

TECHNICAL APPENDIX 7.6: WILD LAND AREA ASSESSMENT – WILD LAND AREA 37: FOINAVEN – BEN HEE

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 NatureScot (previously Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)) Policy Statement No 02/03 ‘Wildness in Scotland’s Countryside’ (Policy Statement 02/03)) recognises the concept of wild land or wildness as land that is sensitive to any form of development and provides psychological benefit to those seeking more challenging forms of outdoor recreation. It notes that this type of land is scarce in national terms and has declined in extent over the past few decades. It aims to safeguard the character of these landscapes and protect them from inappropriate development or land use change.
- 1.1.2 Within the context of this policy, NatureScot have identified 42 Wild Land Areas (WLAs) considered to represent the most significant areas of wild land character in Scotland. These areas are considered as being of national importance.
- 1.1.3 WLAs do not constitute designated landscapes but are recognised within the Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). The SPP identifies WLAs as a Group 2 constraint (Areas of Significant Protection), for inclusion in Spatial Frameworks for Onshore Wind Farms¹. Such areas are recognised as requiring significant protection from onshore wind farm development, although wind farms may be appropriate in some circumstances. The SPP states that further consideration is required to demonstrate that any significant effects can be substantially overcome by siting, design or other mitigation.
- 1.1.4 This assessment considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on WLA 37: Foinaven – Ben Hee. The purpose of the assessment is to analyse the strength of the wild land attributes which contribute to the values of this WLA, the degree to which the Proposed Development may affect these attributes and the resultant effect on the WLA Key Qualities and the WLA overall. The assessment has been undertaken by Chartered Landscape Architects, ASH design + assessment Ltd (ASH) and is supplementary to the Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVIA) (Chapter 7 of the EIAR Volume 2).

1.2 Wild Land Background

- 1.2.1 Annex 1 of Policy Statement 02/03 identifies five physical attributes which contribute to the experience of wildness and identification of wild land:
- 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.
- 1.2.2 In addition, four perceptual responses are identified as being evoked by those experiencing wild land:
- A sense of sanctuary or solitude;

¹ Scottish Government, Scottish Planning Policy, (2014), Table 1: Group 2 (Areas of significant protection).

- 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.

1.2.3 Explanation of the physical attributes and perceptual responses are provided by NatureScot² as detailed in Table 1.2.1:

Table 1.2.1: Explanation of Physical Attributes and Perceptual Responses

Physical Attribute	Explanation
Perceived naturalness	Within WLAs vegetation cover is primarily composed of natural or semi-natural habitats (which may not be, ecologically, in the best condition). Catchment systems and other geomorphological processes are largely unmodified. The term 'perceived naturalness' reflects that some may consider the vegetation cover to be more 'natural and unmanaged' than they are in fact (for example, managed heather moorland).
Lack of construction or other artefacts	There is no or very limited evidence of contemporary buildings, structures or engineering works within WLAs although their presence outwith may be discerned. Older artefacts (for example, shielings and cleared settlements) and small scale features (for example, fences and stalkers paths) may be evident.
Evidence of contemporary land uses	Within WLAs no or very limited evidence of more intensive land use, but their presence outwith may be discerned. Extensive grazing and management for field sports may be evident (for example, muirburn, grazing pressure and use of ATVs).
Rugged or challenging terrain	Within WLAs, land that has extensive rough terrain or extensive boglands, which is difficult to traverse.
Remoteness and inaccessibility	Within WLAs, land that is distant from public motorised access (the nearest public road, ferry landing or railway station), taking account of the distance, barriers to travel (for example, lochs, rivers and cliffs), and ease of travel on foot / bicycle.
Perceptual Response	Explanation
Sense of sanctuary or solitude	The perception of separation from the 'modern world', isolation or distance from disturbance, that engenders feelings of respite or tranquillity, that enables a focus on the natural / semi-natural setting.
Risk, a sense of awe or anxiety	The perception of hazard that arises from being self-reliant in remote settings of large scale, whose rugged natural character and isolation from assistance (if required) engenders respect.
Arresting or inspiring qualities	An aesthetic reaction to the natural / semi-natural setting, often associated with the 'classic' high, steep and jagged mountains juxtaposed with deep lochs or seas, but can also be prompted by other superlative compositions such as the large scale simplicity of rounded massif, or the seemingly infinite expanse of open peatland or seas.

² Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas: Technical Guidance, Annex 1 (NatureScot, 2020)

Physical Attribute	Explanation
Fulfilment from Physical Challenge	The satisfaction and sense of accomplishment that arises from the physical effort required to traverse these settings, tackling their scale, topography, ground and weather conditions.

NatureScot's Mapping Scotland's Wildness and Wild Land Project

1.2.4 In 2014, NatureScot (then SNH) completed a two phase mapping project to identify areas where the highest degree of wildness is experienced in Scotland and which could be classed as wild land. The two phases to the project comprised:

- Phase 1: Desk- based mapping exercises leading to the production of a Map of Relative Wildness for Scotland; and
- Phase 2: Identification of WLAs where the highest degree of wildness was found to be experienced.

Map of Relative Wildness

1.2.5 The Map of Relative Wildness attempts to indicate relative wildness throughout Scotland and shows the degree of wildness considered to be present on a continuum from Low through to High at a 25 m resolution. This has been compiled through the combined mapping of four individual attributes giving equal weighting to each as follows:

- Perceived naturalness;
- Rugged or challenging terrain;
- Remoteness from public mechanised access; and
- Lack of built modern artefacts.

1.2.6 The Map of Relative Wildness and associated Attribute Mapping have been developed as a desk exercise using GIS software to interrogate and classify a number of datasets leading to an impression of the intensity of each of the physical attributes across Scotland. Whilst this is considered to give a good general impression of the strength of each of the attributes and the potential for the overall degree of wildness in a particular area, there are a number of limitations with this process:

- The analysis is limited to information included in the digital datasets analysed and features which are not mapped have therefore not been considered;
- Digital datasets can only depict a particular situation at one point in time and any changes taken place since the production of the dataset can therefore not be considered. Therefore, the analysis of 'Absence of Modern Artefacts' considered only wind farms built and mapped at that time. Those consented at the time of production were considered only as footprints and those built or consented since the production of the mapping in 2014 are not considered at all (changes which have occurred to the baseline since 2014 are discussed in paragraphs 3.2.4 to 3.2.9); and
- The perceptual qualities of wild land which lead to its appreciation cannot be accurately mapped by the analysis of physical attributes. Policy Statement 02/03 states, "*The appreciation of wildness is a matter of an individual's experience, and their perceptions and preferences for landscapes of this kind. Wildness cannot be captured and measured, but it can be experienced and interpreted by people in*

many different ways.”³ Therefore, the strong presence of the physical attributes can only suggest that the perceptual attributes would be likely to be present. Confirmation of the degree in which the perceptual attributes are present can only be made by site visit and objective analysis. Policy Statement 02/03 states that “to identify wild land... all of the perceptual attributes should be identifiable to some degree.”⁴

Wild Land Areas

- 1.2.7 NatureScot have identified and mapped 42 WLAs throughout Scotland. These WLAs represent the areas considered to have the highest degree and extent of wild land, meriting safeguarding in the National interest.
- 1.2.8 The identification of WLAs involved a review of the Map of Relative Wildness using the Jenks Natural Breaks Optimisation method which divides the data into distinct classes by seeking to reduce the variance within each class and maximise the variance between them. A ‘Jenks 8’ classification (8 classes) was chosen for analysis of the Map of Relative Wildness data. Review of the Jenks 8 classification informed selection of areas for consideration as WLAs, requiring a sufficient area of contiguous coverage of Jenks 8 Classes 7 and 8, surrounded by a broader expanse of Jenks 8 Classes 5 and 6.
- 1.2.9 Identification of the defined WLAs was informed by the following guidelines:
- The areas identified contain around 650 ha+ of Jenks 8 Classes 8 and 7. Areas of wild land will consist of these Classes, with the inclusion of Class 6 and Class 5 where these are part of and contribute to the wild land block as a whole, reflecting that wildness strengthens as you move into or across an area.
 - Account is taken of changes since the baseline data underpinning the Map of Relative Wildness was undertaken, in particular the approval and / or construction of significant developments such as wind farms.
 - Areas can encompass features detracting from wildness (such as isolated estate buildings), but their effect should be localised with relatively limited impact on the wider sense of wildness that can be experienced across the wild land area.
 - Limited areas of lower Jenks Classes may be included within a wild land area where they occur as an isolated feature, interrupt simple boundaries, or fragment otherwise contiguous blocks of wild land (examples include transmission lines and railway lines).
- 1.2.10 NatureScot have produced a suite of WLA Descriptions and identified Key Qualities for each of the 42 WLAs.

2. Methodology

2.1 Guidance

- 2.1.1 The assessment of effects on the WLA has been based on NatureScot 2020 Guidance ‘Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas: Technical Guidance’ (the NatureScot Guidance) supported by a desk based analysis of the Proposed Development in relation to the Map

³ NatureScot, Wildness in Scotland’s Countryside: Policy Statement 02/03, (2002), paragraph 3.

⁴ SNH, Policy Statement 02/03, Annex, paragraph 9.

of Relative Wildness and associated attribute mapping. Appraisal of the baseline wild land situation and the contribution of individual wild land attributes to the wild land Key Qualities has been undertaken using a methodology and criteria adapted from the 2007 NatureScot (then SNH) Guidance Note⁵ (the 2007 Guidance). Consideration has also been given to the methods for landscape assessment outlined in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual assessment (Third Edition) GLVIA3⁶

2.2 Structure

2.2.1 The NatureScot Guidance advocates a five step approach to the assessment of effects on the WLA broadly in line with GLVIA3:

- Step 1: Define the study area and the scope of the assessment;
- Step 2: Verify the WLA Baseline;
- Step 3: Assess the sensitivity of the WLA qualities;
- Step 4: Assess the magnitude of the effects; and
- Step 5: Judge the significance of the effects.

Step 1: Define the Study Area and Scope of the Assessment

2.2.2 The NatureScot Guidance notes that the study area for the WLA assessment should reflect the extent of the likely significant effects on the WLA, including any cumulative effects. The Foinaven – Ben Hee WLA is very extensive, stretching to the north almost 15 km beyond the 40 km LVIA study area. Whilst it is viewed as appropriate to consider the effects within the context of the whole of the WLA area, the assessment focusses on the area where intervisibility with the Proposed Development would largely be obtained, within 30 km of the Proposed Development.

2.2.3 The WLA assessment considers the effects of the Proposed Development on:

- The physical and perceptual attributes of the wild land;
- The key qualities of the WLA; and
- The contribution of the effects on the overall integrity of the WLA.

Step 2: Establish the Baseline

2.2.4 Establishment of the baseline involves confirmation of the existing wild land qualities of the study area and their contribution to the WLA. This has involved consideration of the degree to which the physical and perceptual attributes of wild land and the identified WLA Key Qualities vary across the WLA and has been established using a combination of desk-based study and site survey. Appraisal of the baseline has considered changes which have occurred directly and indirectly since the 2014 mapping exercises have taken place and WLA descriptions have been produced and anticipated changes to the baseline in the form of consented development.

⁵ NatureScot, Assessing the Impacts on Wild Land, Interim Guidance Note, (2007).

⁶ Landscape Institute & Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, (Routledge, 2013).

Desk Studies

2.2.5 Desk study has involved review and consideration of the following documents and resources:

- The Map of Relative Wildness and associated attribute mapping from the Mapping Scotland's Wildness project;
- The 'Non-Technical Description of the Methodology'⁷ for the Mapping Scotland's Wildness project;
- NatureScot (then SNH) Advice to Government⁸;
- NatureScot (then SNH) Description of WLA 37: Foinaven – Ben Hee; and
- ZTVs for the consented Creag Riabhach Wind Farm which was not taken into account in the original mapping exercise.

Site Survey

2.2.6 Site survey has been undertaken to verify the findings of the desk-based studies. To obtain a baseline understanding of the site, visits were undertaken by two teams of Chartered Landscape Professionals from ASH, on 27th and 28th October 2020. Locations within the WLA were visited and evaluated using a standardised form. Site appraisal considered the strength of the physical and perceptual attributes at each location visited and the degree to which the identified WLA Key Qualities were found to be present.

Criteria for the Evaluation of Physical Attributes and Perceptual Responses

2.2.7 The criteria outlined within the 2007 Guidance were used as a basis for identifying the strength of physical attributes, as detailed in Table 2.2.1.

Table 2.2.1: Physical Attributes – Strength of Attribute

Physical Attribute	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Perceived naturalness	Area perceived as generally natural	Majority of area perceived as generally natural.	Some of area perceived as generally natural.	Area is not perceived as generally natural.
Lack of construction or other artefacts	No or minimal perceptible evidence of artefacts	Some artefacts visible but are not prominent.	Some artefacts visible and are prominent.	Several artefacts clearly visible and are prominent.
Evidence of contemporary land uses	Contemporary land use not apparent	Some contemporary land use apparent though not significantly detracting.	Some contemporary land use apparent and locally detracting.	Contemporary land use apparent and detracting.

⁷ SNH, SNH's Mapping of Scotland's Wildness and Wild Land: Non-technical Description of the Methodology, (June 2014).

⁸ SNH, Core Areas of Wild Land 2013 Map: Scottish Natural Heritage's Advice to Government, (June 2014)

Physical Attribute	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Rugged or challenging terrain	Rough, tough terrain. Steep ground requiring an appreciable level of fitness to traverse and sturdy footwear. Navigation across this terrain requires high degree of skill.	Appreciable skill in navigation required including in poor visibility, requiring a degree of accuracy. Rough terrain with some steep ground and requiring a degree of fitness and sturdy footwear.	Some rough areas but terrain easy to cross. Only slightly strenuous. Navigation reasonably straight forward with landforms or tracks providing relatively easier to cross terrain.	Easily traversed terrain requiring no navigation skill.
Remoteness and inaccessibility	No roads, tracks or paths. Not key routes available for crossing area.	Some route availability through landform, but no roads, tracks or paths in area.	Few tracks or paths available to traverse area but wider area still relatively inaccessible.	Close to public roads with easily accessed network of paths or tracks.

2.2.8 Policy Statement 02/03 required all of the perceptual responses to be present in order to identify true wild land. The 2007 Guidance therefore advocates a method whereby perceptual responses are identified as being either 'present' or 'not present'. However, in order to more accurately reflect the strength of these responses and their influence on the degree of wildness, where these have been identified as being 'present', this has been broken down into three separate categories as detailed in Table 2.2.2:

Table 2.2.2: Perceptual Responses – Strength of Response

Perceptual Response	High	Medium	Low	Not Present
Sense of sanctuary or solitude	Landscape experience provides intense perceptions of sanctuary or solitude and impression of being a long way from developed areas.	Perception of sanctuary or solitude likely to be obtained from most areas but some localised influence of human activity from neighbouring areas.	Perception of sanctuary or solitude may be obtained in some localised pockets but generally not present.	Landscape experience provides very little if any sense of sanctuary or solitude.
Risk, a sense of awe or anxiety	Landscape perceived as having a high degree of potential risk with a level of skill required to maintain safety.	Landscape perceived as having a degree of potential risk in some areas. There may be some cliffs or steep drops in	Generally likely to be only a small degree of perceived risk limited to steep slopes, rugged terrain or bog in some areas	No or very little degree of perceived risk.

Perceptual Response	High	Medium	Low	Not Present
	Steep cliffs, drops and very rugged terrain are likely to be dominant and risk may be intensified by extreme weather, ice or snow.	some areas or expanses of difficult bog but this is unlikely to be the dominant terrain.	which can be easily avoided.	
Arresting or inspiring qualities	Landscape experience arouses intense arresting or inspiring impressions. Landscape perceived as being highly dramatic and very extensive with a high degree of 'naturalness'.	Landscape experience arouses inspiring or arresting impressions in some areas. Landscape likely to exhibit dramatic or extensive views from some areas with large areas of perceived naturalness.	Landscape generally perceived as having limited arresting or inspiring qualities but some impressive or attractive views may be obtained from some parts.	Landscape perceived as having very little or no arresting or inspiring qualities.
Fulfilment from Physical Challenge	Terrain appears complex, rugged or very boggy and difficult to navigate without high degree of skill, or a substantial walk from public roads or paths, leading to a high degree of exertion and physical challenge.	Terrain appears fairly rugged with some steep areas, rock outcrops and summits or bogs requiring a level of skill to navigate leading to a moderate degree of exertion and physical challenge.	Some physical challenge required to access land although terrain is relatively unchallenging with tracks and paths present and only a few steep slopes, boggy areas or areas of rough topography which are easy to avoid.	Little or no physical challenge required to access area.

2.2.9 In order to obtain a robust picture of the strength of the various physical attributes and perceptual responses throughout the WLA, an analysis has been undertaken using the above criteria from a range of locations. Both the locations visited and the journeys undertaken to reach the named locations have been considered in arriving at the conclusions made.

2.2.10 Using the information obtained through analysis at each of the locations, a review has then been undertaken for each of the physical attributes and perceptual responses across the WLA as a whole.

Strength of Wildness

- 2.2.11 Based on the strength identified for each of the above criteria an evaluation of strength of wildness has been applied ranging from Low to High as detailed in Table 2.2.3. The individual evaluations at each location have been considered in combination with the information obtained from the desk-based exercises to provide an evaluation of the baseline strength of wildness across the WLA as a whole.

Table 2.2.3: Strength of Wildness Ratings

Rating	Description
High	The area has an overriding sense of wildness. It is large scale and remote with little evidence of human influence on the landscape and strong impressions of isolation. It is likely to be difficult to access with a rugged and challenging terrain, inspiring qualities with a considerable sense of awe or risk.
Medium	The area has a generally dominating sense of wildness. It is likely to be large scale and fairly remote although locally influenced by some human interventions or neighbouring land uses. There is likely to be some rugged or challenging terrain with impressive or dramatic views from some areas and a general sense of isolation.
Low	The area has the qualities of wild land but is influenced by human interventions such as tracks, paths and forestry which will be locally dominating. There will be some difficult terrain with a limited degree of risk, but tracks and paths will provide easier routes through the landscape. A sense of solitude or isolation is likely to be experienced in some areas and there may be some expansive or impressive views.

Step 3: Assess the Sensitivity of the Study Area

- 2.2.12 GLVIA recognises that landscape sensitivity is derived from a combination of two factors:
- Landscape value; and
 - Susceptibility to change.
- 2.2.13 Given its identification as a WLA, the value of the landscape is recognised as being high. However, susceptibility may change across the WLA depending on the strength of wildness and the degree to which the Key Qualities may be present.
- 2.2.14 Sensitivity has been evaluated for each of the Key Qualities rated on a three point scale. This is transcribed across the WLA area dependant on the degree to which these qualities are present. The criteria for sensitivity are defined in Table 2.2.4.

Table 2.2.4: Sensitivity Criteria

Rating	Description
High	The WLA Key Quality is strongly present and a highly valued aspect of the WLA assessment location and is very susceptible to change of the type proposed.
Medium	The WLA Key Quality is present and a valued aspect of the WLA assessment location but has lower susceptibility to change of the type proposed.
Low	The WLA Key Quality is less strongly present and a less valued aspect of the WLA assessment location and/or has limited susceptibility to change of the type proposed.

Step 4: Assess the Magnitude of the Effects

- 2.2.15 Step 4 has involved evaluation of the magnitude of change to each of the physical attributes and perceptual responses which would result from the construction of the Proposed Development. This has fed into a conclusion of the magnitude of effect for each WLA Key Quality across the WLA as a whole.
- 2.2.16 Criteria used for the evaluation of magnitude of change to attributes and key qualities are detailed in Table 2.2.5.

Table 2.2.5: Magnitude of Change Criteria

Rating	Physical Attributes and Perceptual Responses	WLA Key Qualities
High	Total loss or alteration to physical attribute / perceptual response.	Alteration to wild land attributes would cause a notable change in the presence of the Key Quality over an extensive area ranging to a very intensive change over a more limited area.
Medium	Partial loss or alteration to physical attribute / perceptual response.	Alteration to wild land attributes would cause a perceptible change in the presence of the Key Quality over an extensive area ranging to notable change in a localised area.
Low	Minor loss or alteration to physical attribute / perceptual response resulting in a change to the baseline.	Alteration to wild land attributes would cause a perceptible change in the presence of the Key Quality in a localised area.
Negligible	Very minor or no loss to the baseline physical attribute / perceptual response. The introduction of the Proposed Development does not change the baseline assessment.	Alteration to wild land attributes would cause a virtually imperceptible, or no discernible change in the presence of the Key Quality.

Step 5: Judge the Significance of the Effects

- 2.2.17 A final judgement of potential significance of effect has been applied based on the identified values for magnitude of effect for each WLA Key Quality against the sensitivity value, taking in to account the strength of wildness across the WLA. Explanation of the effects ratings is described in Table 2.2.6:

Table 2.2.6: Significance of Effects Criteria

Rating	Description
Major	The Proposed Development would result in total or substantial loss of wild land attributes which contribute a WLA Key Quality and would result in sufficient reduction of strength of wildness for an area of high wildness to be reduced to low wildness.
Moderate	The Proposed Development would result in a partial loss of wild land attributes which contribute to a WLA Key Quality and/or would result in sufficient reduction of strength of wildness for an area of high wildness to

Rating	Description
	be reduced to medium wildness or an area of medium wildness to be reduced to low wildness.
Minor	The Proposed Development would result in localised effects to wild land attributes and WLA Key Qualities but would not be sufficient to result in a reduction of the overall strength of wildness value or a material change in the WLA Key Quality.
Negligible	The Proposed Development would result in no discernible effect to the strength of wildness or WLA Key qualities

- 2.2.18 The NatureScot Guidance states that, “Where effects are identified that result in a material change in the experience of any of the wild land qualities, this is considered to be significant.” For the purposes of this assessment, this is considered to include effects rated as Moderate or greater.

3. Baseline

3.1 Description of WLA 37 – Foinaven – Ben Hee

- 3.1.1 The Foinaven – Ben Hee WLA is located 11.6km to the north of the Proposed Development at it’s closest point, and stretches over 45km to the north, covering a tract of land of 569km². The WLA is broadly contained by the rural roads A838, north from Loch Shin to Laxford Bridge and then east along the north coast, the A836 between Loch Shin and Altnaharra, and the very minor unclassified road which connects Altnaharra to the A838 via Loch Hope. The actual boundary of the WLA varies in distance from the roads defined by the enclosing qualities of the terrain, lochs and areas of particular land use such as commercial forestry.
- 3.1.2 The WLA can be roughly divided into two areas, the northern part being defined by a range of large mountains with flat or rounded summits and steeply sloping sides, and sweeping U-shaped valleys. The southern area is defined by extensive open and low lying peatlands which surround the isolated mountain of Ben Hee which forms the southernmost peak of the mountain group.
- 3.1.3 The WLA is uninhabited other than a few estate and lodge properties. There are few individual properties around outer edges of the WLA. These are limited to occasional houses alongside the public roads, such as at Merkland Lodge, Crask, Rhiconich, Loch Eribol, around Glen Mor, near Loch Hope and Altnaharra. Accessibility is limited to a few tracks, mostly accessing the main glens, and mountain or stalking paths.
- 3.1.4 The influence of existing wind farms and other infrastructure on this WLA is limited. Turbines of the Achany, Rosehall and Lairg Wind Farms are seen distantly in the southern context from more southerly parts of the WLA and turbines at Strathy and Bettyhill may occasionally be perceived to the east from the northernmost areas. Generally, these areas have little effect on the majority of the WLA. However, the Creag Riabhach Wind Farm has been consented partly within the eastern boundary of the WLA, between Crask and Altnaharra and is likely to have greater effect once constructed. This site is discussed further in paragraphs 3.2.6 to 3.2.9.
- 3.1.5 This WLA Assessment focusses generally on the southern, open peatlands and Ben Hee part of the WLA.

WLA 37: Sub-Areas

3.1.6 In order to aid the assessment the description and understanding of effects, the WLA has been loosely divided into two sub-areas:

- The Northern Section: The mountainous area to the north of the Bealach nam Meirleach track, which crosses the WLA between West Merkland and Gobernuisgach Lodge; and
- The Southern Section: The open peatland area and Ben Hee, to the south of the Bealach nam Meirleach track.

WLA Key Qualities

3.1.7 The WLA Key Qualities identified by NatureScot are:

- **Towering, rugged mountains, highlighted by their prominent rock covering, that appear awe-inspiring and contribute to a strong sense of naturalness:**
 - This WLA Key Quality highlights the rugged qualities of the mountains within the northern part of the WLA and the perceptions of naturalness and physically challenging terrain that this leads to;
 - The impressive geological and topographical features and predominance of exposed rock are considered to lead to a sense of challenge, inspiring and arresting qualities and a sense of awe and risk; and
 - A sense of remoteness is considered to be present at the mountain summits due to the physical challenge required, even when close to the WLA boundary.
- **A remote, secluded interior with very few human elements and a strong perception of sanctuary and solitude:**
 - This WLA Key Quality cites the long distance required to penetrate and cross the area and the general lack of human artefacts and contemporary land use in the interior which is considered to lead to a sense of remoteness and sanctuary;
 - The WLA Key Quality notes that when human artefacts are visible, these tend to be distant and few in number and therefore not imposing on the wild land character, or localised and therefore low-key;
- **A variety of shelves, corries and basins carved into the mountain landforms that harbour a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude – some with lochs, rivers and waterfalls:**
 - This WLA Key Quality highlights the shielding qualities of the landform within the corries and basins leading to a perception of being hidden and sense of seclusion, solitude and sanctuary; and
 - The steep slopes surrounding some corries and shelves are noted to have rugged and arresting qualities.
- **A complex mix of towering and arresting crags, cliffs and knolls with a predominance of bare rock, conveying a strong sense of naturalness:**
 - This WLA quality highlights the rugged qualities of crags, cliffs and knolls which are seen to be arresting and physically challenging with a sense of risk;
 - The bare rock and occasional native woodland present is seen to convey a sense of naturalness.
- **Long straths and glens that penetrate far into the interior – some with tracks or paths, that provide access through the landscape:**

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- This WLA Key Quality notes the increase in accessibility the long straths and glens provide to the interior of the WLA including those featuring paths or tracks. However, there is nevertheless a sense of remoteness sanctuary and solitude suggested to be present;
 - It is noted that the presence of tracks introduce a human artefact though variety in track type can lead to differences in the influence of this on the perceptual responses experienced – some tracks such as through Srath Dionard are considered to lead to a greater reduction in sense of naturalness and sanctuary; and
 - The presence of additional artefacts and contemporary land use within the glens is noted in locations such as Srath Beag, Gobernuisgach and West Merkland.
- **Extensive peatland slopes that appear awe-inspiring in their simplicity and contrast to neighbouring mountains, and allow wide open views of the surrounding area:**
 - This WLA Key Quality highlights the extensive nature of the peatlands which are found in the southern part of the WLA, which is considered to have a strong perception of naturalness;
 - The role of the peatlands in providing a setting for Ben Hee and other mountains such as Ben More Assynt (to the south) and Klibreck (to the east) is highlighted with the contrast considered to lead to a sense of awe;
 - Rugged ground is noted to be present at the local level including dubh lochan, bogs and peat hags leading to physically challenging terrain and a sense of risk, further emphasised by a sense of exposure.
 - The WLA Key Quality also notes the open qualities and simple land cover leads to human elements around the margins being highly prominent, such as buildings shelterbelts and telecom masts at Crask and commercial forest plantation at Fiag.

3.2 Desk Study

Map of Relative Wildness

- 3.2.1 The Map of Relative Wildness (see Figure 1 of this Technical Appendix) shows the greatest continuous extent of highest wildness through the mountainous areas of the Northern Section. This reduces generally around the outer edges of the WLA, closer to the roads and in the straths and hills which lie to the north of the 40km study area. A lower degree of wildness is shown though the Bealach nam Meirleach where a track provides access across the WLA. In the Southern Section, the areas of higher wildness are smaller and more patchy throughout. These are focussed around the summit and western crags and corries of Ben Hee and within the lower lying parts of the open peatland and rounded hills to the east of Ben Hee, particularly around watercourses and lochs, where there is likely to be less intervisibility with developed features around the edge of the WLA. A more moderate degree of wildness is indicated generally across the Southern Section with the lowest areas shown in Glen Fiag where commercial forest plantation is present, and around parts of the outer edges which are closer to the roads.

Jenks 8 Analysis

- 3.2.2 Analysis of the WLA in relation to the Jenks 8 classification (see Figure 2 of this Technical Appendix) shows that areas of Jenks 8 Classes 7 and 8 (the two highest classes which are required to be present in sufficient expanse in order for the WLA to be identified) are present in both the Northern and Southern Sections of the WLA. However, the majority of coverage by these classes is within the Northern Section with extensive stretches of Class 8 across the summits and interior crags and corries of the mountainous area. These are set within large areas of Class 7 and a more extensive central area of Class 7 resulting in the majority of the Northern Section being within one of these three classes. Smaller areas of Class 5 and 4 are found around the outer edges and within the straths and glens. Class 3 is present in several locations around the boundary where features such as tracks and forestry are present and through the Bealach nam Meirleach which separates the Northern and Southern Sections.
- 3.2.3 Within the Southern Section, areas of Jenks Class 8 are small, typically less than 0.25 km², and limited to a few isolated corries and hollows. Areas of Class 7 are indicated as fragmented and smaller than in the Northern Section but are found within a solid and contiguous zone of Class 6 which covers the majority of the central part of the Southern Section. There is a proportionally greater area of Classes 5 and below within the Southern Section, covering most of the area around the edge of the WLA, usually up to around 2 km into the WLA but in some locations as much as 4 km. Like the Northern Section, there are small area of Class 4 and Class 3 present near the boundary, notably around Glen Fiag where commercial forest plantation is present, but also in the north-east near Loch Meadie

Changes to the Baseline

- 3.2.4 No significant changes to the baseline have been identified since the Map of Relative Wildness has been undertaken. However, the consented Creag Riabhach -Wind Farm would be partly situated with the eastern edge of the Southern Section of the WLA and would be anticipated to lead to alteration of the baseline situation if built. A number of other consented sites are also present around 20km to the south of the WLA. However, whilst these sites may increase the presence of distant turbines within this part of the context, it is considered unlikely that they would alter baseline wildness, due to their distance from the WLA and setting beyond existing turbines which have already been taken account of in the baseline mapping.
- 3.2.5 A ZTV for the Creag Riabhach Wind Farm has been produced and overlaid on the Map of Relative Wildness Jenks 8 interpretation and Lack of Modern Artefacts attribute mapping (the attribute under which wind farms have been considered in the Mapping Scotland's Wildness exercise) to ascertain how this development may affect the baseline if constructed (see Figure 5 of this Technical Appendix). However, whilst the effects of this development have been considered in the WLA assessment, they have not been given regard to in ratings and conclusions because they do not affect the current baseline and it is not reasonable at this stage to assume that they would alter the baseline wildness.

Creag Riabhach Wind Farm

- 3.2.6 The consented Creag Riabhach Wind Farm would be located on the eastern edge of the Southern Section with four turbines falling just inside the boundary of the WLA and 18 turbines just outside the WLA. In total the consented development comprises 22 turbines

up to 125m in height. The ZTV (see Figure 5 of this Technical Appendix) indicates widespread theoretical visibility of this wind farm within around 5 – 6 km across the low-lying open moorland part of the Southern Section. A further area of intervisibility is indicated across higher ground between around 7km and 12km, including across the summit and facing slopes of Ben Hee. If constructed, it is considered that this wind farm would have a considerable influence on the baseline wildness of the Southern Section. It is likely that strength of wildness as indicated in the Map of Relative Wildness would be reduced throughout the Southern Section, but particularly within around 6km where the wind farm would form a noticeable new man-made artefact in the easterly context. Jenks 8 analysis (see Figure 5 of this Technical Appendix) shows that much of this area is of Jenks Classes 5 and 6. However, areas of higher Jenks Classes 7 and 8 would also be affected within this range, and further towards the core of the Southern Section, across Ben Hee and the hills to the east. It is therefore considered that should Creag Riabhach be constructed, the extent of Jenks Classes 6, 7 and 8 would be much reduced within the Southern Section and there would be a greater coverage of Classes 3 and 4, particularly within the area with 6km from the wind farm.

- 3.2.7 Further afield, in the Northern Section, intervisibility is indicated across the summits of the mountains within the eastern half of the WLA and through the centre. Areas closer to the consented development are usually classed as Jenks Classes 5 and 6 whilst those further away tend to be Classes 7 and 8. Whilst there would be likely to be some influence on baseline wildness in these areas, it is considered that this would be likely to be lesser than in the Southern Section, as most areas of the higher Jenks classes which would be affected are at least 20km distant.
- 3.2.8 Comparison of the ZTV with the ‘Lack of Construction or Other Artefacts’ attribute mapping (see Figure 5 of this Technical Appendix) shows that the majority of the area covered by the ZTV shows a lower to moderate strength of this attribute and is therefore already affected to some degree by modern artefacts. However, the mapping also indicates that areas with a high strength of this attribute would be affected by the Creag Riabhach development. Particular areas of note in the Southern Section include the north-eastern slopes of Cnoc Maol na Cloiche Gile to the west of Loch Fiag, Loch Camasach and the upper part of Allt Preas Braigh nan Allt on the west side of Loch Fiag and the Slopes of Meall na Teanga and Duim nam Bad in the north-east part of the Section. It is reasonable to assume that the strength of this attribute would be notably reduced in these areas in a scenario whereby the Creag Riabhach development was built. Small areas are also shown in the Northern Section, but being more distant the effect may be expected to be lesser.
- 3.2.9 The potential for the above changes to the baseline situation have been considered in this assessment. However, as Creag Riabhach comprises a consented, but not constructed site, they have not been taken into account in the ratings for baseline wildness and conclusions of effects.

3.3 Site Survey

- 3.3.1 Four locations within the Southern Section were evaluated for strength of physical and perceptual attributes as well as the degree to which identified WLA Key Qualities were considered to be present. These included one viewpoint (VP) identified for the visual assessment and three locations which were visited separately. No locations have been included in the Northern Section because the ZTV indicates that there would be little intervisibility with the Proposed Development in this area which is over 20km from the

Proposed Development at its nearest point. The four locations are shown on Figure 1 of this Technical Appendix and comprise:

- Location 1: West of Loch an Fheòir;
- Location 2: Cnoc an Alaskie;
- Location 3: East of Merkland Lodge;
- Location 4: Ben Hee (VP5);

3.3.2 Representative photographs from each location are presented in Annex 1.

Physical Attributes

3.3.3 Analysis of the physical attributes for the above four locations is presented in Annex 2 and summarised below.

Perceived Naturalness

3.3.4 The NatureScot attribute map for 'Perceived Naturalness' (see Figure 3.1 of this Technical Appendix) suggests that WLA 37 has a variable moderate to high strength of perceived naturalness. The highest strength of this attribute is indicated across the large areas of open, low lying bog and peatland in the Southern Section as well as mountain summits, crags and corries of both the Northern and Southern Sections. A particularly large extent of higher attribute strength is shown in the southernmost tip of the Southern Section where there are extensive areas of low-lying bog. Areas of lower attribute strength are shown in Glen Fiag and areas of semi-improved land near Mudale and some of the Straths in the Northern Section.

3.3.5 Site survey suggests that whilst the bog areas of the southern section are likely to be perceived as highly natural, surrounding forest areas often reduce the sense of naturalness in the surroundings. Perceived naturalness across the areas visited was considered to range between Medium and High, being at the lower end of this threshold around the periphery as represented by Location 1 (West of Loch an Fheòir) and highest within the centre of the Southern Section where forestry is only seen distantly, as represented by Location 3 (East of Merkland Lodge). Locations 2 (Cnoc an Alaskie) and 4 (Ben Hee) were considered to have a Medium to High strength of the attribute where the more localised natural seeming vegetation cover was more dominant, but other less natural vegetation cover was present in the surrounding landscape.

Lack of Construction or Other Artefacts

3.3.6 The NatureScot attribute map for 'Lack of Built Artefacts' (see Figure 3.1 of this Technical Appendix) suggests that a high strength of this attribute is widespread throughout the WLA beyond around 2km of the boundary. Hollows around lochs and streams and slopes and corries facing inwards towards the centre of the WLA show the highest strength of wildness although a few isolated features within the Northern Section, as well as tracks through the major glens (including Bealach nam Meirleach which divides the two Sections) reduce the attribute strength in some areas. A lower to moderate attribute strength is shown across the lower-lying peatlands on the eastern side of the Southern Section where attributes round the boundary have a wider influence.

3.3.7 Site survey identified that artefacts are generally perceived within the surrounding context of the Southern Section (where survey work was concentrated). Within the flatter, southerly bog areas, represented by Location 1 (West of Loch an Fheòir)

surrounding artefacts at Crask and wind turbines on the southern skyline appear more influential, although there is a sense of a greater unaffected area to the west. Attribute strength was considered to be Medium in this location. Moving further to the centre of the Southern Section, at Locations 2 (Cnoc an Alaskie) and 3 (East of Merkland Lodge), nearby features become obscured and the further away features, such as wind turbines on the southern skyline appear more distant. Attribute strength was considered to be Medium to High at these locations. On the summit of Ben Hee (Location 4), a much wider context is seen and therefore artefacts are more widely appreciated to the south and east, although limited to the north and west. A Medium attribute strength at this location is considered likely to be generally representative of mountain summit areas.

- 3.3.8 The attribute Lack of Construction or Other Artefacts would be likely to be noticeably reduced across the Southern Section and also across parts of the Northern Section if the Creag Riabhach Wind Farm were constructed, as indicated by Figure 5 of this Technical Appendix. It is likely that this would reduce to Low or Medium for the Locations visited but this baseline is not taken into account in this assessment. Cumulative effects on the WLA which take into account the potential presence of Creag Riabhach Wind Farm are discussed in Technical Appendix 7.8.

Evidence of Contemporary Land Uses

- 3.3.9 There is no NatureScot attribute map for evidence of contemporary land uses. However, this is broadly covered by the maps for 'Perceived Naturalness' and to some extent 'Lack of Built Artefacts' (see Figure 3.1). However, the distribution of the highest levels of these attributes as displayed by the mapping, vary somewhat and therefore it is difficult to extrapolate how the influence of contemporary land use may differ across the WLA.
- 3.3.10 Site survey of the Southern Section has identified that strength of the attribute Evidence of Contemporary Land Use is fairly similar to that of Absence of Modern Artefacts as described in paragraphs 3.3.6 and 3.3.7, as the features which influence that attribute are also those associated with contemporary land use activities such as forestry and wind farms. Coniferous forest plantation is particularly noticeable around the south-eastern periphery leading to a rating of Low at Location 1 (West of Loch an Fheadir) and Medium rating at Location 2 (Cnoc an Alaskie). At Location 3, the influence of contemporary land use is further decreased leading to a Medium to High rating. However, the wider influence of the surrounding landscape which is experienced at higher elevation leads to a Medium rating at Location 4 (Ben Hee). Altogether, contemporary land use is most often experienced in the southern and eastern context, whilst the northern and western context appears to have little influence.
- 3.3.11 As for Absence of Modern Artefacts (see paragraph 3.3.8), the construction of the Creag Riabhach wind farm would be likely to reduce the strength of this attribute across most of the Southern Section although this has not been included in the baseline for this assessment.

Rugged or Challenging Terrain

- 3.3.12 The NatureScot attribute map for 'Rugged or Challenging Terrain' (see Figure 3.2) suggests that the majority of rugged terrain is located within the Northern Section which is more mountainous. Within the Southern Section, this is largely limited to the area of Ben Hee with the majority of the Southern Section indicated to have a low strength of this attribute.

- 3.3.13 The conclusions of site survey of the southern section are broadly consistent with the mapping. However, it is considered that a slightly greater degree of challenge is experienced across the lower lying areas within the south-eastern part of the Southern Section, due to the challenges of crossing the extensive areas of bog. As such, a rating of Medium has been applied to Locations 1 (Loch an Fheòir), 2 (Cnoc an Alaskie) and 3 (East of Merkland Lodge) and a rating of High has been applied to Location 4 (Ben Hee).

Remoteness and Inaccessibility

- 3.3.14 The NatureScot attribute map for ‘Remoteness from Roads’ (see Figure 3.2) shows the central parts of both the Northern and Southern Sections to be remote from roads, except where tracks through the main straths provide access. A low attribute strength is indicated usually within around 1km of the boundary, except in a few locations such as west of Crask and east of Rhiconich in the north-west of the Northern Section. Lower attribute strength is also indicated where access tracks lead into the major straths and glens such as Bealach nam Meirleach, Srath Coir an Easaidh, Srath Dionard and Srath Beag. The attribute strength graduates to high on moving further into the WLA and further from access roads.
- 3.3.15 Site survey of the Southern Section has found the strength of this attribute to be broadly in accordance with the mapping although at most locations this was felt to be slightly higher than indicated by the mapping due to the general lack of paths and difficulty in crossing watercourses and bogs. Generally the attribute strength was felt to be slightly higher towards the west of the WLA due to steeper climb required for access and the more enclosing nature of the topography which limits the visual connection and sense of remoteness in relation to peopled areas. Ratings of Medium to High were therefore identified for Locations 1 (Loch an Fheòir) and 2 (Cnoc an Alaskie) towards the east of the WLA and a rating of High was identified for Locations 3 (East of Merkland Lodge) and 4 (Ben Hee) towards the west of the WLA.

Perceptual Responses

- 3.3.16 The site analysis of the perceptual responses found that these were generally present at all the locations visited within the Southern Section.
- 3.3.17 At Locations 1 (West of Loch an Fheòir) and 2 (Cnoc an Alaskie), on the lower-lying open bog area of the south-east, the perceptual attributes were found to be almost universally Medium, with the exception of ‘Sense of Sanctuary and Solitude’ at Location 2 where the reduced influence of Modern Artefacts leads to a High rating of this response. The responses ‘Risk, a Sense of Awe or Anxiety’ and ‘Arresting or Inspiring Qualities’ were found to be present in these locations due to the expansiveness of the open bog and lonely qualities but were not felt to be as strong as in other locations with greater elevation and steep terrain. In this part of the Southern Section, it was found that these responses seemed higher on the edge of the WLA rather than the centre. This is felt to be due to the flat open qualities in this area which lead to an exaggeration of scale. When looking across the WLA from the edge, the open moorland appears very expansive. However, from within the area, features or contemporary land use around the boundary stand out within the simple, low-lying landscape and appear more distracting reducing the sense of scale.
- 3.3.18 A generally higher degree of the perceptual responses was found to be present at Locations 3 (East of Merkland Lodge) and 4 (Ben Hee) both located on the western side

of the Southern Section. At Location 4, the position on the mountain summit is considered to result in a High strength of all the perceptual responses other than 'Sense of Sanctuary or Solitude' which is considered to be Medium to High, due to the popularity of the location for hill walkers. This is considered likely to be generally reflective of the more popular mountain summits throughout the WLA. At Location 3 which is on lower, though elevated ground, 'Sense of Sanctuary or Solitude' was considered to be High due to the greater sense of isolation from other human activity. However, the other perceptual attributes were all felt less strongly due to the less dramatic terrain, with a Medium to High rating being given to 'Arresting or Inspiring Qualities' and 'Fulfilment from Physical Challenge' and a Medium rating for 'Risk, a Sense of Awe or Anxiety'.

- 3.3.19 The perceptual response 'Sense of Sanctuary or Solitude' in the western part of the Southern Section would also be likely to be somewhat affected by the construction of Creag Riabhach Wind Farm, but less so than the eastern part. However, this is not considered in the baseline for the WLA assessment.
- 3.3.20 Overall, site survey of the Southern Section suggests that the perceptual responses are more strongly present within the central part of the WLA, and weaker towards the edges where greater influence of access routes, modern artefacts and contemporary land uses occurs. However, the transition into areas where these qualities are stronger is quicker on the western side due to the steeper terrain which leads to adjacent features moving out of view more quickly and a greater sense of separation from boundary. The influence of surrounding hills and mountains towards the west also contributes to this effect. On the east side, the lower, flatter terrain means that modern artefacts and contemporary land use continue to be influential on the presence of perceptual responses further into the heart of the WLA.
- 3.3.21 It is noted that the construction of the consented Creag Riabhach wind farm would be likely to reduce the strength of physical attributes across the Southern Section of the WLA. This is considered likely to reduce the presence and strength of the perceptual response 'Sense of Sanctuary and Solitude' and potentially also 'Arresting or Inspiring Qualities', mostly affecting the eastern side of the Southern Section but also potentially affecting parts of the western side. However, this is not considered in the baseline for the WLA assessment.
- 3.3.22 The increasing strength of perceptual responses when moving into the centre of the WLA is considered likely to be similar in the Northern Section, although the east / west split is considered likely to be less pronounced due to the more consistent topography throughout this Section. However, it is considered that within the Northern Area, areas of strongest perceptual attributes may be more variable due to the features and access routes which are found within some of the long glens present in this Section.

WLA Strength of Wildness

- 3.3.23 In general, the site survey has identified that the strength of wildness across the Southern Section of WLA 37 is broadly consistent with the Map of Relative Wildness, with the greatest strength of wildness found towards central areas between Ben Alaskie and Ben Hee. A slightly greater sense of wildness is considered to be present towards western and northern areas where the influence of surrounding mountains and hills leads to a greater sense of wild land stretching beyond the boundary of the WLA. By contrast, the edge of the WLA is clearly felt to the south and east where forest plantation and buildings are

present, and turbines on the distant skyline give a sense of a more developed and managed landscape further south.

- 3.3.24 A notable observation of site survey was that the extent of wild land often seems greater in eastern areas when viewing the WLA from, or just outside, the boundary because the flat terrain appears very extensive in this direction with no evidence of access or artefacts within it. When moving into this area however, the scale of the landscape is reduced as the open character results in features around the boundary appearing noticeable and closer than they may actually be. This effect is not experienced to the north and west because the steeper character of the terrain results in boundary features within the valleys being quickly concealed by landform, leading to a greater connection with surrounding undeveloped areas and a resultant increase in the perceived extent of the surrounding WLA.
- 3.3.25 From summits areas in the Southern Section, such as Ben Hee, a greater degree of development and contemporary land use is seen to the east and south, in particular, extensive forest plantations. This allows the extent of the WLA in these directions to be clearly seen. However, to the north and west there are few man-made features and a complex array of surrounding mountains, some in adjacent WLAs, gives a strong sense of wildness in this direction. As such, from these elevated locations and particularly on the summit of Ben Hee, there is a sense of the Southern Section being small and very much peripheral to the wider wild land area to the north. The value of the Southern Section is therefore considered to be more evident at lower elevation, where its expansiveness is more directly felt and where it provides a setting to the wilder landscapes further north and the remote roads and settlement areas around its boundary.
- 3.3.26 As site survey did not cover the Northern Section, the strength of wildness is considered to be consistent with that indicated by the Map of Relative Wildness for the purposes of the assessment.

WLA Key Qualities

- 3.3.27 Table 3.3.1 summarises the baseline analysis of the WLA Key Qualities from each of the four locations visited during the site survey:

Table 3.3.1: WLA Key Qualities – Baseline Analysis

Key Quality Location	Towering, rugged mountains, highlighted by their prominent rock covering, that appear awe-inspiring and contribute to a strong sense of naturalness	A remote, secluded interior with very few human elements and a strong perception of sanctuary and solitude	A variety of shelves, corries and basins carved into the mountain landforms that harbour a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude – some with lochs, rivers and waterfalls	A complex mix of towering and arresting crags, cliffs and knolls with a predominance of bare rock, conveying a strong sense of naturalness	Long straths and glens that penetrate far into the interior – some with tracks or paths, that provide access through the landscape	Extensive peatland slopes that appear awe-inspiring in their simplicity and contrast to neighbouring mountains, and allow wide open views of the surrounding area
Location 1: West of Loch an Fheòir	Not present. Although some mountains can be seen, the mountainous characteristics of ruggedness, awe and risk are not present.	Partially present. There is a sense of the more remote interior being there if one were to penetrate further into the WLA, but this is not present at this location.	Not present.	Not present.	Not present.	Present. The contrast of the low-lying peatland with the with the high mountain of Ben Klibreck is felt, and the sense of awe is present to some degree due to the expansive views. Human features such as those at Crask are noted around the margins of the WLA.
Location 2: Cnoc an Alaskie	Partially present. A sense of the mountains in the surrounding landscape is present and there is an awareness of their	Present The remote qualities of the interior are felt in this location although there is an awareness that this is likely to strengthen	Partially present Though not experienced in the location, there is awareness of some of these features in the surrounding	Not present. These features can be distantly perceived but are not present in the location.	Not present.	Present. Expansiveness of the surrounding peatlands is felt though forestry in Glen Fiag distracts slightly from the

Key Quality Location	Towering, rugged mountains, highlighted by their prominent rock covering, that appear awe-inspiring and contribute to a strong sense of naturalness	A remote, secluded interior with very few human elements and a strong perception of sanctuary and solitude	A variety of shelves, corries and basins carved into the mountain landforms that harbour a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude – some with lochs, rivers and waterfalls	A complex mix of towering and arresting crags, cliffs and knolls with a predominance of bare rock, conveying a strong sense of naturalness	Long straths and glens that penetrate far into the interior – some with tracks or paths, that provide access through the landscape	Extensive peatland slopes that appear awe-inspiring in their simplicity and contrast to neighbouring mountains, and allow wide open views of the surrounding area
	ruggedness which gives a sense of awe and inspiration.	when moving north and west.	landscape and the qualities of solitude seclusion likely to be experienced.			sense of scale. The contrast with the mountains is seen, more so with the distant Ben Hope than closer Ben Hee which is less distinct.
Location 3: East of Merkland Lodge	Partially present. There is a sense of being on the edge of the mountain landscape with higher elevation and a variety of peaks seen to the north and west. However, the rugged drama described is not strongly present in this location.	Present. This location feels on the edge of the interior landscape and far from developed locations and roads which gives it a strong sense of solitude.	Partially present. There is a sense of proximity to the mountainous landscape and the sense of solitude and seclusion that may be experienced in corries and valleys. However, the variety of landform described is not experienced here.	Partially present. Bare rock is seen on some of the surrounding mountains giving a sense of their naturalness through the complexity of landscape described is not present.	Not present.	Present. The peatland slopes are seen to extend to the south-east whilst the mountainous landscape is seen in contrast to the north
Location 4: Ben Hee (VP5)	Present. The surrounding terrain is rugged, with a high sense of	Partially present. Overlooking the interior, it can be seen as remote with	Present. The variety of mountain landform is seen from this	Present. The variety of the mountain landform is experienced from	Not present. Whilst some of the long glens can be seen from this	Partially present. The open peatlands can be perceived from this location

Key Quality	Towering, rugged mountains, highlighted by their prominent rock covering, that appear awe-inspiring and contribute to a strong sense of naturalness	A remote, secluded interior with very few human elements and a strong perception of sanctuary and solitude	A variety of shelves, corries and basins carved into the mountain landforms that harbour a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude – some with lochs, rivers and waterfalls	A complex mix of towering and arresting crags, cliffs and knolls with a predominance of bare rock, conveying a strong sense of naturalness	Long straths and glens that penetrate far into the interior – some with tracks or paths, that provide access through the landscape	Extensive peatland slopes that appear awe-inspiring in their simplicity and contrast to neighbouring mountains, and allow wide open views of the surrounding area
Location	naturalness and awe-inspiring views across the surrounding summits, particularly to the north and west.	few features or access routes penetrating. However, it is not a part of the experience from this location.	location though the solitude of the corries is not directly experienced.	this location and the sense of a natural landscape, risk and awe is evoked.	location, and provide benefit in terms of access, the elements outlined in the key quality are not experienced here.	but the elevated position allows large areas of forest to be seen which reduce the perceived extent.

4. Assessment of Effects

4.1 Wild Land Sensitivity

- 4.1.1 The sensitivity of each WLA Key Quality has been evaluated at each of the assessment locations in accordance with the criteria in Table 2.2.4. The sensitivity appraisal is summarised in Table 4.1.1.

Table 4.1.1: WLA Key Qualities - Sensitivity

Key Quality Location	Towering, rugged mountains, highlighted by their prominent rock covering, that appear awe-inspiring and contribute to a strong sense of naturalness	A remote, secluded interior with very few human elements and a strong perception of sanctuary and solitude	A variety of shelves, corries and basins carved into the mountain landforms that harbour a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude – some with lochs, rivers and waterfalls	A complex mix of towering and arresting crags, cliffs and knolls with a predominance of bare rock, conveying a strong sense of naturalness	Long straths and glens that penetrate far into the interior – some with tracks or paths, that provide access through the landscape	Extensive peatland slopes that appear awe-inspiring in their simplicity and contrast to neighbouring mountains, and allow wide open views of the surrounding area
Location 1: West of Loch an Fheòir	Low The WLA Key Quality is considered to be Not Present.	Medium The WLA Key Quality is partly present but is susceptible to change if the relationship of this area with the interior were eroded.	Low The WLA Key Quality is considered to be Not Present.	Low The WLA Key Quality is considered to be Not Present.	Low The WLA Key Quality is considered to be Not Present.	High The Key Quality is present and a valued aspect of the location, which is considered to be susceptible to change of the type proposed.
Location 2: Cnoc an Alaskie	Low The WLA Key quality is only partially present and considered a less valued element of this location at lower susceptibility to change.	High The WLA Key Quality is present and is considered a valued aspect of the location, and very susceptible to change of the type proposed.	Medium The WLA Key Quality is only partially present but is considered susceptible to change of the type proposed.	Low The WLA Key Quality is considered to be Not Present.	Low The WLA Key Quality is considered to be Not Present.	High The Key Quality is present and a valued aspect of the location, which is considered to be susceptible to change of the type proposed.

<p style="text-align: center;">Key Quality</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Location</p>	<p>Towering, rugged mountains, highlighted by their prominent rock covering, that appear awe-inspiring and contribute to a strong sense of naturalness</p>	<p>A remote, secluded interior with very few human elements and a strong perception of sanctuary and solitude</p>	<p>A variety of shelves, corries and basins carved into the mountain landforms that harbour a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude – some with lochs, rivers and waterfalls</p>	<p>A complex mix of towering and arresting crags, cliffs and knolls with a predominance of bare rock, conveying a strong sense of naturalness</p>	<p>Long straths and glens that penetrate far into the interior – some with tracks or paths, that provide access through the landscape</p>	<p>Extensive peatland slopes that appear awe-inspiring in their simplicity and contrast to neighbouring mountains, and allow wide open views of the surrounding area</p>
<p>Location 3: East of Merkland Lodge</p>	<p>Medium The WLA Key Quality is considered to be partially present, of some value in this location and of some susceptibility to change.</p>	<p>High The WLA Key Quality is present and susceptible to change of the type proposed.</p>	<p>Medium The WLA Key Quality is considered to be only partly present, although some of the features described are susceptible to change.</p>	<p>Low The WLA Key Quality is considered to be only partly present, and is less valued in this location, with less susceptibility to change.</p>	<p>Low The WLA Key Quality is considered to be Not Present.</p>	<p>High The WLA Key Quality is present and is considered to be susceptible to change.</p>
<p>Location 4: Ben Hee (VP5)</p>	<p>High The WLA Key Quality is present and a valued aspect of the location which is susceptible to change.</p>	<p>Medium The WLA Key Quality partly present, considered to add some value to the location, and susceptible to change.</p>	<p>High The WLA Key Quality is present in this location, is considered of some value and susceptible to change.</p>	<p>High The WLA Key Quality is present and a valued aspect of the location which is susceptible to change.</p>	<p>Low The WLA Key Quality is considered to be Not Present.</p>	<p>Medium The WLA Key Quality is partly present but a slightly less valued aspect of the location, though susceptible to change.</p>

4.1.2 WLA-wide sensitivity for each of the WLA Key Qualities is summarised as follows:

Towering, rugged mountains, highlighted by their prominent rock covering, that appear awe-inspiring and contribute to a strong sense of naturalness

4.1.3 This WLA Key Quality is considered to be not present within the open peatlands of the most south-easterly parts of the WLA. Moving north and west, the association with the mountains becomes stronger, particularly in the westerly context. The WLA Key Quality is most strongly present within the mountainous landscapes around Ben Hee and the Northern Section. Sensitivity is therefore in these areas. A Medium sensitivity is considered to be present in areas where there is a visual connection to the mountains but the mountainous landscape is not immediately present. This includes areas to the north and west of Loch Fiag and the north-western part of the Southern Section. Low sensitivity is present in the south and south-east of the WLA, particularly in areas to the south of Meall an Fhuarain and Cnoc an Alaskie where this WLA Key Quality is considered to be generally not present.

A remote, secluded interior with very few human elements and a strong perception of sanctuary and solitude

4.1.4 There is a sense of connection to the remote interior from all the locations visited. However, this is stronger when moving beyond the first ridge of hills encountered beyond the WLA boundary where the influence of contemporary artefacts and landuse outwith the WLA recedes, such as at Location 2 (Cnoc an Alaskie) and Location 3 (East of Merkland Lodge). In areas where there is a stronger presence of this WLA Key Quality, it is very susceptible to change of the type proposed. Therefore, a High sensitivity is considered to be present within the lower lying valleys of the interior such as around Lochs Camasach and Eileanach and the upper tributaries that feed into Loch Fiag, but particularly amongst the corries to the west of Ben Hee. A High sensitivity is also anticipated within the valleys and corries of the Northern Section. Sensitivity is considered to be Medium on the summit and higher southern slopes of Ben Hee, and other similar mountain summits because the WLA Key Quality is felt to be less strong in these areas where visual connection to the outer landscapes is more influential. Sensitivity is also considered to be Medium within the more developed interior glens where tracks are present, such as Bealach nam Meirleach. Low sensitivity is limited to areas around the outer boundary of the WLA where there is no visual connection to the interior.

A variety of shelves, corries and basins carved into the mountain landforms that harbour a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude – some with lochs, rivers and waterfalls

4.1.5 Of the locations visited, this WLA Key Quality was only really strongly present at Location 4 (Ben Hee). However, some influence was felt in the other areas where there was a visual connection to the mountain area. As such, sensitivity is considered High within the mountainous parts of the WLA, around Ben Hee and in the Northern Section where there is greater susceptibility to change. Other parts of the Southern Section which have a closer connection to the mountains and greater sense of solitude are considered to be of Medium sensitivity, such as to the west of Cnoc an Alaskie (Location 2) and north and west of Loch Fiag. Sensitivity for this Key Quality is Low in the south-east part of the Southern Section as the WLA Key Quality is not anticipated to be present.

A complex mix of towering and arresting crags, cliffs and knolls with a predominance of bare rock, conveying a strong sense of naturalness

- 4.1.6 High sensitivity for this WLA Key Quality occurs in the mountainous parts of the WLA around Ben Hee (Location 4) and in the Northern Section. Where there is a less pronounced visual connection to the crags and knolls of the mountains or some sense of similar features in the lower surrounding hills, such as towards the west of the Southern Section in the landscapes north of Loch Fiag and East of Ben Hee, sensitivity is considered to be Medium. Low sensitivity is considered to be present in the south-east of the Southern Section as the WLA Key Quality is considered to be not present.

Long straths and glens that penetrate far into the interior – some with tracks or paths, that provide access through the landscape

- 4.1.7 This WLA Key Quality was found to be Not Present at all the locations visited and is recognised more as a feature of the Northern Section. Sensitivity is therefore anticipated to be greater within the straths and glens of the northern section and generally Low in the Southern Section although there may be some remote glens in the Southern Section in areas that were not visited (due to lack of ZTV coverage) where sensitivity may be slightly increased.
- 4.1.8 Given the absence of this WLA Key Quality from all of the locations visited, it is not considered further in this assessment.

Extensive peatland slopes that appear awe-inspiring in their simplicity and contrast to neighbouring mountains, and allow wide open views of the surrounding area

- 4.1.9 This WLA Key Quality is considered to be very susceptible to change of the type proposed and is most strongly present in the south-eastern part of the Southern Section though is influential on other areas throughout southern and western parts of the Southern Section where the open areas of peatland provide an extensive south-easterly setting to the more elevated areas. The sensitivity is anticipated to be High across the Southern Section, excepting the mountainous north-western part, where peatland areas are either less evident or the greater visibility of surrounding forest and other contemporary land use to the south-west constricts the perceived scale of the surrounding peatlands, reducing the value of these landscapes in relation to the location. Sensitivity is considered to be Medium in this area. This is considered likely to be generally reflective of the Northern Section, although other peatland areas further north also influence the setting of this area.

4.2 Magnitude of Change

Physical and Perceptual Attributes

- 4.2.1 Evaluation of magnitude of change to physical attributes and perceptual responses for each of the locations is included in Annex 2 and summarised below.

Physical Attributes

- 4.2.2 Magnitude of change for the majority of physical attributes at all locations is anticipated to be Negligible or Low, because the Proposed Development would appear relatively distantly in the southerly context, where existing wind turbines and other contemporary

land uses and features are usually seen to be present. This means that the addition of the Proposed Development would usually be unlikely to alter the baseline attribute strength. As the nearest visible turbines would be over 15km from all of the locations, it is typically the case that other features or areas of contemporary land use, such as commercial forest at Fiag or Crask, are closer and therefore have a greater influence on the baseline attribute strength than the Proposed Development would. This sense of distance also means that there are unlikely to be any perceptible changes to the attributes, 'Perceived Naturalness', 'Rugged or Challenging Terrain' or 'Remoteness and Inaccessibility' because there would be no physical changes to the vegetation cover or terrain or improvements in access.

- 4.2.3 A Negligible magnitude of change was identified for all physical attributes at Location 1 (West of Loch an Fheòir), where existing features and contemporary land use around Crask are more influential, and at Location 3 (East of Merkland Lodge) where the Proposed Development would be distant, with only blades being visible, likely to have limited perceptibility. At Location 2 (Cnoc Alaskie), a slightly higher baseline attribute strength is present, due to the location being screened from closer built features at Crask. A Low magnitude of change is anticipated for 'Lack of Construction or Other Artefacts' as the increased numbers of wind turbines on the distant southern skyline would be perceptible. However, the presence of forested areas at Fiag, at closer proximity than the Proposed Development would lead to a Negligible magnitude for 'Evidence of Contemporary Land Uses'. A Low magnitude is also anticipated to 'Lack of Construction or Other Artefacts' at Location 4 (Ben Hee), where due to the elevation, the Proposed Development turbines would be more visible, leading to a perceptible increase in turbines in the southern context, and an impression of wind farm development moving slightly closer. However, similar to Location 2, the magnitude of change to 'Evidence of Contemporary Land Uses' would be Negligible, because of the extent of forest plantation which is present in this southerly and south-easterly context.
- 4.2.4 Overall, it was found that there are relatively few locations where a decrease in the attribute strength would be experienced. This would be limited to Low magnitude changes to 'Lack of Construction or Other Artefacts' but would only occur in areas away from the east of the Southern Section where the features at Crask are noticeable and away from the westerly fringes and lower ground where the Proposed Development would be less perceptible. There are few areas in the south of the WLA where either features and forested areas at Crask, or commercial forest plantation and tracks in Glen Fiag do not influence the baseline attribute strength and therefore a Low magnitude of change is anticipated only in fairly discrete areas of higher terrain, to the west and north-west of Cnoc an Alaskie and south and east of Ben Hee. Negligible magnitude of change is anticipated for all other physical attributes including 'Evidence of Contemporary Land Use' because it is considered likely that in all areas where the Proposed Development would be sufficiently perceptible to alter the attribute, areas of commercial forest plantation at closer proximity would be more noticeable in the context.
- 4.2.5 Due to the distance of over 23km to the nearest turbine, no perceptible change is anticipated to any of the physical attributes in the Northern Section.

Perceptual Responses

- 4.2.6 Due to the minimal changes anticipate for the physical attributes, magnitude of change for perceptual responses is also considered to be either Negligible or Low for all locations.

Negligible magnitude of change was identified for all responses with the exception of 'Arresting or Inspiring Qualities', where it was considered that a Low magnitude may occur at Locations 1 (West of Loch an Fheòir), 2 (Cnoc an Alaskie) and 4 (Ben Hee) due to a perceptible increase in wind turbines in the view may lead to an increased focus in the southern context, or a small reduction in sense of scale and distance. At Location 3 (East of Merkland Lodge) it was considered that the reduced perceptibility of the proposed turbines and greater distance would result in no noticeable change to the baseline presence of this perceptual response.

- 4.2.7 Due to the distance of over 23km to the nearest turbine, no perceptible change is anticipated to any of the perceptual responses in the Northern Section.

WLA Key Qualities

- 4.2.8 Magnitude of change to WLA Key Qualities is discussed in Table 4.2.1 to Table 4.2.5 below. The magnitude evaluation excludes consideration of the WLA Key Quality, "*Long straths and glens that penetrate far into the interior – some with tracks or paths, that provide access through the landscape,*" because it was found to be Not Present at all the assessment locations visited:

Table 4.2.1: Magnitude of Change to WLA Key Quality: Towering, rugged mountains, highlighted by their prominent rock covering, that appear awe-inspiring and contribute to a strong sense of naturalness

Location	Description of Change
Location 1: West of Loch an Fheòir	The WLA Key Quality is considered to be Not Present at this location
Location 2: Cnoc an Alaskie	The Proposed Development would be present in the southerly context and would not affect the relationship of the location to the mountainous landscape which lies to the north-west and west. Whilst a Low magnitude of change was identified to the perceptual response 'Sense of Sanctuary or Solitude', this relates to the potential presence of the Proposed Development in the expansive southerly landscape and would not affect the WLA Key Quality.
Location 3: East of Merkland Lodge	The Proposed Development would be a barely perceptible feature of the southern context and would not affect the appreciation of the mountain landscape which lies to the north, south and south-west of this location.
Location 4: Ben Hee (VP5)	The Proposed Development would feature in the expansive views from this mountain location, anticipated to lead to a Low magnitude of change on the perceptual response 'Arresting or Inspiring Qualities'. This may lead to a localised degree of change to the WLA Key Quality, although the arresting qualities of the mountain landscape itself would not be changed.
Magnitude of Change	
This WLA Key Quality recognises the physical attributes of 'Perceived Naturalness', 'Rugged or Challenging Terrain' and 'Remoteness and Inaccessibility' and the perceptual responses of 'Risk, a Sense of Awe or Anxiety', 'Arresting or Inspiring Qualities' and Fulfilment from Physical Challenge'. A Negligible magnitude of change is anticipated for the majority of these attributes and qualities at the majority of locations. There would be potential small scale changes to the quality, 'Arresting or Inspiring Qualities' within the mountainous part of the Southern Section where the Proposed Development would be seen within expansive views towards the south	

Location	Description of Change
	<p>and may form additional focus in this direction. However, this would be seen in a context of expansive areas of commercial forest and would not affect the local features of the mountains which are noted as contributing to this quality.</p> <p>Magnitude of change to the perception of this Key Quality is anticipated as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally Low around summit and steeper areas of Ben Hee where the increased numbers of turbines present in the southern context may lead to some sense of focus outwith the WLA and away from the local terrain of the mountains. • Negligible in all other areas.

Table 4.2.2: Magnitude of Change to WLA Key Quality: A remote, secluded interior with very few human elements and a strong perception of sanctuary and solitude

Location	Description of Change
Location 1: West of Loch an Fheòir	There is a sense of the presence of the more remote interior from this location although it is not directly felt to be present due to the greater influence of exterior features. The Proposed Development would be perceptible in the landscape to the south, in a context where other turbines are already present. It is considered that this would lead to no change in the way that the relationship towards the remote interior would be perceived.
Location 2: Cnoc an Alaskie	The Proposed Development would be perceptible in the southerly context of this location but would reflect existing turbines which are already perceived. This is anticipated to give a Low magnitude of change to the physical attribute 'Lack of Construction or Other Artefacts' but a Negligible magnitude of change for all other physical attributes. A Negligible magnitude of change is also anticipated to the perceptual attribute 'Sense of Sanctuary or Solitude' which contributes to this WLA Key Quality. The location is sited on the edge of the more remote interior and moving further north into the more remote area, the intervisibility with the Proposed Development would reduce.
Location 3: East of Merkland Lodge	The Proposed Development would appear in the distant, southern context from this location but would have limited perceptibility, being predominantly blades. Whilst this may slightly increase the perceptibility of artefacts in the surrounding context, it would be very distant and considered unlikely to lead to any change in the sense of solitude that exists. A Negligible magnitude was identified at this location for all physical attributes and perceptual responses.
Location 4: Ben Hee (VP5)	The remote interior can be seen to the north and east from this location as having few features or access routes. The Proposed Development would be sited in the southerly context in an area where extensive commercial forest plantation and other wind turbines are already influential. This is unlikely to lead to any change on the perception of the interior, as a contrast with the southerly context is already perceived. Therefore, although a Low magnitude of change is anticipated to the physical attribute 'Perceived Naturalness', this is not anticipated to lead to any corresponding change to the Key Quality.
Magnitude of Change	
The more remote parts of the interior would be largely unaffected by intervisibility with the Proposed Development, being naturally more concealed from the southerly context where	

Location	Description of Change
	<p>existing wind turbines and other features influence the landscape. As such, potential for change to this WLA Key Quality would be limited to areas around the edges of the interior, where a transition into the interior is perceived, although the strength of the WLA Key Quality can not be fully appreciated. This occurs more at locations 2 (Cnoc an Alaskie) and 3 (East of Merkland Lodge). However, in both these locations, it is considered that the addition of the Proposed Development to the context would have little qualities of the character of the interior, as it would be viewed in a different part of the context, and would be in the form of a very small exterior feature where other similar contemporary land use and features are already influential. When moving further into the interior of the WLA, the Proposed Development would cease to be visible and from all areas the sense of distance to the Proposed Development is anticipated to lead to a Negligible degree of change on the sense of solitude and sanctuary.</p> <p>Magnitude of change to the perception of this Key Quality is therefore anticipated to be Negligible from all areas.</p>

Table 4.2.3: Magnitude of Change to WLA Key Quality: A variety of shelves, corries and basins carved into the mountain landforms that harbour a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude – some with lochs, rivers and waterfalls

Location	Description of Change
Location 1: West of Loch an Fheòir	The WLA Key Quality is considered to be Not Present at this location
Location 2: Cnoc an Alaskie	The WLA Key Quality is considered to be Not Present at the location though some of the features and qualities referred to are perceived in the surrounding landscape. The Proposed Development would be present in the southerly context and would not affect the relationship of the location to the mountainous landscape which lies to the north-west and west, or the sense of seclusion that anticipated within the lower lying areas to the north and west of this location.
Location 3: East of Merkland Lodge	There is some connection to the mountain landscape at the location and some of the features described can be seen in the northerly context around Ben Hee to some extent. However, the Proposed Development would be a barely perceptible feature of the southern context and would not affect the appreciation of these features at this location, or the qualities of sanctuary and solitude with which they are associated.
Location 4: Ben Hee (VP5)	The Proposed Development would feature in the expansive views from this mountain location leading to a Low magnitude of change on the perceptual attribute 'Arresting or Inspiring Qualities' which contributes to this WLA Key Quality. However, this relates to the setting in the wider landscape and the Proposed Development would not affect the localised features more directly to this WLA Key Quality. In the more concealed locations amongst the corries and shelves, where the sense of sanctuary or solitude is strongest, there would be no intervisibility with the Proposed Development.
Magnitude of Change	
The WLA Description cites the physical attribute of 'Rugged or Challenging Terrain' and the perceptual responses of 'Sense of Sanctuary or Solitude', 'Risk, a Sense of Awe or Anxiety' and 'Arresting or Inspiring Qualities' as contributing to this WLA Key Quality. The Proposed	

Location	Description of Change
	<p>Development would be distant within the southerly context and would therefore have no direct change on any corries, crags and knolls. These areas are primarily located within the north-westerly part of the Southern Section and the Northern Section. Whilst the Proposed Development would be perceptible in the southern context from parts of the mountain landscape, leading to a Low magnitude of change to the perceptual response 'Arresting or Inspiring Qualities' from Location 4 (Ben Hee), this would be unlikely to affect the appreciation of the landform features in the local landscape. The concealed areas amongst the corries and crags, as described under this WLA Key Quality would have no or little intervisibility with the Proposed Development and the magnitude of change on 'Sense of Sanctuary or Solitude' would be Negligible.</p> <p>Magnitude of change to the perception of this Key Quality is therefore anticipated to be Negligible from all areas.</p>

Table 4.2.4: Magnitude of Change to WLA Key Quality: A complex mix of towering and arresting crags, cliffs and knolls with a predominance of bare rock, conveying a strong sense of naturalness

Location	Description of Change
Location 1: West of Loch an Fheòir	The WLA Key Quality is considered to be Not Present at this location
Location 2: Cnoc an Alaskie	Although distantly perceived in the north-westerly context, the WLA Key Quality is considered to be Not Present at this location. The presence of the Proposed Development in the distant southerly context is considered unlikely to affect the appreciation of the distant mountain features to the north west seen from this location.
Location 3: East of Merkland Lodge	The WLA Key Quality is somewhat present at this location appreciated in the more mountainous landscape setting to the north. The Proposed Development would have limited perceptibility in the southerly context, and is considered unlikely to result in any perceived change to the arresting qualities of the crags and cliffs which are seen in the northerly context.
Location 4: Ben Hee (VP5)	The Proposed Development would form a perceptible feature in the elevated southerly views from this location, anticipated to lead to a Low magnitude of change to the perceptual response 'Arresting or Inspiring Qualities'. However, this would not affect the appreciation of the drama of the more localised features of crags, cliffs and bare rock which are more immediately experienced at the location, the sense of risk, or the degree of perceived naturalness.
Magnitude of Change	
<p>This WLA Key Quality cites the physical attributes of 'Perceived Naturalness' and 'Rugged or Challenging Terrain' and the perceptual responses of 'Risk, a Sense of Awe or Anxiety', 'Arresting and Inspiring Qualities' and 'Fulfilment from Physical Challenge'. It is most closely associated with the mountainous landscape to the north-west of the Southern Section and within the Northern Section. Of the attributes and responses which contribute to its appreciation, a Low magnitude was identified for Arresting and Inspiring Qualities, affecting the mountain location of Ben Hee within this part of the Southern Section. However, this change is associated with the appearance of the Proposed Development within the extensive southerly context and arresting view, rather than the more localised features of crags and</p>	

Location	Description of Change
	cliffs. It is unlikely that the appreciation of these features, or the perceptual responses aroused by them would be affected to a noticeable degree by the Proposed Development. Magnitude of change to the perception of this Key Quality is therefore anticipated to be Negligible from all areas.

Table 4.2.5: Magnitude of Change to WLA Key Quality: Extensive peatland slopes that appear awe-inspiring in their simplicity and contrast to neighbouring mountains, and allow wide open views of the surrounding area

Location	Description of Change
Location 1: West of Loch an Fheòir	The Proposed Development turbines would appear on the far southerly skyline in a context where existing turbines can already be perceived. The increased numbers of turbines may be perceptible and may appear slightly closer but given the prominence of other features this is anticipated to lead to a Negligible degree of change on the physical attributes of 'Perceived Naturalness' and 'Lack of Construction or Other Artefacts'. However, a Low magnitude is anticipated for the perceptual response 'Arresting or Inspiring Qualities' as the Proposed Development turbines may appear slightly closer and reduce the perceived scale and distance of the peatlands and distant hills slightly. The Proposed Development would not affect the views towards mountains from this area.
Location 2: Cnoc an Alaskie	The Proposed Development would appear within the southerly context, on the horizon within a context of existing wind turbines. A perceptible increase in turbine numbers leading to a Low magnitude of change on the physical attribute 'Lack of Construction or Other Artefacts'. Turbines would appear slightly closer which may form a slightly increased focus of wind turbines within this part of the context and could slightly reduce perceived scale and distance leading to a Low magnitude of change on the perceptual attribute 'Arresting and Inspiring Qualities'. The Proposed Development would not affect the views towards mountains from this area.
Location 3: East of Merkland Lodge	The Proposed Development would appear barely perceptible on the hills of the southern context but is unlikely to affect the appreciation of the peatland landscape to the south-east or the contrast with mountains to the north.
Location 4: Ben Hee (VP5)	The Proposed Development would appear distantly within the southern context in an area where wind turbines are already present but would appear slightly closer with a Low magnitude of change on the physical attribute 'Lack of Construction or Other Artefacts' and the perceptual response 'Arresting or Inspiring Qualities'. This could lead to some impression of the peatland context to the mountains being reduced in scale although this landscape type is more appreciated to the east and south-east.
Magnitude of Change	
The Proposed Development would appear within the southern context to the open peatland areas located in the south-east part of the Southern Section, appearing relatively distant. Where visible, it would be likely to form a perceptible increase in numbers of turbines in this part of the context and would appear to be slightly closer than existing turbines. This may have the effect of slightly reducing the perceived scale of the peatlands in this direction. From the more easterly areas, within around 2km of the WLA boundary (as represented by Location	

Location	Description of Change
	<p>1), features at Crask already appear close and limit the scale of the area to some degree. In other areas to the south-west of Cnoc an Alaskie (Location 2) and around Loch Fiag, forested areas can also be seen to reduce the apparent extent of the peatland area. The influence of the proposed turbines in this respect would therefore be relatively limited and mostly experienced in areas where these existing land use features were not evident. However, in such areas the appearance of the Proposed Development would also be much more limited due to the screening effects of the local landscape.</p> <p>Magnitude of change to the perception of this Key Quality is anticipated as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally Low in the south-east of the Southern Section, principally limited to the east of Loch Fiag and south of Meall an Fhuarain, mostly in areas where the Proposed Development would appear within the southern context, and other features or contemporary land would not be more noticeable within the foreground. • Negligible in all other areas.

4.3 Mitigation Measures

4.3.1 Potential mitigation measures which may be considered to help minimise significant effects on wild land areas are described in Box 1 of the NatureScot Guidance. These include the following recommendations:

- Rationalise the spatial extent or scale of proposal or parts of the proposal;
- Sensitive siting of components;
- A high standard of design; and
- A high standard of restoration.

4.3.2 The potential for effects on WLA 37 has been considered throughout the design process for the Proposed Development. Although the mitigation measures developed were more focussed on the aim of minimising effects on WLA 34 these measures are also considered to help reduce effects to WLA 37. The full design process is described in the Technical Appendix 2.1: Design Statement and can be summarised in relation to WLA 37 as follows:

- The design iterations for the Proposed Development have resulted in the turbine footprint being pushed as far south as possible, to the periphery of the WLA 34, to create a closer connection with the existing Achany and Rosehall wind farms.
- The development of the turbine layout has aimed to minimise the presence of turbines on higher ground and maintain a cohesive grouping of turbines to minimise the visual envelope of the Proposed Development as far as possible across the study area, including WLA 37 and the appearance of turbine spread or outlier turbines.
- The height of the proposed turbine has been reduced to under 150m in order to avoid the effects of visible aviation lighting on the WLA
- The location of tracks and permanent ancillary features such as the substation and welfare facilities has been given careful consideration in relation to the topography of the site, to minimise their visual extent.

4.4 Significance of Effects

Effects on Key Qualities

- 4.4.1 The effects of the Proposed Development would be limited to indirect effects occurring as a result of the appearance of the proposed turbines in the southerly landscape context, on the ridgeline of the southern hills. From distances ranging between 15km to 23km from the proposed turbines, the Proposed Development would be viewed across the open peatland landscape both from other areas within the peatlands, and from high ground surrounding Ben Hee which, although within the Southern Section, forms the most southerly in the group of mountains which principally characterise the Northern Section. The positioning of Ben Hee on the southern edge of the mountains leads to its being more influenced by the low lying peatlands to the south-east both in terms of the setting within which the mountain is viewed, and the expansive nature of the views which are obtained from it.
- 4.4.2 From these areas, the proposed turbines would appear within a context of existing turbines of the Rosehall and Achany Wind Farms but would appear slightly larger and closer to the WLA leading to a perceptible increase in the influence of constructed artefacts on locally more secluded parts of the landscape. This is anticipated to lead to a slight reduction in the scale of the low lying peatland landscape when viewed across it from some areas, particularly around the southern, eastern and western slopes of Cnoc an Alaskie and potentially some areas to the east of Loch Fiag, and consequently may lead to a small effect on the arresting qualities which are experienced. However, in many of these locations, existing features and contemporary land uses, particularly forest plantation, buildings and vehicles on the road around Crask, and forest plantation in Glen Fiag, already reduce the apparent scale of the peatlands. Where these features are more noticeable in the southerly context, this would reduce the degree of effect. A locally Low magnitude of change is anticipated to the WLA Key Quality, *“Extensive peatland slopes that appear awe-inspiring in their simplicity and contrast to neighbouring mountains, and allow wide open views of the surrounding area,”* across parts of this area where the reduction in scale would be experienced. Sensitivity of this WLA Key Quality to change in this area is considered to be High, but the magnitude of change would be so small and localised that the effect on the key quality is anticipated to be not significant.
- 4.4.3 From high ground around Ben Hee, the Proposed Development would also appear slightly larger and closer than existing turbines and would form an increased focus within the expansive southerly views obtained from this area. This is not anticipated to affect the WLA Key Quality of *“Extensive peatland slopes...”* because these areas are experienced more towards the south-east and east of this location. However, the increased focus in the southern landscape is anticipated to result in a Low magnitude of change to the perceptual response ‘Arresting or Inspiring Qualities’ and a consequent Low magnitude of change to the WLA Key Quality *“Towering, rugged mountains, highlighted by their prominent rock covering, that appear awe-inspiring and contribute to a strong sense of naturalness.”* However, there would be no change to the appreciation of the mountain landscape itself or the context to north, east and west which is expansive with less evidence of development or contemporary land use than the south and south-easterly context. Therefore, although the sensitivity of this WLA Key Quality is considered to be High in this location, the effect would be minimal and not significant.

- 4.4.4 The magnitude of change for all other WLA Key Qualities would be Negligible and therefore no significant effects are anticipated to any of the WLA Key Qualities.

Effects on Strength of Wildness

- 4.4.5 Within the Southern Section, generally to the west of Loch Fiag and south of of Meall an Fhuaran at distances of between around 15km and 20km of the Proposed Development, and on the higher mountain landscape of Ben Hee, where the Proposed Development would lead to a perceptible increase in numbers of turbines within the more distant southerly context, and a perceptible movement of turbines closer to the WLA, non-significant effects to the WLA Key Qualities, “*Extensive peatland slopes that appear awe-inspiring in their simplicity and contrast to neighbouring mountains, and allow wide open views of the surrounding area,*” and “*Towering, rugged mountains, highlighted by their prominent rock covering, that appear awe-inspiring and contribute to a strong sense of naturalness.*” are predicted to lead to a **Minor** (not significant) effect to localised parts of the WLA where existing features and contemporary land use such as forest plantation at Crask and in Glen Fiag are not already influential. This effect would be relatively localised across the Southern Section to areas of higher or more open ground which are beyond around 1-2km from the boundary of the WLA. However, more secluded areas towards the centre of the Southern Section where the physical and perceptual attributes of wild land are more pronounced would be unlikely to be affected to this degree as these areas are usually more concealed by local landform which would often result in the Proposed Development being entirely or largely concealed.
- 4.4.6 These effects would be localised with the effect on the majority of the Southern Section and all of the Northern Section considered to be **Negligible** and not significant.

Integrity of the WLA

- 4.4.7 Consideration of the potential effects on the integrity of WLA comprises a review against the following factors:
- Potential for change to the Jenks 8 Interpretation of the Map of Relative Wildness:
 - The identification of the area as a WLA is based on the presence and extent of Jenks 8 classifications of relative wildness; principally Classes 7 and 8, as detailed in paragraphs 2.2.8 and 2.2.9. Consideration is given to how the Proposed Development may change the Jenks 8 Classifications across the WLA, and particularly the highest Classes which have led to the identification of the WLA in this area.
 - Potential change to the presence of physical attributes, perceptual responses and WLA Key Qualities:
 - As detailed in Policy Statement 02/03, the presence of the physical attributes and perceptual responses is necessary for the identification of wild land. If the presence of these attributes / responses and the WLA Key Qualities to which they contribute were substantially lost, this would be considered to contribute to a loss of integrity for the WLA.

Jenks 8 Mapping Interpretation

- 4.4.8 Analysis of the ZTV in relation to the Jenks 8 interpretation of the Map of Relative Wildness (see Figure 4 of this Technical Appendix) shows that the majority of areas where

intervisibility of the Proposed Development would occur fall within Jenks classes 5 and 6. However, some areas of Jenks Classes 7 are also shown as potentially affected to the north-west of Cnoc an Alaskie, west of Loch Fiag and on the upper slopes of Ben Hee. Very small areas of Jenks Class 8 are also shown to be potentially affected covering lochs to the west of Ben Hee and very small patches north of Cnoc an Alaskie. As detailed in 1.2.9, Jenks Classes 7 and 8 are those required to be present in sufficient extent in order to qualify the area for identification as a WLA.

- 4.4.9 Around Ben Hee, the Proposed Development would appear very distant. In areas of Jenks Class 7, it would virtually always appear in areas where existing Achany and Rosehall turbines are already visible (see Figure 7.8.2 of Chapter 7 of the EIA Report) as demonstrated by the 'Absence of Modern Artefacts' attribute map (see Figures 3.1 and 4 of this Technical Appendix). The very small areas where existing wind turbines are not visible accounts for the small areas of Jenks Class 8 which would be affected by the Proposed Development. In these areas, theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development would be extremely limited, comprising only distant blades and tips. Although a perceptible increase in turbines and sense of turbines moving slightly closer is anticipated in the Ben Hee area, as detailed in paragraphs 4.4.3 and 4.4.5 above, this is not anticipated to lead to any significant effects on WLA Key Qualities or strength of wildness.
- 4.4.10 In the area around Cnoc an Alaskie, the cumulative ZTV (see Figure 7.8.2 of Chapter 7 of the EIA Report) shows some areas of theoretically increased turbine visibility across Jenks Class 7 areas and very small fragmented areas of Jenks Class 8. The reality of such areas is that only limited numbers of turbines would be distantly visible, reflective of the situation of other nearby areas with respect to the existing Achany and Rosehall turbines. This is recognised in the identification of a Minor effect to the strength of wildness and WLA Key Quality, "*Extensive peatland slopes...*". These areas are very small and in the context of WLA as a whole, taking into account that the vast majority of the WLA would not be affected at all, they are considered to have little bearing on the integrity of the WLA.
- 4.4.11 The vast majority of Jenks Classes 7 and 8 are located in the Northern Section and, other than a few areas of very distant intervisibility, where the Proposed Development is likely to be barely discernible, would not be affected at all.

Physical Attributes, Perceptual Responses and WLA Key Qualities

- 4.4.12 No significant effects have been identified either to any of the WLA Key Qualities or to the strength of wildness within WLA37 with only localised Minor effects likely to occur within parts of the Southern Section. The WLA Key Qualities would therefore remain well expressed in all areas where they are currently experienced.

Overall Conclusions on Integrity

- 4.4.13 Overall, the localised and distant nature of the areas likely to be affected by the Proposed Development, and the lack of significant effects is considered unlikely to lead to any risk to the integrity of any part of the WLA.

4.5 Conclusion

- 4.5.1 The WLA Assessment has identified that no significant effects would be likely to occur to WLA 37 Foinaven – Ben Hee, either to WLA Key Qualities or the strength of wildness within the WLA.
- 4.5.2 Localised Minor (not significant) effects are anticipated to two WLA Key Qualities:
- Towering, rugged mountains, highlighted by their prominent rock covering, that appear awe-inspiring and contribute to a strong sense of naturalness; and
 - Extensive peatland slopes that appear awe-inspiring in their simplicity and contrast to neighbouring mountains, and allow wide open views of the surrounding area.
- 4.5.3 These would relate to the appearance of the Proposed Development within the southern context, where it would form a perceptible increase to existing turbines which are already seen and would appear to bring wind farm development slightly closer leading to a small reduction in the sense of scale and distance to the peatland landscapes, and a slight increased of focus towards constructed features in this area. However, the Proposed Development would appear distant and small in this context and the effect would be limited to relatively small areas where existing features around the periphery of the WLA are not already more noticeable. The vast majority of the WLA would be completely unaffected by the Proposed Development and there would be no material change to any of the WLA Key Qualities. The integrity of the WLA would therefore remain intact.

The Future Baseline Situation

- 4.5.4 It is noted that the Creag Riabhach Wind Farm has already been consented partly within the eastern edge of the Southern Section of WLA 37. All conclusions on the effects of the Proposed Development on the WLA have been based on the current baseline situation and do not take account of the effects of Creag Riabhach. However, it is recognised that should this development become operational, the baseline situation would change. The turbines would form very noticeable features in the east of the Southern Section of the WLA and would be anticipated to reduce the strength of the physical attribute ‘Lack of Construction or Other Artefacts’, thereby also likely to reduce the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development to this attribute in many areas. It is anticipated that this would reduce the effect on strength of wildness across many of the areas affected and may also reduce the extent of the area within which effects to the WLA Key Qualities are anticipated. However, effects in relation to the southern context would still be likely to occur in areas further south than Creag Riabhach, though there would be no change anticipated to the current conclusions on lack of significant effects.
- 4.5.5 Given the distance of the Proposed Development from the WLA and minimal nature of anticipated effects, it is not considered that there would be any greater risk to the integrity of the WLA if the Proposed Development were to be added to a baseline where Creag Riabhach was already operational.