

TECHNICAL APPENDIX 8.4: ASSESSMENT OF DESIGNATED AND PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

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1. Technical Appendix 8.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This appendix sets out the assessment findings for the Landscape Character Assessment included within the 2021 EIAR, outlining any changes to the assessment for the Proposed Varied Development.
- 1.1.2 This appendix details the assessment of effects of the Proposed Varied Development on designated and protected landscapes within the study area, outlining any changes to effects when compared to those of the Consented Development.
- 1.1.3 The assessment gives consideration to effects on landscape character and identified Special Qualities. Conclusions made during the assessment of Landscape Character Types (LCTs) (see **Technical Appendix 8.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types**) are used to feed into this assessment and are cross referenced as necessary.
- 1.1.4 This assessment does not include cumulative landscape effects or effects of visible aviation lighting which are discussed in **Technical Appendix 8.8: Cumulative Landscape Tables** and **Technical Appendix 8.9: Landscape and Visual Assessment of Aviation Lighting** respectively.

1.2 Designated and Protected Landscapes

1.2.1 High Level Appraisal of Designated and Protected Landscapes

Table 1.1: Designated and/or Protected Landscapes Included for Further Assessment

Designated / Protected Landscape	Potential Effects	Further Assessment
Glen Affric National Scenic Area (NSA)	<p>The Scoping Report proposed the inclusion of the NSA within the assessment due to the potential for new effects relating to aviation lighting.</p> <p>Effects were identified as Negligible in the 2021 LVIA.</p> <p>There would be very little increase to theoretical visibility within the NSA. Where seen, principally from elevated mountain areas surrounding the glen, the Proposed Varied Development would appear perceptibly larger but the full height of turbines would rarely be seen, meaning it would be unlikely to appear noticeably closer to the NSA. This may slightly reduce the level of perceived remoteness but the Proposed Varied Development would still be seen within a context where existing wind turbines are present, often appearing indistinguishable from these turbines. The SLQs of the NSA are typically focussed within the glen area and associated with the journey westwards and it is considered unlikely that effects to the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) would increase to a level which would be significant.</p>	<p>This area has been scoped out of further day-time assessment but has been considered further within the assessment of effects on visible aviation lighting (see Technical Appendix 8.9: Landscape and Visual Assessment of Aviation Lighting).</p>
WLA 19:	<p>The Scoping Report proposed the inclusion of WLA 19 within the assessment due to the potential for new effects relating to aviation lighting.</p> <p>Effects were identified as Minor within a very localised area in the 2021 LVIA and generally Negligible. No perceptible effect was predicted for any of the Wild Land Qualities (WLQs)</p> <p>The ZTV indicates that there would be very little additional visibility within this area, although the turbines would be perceived as larger in comparison with adjacent turbines. However, the areas affected are already influenced by existing wind turbines at closer proximity and therefore any changes to the attributes and perceptual responses of wild land which contribute to the WLQs are likely to be limited and any effects are unlikely to increase to a significant level.</p>	<p>This area has been scoped out of further day-time assessment but has been considered further within the assessment of effects on visible aviation lighting (see Technical Appendix 8.9).</p>
WLA 24: Central Highlands	<p>The Scoping Report proposed the inclusion of WLA 24 within the assessment due to the potential for new effects relating to aviation lighting.</p> <p>The 2021 LVIA identified localised Minor effects to this WLA within areas north of Glen Cannich with which the Proposed Development would be intervisible. No perceptible effect was predicted for any of the WLQs.</p> <p>The ZTV indicates some small areas of increased intervisibility to the west of the Proposed Varied</p>	<p>This area has been scoped out of further day-time assessment but has been considered further within the assessment of effects on visible aviation lighting (see</p>

Designated / Protected Landscape	Potential Effects	Further Assessment
	Development, in areas where the effect was considered to be Negligible due to the perceptibly closer presence of the operational Bhlaraidh Wind Farm. Limited increased intervisibility is indicated in the areas to the north of Glen Cannich. The Proposed Varied Development turbines would appear slightly larger in the context from these areas, but would continue to be seen in the context of other operational developments which already affect the sense of wildness. It is considered unlikely that effects would increase to a level that would be significant.	Technical Appendix 8.9).
Loch Ness and Duntelchaig Special Landscape Area (SLA)	<p>The Scoping Report proposed the inclusion of the SLA within the assessment as it is considered that the taller turbines may lead to increased prominence within parts of the landscape.</p> <p>The 2021 assessment identified a localised Minor effect within open elevated parts of this SLA, with effects elsewhere being Negligible.</p> <p>The comparative ZTV does not show much additional intervisibility with this SLA, but the turbines would appear taller and potentially closer and, given the proximity of the Proposed Development to parts of this SLA, it is considered that this may increase the level of effect.</p>	<p>This area has been included in assessments for both day time effects (see Table 1.2 below) and effects of visible aviation lighting (see Technical Appendix 8.9).</p>

1.3 Detailed assessment of Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA

Table 1.2: Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA

Landscape Baseline	
Description	<p>This SLA, located 1.9 km from the Proposed Development, surrounds and includes Loch Ness and surrounding areas, from Lochend in the north to Fort Augustus in the south. It is characterised by the strongly linear landform of the Great Glen fault, which contains the large waterbody of Loch Ness. The steep, wooded loch sides contrast with the horizontal expanse of water. To the east, the landscape consists of a mosaic of undulating moorland, tracts of woodland and smaller lochs, including Loch Duntelchaig. This creates a contrast to the scale and simplicity of the Great Glen. A number of rivers and burns cut into the steep slopes and flow into Loch Ness. Settlements are found by the mouths of these rivers, the largest of these being Fort Augustus, Invermoriston and Drumnadrochit. The human scale of these settlements is juxtaposed against the vast extent of open water and dramatic linear landform. A number of historic features are found along the shores, and create focal points in the landscape. One of these is Urquhart Castle, which sits on a headland protruding into the loch on the western side. The scale of the landscape is difficult to perceive due to a lack of size indicators, although elevated viewpoints reveal the glen within its context as a landscape of elevated plateaux and hills.</p>
Special Qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dramatic Great Glen, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The striking profile of the glen, seen from either end, the water and elevated viewpoints on loch-side ridges and hill tops; ○ Steep-sided slopes, incised by watercourses with woodland and forest and an open and smooth, moorland skyline ridge; ○ The contrast between northern and southern loch-side in relation to access, activity and settlement; ○ Distinctive views of grand proportions and long vistas along Loch Ness; ○ Atmospheric mists and low clouds; ○ Urquhart Castle and Foyers former British Aluminium Factory, prominent focal points along the loch; ○ Varying experience of the SLA from the B852, B851, and A82, the Great Glen Way and Caledonian Canal; and ○ Prominent landmark of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh and role as a vantage point. • Contrasting Intimate Plateau, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intimate mix of landscape elements of changing visual interest. • Historic landscapes, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Achculin depopulated township; ○ Intensive prehistoric activity associated with Loch Duntelchaig, Loch Ashie and Loch Ruthven; and ○ The Caledonian Canal and Fort Augustus Abbey.
Landscape Value	<p>This is a highly valued landscape, which is appreciated for its scenic qualities and historical features by tourists and visitors, on both a national and international level. It is representative of the dramatic landform of the Great Glen as a whole and its recognition as an SLA gives it a generally high landscape value.</p>

Landscape Baseline	
Changes to the Landscape Baseline since 2021 EIAR	On-going management within the SLA may have led to some changes in forest and woodland cover. However, this has not led to any noticeable change in character, and therefore no noticeable changes in the baseline characteristics of the landscape have been observed.
Consented Development – Summary of Landscape Effects	
Summary of 2021 LVIA	<p>The 2021 LVIA identified a localised Minor (not significant) effect to the SLA during construction and operation with the effect being Negligible elsewhere.</p> <p>It was noted that only very localised parts of the SLA would be intervisible with the 2021 Proposed Development and that this intervisibility would be further reduced across lower slopes and loch shore areas by local woodland cover. It was considered that the turbine would be relatively noticeable from some higher areas east and west of Loch Ness, including around Suidhe and elevated areas south of Dore (VP 17), seen next to the Operational Development and would also be prominent within the immediate context to the west when seen from some sections of the western ridgeline including Meall Fuar Mhonaidh and some parts of the Great Glen Way.</p> <p>This was predicted to lead to some effect on the Special Quality “<i>The Dramatic Great Glen</i>” through its appearance from elevated viewpoints including Meall Fuar Mhonaidh, and as addition to the skyline within the context of the Glen from some locations. However, as it would be seen in the context of the Operational Development and would not be seen in the direction of the Great Glen from Meall Fuar Mhonaidh nor affect its prominence as a landmark, it was not considered that there would be a notable change to the appreciation of the Great Glen.</p> <p>Some localised, non-significant visual effects along parts of the Great Glen Way would also lead to some effect on appreciation of the SLA from this route, which is also noted as a contributory element to this Special Quality.</p> <p>When taking account of the contribution of these effects on Special Qualities and on the SLA as a whole, the landscape effect is considered to be <i>locally Minor</i> for open elevated areas of the SLA during construction and operation and Negligible elsewhere.</p>
Consented Layout	The consented layout of 15 turbines would not change the assessment or conclusions for this LCT.
Proposed Varied Development – Assessment of Landscape Effects	
Landscape Sensitivity	This is a valued landscape, as recognised by its designated status. The expansive vistas obtained from elevated areas and across open waters, and the intimate scale of the loch-shore areas, are susceptible to change of the type proposed. Landscape sensitivity to change of the type proposed is therefore considered to be High.
Magnitude of Change	<p>The Proposed Varied Development would be similarly experienced from elevated areas within the SLA, notably above the eastern shore of Loch Ness around Dore within Landscape Character Type (LCT) 225, occasional rocky crags and summits of the plateau area within LCT 224 including Carn an t-Suidhe (VP6), and the ridge and summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh (VP3) to the west of Loch Ness, within LCT 222. The comparative ZTV (see Figure 8.3: Comparative ZTV of the Consented Development and Proposed Varied Development and Figure 8.4: Designated and Protected Landscapes with Proposed Varied Development ZTV) indicates that there would be few areas of increased intervisibility between the SLA and the Proposed Varied Development. However, the taller turbines of the Proposed Varied Development would be typically more prominent when seen from areas of higher ground around the east of Loch Ness with greater numbers of turbines appearing and/or often hubs appearing as opposed to only blades or tips of the Consented Development. However, these views would</p>

Landscape Baseline	
	<p>remain relatively infrequent due to existing woodland cover and local landform and the turbines would still appear external to the landscape of the Great Glen and Duntelchaig areas.</p> <p>On the western side of Loch Ness, around the Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit and ridge area, the turbines would be noticeably taller than the Consented Development. Although they would continue to be located in the same part of the context as the Operational Development and within views orientated away from the Great Glen, the greater disparity in turbine size would lead to them appearing closer to the SLA, less associated with the Operational Development turbines, and within the more immediate landscape setting.</p> <p>Magnitude of change is considered to be Medium within the area around Meall Fuar-mhonaidh but would be Low within the area lying to the east of Loch Ness and generally Negligible within lower lying areas around the Loch Shore.</p>
Effect Significance	<p>The taller turbines and increased prominence of the Proposed Varied Development experienced from occasional areas to the east of Loch Ness would appear similar to the Consented Development although may slightly increase the impression of a more developed upland context to the west, as noted in the assessment tables for LCT 224 and LCT 225 (see Technical Appendix 8.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types). This may lead to some localised effect on the elements of “<i>Distinctive views of grand proportions...</i>” and “<i>The striking profile of the glen...</i>” experienced from some areas such as Suidhe and elevated routes above Dores where the Proposed Varied Development may form a distracting feature. However, within these areas, it would still appear external to the Great Glen and the SLA, associated with the wider upland landscape beyond the confines of the glen.</p> <p>From areas around Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, the Proposed Varied Development would appear closer and more present within the immediate landscape than the Consented Development. This is not predicted to affect the role of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh as a landmark when experienced from elsewhere within the SLA (for example, see VP17 (Figures V3a-12.1-12.4 and V3b-12.1-12.5) where the striking feature of the hill would not be compromised by the Proposed Varied Development) or the appreciation of the Great Glen when seen from its summit as the turbines would be experienced in the westerly context. However, the closeness of the Proposed Varied Development would be experienced from on and around its summit, reducing the extent and availability of views over the western hills (see Technical Appendix 8.6: Visual Assessment Tables, VP3, where a Moderate (significant) visual effect is predicted). This is predicted to somewhat reduce the connection to the wider, western landscape of the Balmacaan and Affric mountain interior which is described in the citation, and the remote qualities of the hill-top.</p> <p>Overall, it is considered that there would be a Minor (not significant) effect on the SLA, affecting the Special Quality, “<i>The Dramatic Great Glen.</i>” However, this effect is predicted to be locally Moderate (significant) around the western ridge and summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh during construction and operation. Nevertheless, Meall Fuar-mhonaidh would remain an integral part of the SLA and it’s setting in relation to the Great Glen would not be affected. This would therefore ensure that the role of the SLA as a whole would not be compromised.</p>
Change to Effect Significance	<p>The level of effect is predicted to increase slightly from a localised Minor (not significant) effect to a Minor (not significant) effect on the SLA as a whole. The effect is also predicted to increase to Moderate (significant) within a localised area around Meall Fuar-mhonaidh.</p>