects; and
- Assessment of effect significance.

### Establishment of the Baseline

7.9.3 Establishment of the baseline conditions has been undertaken through a combination of desk study, consultation and site appraisal.

### Identification of Visual Receptors

7.9.4 For there to be a visual effect, there needs to be a viewer. Individuals experiencing views from locations such as buildings, recognised routes and popular viewpoints used by the public have been considered in this assessment. Those experiencing views are referred to as visual receptors.

7.9.5 The ZTV was reviewed to aid identification of visual receptors with the potential to experience visual effects from the Proposed Development, informed by review of a range of desk resources, and supplemented by ASH's existing knowledge of the study area. The

following resources were used to enhance understanding of the use of the study area by potential visual receptors:

- Relevant development plans and supplementary planning guidance as described in section 7.4;
- OS mapping resources and aerial photography;
- Citations and descriptions of landscape designations and protected areas, as outlined in paragraph 7.5.4; and
- Other web-based tourism, recreation and information resources (see list of references in section 7.15).

- 7.9.6 The list of representative viewpoints (VPs) was refined and approved through post-Scoping consultation with THC and SNH. A full list of VPs considered for inclusion in the visual assessment is included in Technical Appendix 7.2: Landscape and Visual Scoping Appraisal, along with the rationale for those selected.

#### Site Appraisal

- 7.9.7 Site visits were undertaken in July and August 2019 by a team of two Chartered Landscape Professionals to verify the visual receptors identified through desk study, identify any further potential receptors which had been missed and collate information on baseline visual amenity. Site recording involved the completion of standardised recording forms and annotation of 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey plans, supported by a photographic record of views from key receptor locations.

#### **Appreciation of the Proposed Development**

- 7.9.8 Appreciation of the Proposed Development involves the accumulation of a thorough knowledge of the proposal (as detailed in Chapter 3: Description of Development), and its location, scale and potential appearance within the visual amenity context. To aid this process, ZTVs and wirelines of the Proposed Development were consulted, along with use of TrueView Visuals, ipad-based specialist software which uses augmented reality to show how the Proposed Development may appear within the view. The limitations of these resources are discussed in Technical Appendix 7.1: Technical Methodologies for Visual Representation.

#### **Analysis of Visual Receptors and Potential Effects**

- 7.9.9 Preparation of the visual baseline is followed by the systematic identification of likely effects on potential visual receptors. This is a two-fold process, giving consideration to how effects may arise from aspects of the Proposed Development, and how these changes may be accommodated in the existing baseline view.
- 7.9.10 Visual receptors and representative viewpoints identified for inclusion in the assessment were visited and key information on the nature, composition and characteristics of the existing view experienced recorded. Consideration is given to the likely perceived value of a particular view to the viewer, taking into account the nature of the receptor and the potential activity they may be involved in, and factors such as elevation, extent and key features or attractions which may feature in the view.

#### Visual Receptor Sensitivity

- 7.9.11 The evaluation of visual sensitivity considers both the perceived value of the existing view and the susceptibility of the visual receptor to change. It is important to note that the

judgement of visual sensitivity is considered in relation to an understanding of both the existing view and the development proposed and therefore perceived value of the area of change as a part of the view as a whole contributes to the sensitivity evaluation.

- 7.9.12 Visual sensitivity to the change proposed has been evaluated using a three-point scale as shown in Table 7.9.1.

**Table 7.9.1: Visual Sensitivity Criteria**

Visual Sensitivity	Criteria
High	Views from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dwellings and publically accessible buildings where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present; and</li> <li>• recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present.</li> </ul>
Medium	Views from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dwellings and publically accessible buildings where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present;</li> <li>• recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present;</li> <li>• roads and transport routes where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present; and</li> <li>• workplaces where the changed aspect is an important element of the view and there are no detracting features present.</li> </ul>
Low	Views from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dwellings and publically accessible buildings where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view and / or numerous detracting features are present;</li> <li>• recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view and / or where numerous detracting features are present;</li> <li>• roads and transport routes where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present; and</li> <li>• workplaces where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present.</li> </ul>

#### Magnitude of Change

- 7.9.13 Magnitude of change concerns the extent to which the existing view would be altered by the Proposed Development. The evaluation of magnitude gives consideration to factors such as the scale or extent of the changes within the view, the extent to which this may alter the composition or focus of the view and the duration and reversibility of these changes. Magnitude of change has been evaluated using a four-point scale, detailed in Table 7.9.2.

**Table 7.9.2: Criteria for Magnitude of Visual Change**

Magnitude of Visual Change	Criteria
High	Where the proposed development would cause a very noticeable change in the existing view.
Medium	Where the proposed development would cause a noticeable change in the existing view.
Low	Where the proposed development would cause a perceptible change in the existing view.
Negligible	Where the proposed development would cause a largely imperceptible change in the existing view.

**Assessment of Effects Significance**

- 7.9.14 The level of visual effect identified concerns the importance of changes resulting from the Proposed Development. Evaluation of the effect and determination of significance is based on consideration of the magnitude of change in relation to sensitivity, taking into account proposed mitigation measures, and is established using professional judgement. The assessment takes into account likely changes to the visual composition, including the extent to which new features would distract or screen existing elements in the view or disrupt the scale, structure or focus of the existing view.
- 7.9.15 Significance has been evaluated using a four-point scale, as detailed in Table 7.9.3 below.

**Table 7.9.3: Visual Effect Significance Criteria**

Visual Effect Rating	Criteria
Major	The proposed development would become a prominent and very detracting feature and would result in a very noticeable deterioration to an existing highly valued and well composed view.
Moderate	The proposed development would introduce some detracting features to an existing highly valued view or would be more prominent within a pleasing or less well composed view, resulting in a noticeable deterioration of the quality of view.
Minor	The proposed development would form a perceptible but not detracting feature within a pleasing or valued view or would be a prominent feature within a poorly composed view of limited value, resulting in a small deterioration to the existing view.
Negligible	The proposed development would form a barely perceptible feature within the existing view and would not result in any discernible deterioration to the view.

**7.10 Visual Assessment: Baseline****Visual Context**

- 7.10.1 As described in section 7.6 the study area is characterised by extensive areas of upland which are segmented by deep valleys containing the majority of settlement and transportation routes. As a result, views from properties, roads and tourism developments, obtained by the largest numbers of people, are usually contained within, or directed along, these valleys. These vary between relatively intimate views enclosed

by woodland or across pasture, open views across water and long funnelled views up or down the valleys, often along the lengths of the long, linear lochs. Surrounding hills typically provide a back drop and horizon line to these views, although may often be filtered by forest or woodland from the major routes.

- 7.10.2 Visual receptors within the detailed study area are shown on Figure 7.6.1. Key settlement centres within the valleys include Fort Augustus, set at the end of Loch Ness in the Great Glen, and Newtonmore and Kingussie in the upper Strathspey. Smaller settlements comprise Dalwhinnie in Glen Truim, 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 scattered properties are scattered throughout these straths and glens and a few isolated lodge properties set deeper into the hills.
- 7.10.3 From upland areas more expansive views are obtained both overlooking the settled glens and across the upland plateaux and summits of surrounding mountains. Because of the difference in relief between the major glens and mountains, settled areas are often not a noticeable feature of these elevated views which feature layers of hills and mountains receding into the distance. A number of popular mountain summits are present including various Munros (mountains over 3000 ft) and Corbetts (mountains over 2500 ft). There are also various mapped longer distance walking routes through the upland glens and across the plateaux, as shown on Figure 7.6.1.
- 7.10.4 Wind farms are already a noticeable feature within many views throughout the study area both from within the straths and glens, where they typically skyline above the surrounding hills, and particularly in upland views due to the locations of existing sites on the higher ground.

### **Potential Receptors**

#### Interpretation of the ZTV

- 7.10.5 The ZTV (see Figure 7.1.1) shows that theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development would be largely limited to upland areas with the greatest concentration of potential visibility shown within around 5km of the Proposed Development. Beyond this distance, ZTV coverage becomes more patchy, limited to higher ground and facing slopes.
- 7.10.6 To the south of the Proposed Development, this comprises some fairly extensive areas which cover the northern facing slopes and summits of Creag Meagaidh and the Glenshirra Forest, summits around Glen Roy, the hills and mountains to the south of Strath Mashie and Loch Laggan, and Carn na Caim on the east side of Glen Truim. Limited areas of potential visibility are shown at greater distance, mostly featuring only up to nine turbines, although potentially up to 36 turbines would be theoretically visible from Aonach Mòr, over 35km to the south-east.
- 7.10.7 To the west, potential visibility is shown to mostly cover the higher ground between the straths and glens although a limited degree of visibility is indicated up Glen Garry and from the elevated section of the A87. To the north and north-west however, potential visibility is shown on the north-western slopes of the Great Glen, potentially affecting the A82, Great Glen Way and elevated settlement. There is also a limited degree of visibility suggested around Whitebridge, Foyers and Inverfarigaig on the eastern side of Loch Ness.

- 7.10.8 To the north-east, theoretical visibility is shown to be limited, mostly affecting higher hills within 20km, with turbine numbers of less than 10. To the east, within the CNP, visibility is shown to be mostly limited to the higher hills and summits on the western boundary, and higher summits beyond 20km with up to 36 turbines theoretically being seen from the peaks of mountains and fewer numbers from facing slopes.

#### Representative Viewpoints

- 7.10.9 Twenty viewpoints have been selected throughout the wider study area to represent the range of views which would be obtained of the Proposed Development. These viewpoints form the basis of the visual assessment. Viewpoints selected are all within areas shown to have theoretical visibility by the ZTV. The selection of viewpoints has been an iterative process in consultation with SNH and THC, with a greater number of VPs considered than those included in the final list. Detail of all those considered and the rationale for those selected is included in Technical Appendix 7.2: Landscape and Visual Scoping Appraisal.
- 7.10.10 The viewpoints selected are detailed in Table 7.10.1 and shown on Figure 7.5.1. A larger version of the viewpoints plan is included as Figure 7.5.2.

**Table 7.10.1: Viewpoints**

Ref.	Location	OS Grid Reference	Reason for Selection
VP1	Beinn a' Mheadhoin (Glen Affric)	NH 21906 25555	Representative of the types of view obtained from high points within Glen Affric NSA and Central Highlands WLA.
VP2	Great Glen Way, Balbeg	NH 49330 24347	Representative of views obtained from properties, minor roads and a section of the Great Glen Way on elevated ground to the west of Loch Ness.
VP3	Meall Fuar-mhonaidh	NH 45889 22181	Popular local hill summit and highest point on the west side of Loch Ness, within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA. Representative of views from high ground and summits on the west side of Loch Ness including Burach Cairn.
VP4	Carn na Saobhaidhe	NH 59863 14300	Summit of Corbett. Representative of the types of view obtained from high ground to the north of the Proposed Development.
VP5	Carn Dubh	NH 51675 09519	Representative of the types of views obtained from high ground to the north of the Proposed Development.
VP6	Glen Markie	NH 54356 07217	Representative of views from recreational route (Scottish Hill Track 231)
VP7	Carn a' Chuilinn	NH 41679 03397	Summit of Corbett in close proximity to the west of the Proposed Development.
VP8	Carn Dearg (Monadhliath)	NH 63545 02427	Munro summit. Representative of views from high ground near the western boundary of the CNP and within the Monadhliath WLA.

Ref.	Location	OS Grid Reference	Reason for Selection
VP9	Geal Charn (Monadhliath)	NN 56145 98766	Munro summit in very close proximity to the east of the Proposed Development. Representative of views from high ground on the western boundary of the CNP.
VP10	Braeriach	NN 95300 99906	Popular mountain summit within the CNP, The Cairngorm Mountains NSA and Cairngorms WLA. Representative of more distant mountain summit views from CNP.
VP11	Carn Liath	NN 47216 90352	Munro summit. Representative of views from high summits to the south of the Proposed Development and within Braeroy - Glenshirra - Creag Meagaidh WLA.
VP12	Glen Shirra	NN 53411 90479	Located on estate track. Representative of types of views obtained from lower level locations and walking routes in the CNP and Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA.
VP13	Geal Charn (Ardverikie)	NN 50441 81229	Munro summit located in in Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA. Representative of elevated middle distance views from the south.
VP14	A87, Loch Garry Viewpoint	NH 21165 02845	Popular stopping point on A87 tourist route. Representative of views obtained by those travelling east on this section of the A87.
VP15	Beinn Teallach	NN 36142 85969	Munro summit located within Braeroy, Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh WLA. Representative of elevated views from the south-west.
VP16	Footpath East of Loch Spey	NN 42847 94138	Located within Braeroy, Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh WLA. Representative of views from recreational routes within Upper Glen of the Spey.
VP17	Carn Dearg (Glen Roy)	NN 35029 96630	Corbett summit located within Braeroy, Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh WLA. Representative of elevated views from south-west in near distance.
VP18	Loch na Lairige	NN 55806 91384	Located within Cairngorms National Park and Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA. Representative of elevated views around Strath Mashie.
VP19	Carn na Caim	NN 67701 82147	Munro summit to east of A9 located in CNP and Cairngorms WLA. Representative of elevated views from CNP to the south-east.

Ref.	Location	OS Grid Reference	Reason for Selection
VP20	Urquhart Castle	NH 53103 28638	Important tourist site and Scheduled Monument located within Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA. Representative of low level views from western side of Loch Ness.

### Settlements and Routes

7.10.11 The visual assessment of settlements / residential areas and routes has been generally limited to those where the ZTV for the detailed study area (Figure 7.1.1) indicates potential for effect. However, the potential for views of site access, site compounds and laydown has also been considered.

7.10.12 The ZTV (Figure 7.1.1) indicates that the vast majority of established settlements and rural properties within the detailed study area would not receive any visibility of the Proposed Development. The following Residential Receptor Locations (RRLs) have been identified by the ZTV as receiving theoretical visibility and are included in the detailed assessment, as shown on Figure 7.6.2:

- RRL 1: Bunloit, Balbeg and Inchterrach House, a group of scattered residential properties set in an elevated position to the west of Loch Ness.
- RRL 2: Whitebridge, a small settlement cluster and surrounding scattered properties located in Strath Errick around the confluence of the River Fechlin and Allt Breineag.
- RRL 3: Foyers (upper), a small community formed of terraced traditional cottages set on the east side of Loch Ness, above the Falls of Foyers.
- RRL 4: Garvamore and Garvabeg, a few remote cottage and lodge properties set in the Upper Glen of the Spey.
- RRL 5: Killin and Garrogie Lodges, shooting lodges and associated development within River Fechlin glen.

7.10.13 Routes considered in the assessment include public roads and other public transport routes, Core Paths, routes included in the 'Scottish Hill Tracks' (Scotways, 2011) and other mapped and established, locally promoted walking routes, as shown on Figure 7.6.1. As for residential receptors, the ZTV (see Figure 7.1.1) shows the majority of routes as unlikely to receive views of the Proposed Development. Routes identified with the potential for effect and therefore included in the assessment are shown on Figure 7.6.2 and comprise:

- R1: the A82 trunk road;
- R2: the B852 (also part of National Cycle Route 78);
- R3: the B862 (also part of National Cycle Route 78);
- R4: the Great Glen Way, long distance walking and cycling route;
- R5: Scottish Hill Track 200;
- R6: Scottish Hill Track 231 (also Right of Way (RoW) HI106);
- R7: Scottish Hill Track 235 (also RoW HI109);
- R8: Scottish Hill Track 236 / 237;
- R9: South Loch Ness Trail; and

- R10: Monadhliath Trail.

7.10.14 Detailed descriptions of the baseline views from viewpoints, residential areas and routes included in the assessment are provided in Technical Appendix 7.7: Visual Assessment Tables.

## 7.11 Visual Assessment: Assessment of Effects

7.11.1 A detailed assessment of effects on views from VPs, RRLs and Routes is presented in Technical Appendix 7.7: Visual Assessment Tables which includes an analysis of the visual receptor sensitivity and magnitude of change resulting from the Proposed Development. Potential effects identified are summarised below with an emphasis on potential significant effects.

### Viewpoints

7.11.2 Of the 20 representative VPs selected for inclusion within the visual assessment (see Figure 7.5.1 or 7.5.2), the majority were identified as likely to have no significant effect to the view. Potential significant effects were identified to views from three VPs:

- VP7 – Carn a' Chuilinn;
- VP9 – Geal Charn (Monadhliath) (during construction only); and
- VP18 – Loch na Lairige.

### Effects Likely to be Significant

#### *VP7 – Carn a' Chuilinn*

7.11.3 This VP comprises a Corbett (mountain over 2500 ft) summit with elevated, panoramic 360° views of the surrounding glens and mountains. Expansive views across the Great Glen and Glen Garry are obtained to the west with Millennium, Beinneun and Bhlairidh Wind Farms forming a focus on the hills and to the south, the Braeroy mountains and Creag Meagaidh form a dramatic landscape. The Proposed Development would appear within the westerly panoramic view which features the undulating Monadhliath plateau with Stronelaig Wind Farm prominent but contained by the landform in the middle distance and Corriegarth Wind Farm seen more distantly to the north-east. The presence of these existing developments in this view is considered to reduce the sensitivity to further wind farm development. Sensitivity is therefore considered to be Low-Medium.

7.11.4 The eastern cluster of the Proposed Development would appear to the rear of Stronelaig turbines and would be largely imperceptible within this context. However, the western cluster would appear to the front of the Stronelaig turbines and would substantially increase the occupied field of view further to the south. These turbines would be noticeably closer, larger and more prominent than Stronelaig, resulting in wind turbines becoming the dominant focus of the westerly view. Construction activities, working areas and tracks would also be visible in some areas, as would the substation. These features may give a greater sense of the scale of the proposed turbines. Nevertheless, the easterly view forms only part of the view from this location. The more impressive southerly views would remain unaffected by wind turbines and the more expansive westerly views over the glens would not be affected by the Proposed Development.

7.11.5 A High magnitude of change to the view in the short term, and Medium – High magnitude of change in the longer term from this VP is considered to lead to a **Moderate – Major**

(significant) visual effect during construction, reducing to **Moderate** (significant), visual effect once construction is complete.

*VP9 – Geal Charn (Monadhliath)*

- 7.11.6 This VP comprises the summit of a Munro 2.7km to the south of the eastern cluster and is representative of views from the ridgeline which forms the western boundary of the CNP. The existing view is elevated and panoramic over the surrounding plateaux, mountains and glens. The Stronelairg Wind Farm is very prominent to the north-west with the closest turbine being 3.2km away. The prominence of Stronelairg in this part of the view is considered to reduce the sensitivity to further wind farm development. Sensitivity is therefore considered to be Low – Medium.
- 7.11.7 The visual effect of the Proposed Development in the view from this VP is considered to be significant during construction, but not significant during operation.
- 7.11.8 The Proposed Development would feature in the westerly and north-westerly view in combination with the turbines of Stronelairg. Western cluster turbines would appear in the close - middle distance to the west-north-west increasing the occupied field of view further to the south whilst eastern cluster turbines would appear in the foreground of the northerly view. Whilst these turbine groupings would increase the field of view occupied they would form a single cohesive grouping with those of Stronelairg. The magnitude of change to the view is considered to be Medium, but given the lower sensitivity brought about by Stronelairg would lead to a **Minor – Moderate** (not significant) visual effect during operation.
- 7.11.9 During construction however, due to the proximity of this VP the greater amount of activity and movement within the view is considered likely to increase the visual effect. This would include track construction, vehicle movements and turbine deliveries, materials storage, craneage and works at a nearby borrow pit. During the operational phase therefore, the magnitude of change to the view is anticipated to be Medium – High and the visual effect would therefore be **Moderate** (significant) during this period. However, this would be a temporary effect.

*VP18 – Loch na Lairige*

- 7.11.10 This VP is representative of views from higher ground areas above Strath Mashie. It offers elevated, 360° panoramic views of the surrounding hills with views over Loch Laggan and Strath Mashie, and up Glen Pattack forming a particular focus. A few blades and tips of the Stronelairg Wind Farm are present over the horizon of the hills to the north, as well as a few towers of the Beaully – Denny overhead line. Sensitivity of this view is considered Medium – High, because the proposed area of change is a slightly less important part of the view.
- 7.11.11 The western cluster of the Proposed Development would feature within a dip on the north-western skyline. The turbines would form a new focus of the view although they would not affect the more extensive views over Loch Laggan and up Glen Pattack, likely to be most valued from this location. The magnitude of change would be Medium, leading to a **Moderate** (significant) visual effect during construction and operation.

Effects Likely to be Not Significant*Minor – Moderate Effects*

- 7.11.12 A **Minor – Moderate** (not significant) effect is anticipated for seven of the twenty VPs during construction, and eight during operation (with the inclusion of Geal Charn as discussed in paragraph 7.11.8 above). These VPs comprise:
- VP3 – Meall Fuar-mhonaigh;
  - VP4 – Carn na Saobhaidhe;
  - VP8 – Carn Dearg (Monadhliath);
  - VP9 – Geal Charn (Monadhliath) (operational only);
  - VP11 – Carn Liath;
  - VP16 – Footpath East of Loch Spey;
  - VP15 – Beinn Teallach; and
  - VP17 – Carn Dearg (Glen Roy).
- 7.11.13 These mostly comprise a range of hill-top VPs where the Proposed Development would form a feature within near to far, mid-range views, seen in combination with existing Stronelairg Wind Farm turbines.
- 7.11.14 For these VPs, it is recognised that the Proposed Development would make a noticeable or fairly noticeable addition to the view, but when considered in relation to the Stronelairg Wind Farm which already forms a distracting feature within the part of the view affected, this is not considered to lead to a noticeable deterioration to the quality of the view from these VPs or the visual amenity of the visual receptors which they represent. The visual effect is therefore considered to be not significant.
- 7.11.15 The exceptions are VP9 and VP16 which lie closer to the Proposed Development. The effects of VP9 are discussed in paragraph 7.11.8 above. VP16 would comprise only three turbine blades seen over the skyline. These are considered likely to be noticeable, but not very prominent, and not out of place within the context where existing overhead transmission line towers are present. This effect is considered to be not significant.

*Minor Effects*

- 7.11.16 **Minor** effects have been identified for six of the twenty VPs as follows:
- VP1 – Beinn a' Mheadhoin (Glen Affric);
  - VP2 – Great Glen Way, Balbeg;
  - VP5 – Carn Dubh;
  - VP13 – Geal Charn (Ardverikie)
  - VP14 – A87, Loch Garry Viewpoint; and
  - VP19 – Carn na Caim.
- 7.11.17 These VPs comprise a range of higher and lower level VPs. From these VPs the Proposed Development would comprise either a new feature in the view which would be perceptible but small within the context, or a small additional feature where the turbines of Stronelairg and other existing developments are more prominent. This would lead to only a minimal reduction in the quality of the view experienced from these VPs and therefore the effect would be not significant.

*Negligible Effects*

- 7.11.18 The effect on the visual amenity of all other VPs not discussed is considered to be **Negligible** as the Proposed Development is not anticipated to lead to any perceptible reduction in the quality of the view obtained.

**Residential Receptor Locations (RRLs)**

- 7.11.19 Five RRLs were included in the visual assessment (see Figure 7.6.2), being residential properties or groups of properties where the potential for views of the Proposed Development was identified. No significant effects were identified for any of the RRLs.
- 7.11.20 A **Minor – Moderate** (not significant) effect was identified for one location: RRL4 – Garvamore and Garvabeg. Comprising a few remote cottage and lodge properties set in the Upper Glen of the Spey. A few western cluster turbines of the Proposed Development would appear over a low point in the skyline to the north-west within a context of existing transmission towers for the Beaully-Denny overhead line, a forest plantation and track. The turbines would appear relatively prominent where seen but this is not likely to be the main valued part of the view from any of these properties and existing features already lower visual sensitivity. As such, the effect is considered to be not significant.
- 7.11.21 A **Minor** (not significant) effect was identified for two locations: RRL1 – Bunloit, Balbeg and Inchterrach House; and RRL2 – Whitebridge. Some properties in both these groups, although at different distances from the Proposed Development, would obtain views of a few western cluster turbines through the gap of Glen Brein. A higher number of turbines may be seen more distantly from properties at RRL1. Receptors at RRL2 would potentially obtain views of only one or two turbines but at closer proximity. In both cases this would affect only a small part of the view from some properties and would generally be unlikely to be detrimental to the overall visual amenity. The effect is therefore considered not significant.
- 7.11.22 The effect on views from RRL3 – Foyers and RRL 5 – Killin and Garrogie Lodges would be **Negligible**, as the Proposed Development would be likely to be barely perceptible.

**Routes**

- 7.11.23 Ten routes within the detailed study area were identified as having the potential for views of the Proposed Development (See Figure 7.6). Of these, no significant effects to the visual amenity were identified during the operational phase of the Proposed Development. However, two routes which pass through the Proposed Development site were identified as likely to have a temporary significant effect to the view during the construction phase:
- R7 – Scottish Hill Track 235: Laggan to Whitebridge; and
  - R10 – Monadhliath Trail.

Effects Likely to be Significant*R7 – Scottish Hill Track 235: Laggan to Whitebridge*

- 7.11.24 This route, following a variety of tracks and unmarked routes across the plateau between Laggan and Loch Killin to Whitebridge, is also a Right of Way (HI109) and is recorded as a Heritage Path 'Glen Markie Track'. It passes through the eastern edge of Stronelairg Wind Farm and therefore existing wind turbines are prominent from elevated parts of the route, passing over the plateau. However, from other parts of the route no wind turbines

are visible, and there are elevated expansive views. The visual sensitivity is therefore considered to be Low – Medium.

- 7.11.25 This route passes through the Proposed Development eastern cluster between turbines C30 and C31. It is also likely that access track construction would interact with this route with pedestrians potentially re-routing onto proposed access tracks, where they provide an easier route. Construction works would be immediately adjacent to this part of the route and even with the presence of the existing wind farm, would be likely to be prominent and distracting in the view. This is anticipated to lead to a Medium magnitude of change and a temporary **Moderate** (significant) effect to the visual amenity of recreational users of this route.
- 7.11.26 During operation, in the longer term, without the additional distractions of construction works for the Proposed Development, the visual effect would reduce. Whilst there would be a noticeable increase in turbines which would be prominent in the view, given the effect of the existing wind turbines and the existing viewing expectations of those using this route, the visual effect is considered unlikely to be significant. Magnitude of change would be Low and the effect would be **Minor** (not significant).

#### *R10 – Monadhliath Trail*

- 7.11.27 This route comprises a longer distance mapped recreational route which uses existing tracks through Stronelaig Wind Farm. There are varying views obtained from the upland and lowland parts of this route but from around 15km of the route across the high plateau existing wind turbines are very prominent. This comprises a similar stretch which would be affected by the Proposed Development. The visual sensitivity is therefore considered to be Low.
- 7.11.28 Part of this route provides the main access for the Proposed Development and construction works and working areas would therefore be immediately adjacent and distracting for walkers or cyclists with the potential for them also to be physically disrupted. This is anticipated to lead to a High magnitude of change during construction and considered to result in a **Moderate** (significant) visual effect.
- 7.11.29 During operation, however, whilst the proposed turbines would appear prominent, they would affect areas where Stronelaig turbines are already prominent. Although the length of route where turbines are close by (within 500m) would be increased, given the viewing expectation of those using this route through an existing operational wind farm, this is considered unlikely to lead to a long term significant effect. Magnitude of change would therefore be Low, and the visual effect would be **Minor** (not significant).

#### Effects Likely to be Not Significant

##### *Minor – Moderate Effects*

- 7.11.30 A **Minor- Moderate** (not significant) effect was identified for users of one route during construction and operation: R8 – Scottish Hill Track 237: Laggan to Roybridge or Glenfintaig Lodge (Spean Bridge) by Leckroy. This is a low level walking route between Glen Spey and Glen Roy, using a minor private road between Laggan and Melgarve, then tracks and paths through the pass to Glen Roy. This route is also a Heritage Path ‘The Soft Road for the Hogs’ and converges with part of Scottish Hill Track 236 / Heritage Path ‘Corrieyairack Pass’ east of Melgarve. There would be no view from the majority of this route but from two short sections there would be views of small numbers of turbines and blades over the northern skyline. These would be a noticeable addition to the view from

these short sections but seen in a context of other features such as the Beaully – Denny overhead line and Melgarve substation. The contribution of the effect on these two short sections to the visual amenity value of the route as a whole is considered to be not significant.

#### *Minor Effects*

- 7.11.31 A **Minor** (not significant) effect during construction and operation was identified for two of the ten routes included in the assessment: R4 – The Great Glen Way; and R5 – Scottish Hill Track 200: Dalwhinnie to Feagour (Strath Mashie). A **Minor** (not significant) effect was also identified for R7 – Scottish Hill Track 235: Laggan to Whitebridge and R10 - Monadhliath Trail during the operational phase, as discussed in paragraphs 7.11.26 and 7.11.29.
- 7.11.32 Routes R4 and R5 are located at least 15km away from the Proposed Development and would have only infrequent potential visibility of the Proposed Development from elevated sections. From R4 – The Great Glen Way, the views are often restricted by trees and forestry. The Proposed Development would appear small and relatively distant, normally as blades or tips over the horizon, from only a very few locations and would reflect a pattern of existing visible wind development. From R5 - Scottish Hill Track 200, views would be obtained from only a very short part of the route and would be seen in a context of closer Beaully – Denny steel lattice towers. For both routes, the Proposed Development is considered likely to be perceptible within the view, but not distracting when considering the views more widely obtained from the full length of these routes. The effect on the visual amenity of those travelling along both routes is therefore considered to be not significant.

#### *Negligible Effects*

- 7.11.33 Visual effects on the view obtained from the five remaining tracks included in the detailed assessment are predicted to be **Negligible**. From these routes, the Proposed Development is anticipated to be barely perceptible or perceptible from only very short sections of the route which are unlikely to lead to any reduction in the visual amenity value of the route.

#### **Summary of Visual Effects**

- 7.11.34 A summary of the effects on visual receptors is outlined in Table 7.11.1.

**Table 7.11.1: Summary of Visual Effects**

LCT / LCA	Effect During Construction						Effect During Operation					
	Not Significant			Significant			Not Significant			Significant		
	Negligible	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Major	Major	Negligible	Minor	Minor - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Major	Major
Viewpoints	4	6	7	2	1	0	4	6	8	2	0	0
Residential Receptor Locations	2	2	1	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	0
Routes Receptors	5	2	1	2	0	0	5	4	1	0	0	0
<b>Total Effects</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## 7.12 Cumulative Visual Assessment

### Methodology

- 7.12.1 The methodology for the cumulative visual assessment is based on that described in SNH guidance (SNH, 2012). The assessment considers the potential for combined views of wind developments from receptors at selected viewpoints and on routes. Combined views of wind energy development are expressed as either ‘in combination’ (where turbines from different developments would be observable at the same time<sup>1</sup>) or ‘in succession’<sup>2</sup> (where an observer would be required to turn to experience multiple developments).
- 7.12.2 The assessment also considers the potential for sequential effects experienced from receptors on routes where different wind developments become visible whilst moving through the landscape. Sequential effects may be occasional, frequent or constant.
- 7.12.3 The cumulative visual assessment has involved four key stages:
- Identification and analysis of the baseline wind energy development scenario from receptors at each viewpoint/ route;
  - Evaluation of the cumulative visual sensitivity to change;
  - Evaluation of the potential magnitude of visual change to the baseline scenario resulting from the proposed development; and
  - Assessment of the potential cumulative visual effects arising from the introduction of the proposed development to the baseline scenario.

<sup>1</sup> Sites visible in combination with the Proposed Development refer to those that are visible within the observer’s arc of vision with the Proposed Development. That is, within a 90° field of view of the Proposed Development. Where sites may be on the edge of the 90° field of view (within 60-90°) these would be within the observer’s peripheral field of view and are marked accordingly.

<sup>2</sup> Sites visible in succession with the Proposed Development refer to those that are visible when the observer turns their head away from the Proposed Development and are therefore within a greater than 90° field of view.

Identification and Analysis of the Baseline Wind Energy Development Scenario

- 7.12.4 Analysis of the baseline involves an appreciation of the existing view within the context of the baseline wind development scenario, which assumes that all consented and proposed (application) wind developments, as detailed in Table 7.8.4, have been constructed.
- 7.12.5 The identification of the baseline cumulative visual context involves consideration of the scale, location and nature of the baseline wind developments within the view, the proportion of the view which is occupied by wind turbines and the potential importance of this part of the view to the viewer.

Evaluation of the Cumulative Visual Sensitivity to Change

- 7.12.6 The evaluation of sensitivity to change concerns the nature of the existing view in the context of the baseline wind development scenario, and the potential for further wind turbines to be accommodated within that view without significantly altering, obstructing or dominating the view. An evaluation of sensitivity to change has been attributed to each receptor based on a three-point scale detailed in Table 7.12.1.

**Table 7.12.1: Criteria for Cumulative Visual Sensitivity to Change**

<b>Cumulative Visual Sensitivity to Change</b>	
High	Where wind energy developments within the cumulative baseline scenario are well accommodated within a valued or well composed view and/or the proposed changed landscape forms an important part of the view.
Medium	Where wind energy developments within the cumulative baseline scenario are present but not prominent in the existing view, and/or the proposed changed landscape forms a less important part of the view.
Low	Where wind energy developments within the cumulative baseline scenario are prominent in an existing view and/or the changed landscape forms an unimportant part of the view.

Evaluation of the Cumulative Magnitude of Visual Change

- 7.12.7 Magnitude of change concerns the measurement of change which would occur as a result of the introduction of the Proposed Development into the baseline wind development scenario. This is identified based on the consideration of the potential nature, size, scale and location of the proposed change within the existing view, and in relation to the existing wind farms / turbines within the view. The evaluation of the magnitude of change is based on the criteria outlined in the main visual assessment methodology (see Table 7.9.2).

Assessment of Potential Cumulative Visual Effects

- 7.12.8 Assessment of potential cumulative effects is based on analysis of the relationship between the cumulative sensitivity to change and the magnitude of change and is made using a degree of professional judgement. It should be noted that the cumulative effect assessed is the result of the addition of the Proposed Development to the existing baseline scenario. Cumulative visual effects are assessed against the scale detailed in Table 7.12.2 below.

**Table 7.12.2: Criteria for Assessment of Cumulative Visual Effects**

Cumulative Visual Effect	Criteria
Major	The addition of the Proposed Development to views of the baseline cumulative scenario would result in a very noticeable increase in wind turbines to the extent whereby they would become a dominating or obstructive feature within the view.
Moderate	The addition of the Proposed Development to views of the baseline cumulative scenario would result in a noticeable increase in wind turbines to the extent whereby they would become prominent but would not dominate or obstruct the view.
Minor	The addition of the Proposed Development to views of the baseline cumulative scenario would result in a perceptible increase in wind turbines but would not increase the prominence of wind farms/turbines as a feature in the view.
Negligible	The addition of the Proposed Development to views of the baseline cumulative scenario would not result in any discernible increase in the appearance of wind turbines in the view.

**Cumulative Baseline Scenario**

7.12.9 The cumulative baseline scenario is described in section 7.8 of the cumulative landscape assessment. The cumulative visual assessment has considered VP and route receptor locations where potential for cumulative effects has been identified as follows:

Viewpoints

7.12.10 15 VPs within the wider study area have been identified for inclusion in the cumulative visual assessment. These have been selected through analysis of the cumulative ZTVs (see paragraph 7.8.15) and review of the outcome of the visual assessment. The assessment has been limited to those VPs where the cumulative ZTV indicates that the Proposed Development would have combined visibility with another cumulative baseline site. The cumulative visual assessment excludes those VPs where a Negligible effect has been identified during the visual assessment as described in paragraph 7.3.8.

7.12.11 The following VPs have been included:

- VP1 – Beinn a’ Mheadhoin (Glen Affric) (see Figure 7.9.1.1.1 – 7.9.1.1.2);
- VP2 – Great Glen Way, Balbeg (see Figure 7.9.2.1.1 – 7.9.2.1.2);
- VP3 – Meall Fuar-mhonaidh (see Figure 7.9.3.1.1 – 7.9.3.1.3);
- VP4 – Carn na Saobhaidhe (see Figure 7.9.4.1.1 – 7.9.4.1.2);
- VP5 – Carn Dubh (see Figure 7.9.5.1.1 – 7.9.5.1.3);
- VP7 – Carn a Chuilinn (see Figure 7.9.7.1.1 – 7.9.7.1.3);
- VP8 – Carn Dearg (Monadhliath) (see Figure 7.9.8.1.1 – 7.9.8.1.2);
- VP9 – Geal Charn (Monadhliath) (see Figure 7.9.9.1.1 – 7.9.9.1.2);
- VP11 – Carn Liath (Laggan) (see Figure 7.9.11.1.1 – 7.9.11.1.2);
- VP13 – Geal Charn (Arkverikie) (see Figure 7.9.13.1.1);
- VP15 – Beinn Teallach (see Figure 7.9.15.1.1 – 7.9.15.1.2);
- VP16 – Footpath East of Loch Spey (see Figure 7.9.16.1);

- VP17 – Carn Dearg (Glen Roy) (see Figure 7.9.17.1.1 – 7.9.17.1.2);
- VP18 – Loch na Lairige (see Figure 7.9.18.1.1);
- VP19 – Carn na Caim (see Figure 7.9.19.1).

#### Routes

- 7.12.12 Five routes within the wider study area where there is potential for views of the Proposed Development and at least one other wind development have been identified and assessed for sequential cumulative effects. As for VPs, only those routes identified as having a minor effect or greater in the main visual assessment have been included in the cumulative assessment.
- 7.12.13 The following routes have been included:
- R4 – The Great Glen Way;
  - R5 – Scottish Hill Track 200: Dalwhinnie to Feagour (Strath Mashie);
  - R7 – Scottish Hill Track 235: Laggan to Whitebridge;
  - R8 – Scottish Hill Track 237: Laggan to Roybridge or Glenfintaig Lodge (Spean Bridge) by Leckroy; and
  - R10 – Monadhliath Trail.
- 7.12.14 The baseline view containing the cumulative baseline scenario sites is described for each VP and route in Technical Appendix 7.8: Cumulative Visual Assessment Tables.

#### **Cumulative Visual Effects Evaluation**

- 7.12.15 The detailed cumulative assessment of VPs and routes is presented in Technical Appendix 7.8: Cumulative Visual Assessment Tables. The following section provides a summary of the results and key issues highlighted by the assessment, focussing on potential significant effects.

#### Viewpoints

- 7.12.16 When considered in relation to the cumulative baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development is anticipated to result in a significant cumulative visual effect from one VP: VP7 – Carn a' Chuilinn. The cumulative visual effect would be not significant for all other VPs.

#### *VP7 – Carn a' Chuilinn*

- 7.12.17 Under the cumulative baseline scenario, wind turbines would be a prominent feature of the view from this VP. The Proposed Development would feature within the easterly view where Dell and Glenshero would add to the existing Stronelairg Wind Farm, increasing the field of view of wind turbines to north and south within the middle distance. The prominence of this existing development within the view to be changed results in a low cumulative sensitivity of change to the view.
- 7.12.18 The eastern cluster of the Proposed Development would appear beyond this existing group of turbines with little additional cumulative effect. The western cluster would appear in the foreground and would move wind turbine development closer to the VP. Although in a part of the view already occupied by the turbines of Glenshero it would increase the prominence of wind turbines in this area due to the proximity of turbines as Glenshero is often limited to just tips, set further back in the view. This is considered to lead to a medium magnitude of change and a **Moderate** (significant) cumulative effect.

*Minor – Moderate Effects*

- 7.12.19 A **Minor – Moderate** (not significant) cumulative visual effect has been identified for three VPs: VP8 – Carn Dearg (Monadhliath); VP9 – Geal Charn (Monadhliath); and VP11 – Carn Liath. From VP8, Carn Dearg (Monadhliath) and VP11 – Carn Liath, the Proposed Development would lead to a perceptible increase in wind turbines within the view which would slightly increase the prominence of wind turbines as a feature within the view but not to an extent that is considered significant. From VP9 – Geal Charn, western and eastern cluster turbines would add to the numbers of turbines within the view, increasing the sense of depth of wind turbines in the middle distance and adding to the occupied field of view to the north. However, as existing turbines are so prominent from this location, this would not be significant.

*Minor Effects*

- 7.12.20 The majority of VPs considered in the cumulative visual assessment are anticipated to have **Minor** (not significant) cumulative effects to views. This comprises nine of the fifteen VPs included in the CLVIA.
- 7.12.21 In views from VP2 – Great Glen Way, Balbeg, VP3 – Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, VP13 – Geal Charn (Ardverikie), VP15 – Beinn Teallach and VP19 – Carn na Caim, which are all beyond 15km from the Proposed Development, the Proposed Development would be relatively small and distant. The increased number of turbines would be perceptible from these VPs but would not increase the prominence of wind turbines as a feature in the view as the Proposed Development would appear in combination with, and similar to, turbines of the cumulative baseline sites, in particular Stronelairg, Dell and Glenshero. The cumulative effect would therefore be not significant.
- 7.12.22 In views from VP4 – Carn na Saobhaidhe, VP5 – Carn Dubh, VP17, Carn Dearg (Glen Roy) and VP18 – Loch na Lairige, within 15km, the Proposed Development turbines would appear closer, but would lead to only a perceptible increase in turbines within the view due to the prominence of the existing baseline sites of Stronelairg, Dell and Glenshero in these views. Therefore, the prominence of wind turbines as a feature within these views would not be increased and the effect would be not significant.

*Negligible Effects*

- 7.12.23 The cumulative effect on views from VP1 and VP16 would be **Negligible**, as it is considered that the increased numbers of wind turbines within the view would be barely perceptible.

Routes

- 7.12.24 The cumulative assessment of views from routes has considered the potential for increased prominence of wind turbines in combined views and sequentially when travelling along the route. The addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative baseline scenario is not anticipated to lead to any significant cumulative effects.

*Minor Effects*

- 7.12.25 A **Minor** (not significant) cumulative visual effect is anticipated for routes R4 – The Great Glen Way, R7 – Scottish Hill Track 235: Laggan to Whitebridge, and R10 – Monadhliath Trail.

- 7.12.26 From Route R4, the Proposed Development would be distant with only infrequent potential visibility. It would only affect parts of the route where the turbines of Dell Wind Farm would already be visible in the same part of the view, and in many cases Stronelaig. The increased number of turbines in this part of the view may occasionally be perceptible, but this would not make wind turbines a more prominent feature of the view, particularly given the very limited sections of the route affected. Therefore, the effect would be not significant.
- 7.12.27 From Routes R7 and R10, both of which pass through the existing Stronelaig site and the Proposed Development site and close to both Dell and Glenshero, the Proposed Development would lead to an increased number of turbines which would be prominent in the view. However, given the prominence of the turbines of the cumulative baseline sites which already affect the same sections of the routes, this effect is not considered to be significant.

#### *Negligible Effects*

- 7.12.28 The cumulative visual effect to views from Routes R5 – Scottish Hill Track 200: Dalwhinnie to Feagour (Strath Mashie) and R8 – Scottish Hill Track 237: Laggan to Roybridge or Glenfintaig Lodge (Spean Bridge) by Leckroy are anticipated to be **Negligible** due to the likely greater prominence of Glenshero Wind Farm when seen from these routes. Turbines of the Proposed Development would be seen to the rear of those of Glenshero and likely to be indistinguishable from them.

#### Summary of Cumulative Visual Effects

- 7.12.29 Table 7.12.3 provides a summary of predicted cumulative visual effects on those VPs and Routes included in the CLVIA.

**Table 7.12.3: Summary of Cumulative Visual Effects**

Visual Receptor Locations included in the CLVIA	Potential Effect (Not Significant)			Potential Effect (Significant)		
	Negligible	Minor	Minor - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Major	Major
<b>Viewpoints</b>						
VP1 – Beinn a' Mheadhoin (Glen Affric)	x					
VP2 – Great Glen Way, Balbeg (see		x				
VP3 – Meall Fuar-mhonaidh		x				
VP4 – Carn na Saobhaidhe		x				
VP5 – Carn Dubh		x				
VP7 – Carn a Chuilinn				x		
VP8 – Carn Dearg (Monadhliath)			x			
VP9 – Geal Charn (Monadhliath)			x			
VP11 – Carn Liath			x			
VP13 – Geal Charn (Arkverikie)		x				

Visual Receptor Locations included in the CLVIA	Potential Effect (Not Significant)			Potential Effect (Significant)		
	Negligible	Minor	Minor - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Major	Major
VP15 – Beinn Teallach		x				
VP16 – Footpath East of Loch Spey	x					
VP17 – Carn Dearg (Glen Roy)		x				
VP18 – Loch na Lairige		x				
VP19 – Carn na Caim		x				
<b>Routes</b>						
R4 – The Great Glen Way		x				
R5 – Scottish Hill Track 200	x					
R7 – Scottish Hill Track 235		x				
R8 – Scottish Hill Track 237	x					
R10 – Monadhliath Trail		x				

### 7.13 Mitigation

- 7.13.1 Mitigation for landscape and visual effect has been undertaken through design development and selection of a preferred layout. This process is described in further detail in Chapter 2: Site Selection and Design Evolution and the Design Statement (Technical Appendix 2.1). Potential for landscape effects and effects on sensitive views has been central to the initial site selection and iteration of layouts. Site layout options were reviewed repeatedly from a range of key VPs in order to avoid effects from the most sensitive viewpoints (e.g. Urquhart Castle), minimise significant effects from other VPs as far as possible and maintain a balanced layout which avoids the appearance of turbines which are inconsistent in elevation or visual spread. This involved the removal and adjustment of a number of turbines. The final layout presented is considered to be the optimum layout in minimising landscape and visual effects, whilst balancing effects on other areas of environmental constraint and achieving the required technical performance.
- 7.13.2 The successful landscape reinstatement of areas disturbed during the construction of the Proposed Development including compounds, working areas and borrow pits is important in minimising the degree of landscape effect. The formation of smooth gradients to tie into adjacent undisturbed areas and the use of Best Practice techniques for the handling and reinstatement of soil and peat as outlined in the Draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (Technical Appendix 3.1) would assist in the successful reinstatement of disturbed areas and minimise landscape and visual effects to those resulting from the permanent features of the Proposed Development.

## 7.14 Summary and Conclusions

### Summary of Landscape Effects

- 7.14.1 The vast majority of effects to landscape character, landscape designations and other protected landscapes resulting from the Proposed Development would not be significant. This is largely due to the proximity of the Proposed Development to Stronelairg Wind Farm which provides a precedent in most areas for the types of effects which would be experienced. Significant effects would be limited to very localised effects on two landscape areas:
- Rolling Uplands – Inverness LCT; and
  - Monadhliath: South Monadhliath LCA.
- 7.14.2 These effects would occur within the hills and plateaux of the Monadhliath, largely within 2km of the Proposed Development and not more than 8km away, generally affecting small, discrete parts of the landscape.
- 7.14.3 Significant effects during construction would relate to temporary disturbance, and activity within a localised area from construction activities including use of access tracks, compound areas and borrow pits, construction of turbines and appearance of these features within the wider landscape. During operation, 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.
- 7.14.4 These significant effects would lead to a very localised significant effect on the WLA 20. Monadhliath but no significant effect is anticipated to WLA 19. Braeroy – Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh.
- 7.14.5 Whilst some of these localised significant effects may affect the landscape character of a small area within the CNP, it is not considered that this would contribute to a significant effect on any CNP Special Landscape Qualities or that the integrity of the CNP would be affected.

### Cumulative Landscape Effects

- 7.14.6 No significant cumulative landscape effects have been identified when considering the addition of the Proposed Development to the baseline cumulative scenario of existing and proposed wind farm sites. This is largely related to the position of the Proposed Development adjacent to the operational site of Stronelairg, the consented site of Dell and the application site of Glenshero leading often to the appearance of a cohesive cluster of baseline development which would strongly define the character of the landscape in which it would be located. In adjacent landscapes where the more notable landscape effects of the Proposed Development alone would be experienced, the effect of the cumulative baseline scenario would be such that the addition of the Proposed Development would be unlikely to increase the prominence of wind turbines as a feature of the landscape.

### Summary of Visual Effects

- 7.14.7 The majority of visual effects anticipated to result from the Proposed Development are expected to be not significant, including VPs, RRLs and Routes. This is generally due to the proximity of the Proposed Development to Stronelaig Wind Farm which leads to an existing similar appearance of wind turbines in most views. This often reduces the sensitivity of the part of the view affected and also reduces the perceptibility of changes resulting from the Proposed Development.
- 7.14.8 Significant effects would be limited to changes in the views from three representative VPs and two routes:
- VP7 – Carn a’ Chuilinn;
  - VP9 – Geal Charn;
  - VP18 – Loch na Lairige;
  - R7 – Scottish Hill Track 235: Laggan to Whitebridge; and
  - R10 – Monadhliath Trail.
- 7.14.9 However, the majority of these effects would occur during the construction phase only with longer term significant effects anticipated to only two representative VPs:
- VP7 – Carn a’ Chuilinn; and
  - VP18 – Loch na Lairige.
- 7.14.10 The VPs and routes where significant effects are anticipated to occur generally (excluding VP18) comprise those located within elevated locations close to the Proposed Development site (within 5km) and in the case of the two routes, passing through the Proposed Development site. However, only one of these VPs: VP7 – Carn a’ Chuilinn which is located to the west of the Proposed Development, would have a longer term significant effect. This is due to the larger number of turbines sited within the western cluster, which would reduce the proximity of wind turbine development within the view and lead to this forming a more prominent feature of the view. VPs at a similar distance to the north have been identified as likely to have visual effects that would be not significant because construction activities are unlikely to be visible from these locations and the effect of the Proposed Development on these views is less compared to the existing effect of Stronelaig.
- 7.14.11 The exception to this is an anticipated significant longer term effect to VP18 – Loch na Lairige which is representative of views from elevated areas around Strath Mashie, around 11km from the Proposed Development. Whilst this VP is located further from the Proposed Development, the prominence of wind turbines within the view would be increased. This is due to the much reduced prominence of the Stronelaig Wind Farm within areas to the south-east. However, whilst this VP is representative of similar high ground areas around Strath Mashie, these hills are lower and somewhat less frequented by recreational users than those represented by VP7. The visual effect would therefore not often be experienced.
- 7.14.12 The visual assessment has demonstrated that there would be very few potential views from residential areas, including no views from the main populated areas. Of the few residential areas where views are theoretically obtained, no significant visual effects would occur.
- 7.14.13 Long term significant visual effects are therefore anticipated to be limited to those experienced by recreational users in the hills around the Proposed Development western

cluster of which VP7 is representative, and to a lesser extent within some small areas of high ground around Strath Mashie, of which VP18 is representative.

#### Cumulative Visual Effects

- 7.14.14 The CLVIA has identified that the addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative baseline scenario of existing and proposed wind farm development would result in a significant cumulative effect to one VP: VP7, Carn a' Chuilinn. All other cumulative effects to VPs, Routes and Residential Receptor Locations would be not significant. This is due to the location of the Proposed Development adjacent to the existing Stronelairg Wind Farm, consented Dell Wind Farm and application site of Glenshero. In almost all views, the effect of these baseline sites would be such that the addition of the Proposed Development would not form a noticeable addition to the view, or increase prominence of wind turbines in the view. Where the addition of the Proposed Development may be noticeable, the prominence of the baseline sites would be such that this would not lead to any noticeable deterioration in the value of the view.
- 7.14.15 The one exception would be VP7 – Carn a' Chuilinn, located less than 5km to the west of the Proposed Development where the Proposed Development would be closer and more prominent than the baseline developments, leading to an increased prominence of wind turbines within the easterly view.

#### **Conclusions**

- 7.14.16 The vast majority of landscape, visual and cumulative effects of the Proposed Development would be not significant. Significant effects would be limited to an area within close proximity of the Proposed Development, affecting relatively discrete parts of the landscape within 8km and only occasional views obtained by recreational users of the landscape, on the hills around the western cluster of the Proposed Development and Strath Mashie. This may lead to very localised significant effects to wild land characteristics within the Monadhliath WLA (WLA 20), but there would be no significant effect to the Braeroy – Glen Shirra – Creag Meagaidh WLA (WLA 19).
- 7.14.17 There would be no significant effects to any designated landscapes and the integrity of these areas would not be affected. Although there may be localised significant landscape and visual effects close to the western boundary of the Cairngorms National Park, there would be no significant effects to any of its Special Landscape Qualities and the effect on the National Park as a whole is considered to be not significant.
- 7.14.18 There would be no significant visual effect to any residential areas and no significant effect to any visual receptors or landscapes within the Great Glen.

## 7.15 References

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