

TECHNICAL APPENDIX 15.1: DRAFT OUTDOOR ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

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15. Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan

15.1 Introduction

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

15.2 Methodology

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

15.3 Outdoor Access Baseline

15.3.1 As set out in Chapter 15: Land Use and Recreation of the Cloiche Wind Farm EIA Report, there are a number of walking routes and trails within 15km of the Proposed Development. Three of these routes run through the Proposed Development site boundary:

- Scottish Hill Track 235 (Right of Way RoW HI109) is a route used by walkers between Whitebridge and Laggan, and is also sometimes used by participants of The Great Outdoors Challenge;
- The Monadhliath Trail is a 28 mile (45km) route that runs from the Stronelairg Wind Farm site entrance off the B862 road high into the Monadhliath Mountains via the operational wind farm access track, before heading north via estate tracks to loch Killin and then a minor public road and ending south of Whitebridge. The route follows tracks and minor roads and is not a waymarked trail; and
- Route to access the Corbett Carn a' Chuilinn; a 17km route which commences at the Stronelairg Wind Farm site entrance, follows the operational wind farm access track for approximately 5km, before heading south across boggy, rough and pathless terrain to the hill summit.

15.3.2 Two further recreational trails cross the access track near the site entrance off the B862:

- South Loch Ness Trail, which is a long-distance route that stretches for approximately 34 miles between Loch Tarff to Torbeck on the edge of Inverness via Whitebridge, Foyers, Inverfarigaig and Dores. In August 2018, an additional 4 km spur that links the trail from the Stronelairg Wind Farm site entrance to Bridge of Tarff (on the edge of Fort Augustus) opened, to allow access for pedestrians away from the B862 road. This extension incorporates a footpath that was provided by SSE Renewables as part of the planning consent for Stronelairg Wind Farm. The trail is used by a variety of users including both walkers and cyclists; and

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

- The Loch Ness 360° Trail, which is a long distance route that connects the Great Glen Way and the South Loch Ness Trail into one circuit around the circumference of Loch Ness.

15.3.3 **Figure A15.1** shows the existing routes and trails within the Proposed Development site.

15.3.4 Within 15km of the Proposed Development, there are seven Munros (mountains over 3,000 feet) and six Corbett's (a mountain over 2,500 feet) and several long-distance trails, core paths and routes including the Corrieyairack Pass. These walking routes are detailed further within Chapter 15 of the EIA Report.

15.4 Potential Access Impacts

Construction Phase

15.4.1 The primary access impact associated with the Proposed Development would arise during the construction phase of the project. Construction works of the Proposed Development are anticipated to last between 24 - 36 months.

15.4.2 There would be potential disruption to the recreational users of three walking routes, as follows:

- Scottish Hill Track 235 (RoW HI109); sections of the route pass through the Proposed Development site and construction of access tracks would interact with this route in proximity to turbines C30 and C31. One of the proposed permanent Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) Stations is located adjacent to this route;
- Monadhliath Trail; part of this route provides access for the Proposed Development, although the same section is currently used by maintenance vehicles gaining access to the operational Stronelaig Wind Farm and Glendoe hydroelectric scheme; and
- Route to access the Corbett Carn a' Chuilinn; a section of the route provides access for the Proposed Development although the same section is currently used by maintenance vehicles gaining access to the operational Stronelaig Wind Farm and Glendoe hydroelectric scheme

15.4.3 There may be some disruption during the construction works to users of the South Loch Ness Trail and Loch Ness 360 Trail, specifically the section near the Stronelaig Wind Farm site entrance where the trail crosses the access track. The additional spur that links the trail from the Stronelaig Wind farm site entrance to Bridge of Tarff (on the edge of Fort Augustus) allows access for pedestrians away from the B862 road limiting interaction with construction vehicles.

15.4.4 During the construction phase every effort would be made to ensure accesses to the existing walking routes / trails are maintained. However, to ensure the safety of the public, some additional measures will be required. Further details of the management strategy are presented in section 15.5 of this Plan.

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

Operational Phase

15.4.6 Potential access impacts during the operational phase include routine maintenance and servicing vehicles using tracks to access the wind farm site which could interact with rights of way that pass through the site.

- 15.4.7 Additional impacts would include ice throw and lightning during adverse weather and ongoing Estate activities (shooting etc.).

15.5 Access Arrangements

General Access Arrangements

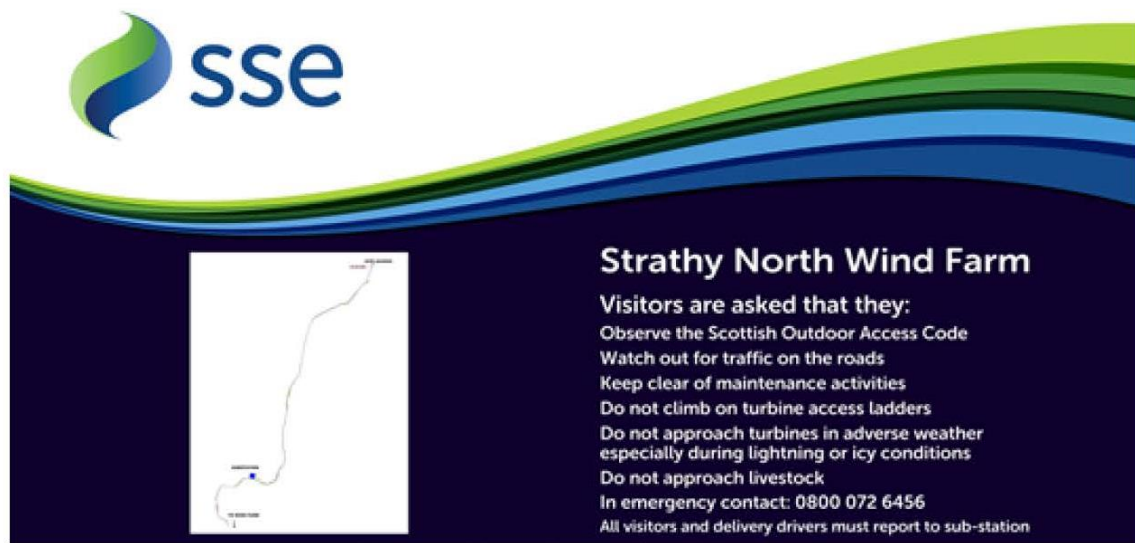
- 15.5.1 SSE is committed to enabling day to day access where the safety of the general public or construction staff is not compromised. It is envisaged that with the correct management strategy, access can be maintained to all existing routes within the development site, and hence to the wider area.
- 15.5.2 Prior to commencement of the construction works, access arrangements and appropriate warnings would be communicated to the local community via the community liaison group, wind farm website and local mailing list.
- 15.5.3 From time to time, short term restrictions on access may be required where there is no safe alternative. These restrictions would be communicated via the same method.
- 15.5.4 SSE would liaise with the landowners to minimise the disruption to estate run activities where possible.

Existing Rights of Way

- 15.5.5 Where there is potential for interaction along Scottish Hill Track 235 (HI109), the Monadhliath Trail route to access the Corbett Carn a' Chuilinn, South Loch Ness Trail and Loch Ness 360 Trail with construction activities, it is proposed that these interactions will be managed through:
- Warning signage indicating the likelihood of construction traffic will be placed at regular intervals along the walking routes / trails (see Plate 1);
 - A site information leaflet will be posted at regular intervals along the track, informing members of the public 'what to do' of site traffic is encountered;
 - Speed limit of construction traffic on tracks to be set to 15 mph with appropriate signage highlighted;
 - Site rules will dictate flashing / hazard lights are to be switched on by all construction traffic vehicles while using site tracks;
 - Warning signage for construction staff highlighting that members of the public may be utilising routes (see Plate 2); and
 - Training / briefing of all drivers to be aware of path users.
- 15.5.6 The above arrangements will be implemented to ensure both that those wishing to take access are informed of construction hazards, and that construction workers are trained to anticipate and take measures to avoid other access users.
- 15.5.7 Proposed Right of Way Management strategies are set out on **Figure A15.2**.

Plate 1: Example Pedestrian Warning Sign**Plate 2: Example Construction Staff Warning Sign****New Wind Farm Access Tracks**

- 15.5.8 As part of the Proposed Development, new access tracks will be constructed and once the wind farm becomes operational, the public will be able to fully access these tracks by foot and by bicycle.
- 15.5.9 During construction of these new tracks, access will be restricted to the general public on safety grounds. Access gates will be installed to limit unauthorised vehicles from entering the site (e.g. joyriders) and pass gates will be installed where the site entrance meets the B862 to accommodate walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
- Signage will be put in place where the site entrance meets the B862 and where the existing rights of way intersect the new access tracks (as indicated on **Figure A15.2**) with a purpose to highlight to the public the risk of entering the site.
- 15.5.10 In the longer term, signage would be put in place for the lifetime of the wind farm with the purpose of highlighting to the public the potential safety issues of accessing the site during adverse weather (e.g. ice throw and lightning etc.) and ongoing Estate activities (shooting etc.) (see Plate 3). These are already in place at the site entrance for the operational Stronelairg Wind Farm but would also be placed where existing walking routes intersect with the Proposed Development.

Plate 3: Example Operational Signage**15.6 Conclusions**

- 15.6.1 SSE aims to maintain access during construction of the Proposed Development and by implementing the management strategies set out in section 15.5 of this Plan, it is believed that this can be achieved while ensuring the safety of the public and construction staff.

