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The Scottish Government
Energy Consents Unit

Scoping Opinion on behalf of Scottish Ministers under the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

Achany Extension Wind Farm
SSE Renewables

13th August 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 This scoping opinion is issued by the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit on behalf of the Scottish Ministers to SSE Renewables a company incorporated under the Companies Acts with company number SC435847 and having its registered office at Inveralmond House, 200 Dunkeld Road, Perth, PH1 3AQ ("the Company") in response to a request dated 13th June 2025 for a scoping opinion under the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 in relation to the proposed Achany Extension Wind Farm ("the proposed development"). The request was accompanied by a Scoping Report.

1.2 The proposed development lies immediately to the north-west of the Applicant's operational Achany Wind Farm, Lairg.

1.3 The proposed development is for 18 wind turbines (200m blade to tip height) with a proposed generating capacity of 81MW. The turbines have a hub height of 132m (meter) and a rotor diameter of 136m.

1.4 In addition to the turbines there will be ancillary infrastructure including:

- Crane hardstandings
- An onsite substation
- Access tracks
- Turning heads
- A new Aviation Lighting Solution

1.5 The Company indicates the proposed development would be decommissioned after 50 years and the site restored in accordance with the decommissioning and restoration plan.

1.6 The proposed development is solely within the planning authority of The Highland Council.

1.7 The Proposed Development is a variation of a Consent Development that was granted on May 22nd 2023 by Scottish Ministers (ECU00001930). The Consented Development was to be comprised of 18 wind turbine generators with a tip height of up to 149.9m and a generating capacity greater than 50MW.

The proposed varied development has a site boundary identical to that of the Consented Development. No statutory designated nature conservation sites are located within the site boundary. However, there are several designated sites of ecological importance within 10km (kilometre) of the proposed development. These include:

- River Oykel SAC
- Caithness & Sutherland Peatlands SAC
- Caithness & Sutherland Peatlands Ramsar
- Strath an Loin SSSI
- Grudie Peatlands SSSI
- Kyle of Sutherland Marshes SSSI
- Ben More Assynt SSSI
- Flow Country – UNESCO World Heritage Centre

2. Consultation

2.1 Following the scoping opinion request a list of consultees was agreed between SSE Renewables (acting as the Company's agent) and the Energy Consents Unit. A consultation on the Scoping Report was undertaken by the Scottish Ministers and this commenced on 13th June 2025. The consultation closed on 28th July 2025. Extensions to this deadline were granted to The Highland Council, Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot and RSPB Scotland. The Scottish Ministers also requested responses from their internal advisors Transport Scotland and Scottish Forestry. Standing advice from Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital (MD-SEDD) has been provided with requirements to complete a checklist prior to the submission of the application for consent under section **36C** of the Electricity Act 1989. All consultation responses received, and the standing advice from MD-SEDD, are attached in ***ANNEX A Consultation responses*** and ***ANNEX B MD-SEDD Standing Advice.***

2.2 The purpose of the consultation was to obtain scoping advice from each consultee on environmental matters within their remit. Responses from consultees and advisors, including the standing advice from MD-SEDD, should be read in full for detailed requirements and for comprehensive guidance, advice and, where appropriate, templates for preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report.

2.3 Unless stated to the contrary in this scoping opinion, Scottish Ministers expect the EIA report to include all matters raised in responses from the consultees and advisors.

2.4 The following organisations were consulted but did not provide a response:

Ardgay and District Community Council

British Horse Society

Civil Aviation Authority

Crown Estate Scotland

Fisheries Trust - Kyle of Sutherland

Friends of the Earth (Scotland)

Highland and Islands Enterprise

Inverness Chamber of Commerce

John Muir Trust

Lairg Community Council

Mountaineering Scotland

OFCOM

Scottish Canoe Association

Scottish Forestry

Scottish & Southern Electricty Networks (SSE)

ScotWays

Scottish Water

Scottish Wildlife Trust

Scottish Wild Land Group

Visit Scotland

WWF (Scotland)

2.5 With regard to those consultees who did not respond, it is assumed that they have no comment to make on the Scoping Report, however each would be consulted again in the event that an application for section 36C consent is submitted subsequent to this EIA scoping opinion.

2.6 The Scottish Ministers are satisfied that the requirements for consultation set out in Regulation 12(4) of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 have been met.

3. The Scoping Opinion

3.1 This scoping opinion has been adopted following consultation with The Highland Council, within whose area the proposed development would be situated, NatureScot, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Historic Environment Scotland, all as statutory consultation bodies, and with other bodies which Scottish Ministers consider likely to have an interest in the proposed development by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities or local and regional competencies.

3.2 Scottish Ministers adopt this scoping opinion having taken into account the information provided by the applicant in its request dated 13th June 2025 in respect of the specific characteristics of the proposed development and responses received to the consultation undertaken. In providing this scoping opinion, the Scottish Ministers have had regard to current knowledge and methods of assessment; have taken into account the specific characteristics of the proposed development, the specific characteristics of that type of development and the environmental features likely to be affected.

3.3 A copy of this scoping opinion has been sent to The Highland Council for publication on their website. It has also been published on the Scottish Government energy consents website at www.energyconsents.scot.

3.4 Scottish Ministers expect the EIA report which will accompany the application for the proposed development to consider in full all consultation responses attached in **Annex A and Annex B**.

3.5 Scottish Ministers are satisfied with the scope of the EIA set out at Section **3** of the Scoping Report.

3.6 In addition to the consultation responses, Ministers wish to provide comments with regards to the scope of the EIA report. The Company should note and address each matter.

3.7 Scottish Water did not provide any information on whether there are any drinking water protected areas or Scottish Water assets on which the development could have any significant effect. It did not respond to the consultation. However Scottish Ministers request that the company contacts Scottish Water (via EIA@scottishwater.co.uk) and makes further enquires to confirm whether there any Scottish Water assets which may be affected by the development, and includes details in the EIA report of any relevant mitigation measures to be provided.

3.8 Scottish Ministers request that the Company investigates the presence of any private water supplies which may be impacted by the development. The EIA report should include details of any supplies identified by this investigation, and if any supplies are identified, the Company should provide an assessment of the potential impacts, risks, and any mitigation which would be provided.

3.9 Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital (MD-SEDD) provide generic scoping guidelines for onshore wind farm and overhead line development https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/Freshwater/Research/onshoreren) which outline how fish populations can be impacted during the construction, operation and decommissioning of a wind farm or overhead line development and informs developers as to what should be considered, in relation to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries, during the EIA process.

3.10 In addition to identifying the main watercourses and waterbodies within and downstream of the proposed development area, developers should identify and consider, at this early stage, any areas of Special Areas of Conservation where fish are a qualifying feature and proposed felling operations particularly in acid sensitive areas.

3.11 MD-SEDD also provide standing advice for onshore wind farm or overhead line development (which has been appended at Annex B) which outlines what information, relating to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries, is expected in the EIA report. Use of the checklist, provided in Annex 1 of the standing advice, should ensure that the EIA report contains the required information; the absence of such information may necessitate requesting additional information which may delay the process. Developers are required to submit the completed checklist in advance of their application submission.

3.12 Scottish Ministers consider that where there is a demonstrable requirement for peat landslide hazard and risk assessment (PLHRA), the assessment should be undertaken as part of the EIA process to provide Ministers with a clear understanding of whether the risks are acceptable and capable of being controlled by mitigation measures. The Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessments: Best Practice Guide for Proposed Electricity Generation Developments (Second Edition), published at http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/04/8868, should be followed in the preparation of the EIA report, which should contain such an assessment and details of mitigation measures. Where a PLHRA is not required clear justification for not carrying out such a risk assessment is required.

Due to the increase in turbine height and the slight change in location, Scottish Ministers recommend that further peat survey data is collected to determine the location of the proposed infrastructure.

3.13 The Scoping Report identified viewpoints at Table 5.4 to be assessed within the landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA). The Highland Council (THC) are satisfied with the viewpoints selected in the Scoping Report. However, THC requests that the EIAR's (Environmental Impact Assessment Report) photomontages follow the Council's Visualisation Standards. Scottish Ministers also advise that the LVIA refer to the Council's Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG). For the LVIA, the Council requests the use of single frame images for the EIAR, are taken with a 35mm format full frame sensor camera. The required focal lengths are 50mm and 75mm.

Historic Environmental Scotland (HES) requests updated photomontages to allow them to assess the visual impact of the proposed site on the Dail Langwell broch

monument (SM1852). HES are content that all other heritage assets are scoped out of the EIA.

NatureScot have requested additional viewpoints: 18 Carn Chuinneag, 19 Seana Bhràigh and 20 Cul Mòr are included in the LVIA. A night-time assessment has been requested for viewpoints 6 Rosehall, 9 Achnairn caravan and camping site entrance and 12 Glencassley road by Langwell Hill.

Scottish Minister's advice that finalised Viewpoints (VP) and wireframes for the EIAR must be agreed in advance of preparation of any visuals with THC, HES and NatureScot.

3.14 The noise assessment should be carried out in line with relevant legislation and standards as detailed in section 4 of the Scoping Report. The noise assessment report should be formatted as per Table 6.1 of the IOA "A Good Practice Guide to the Application of ETSU-R-97 for the Assessment and Rating of Wind Turbine Noise.".

Due to the increase in turbine height, Scottish Ministers advises that a new noise assessment is carried out for operational noise. However, due to the distance of the proposed development from noise sensitive receptors, construction noise and vibration assessments can be scoped out of the EIAR if construction is carried out within typical working hours.

3.15 As the maximum blade tip height of turbines exceeds 150m the LVIA as detailed in section 5 of the Scoping Report must include a robust Night Time Assessment with agreed viewpoints to consider the effects of aviation lighting and how the chosen lighting mitigates the effects.

3.16 It is recommended by the Scottish Ministers that decisions on bird surveys – species, methodology, vantage points, viewsheds & duration - site specific & cumulative – should be made following discussion between the Company and NatureScot and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Scotland.

Scottish Ministers advise that the protected species survey work conducted for the original EIAR (2021) cannot be used in support of the current application. The protected species surveys for the 2021 EIAR were completed in 2020, meaning the data is 5 years old. The applicant will need to provide protected species survey data within the previous two 'survey seasons'.

Scottish Ministers consider some of the ornithological data of the Scoping Report to be out of date, as the surveys were undertaken in 2019 and 2020. NatureScot Guidance advises that bird survey methods to inform impact assessment for onshore windfarms' are invalid if data is greater than 5 years old. Scottish Ministers advise that the relevant data is submitted within the EIAR, including flight map data and full assessment of collision risks.

For the collision risk model, RSPB is requesting that updated baseline data is used and collected over a minimum of one year. They also have concerns that the location of the proposed development is between a nest of white-tailed Eagles and several suitable feeding lochs. RSPB requests that the Highland Raptor Study Group is

contacted for further information, and further Vantage Point surveys are undertaken to inform a collision risk assessment.

The Scottish Ministers recommend bird surveys must be carried out in relation to the qualifying features of the relevant Special Protection Area (SPA) / Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

3.17 Where borrow pits are proposed as a source of on-site aggregate they should be considered as part of the EIA process and included in the EIA report detailing information regarding their location, size and nature. Ultimately, it would be necessary to provide details of the proposed depth of the excavation compared to the actual topography and water table, proposed drainage and settlement traps, turf and overburden removal and storage for reinstatement, and details of the proposed restoration profile. The impact of such facilities (including dust, blasting and impact on water) should be appraised as part of the overall impact of the working. Information should cover the requirements set out in '**PAN 50: Controlling the Environmental Effects of Surface Mineral Workings**'.

3.18 Further recommendations from the Scottish Ministers includes the EIAR being informed by the Council's Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment Supplementary Guidance.

As the proposed development has no infrastructure within 250m of a private water supply (PWS), it is possible that a detailed risk assessment on PWS abstractions may be scoped out. However, Scottish Ministers advise that the applicant submits information detailing the assessment undertaken to date, and the sources of information which have informed the conclusion.

General guidance recommended advice by Scottish Ministers include, but are not limited to, an up-to-date National vegetation Classification (NVC) survey for the EIAR, a map and assessment of impacts upon Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE).

HES requests that the removal of turbine T2 and the relocation of turbine T8 are considered. The Scottish Ministers recommend that the applicant discuss and agree mitigation with HES prior to submission of any forthcoming application.

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has concerns that the turbines may cause a physical obstruction to air traffic movements. Specifically, DIO's concerns relate to the Tactical Training Area 14 (TTA 14T) and the related low level flight training. The Scottish Ministers recommend that the applicant discuss and agree mitigation with the DIO prior to submission of any forthcoming application.

Due to the increase in turbine heigh and weight, Transport Scotland (TS) is requesting a screening assessment of Traffic and Transport effects for the EIAR. TS also requests that updated data is used for the trunk road base traffic flows in the screening assessment. Furthermore, TS is requesting that a full Abnormal Loads Assessment Report is provided.

3.19 The Scottish Ministers request that the company assess the impact of the proposed development on existing and/or planned infrastructure. In particular, the company should carry out the necessary assessments to confirm if any part of the proposed development is within the consultation zone of any of the following:-

- a licenced explosives site;
- gas (or any other) pipeline;
- existing overhead electric lines;
- underground cables;
- water pipes;
- telecommunications links.

3.20 Scottish Ministers request the company to assess if any flammable, toxic or explosive chemicals detailed in The Town and Country Planning (Hazardous Substances) (Scotland) Regulations 2015 would be stored on site in quantities such that a Hazardous Substances Consent would be required under section 2 of the Planning (Hazardous Substances) (Scotland) Act 1997.

3.21 Ministers are aware that further engagement is required between parties regarding the refinement of the design of the proposed development regarding, among other things, surveys, management plans, peat, radio links, finalisation of viewpoints, cultural heritage, cumulative assessments and request that they are kept informed of relevant discussions.

4. Mitigation Measures

4.1 The Scottish Ministers are required to make a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the proposed development on the environment as identified in the environmental impact assessment. The mitigation measures suggested for any significant environmental impacts identified should be presented as a conclusion to each chapter. Applicants are also asked to provide a consolidated schedule of all mitigation measures proposed in the environmental assessment, provided in tabular form, where that mitigation is relied upon in relation to reported conclusions of likelihood or significance of impacts.

5. Conclusion

5.1 This scoping opinion is based on information contained in the applicant's written request for a scoping opinion and information available at the date of this scoping opinion. The adoption of this scoping opinion by the Scottish Ministers does not preclude the Scottish Ministers from requiring of the applicant information in connection with an EIA report submitted in connection with any application for section 36C consent for the proposed development.

5.2 This scoping opinion will not prevent the Scottish Ministers from seeking additional information at application stage, for example to include cumulative impacts of additional developments which enter the planning process after the date of this opinion.

5.3 Without prejudice to that generality, it is recommended that advice regarding the requirement for an additional scoping opinion be sought from Scottish Ministers in the event that no application has been submitted within 12 months of the date of this opinion.

5.4 It is acknowledged that the environmental impact assessment process is iterative and should inform the final layout and design of proposed developments. Scottish Ministers note that further engagement between relevant parties in relation to the refinement of the design of this proposed development will be required, and would request that they are kept informed of on-going discussions in relation to this.

5.5 Applicants are encouraged to engage with officials at the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit at the pre-application stage and before proposals reach design freeze.

5.6 When finalising the EIA report, applicants are asked to provide a summary in tabular form of where within the EIA report each of the specific matters raised in this scoping opinion has been addressed.

5.7 It should be noted that to facilitate uploading to the Energy Consents portal, the EIA report and its associated documentation should be divided into appropriately named separate files of sizes no more than 10 megabytes (MB).

Niall MacQuarrie

Energy Consents Unit

13th August 2025

ANNEX A

Consultation

List of consultees who provided a response.

- The Highland Council A1-A25
- Historic Environment Scotland A26-A29
- NatureScot A30-A31
- Scottish Environmental Protection Agency A32-A47
- British Telecommunications plc A48-A51
- The Coal Authority A52
- Creich Community Council A53-A54
- Defence Infrastructure Organisation A55-A57
- District Salmon Fisheries Board - Kyle of Sutherland A58-A59
- Health and Safety Executive A60-A61
- Highlands and Islands Airports Limited A62-A65
- Joint Radio Company Limited A66-A69
- The Met Office A70-A72
- NATS Safeguarding A73-A76
- Office for Nuclear Regulation A77-A79
- RSPB Scotland A80-A83
- Scottish Gas Networks (SGN) A84-A85
- Transport Scotland A86-A88

Internal advice from areas of the Scottish Government was provided by officials from Transport Scotland and Marine Directorate (in the form of standing advice from Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital (MD-SEDD or bespoke advice from Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital (MD-SEDD).

See Section 2.4 above for a list of organisations that were consulted but did not provide a response.

A1

The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Energy Consents Unit
Per: Niall MacQuarrie
Scottish Government
5 Atlantic Quay
150 Broomielaw
Glasgow
G2 8LU

Please ask for: Niamh Coyne
Direct Dial:
e-mail: Niamh.coyne1@Highland.gov.uk

Our Ref: 25/02247/SCOP
Your Ref. ECU00006178
Date: 25 July 2025

By email only to: Niall.Macquarrie@gov.scot;
Econsents_Admin@gov.scot

Dear Niall,

ECU REFERENCE: ECU00006178

THC REFERENCE: 25/02247/SCOP

DEVELOPMENT: ACHANY WIND FARM EXTENSION - SCOPING OPINION FOR ERECTION AND OPERATION OF A WIND FARM COMPRISING 18 WIND TURBINES WITH A MAXIMUM BLADE TIP HEIGHT OF 200M AND ANCILLARY INFRASTRUCTURE

LOCATION: LAND 2KM NE OF GLENCASSLEY, ROSEHALL

Thank you for requesting this Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Request for the above project. We received the consultation on 13th June 2025 by email and are grateful for the extension of time to make comments.

Our view on the scope of the assessment may be subject to change on a number of topics within the EIAR if the scale of development, in terms of the number and height of turbines, changes.

Whilst unlikely, this application may reduce in scale to a level which would be considered as an application under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (As Amended). If this is the case, we would require a revised scoping response under the relevant regulations.

We note that the applicant has not requested to use the Council's pre-application advice for major developments for this variation proposal. We would however strongly encourage the applicant to do so in order for the applicant to better understand the Council's position on the proposal, in particular with regard to landscape and visual impacts.

We trust that this consultation response helps inform ECUs Scoping Response and is helpful to the applicant when formalising any forthcoming application.

Yours sincerely

Niamh Coyne
Graduate Planner - The Highland Council

A2

SCOPING RESPONSE TO ENERGY CONSENTS UNIT

Applicant:	**SSE Renewables**
Project:	**Achany Wind Farm Extension - Scoping Opinion for erection and operation of a wind farm comprising 18 wind turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 200m and ancillary infrastructure**
Project Address:	**Land 2km NE Of Glencassley Castle, Rosehall**
Our Reference	**25/02247/SCOP**

This response is given without prejudice to the Planning Authority's right to request information in connection with any statement, whether Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) or not, submitted in support of any future application. These views are also given without prejudice to the future consideration of and decision on any planning application received by The Highland Council (THC).

THC request that any EIAR submitted in support of an application for the above development take the comments highlighted below into account; many of which are already acknowledged within the Scoping Report. In particular, the elements of this report as highlighted in parts 3, 4 and 5 should be presented as three distinct elements.

Responses to the internal consultation undertaken are attached. Should any further responses be received from internal consultees, these will be forwarded in due course.

1.0 Description of the Development

1.1 The description of development for an EIAR is often much more than would be set out in any planning application. An EIAR must include:

- a description of the physical characteristics of the whole development and the full land-use requirements during the operational, construction and decommissioning phases. These might include requirements for borrow pits, local road improvements, infrastructural connections (i.e., connections to the grid), off site conservation measures, etc. A plan with eight figure OS Grid co-ordinates for all main elements of the proposal should be supplied.
- a description of the main characteristics of the production processes, for instance, nature and quantity of the materials used;
- the risk of accidents, having regard in particular to substances or technologies used;

- an estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions (water, air and soil pollution, noise, vibration, light / flicker, heat, radiation, etc.) resulting from the operation of the development; and
- the estimated cumulative impact of the project with other consented or operation development.

2.0 Alternatives

2.1 A statement is required which outlines the main development alternatives studied by the applicant and an indication of the main reasons for the final project choice. This is expected to highlight the following:

- the design chapter should clearly set out the design evolution of the scheme including constraints to the delivery of that scheme;
- the range of technologies that may have been considered;
- locational criteria and economic parameters used in the initial site selection;
- options for access;
- design and locational options for all elements of the proposed development (including grid connection); and
- the environmental effects of the different options examined.

The assessment should also highlight sustainable development attributes including for example assessment of carbon emissions / carbon savings.

3.0 Environmental Elements Affected

3.1 The EIAR must provide a description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development. The following paragraphs highlight some principal considerations. There are a number of wind energy developments in the area and you are encouraged to use your understanding of these in assessing your development and the potential for cumulative effects to arise. The EIAR should fully utilise this understanding to ensure that information provided is relevant and robustly grounded.

Land Use and Policy

3.2 The current Development Plan comprises the:

- Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) adopted in 2023.
- Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) adopted 2012.
- Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan) adopted 2018.
- Associated Supplementary Guidance (SG), with particular regard to the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG) (2016) and Part 2b (2017).

A large number of policies will apply to this proposal from the above development plan documents. This response does not attempt to detail all which may be relevant, as such, it is recommended that the applicant/agent reviews all these plans and documents prior to submission to establish the planning policy context for the EIA. The scope of the EIA should, however, address all the relevant issues covered within NPF4, HwLDP, CaSPlan, and Highland Council Supplementary Guidance. The CaSPlan will have limited relevance to this proposal as its focus is mainly on regional and settlement strategies as well as identifying specific site allocations. However, certain aspects of the strategies for the local area and settlements may help to inform plans for community engagement. The CaSPlan does, however, establish boundaries (including any refinements) of the Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) across the plan area. The SLA citations webpage summarise key characteristics, qualities, sensitivities, and measures for enhancement and must be used to assess the potential impacts of the proposed development.

3.3 The Council has recently commenced the preparation of a new-style Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP), with the intention to undertake the evidence-gathering stage of the new LDP throughout 2023, with the tentative programme including an Evidence Report in 2024 and subsequent Gate Check, with Proposed Plan stage in 2025. Once adopted this new style HLDP will supersede and replace HwLDP and the Council 'area' LDP. The programme of work includes the review of the coverage and content of its current suite of Supplementary Guidance, to establish which aspects should be covered within the new Local Development Plan itself, which aspects should be covered within non-statutory planning guidance and any aspects no longer required. Applicants are advised to monitor the Council's annual Development Plans Newsletter, as this provides the most up to date timetable for this work and is available on the Council Development Plans webpage.

3.4 The Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance, on pages 19 and 20, lists ten landscape and visual criteria that the Council use as a framework for assessing proposals. In considering landscape and visual impacts, the assessment should pay particular attention to these 10 criteria, as these will be used in the future appraisal of an application and should therefore also form part of the applicant's own assessment.

3.5 The Council also recognises the importance of the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, as the legislative tool for addressing Scotland's Climate & Ecological Emergency, which the Council committed to under its own Climate and Ecological Emergency declaration in May 2019. In addition, the Scottish Government published its Onshore Wind: Policy Statement 2022 on 21st December 2022. This statement sets out the Government ambition to deploy a minimum of 20GW of onshore wind by 2030, up from the 9.4GW of existing generation capacity in June 2023.

3.6 Benefits to rural areas, such as provision of jobs and opportunities to restore and protect natural habitats, are also highlighted in Scottish Government Policy documents, with the aforementioned Policy Statement reinforcing the notion that the right development should be permitted in the right place.

3.7 Developer Contributions, Community Benefit & Community Wealth Building will all need to be considered as the scheme develops. With Developer Contribution sought towards Transport (including Active Travel), Green Infrastructure, Water & Waste and Public Art/Realm in compliance with NPF4 Policy 18 (Infrastructure first), HwLDP Policy 31 (Developer Contributions) and Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance (2018).

3.8 Your attention is also drawn to the fact that the council has a separate remit to promote community benefit which is distinct and separate from planning. The policy contains contacts for further discussion on this matter, and we would encourage the developer to engage early in the process. The Council's position with regard community benefits has recently been updated with the approval of a new 'Social Values Charter for Renewables Investment' at its meeting on 27 June 2024, with the report available at the following link:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/5003/highland_council

3.9 The approved charter sets out The Highland Council's expectations from developers wishing to invest in renewables in the Highland area and what the Highland partnership – public, private, and community – will do to support and enable this contribution, namely:

- embed an approach to community wealth building into Highland;
- maximise economic benefits from our natural environment and resources;
- engage and involve relevant stakeholders to understand how we can continually improve our impact; and,
- unlock economic opportunities for the area.

3.10 Community Wealth Building is intended to encourage, promote, and facilitate a new strategic approach to economic development as set out in NPF4 Policy 25. This Policy indicates examples of what contributions by development proposals to community wealth building could include: improving community resilience and reducing inequalities; increasing spending within communities; ensuring the use of local supply chains and services; local job creation; supporting community led proposals, including creation of new local firms and enabling community led ownership of buildings and assets. However, that is not an exhaustive list.

3.11 Notwithstanding that wind energy developments contribute to the production and supply of renewable energy, the Council maintains that this commitment must be taken in balance along with all other considerations, and that such developments should be located, sited, and designed appropriately and thus assessed against the wider development plan policies.

3.12 The Highland Council's Community Wealth Building Team were consulted and responded stating they will make contact with the Developer/Applicant regarding the Highland Social Value Charter.

Sustainability

3.13 The Council's Sustainable Design Guide SG provides advice and guidance on a range of sustainability topics, including design, building materials, and minimising environmental impacts of development. A Sustainable Design Statement is required. Wind farms produce a sustainable form of energy; however, the Council will need to be satisfied in reaching a conclusion on any consultation or application that the development in its entirety is in fact sustainable development. In order for us to do so we recommend that matters related to the three pillars of sustainable development are fully assessed in the information which supports the application. The wind farm needs to be considering the provision of energy systems within the holistic demand cycle of the network. The developer needs to consider the impact of the installation and the prospective long-term use of the energy to accommodate the requirements of a decarbonised energy provision for Scotland and the Highlands. The application should include a statement on how the development is likely to contribute to the Scottish Government Energy Efficient Scotland roadmap and provide the Highlands with secure and clean electricity supplies.

3.14 It would be highly beneficial to have information to explain electricity network benefits and capacity proposed, with the end result ideally being all wind turbines being operational on a consistent basis when there is sufficient windspeeds, rather than either certain or no turbines being in operational depending upon short term grid constraints or levels of demand.

3.15 To that end, concepts of developing energy storage and/or Major Energy Users (such as Hydrogen production) in association with Energy Generation are of interest to the Council, with considerable potential benefits for energy generation (avoiding or reducing curtailment), diversity, decarbonisation, efficiency and supply and for the economy. It may be noted that the Council supports in broad principle the inclusion of energy storage within such developments and that in respect of hydrogen the Council has (March 2021) agreed to prepare a Hydrogen Strategy for Highland. A strategy for the provision of charging points within the development should also be submitted with the application.

Landscape and Visual

3.16 We would encourage the applicant to use the Council's pre-application for major developments and wind farm design workshop service in order that the landscape and visual impacts of the change can be understood prior to the submission of the application. In any case, the Council expects the EIAR to consider the full landscape and visual impacts of the development and not just the 'over and above' effects, noting that the Council makes a distinction between landscape and visual impacts. While not mutually exclusive, these elements require separate assessment and therefore presentation of visual material in different ways. It is the Council's position that it is not possible to use panoramic images for the purposes of visual impact assessment. The Council, while not precluding the use of panoramic images, require single frame images with different focal lengths taken with a 35mm format full frame sensor camera – not an 'equivalent.' The focal lengths required are

50mm and 75mm. The former gives an indication of field of view and the latter best represents the scale and distance in the landscape; i.e., a more realistic impression of what we see from the viewpoint. These images should form part of the EIAR and not be separate from it. Photomontages should follow the Council's Visualisation Standards and are subject an independent verification check upon receipt:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/12880/visualisation_standards_for_wind_energy_developments

3.17 Separate volumes of visualisations should be prepared to both Highland Council Standards and NatureScot guidance. These should be provided in hard copy. It would be beneficial for THC's volume to be provided in a **A3 leaver arch folder** for ease of use. The use of monochrome for specific viewpoints is useful where there are a number of different wind farms in the view. We are happy to provide advice on this matter going forward. All existing turbines should be re-rendered even if they appear to be facing the viewer in the photograph to ensure consistency.

3.18 All elements of a development are important to consider within any EIAR and the assessment must include the expected landscape and visual impact of any on-site BESS, borrow pits, access roads, compounds including substations, this is despite the fact that the principal structures will be a primary concern. All elements of the proposal are to be rendered into photomontages.

3.19 There are a number of similar applications in this area that are yet to be determined / concluded in the vicinity of this application, many of these have been identified in the scoping report, which may or may not help clarify the weight towards particular policy elements in the final planning balance. Our interactive Wind Turbine map is up to date as of 31 December 2024 and can be accessed on the following link: http://highland.gov.uk/windmap The Energy Consents Unit may also be able to provide details of any other known nearby proposal that may be at Scoping Stage as these may have advanced at the same pace as your proposal.

3.20 The finalised list of Viewpoints (VP) and wireframes for the assessment of effects of a proposed development must also be agreed in advance of preparation of any visuals with THC and NatureScot.

3.21 We acknowledge that there will be some micrositing of the viewpoints to avoid intervening screening of vegetation boundary treatments etc. We would recommend that the photographer has in their mind whether the VP is representative or specific and also who the receptors are when they are taking the photos it would be helpful. We have also found that if the photographer has a 3D model on a laptop when they go out on site it helps the orientation of the photography.

3.22 As far as possible, the viewpoints should correspond with the viewpoints used for the approved scheme and other existing wind energy schemes within the area. The detailed location of viewpoints will be informed by site survey, mapping and predicted ZTVs. Failure

to do this may result in abortive work, requests for additional visual material and delays in processing applications/consultation responses. Community Council's may request additional viewpoints and it would be recommended that any pre-application discussions with the local community, and associated reporting on consultation undertaken, take this into account. However, at this stage, The Council is generally satisfied with the VPs selected.

3.23 The purpose of the selected and agreed viewpoints shall be clearly identified and stated in the supporting information. For example, it should be clear that the VP has been chosen for landscape assessment, or visual impact assessment, or cumulative assessment, or sequential assessment, or to show a representative view, or for assessment of impact on designated sites, communities, or individual properties. However, it is important for assessors to remember that Visual Effects are defined by GLVIA3 not just as effects on views, but as 'Effects on specific views and on the general amenity experienced by people'.

3.24 The Study Area will be 45km, given the scale of the turbines. Given the size of the turbines and the landscape sensitivities of this site and the surrounding area, we would expect a detailed assessment of effects should be undertaken for the whole Study Area, including for Cumulative Impact Assessment, which should also include an assessment of sequential effects as the receptor moves through the landscape.

3.25 Furthermore, the LVIA Chapter of the EIAR should clearly set out the methodology including:

- Definitions of each point on the scale of magnitude of change which is used by the applicant in reaching a conclusion on the magnitude of change;
- Definitions of each point on the scale of sensitivity of receptor which is used by the applicant in reaching a conclusion on the sensitivity of receptor;
- The threshold to which the applicant considers a significant effect is reached. For the avoidance of doubt the Council consider that Moderate impacts can be significant, and it is recommended that the EIAR takes this approach as well;
- A clear matrix approach supported by descriptive text setting out how you have reached your conclusion of effect on landscape character, designated landscapes, visual receptors, and residential amenity. The LVIA should contain be an assessment of significance of singular and cumulative effects for each of the viewpoints following this methodology in addition to receptor groups. This approach is important because the logic of the applicant's assessment must be clearly and readily understood.

3.26 Given the potential cumulative impact of renewable energy in this area it is expected that the applicant should present images for presentation within the Panoramic Digital Viewer deployed by the Council – see visualisation standards document. If the applicant wished to utilise this tool there may be an associated cost per image to be inserted which should be

discussed with the Council prior to submission. To view current or determined schemes in the Council's Panoramic Viewer please see the link below:

http://www.highland.gov.uk/panoramicviewer

3.27 We expect the Landscape Impact Assessment to refer to the Council's Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance and expect an assessment of the proposal against the criterion set out in the Council's OWESG at pages 19 and 20 to be included within the LVIA chapter of the EIAR. The Proposed Development is situated within Landscape Character Type 135 (LCT135): Rounded Hills – Caithness and Sutherland as described in the NatureScot 2019 national LCT map. NatureScot provide further detail of the LCT on their website, see here.

3.28 The finalised LVIA should include consideration of the impact of the proposals on the visual amenity of key transport routes in the area. When assessing the impact on recreational routes please ensure that all core paths and long-distance trails, are assessed. The assessments of these routes should include a sequential assessment of how the development will be experienced in relation to existing and consented wind farms for receptors in motion. We expect an assessment of the development's visual impacts on surrounding settlements.

3.29 We advise that wind energy developments are generally sited within a complex combination of Landscape Character Types. As such, the Landscape Impact Assessment's analysis should not only focus on potential impacts on individual Landscape Character Types and individual Units, but also on the local landscape character composition within which these elements come together to define a particular sense of place.

3.30 An assessment of the impacts of the proposal on landscape should assess the impacts on any landscapes designated at a national and local scale. While NatureScot will respond separately to the ECU on landscape and other matters, their draft guidance on assessing the impacts on Special Landscape Qualities of National Scenic Areas should be followed with NatureScot determining which qualities should be scoped in for detailed assessment once the full list of VPs is finalised.

3.31 In addition, any assessments of Special Landscape Areas (SLA) must be undertaken using the SLA citations available from the Council's website.

3.32 As the heights of the proposed turbines are above 150m, aviation lighting is required. Further advice on aviation lighting is available from NatureScot however generally the impact of aviation lighting on WLAs and SLAs and areas where there would be an expectation of dark skies should be included. THC generally prefers the term 'Hours of Darkness' over 'Night-Time' in recognition of how extensive hours of darkness can be in the Highlands. It is pertinent to the assessment to understand that Hours of Darkness Effects will be visible during people's working day and commuting hours for a significant part of the year and that sensitivities of receptors to these effects must account for this.

Therefore, Hours of Darkness VPs should be representative of commutes and communities, as well as Wild Land.

3.33 The residential visual amenity impact should be assessed for all properties, settlements, housing groups within 2km of the turbines within the LVIA.

3.34 **Cultural Heritage**

3.35 The EIAR needs to identify all designated sites which may be affected by the development either directly or indirectly. This will require you to identify:

- the architectural heritage (Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings);
- the archaeological heritage (Scheduled Monuments);
- the landscape (including designations such as National Parks, National Scenic Areas, Areas of Great Landscape Value, Gardens and Designed Landscapes and general setting of the development; and
- the inter-relationship between the above factors.

3.36 We would expect any assessment to contain a full appreciation of the setting of these historic environment assets and the likely impact on their settings. Where the assessment finds that significant impacts are likely, appropriate visualisations such as photomontage and wireframe views of the development in relation to the sites and their settings should be provided. Visualisations illustrating views both from the asset towards the proposed development and views towards the asset with the development in the background would be helpful.

3.37 Historic Environment Scotland (HES) are anticipated to provide comment on the assessment methodology for heritage assets within their remit including the scope of the assessment and their requirements for supporting information (including visualisations) and the potential impacts on heritage assets in their consultation response.

3.38 THC's Historic Environment Team (Archaeology) are satisfied that the information presented in the Scoping Report will adequately address an impact assessment for this proposal. The methodology as set out in the Scoping Report Section 10.5 is acceptable and will allow an assessment of the predicted impacts to be made. Where impacts are unavoidable, HET expect methods to mitigate this impact to be discussed in detail.

Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology (Water Environment)

3.39 The EIAR should include a full assessment on the impact of the development on peat. The assessment of the impact on peat must include peat probing for all areas where development is proposed. The Council are of the view this should include probing not just at the point of infrastructure as proposed by the scheme but also covering the areas of ground which would be subject to micro siting limits. THC expects all peat impact

compensation and enhancement measures to be fully compliant with the current policy and guidance.

3.40 SEPA can provide detailed advice on methodology for peat probing and the peat assessment.

3.41 Carbon balance calculations should be undertaken and included within the EIAR with a summary of the results provided focussing on the carbon payback period for the wind farm.

3.42 The EIAR should fully describe the likely significant effects of the development on the local geology including aspects such as borrow pits, earthworks, site restoration and the soil generally including direct effects and any indirect. Proposals should demonstrate construction practices that help to minimise the use of raw materials and maximise the use of secondary aggregates and recycled or renewable materials. Where borrow pits are proposed the EIAR should include information regarding the location, size and nature of these borrow pits including information on the depth of the borrow pit floor and the borrow pit final reinstated profile. This can avoid the need for further applications.

3.43 The EIAR needs to address the nature of the hydrology and hydrogeology of the site, and of the potential impacts on water courses, water supplies including private supplies, water quality, water quantity and on aquatic flora and fauna. Impacts on watercourses, lochs, groundwater, other water features and sensitive receptors, such as water supplies, need to be assessed. Measures to prevent erosion, sedimentation or discolouration will be required, along with monitoring proposals and contingency plans. Assessment will need to recognise periods of high rainfall which will impact on any calculations of run-off, high flow in watercourses and hydrogeological matters. You are strongly advised at an early stage to consult SEPA as the regulatory body responsible for the implementation of the Controlled Activities (Scotland) Regulations 2005 (CAR), to identify if a CAR license is necessary and the extent of the information required by SEPA to assess any license application.

3.44 If culverting should be proposed, either in relation to new or upgraded tracks, then it should be noted that SEPA has a general presumption against modification, diversion or culverting of watercourses. Schemes should be designed to avoid crossing watercourses, and to bridge watercourses where this cannot be avoided. The EIAR will be expected to identify all water crossings and include a systematic table of watercourse crossings or channelising, with detailed justification for any such elements and design to minimise impact. The table should be accompanied by photography of each watercourse affected and include dimensions of the watercourse. It may be useful for the applicant to demonstrate choice of watercourse crossing by means of a decision tree, taking into account factors including catchment size (resultant flows), natural habitat and environmental concerns. Further guidance on the design and implementation of crossings can be found on SEPA's Construction of River Crossings Good Practice Guide.

3.45 The Council's Flood Risk Management Team has reviewed the information in the scoping report and has no comments to make at this stage. However, there are a number of watercourses and waterbodies on the site therefore the following applies:

- A minimum of a 50m buffer of all watercourses / bodies and turbines/crane hard-standings, which should be shown on a suitably scaled drawing;
- All tracks should be kept a minimum 10m away from any waterbody except water crossings;
- Access tracks not acting as preferential pathways for runoff and efforts being made to retain existing natural drainage wherever possible;
- Natural flood management techniques should be applied to reduce the rate of runoff where possible; use of SuDS to achieve pre-development runoff rates and to minimise erosion on existing watercourses;
- Water crossings in the form of culverts or bridges, or upgrades to existing crossings must be designed to accommodate to 1 in 200 year flood event, plus climate change;
- Land rising within any floodplain to be avoided; if ultimately required, compensatory storage must be provided; and,
- The EIAR should be informed by the Council's Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment SG.

3.46 The need for, and information on, abstractions of water supplies for concrete works or other operations should also be identified. The EIAR should identify whether a public or private source is to be utilised. If a private source is to be utilised, full details on the source and details of abstraction need to be provided.

3.47 The Council's Environmental Health Officer was consulted. The Scoping report has stated there will be no infrastructure within 250m of a private water supply. It may be that a detailed risk assessment can be scoped out however, the applicant will still be required to submit information detailing the assessment undertaken to date, particularly the sources of information which have led to that conclusion. It is understood that the CEMP or similar document will include details of embedded mitigation to prevent pollution or disruption to watercourses.

3.48 It is anticipated that detailed comments will be provided on impacts on the water environment, in particular on buffers to water courses, by SEPA.

Ecology

3.49 The EIAR should provide a baseline survey of the bird and animals (mammals, reptiles, amphibians, etc.) interest on site. It needs to be categorically established what species are present on the site, and where, before a future application is submitted. Further the EIAR should provide an account of the habitats present on the proposed development site. It

should identify rare and threatened habitats, and those protected by European or UK legislation, or identified in national or local Biodiversity Action Plans. Habitat enhancement and mitigation measures should be detailed, particularly in respect to blanket bog, in the contexts of both biodiversity conservation and the inherent risk of peat slide (see later). Details of any habitat enhancement programmes (such as native- tree planting, stock exclusion, etc.) for the proposed site should be provided. It is expected that the EIAR will address whether or not the development could assist or impede delivery of elements of relevant Biodiversity Action Plans.

Ecology General Guidance

3.50 The developer should undertake a specific peat assessment to inform the siting, design, or other mitigation in order to overcome significant effects on peatland and Carbon Rich Soils, Deep Peat, and Priority Peatland Habitat (CPP). Attention is drawn to paragraph 4.34 on page 24 of the OWESG, which discusses peat and CPP. We also expect an up-to-date National vegetation Classification (NVC) survey and a commitment to undertake peatland restoration on an area of increased size to that of the application site. The Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) should provide details of all direct, indirect, permanent, and temporary impacts to any bog habitat present on the site.

3.51 The EIAR should address the likely impacts on the nature conservation interests of all the designated sites in the vicinity of the proposed development. It should provide proposals for any mitigation that is required to avoid these impacts or to reduce them to a level where they are not significant. NatureScot can also provide specific advice in respect of the designated site boundaries for SACs and SPAs and on protected species and habitats within those sites. The potential impact of the development proposals on other designated areas such as SSSI's should be carefully and thoroughly considered and, where possible, appropriate mitigation measures outlined in the EIAR. NatureScot provide advice on the impact on designated sites.

3.52 If wild deer are present or will use the site an assessment of the potential impact on deer will be required. This should address deer welfare, habitats, and other interests.

3.53 The EIAR needs to address the aquatic interests within local watercourses, including downstream interests that may be affected by the development, for example increases in silt and sediment loads resulting from construction works; pollution risk / incidents during construction; obstruction to upstream and downstream migration both during and after construction; disturbance of spawning beds / timing of works; and other drainage issues. The EIAR should evidence consultation input from the local fishery board(s) where relevant.

3.54 Further advice can be found in NatureScot's consultation response on ecology in relation to the surveys required and the adequacy of the work already undertaken. NatureScot will comment on good quality priority peatland and protected areas, including the Flow Country World Heritage Site. SEPA will lead on deep peat and GWDTEs.

3.55 The EIAR should include a map and assessment of impacts upon Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) and buffers, these habitats are easily damaged by insensitive drainage.

3.56 NPF4's commitment to deliver positive effects for biodiversity through development. Policy 3 states that, 'Development proposals for national, major and of EIA development should only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will conserve and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks within and adjacent to the site, so that they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention, including through future management.' A draft or outline Habitat Management Plan (HMP) and Species Protection Plan (SPP) should be produced as part of the EIA, including any proposals for mitigation and enhancement in relation to important habitats and species. Any compensatory planting plans should be carefully considered and included in the HMP. The HMP should include a comprehensive monitoring programme for all habitat improvements, and breeding birds on the site. Remote sensing using radar or infra-red cameras should be considered, to help inform future development and decision making within the industry with regards to eagles. Lastly, the HMP (or other document) should also include a protocol for reporting collisions to NatureScot.

3.57 THC's Ecology Officer has reviewed the Scoping Report and notes the following. The scoping report suggests that the survey work conducted for the original EIAR (2021) is used in support of the current application. The protected species surveys for the original scheme were completed in 2020, so the data is 5 years old. Current NatureScot planning guidance, NatureScot – planning and development: standing advice and guidance advises that data be within the previous two 'survey seasons'. As such, the protected species data is considered invalid. Any relevant (outline) Species Protection Plans shall be made available as part of the EIA report.

Biodiversity Enhancement

3.58 In order to comply with NPF4 Policy 3 and the Highland Council's 'Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance' (May 2024), the applicant needs to demonstrate how a minimum target of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain will be achieved. Details of biodiversity enhancement shall be submitted with the application, such as an outline habitat management plan.

3.59 It is strongly recommended that the use of a metric to clearly demonstrate enhancements. If a metric is used, the raw data (spreadsheet) shall be submitted with the application in order to prevent delays.

3.60 Any peat restoration proposals shall adhere to NatureScot guidance 'Advising on peatland, carbon-rich soils and priority peatland habitats in development management' which states a 1:10 ratio for offsetting and a further 10% of enhancing peatland habitats.

Ornithology

3.61 The presence of Schedule 1 Birds and qualifying interests of Special Protection Areas and other areas designated for ornithological interests must be included and considered as part of the planning application process; not as an issue that can be considered at a later stage. Any consent given without due consideration to these species may breach European Directives with the possibility of consequential delays or the project being halted by the EC. Please refer to any comments from NatureScot and RSPB in this respect.

3.62 An assessment of the impacts to birds through collision, disturbance, and displacement from foraging / breeding / roosting habitat will be required for both the proposed development site and cumulatively with other proposals. The EIAR should be clear on the survey methods and any deviations from guidance on ornithology matters.

3.63 As with the protected species surveys, the ornithological data is considered out of date, with surveys being undertaken in 2019 and 2020. NatureScot Guidance 'Recommended bird survey methods to inform impact assessment for onshore windfarms' notes data should not be greater than 5 years old. All relevant data is expected to be submitted within the EIAR, including flight map data and full assessment of collision risks.

3.64 The EIAR is expected to cover any cumulative assessments for the proposal, considering any developments which may impact upon the same ecological receptors either in the planning system, under construction or operational. The Council is not aware of any recent projects which are not yet in the public domain which may be pertinent to the assessment of impacts.

Noise

THC's Environmental Health Team provided the following comments on the Scoping Report regarding noise.

<u>Operational Noise</u>

3.64 It is understood the application is to vary the consented 21/03695/S36, specifically with regard to increasing the turbine tip height resulting from a change to the candidate turbine. The applicant will be required to submit a noise assessment, carried out in accordance with ETSU-R-97 "The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms" and the associated Good Practice Guide published by the Institute of Acoustics which demonstrates that the development will still meet the limits stipulated in the decision for 21/03695/S36.

3.65 The target noise levels are either a simplified standard of 35dB LA90 at wind speeds up to 10m/s or a composite standard of 35dB LA90 (daytime) and 38dB LA90 (night time) or up to 5dB above background noise levels at up to 12m/s. The night time lower limit of 43dB LA90 as suggested in ETSU is not considered acceptable in many areas of the highlands

due to very low background levels. These limits would apply to cumulative noise levels from more than one development.

Cumulative Noise

3.66 The noise assessment must take into account the potential cumulative effect from any other existing or consented or, in some cases, proposed wind turbine developments. Where applications run concurrently, developers and consultants are advised to consider adopting a joint approach with regard to noise assessments. The noise assessment must take into account predicted and consented levels from such developments. The good practice guide offers guidance on how to deal with cumulative issues. Where existing development has consented limits higher than suggested above, the applicant should agree appropriate limits with the Council's Environmental Health Officer.

3.67 The assessment should include a map showing all wind farm developments which may have a cumulative impact and all noise sensitive properties including any for which a financial involvement relaxation is being claimed. The assessment should also include a table of figures which includes the following:

- The predicted levels from this development based at each noise sensitive location (NSL) at wind speeds up to 12m/s.
- The maximum levels based on consented limits from each existing or consented wind farm development at each NSL. If any reduction is made for controlling property or another reason, this should be made clear.
- The predicted levels from each existing or consented wind farm development at each NSL.
- The cumulative levels based on consented and predicted levels at each NSL.

The assessment should also include a mitigation scheme to be implemented should noise levels from the development be subsequently found to exceed consented levels.

Noise Exposure

3.68 When assessing the cumulative impact from more than one wind farm, consideration must be given to any increase in exposure time. Regardless of whether cumulative levels can meet relevant criteria, if a noise sensitive property subsequently becomes affected by wind turbine noise from more than one direction this could result in a significant loss of respite.

Background Noise Measurements

3.69 If background noise surveys are required, these should be undertaken in accordance with ETSU-R-97 and the Good Practice Guide. It is recommended that monitoring locations be agreed with the Council's Environmental Health Officer. Where a monitoring locations is to be used as a proxy location for another property, particular care must be taken to ensure it

is not affected by other noise sources such as boiler flues, wind chimes, etc. which are not present at that other property.

3.70 Difficulties can arise where a location is already subject to noise from an existing wind turbine development. ETSU states that background noise must not include noise from an existing wind farm. The GPG offers advice on how to approach this problem and in some cases, it may be possible to utilise the results from historical background surveys.

3.71 It is recommended that the developer's noise consultant liaises with Environmental Health at an early stage to discuss any issues regarding the proposed methodology.

Amplitude Modulation

3.72 Research has been carried out in recent years on the phenomenon of amplitude modulation arising from some wind turbine developments. However at this time, the Good Practice guide does not provide definitive Planning guidance on this subject. That being the case, any complaints linked to amplitude modulation would be investigated in terms of the Statutory Nuisance provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

3.73 Operational vibration, infrasound, and low frequency noise can be scoped out from further assessment.

Construction Noise

3.74 Given the separation distances to noise sensitive receptors, it is unlikely that a detailed construction noise assessment will be required in relation to work at the turbine sites.

3.75 It is assumed that access would be through the existing Achany site, therefore, there will be no requirement for track construction work close to noise sensitive receptors. Provided that is the case, further detailed assessment of construction noise and vibration can be scoped out. If a different access is proposed, there may be a requirement for a construction noise assessment depending on the proximity of receptors.

3.76 Regardless of whether a construction noise assessment is required, it is expected that the developer/contractor will employ the best practicable means to reduce the impact of noise from construction activities. The applicant will be required to submit a scheme demonstrating how this will be implemented.

3.77 Planning conditions are not used to control the impact of construction noise as similar powers are available to the Local Authority under Section 60 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. Generally, people are tolerant of construction noise during typical working hours which are taken to be 8am to 7pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays. Works for which noise is inaudible at the curtilage of any noise sensitive property could still be carried out out-with these times.

3.78 If the applicant intends to undertake noisy work out-with the aforementioned times, they will be required to submit a detailed construction noise assessment for the written approval of the Planning Authority. The assessment should include:

1. A description of construction activities with reference to noise generating plant and equipment.
2. A detailed plan showing the location of noise sources, noise sensitive premises and any survey measurement locations.
3. A description of any noise mitigation methods that will be employed and the predicted effect of said methods on noise levels.
4. A prediction of noise levels resultant at the curtilage of noise sensitive receptors.
5. An assessment of the predicted noise levels in comparison with relevant standards.

3.79 Regardless of whether a construction noise assessment is required, it is expected that the developer/contractor will employ the best practicable means to reduce the impact of noise from construction activities. The applicant will be required to submit a scheme demonstrating how this will be implemented. Particular attention should be given to the use of tonal reversing alarms and ground compaction plant which are often the most intrusive noise generating elements of a large construction project.

Substations and Battery Energy Storage Systems

3.80 The previous application included a substation, however, as the separation distance to receptors was approximately 2.5km, a noise assessment was scoped out. It isn't clear if this current application will include a sub-station or a battery energy storage system but provided the separation distances are similar, further noise assessment from these sites can be scoped out.

3.81 If the application includes a proposal for a sub-station or battery storage site, a separate noise assessment may be required to demonstrate that noise will meet the following standards:

- Noise arising from within the operational land of the sub-station, when measured and/or calculated as an LZeq, 5min, in the 100Hz one third octave frequency band must not exceed 30 dB, at noise sensitive premises
- The Rating Level of noise arising from the use of plant, machinery or equipment installed or operated within the operational land of the sub-station, must not exceed the current background noise levels at noise sensitive premises. The Rating Level should be calculated in accordance with BS 4142: 2014+A1:2019 Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound.

Traffic and Transport

3.82 THC's Transport Planning team have provided a response to the request for Scoping Opinion. To enable the developer to undertake this change an increase in hard standing

areas are required along with 8 turning areas for the vehicles to turn round. This additional work will be implemented on private land out with of the road.

The Local Roads Authority understands the increase in turbine length to the consented project will alter the project by:-

1. Providing larger hardstanding areas for the cranes needed to lift the larger turbines
2. Transformer configuration will change which may result in smaller sub stations.
3. Access tracks are to be optimised for onsite works.
4. 8 new turning heads are to be constructed on site.
5. Aviation Lighting to be provided due to hight of turbines.
6. Turbine length to be 200m.

3.83 Any additional impact on the road network assumes the turbines are heavier and more difficult to move which may result in more damage to the road surface or structures therefore the local Roads Authority would look to the consented mitigation measures including the C.P.T.M.P which needs to ensure repairs to the roads used by the developer are repaired quickly and efficiently ensuring the roads are fit for travelling public to use. Noted that it is likely the program for construction will be longer although no timescale has been given.

3.84 Considering the changes being proposed regarding this scoping application and looking at the project which already has approval the Roads Authority believes it is acceptable to scope out Transportation & Traffic when reviewing this application as road mitigation measures are already in place to manage the road network within the consented application.

3.85 A Transport Assessment (TA), Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and an Abnormal Load Assessment will be required within the EIAR. The Transport Assessment Methodology below sets out what the Council requires and further information is provided in our published Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments. When establishing a scope for the assessment consideration should be given to the use of the public roads in this area can be influenced significantly by tourist traffic.

Transport Assessment Methodology

3.86 Transport Planning would expect a Transport Assessment to be submitted with any future planning application and a High National Traffic Forecast be applied. The information below is not exhaustive and should be used as a guide to submitting all relevant information in relation to roads, traffic and transportation matters arising from the development proposals.

1. Identify all public roads affected by the development. In addition to transportation of all abnormal loads and vehicles (delivery of components) this should also include routes to be used by local suppliers and staff. It is expected that the developer submits a preferred access route for the development. All other access route options should be provided, having been investigated in order to establish their feasibility. This should clearly identify the pros and cons of all the route options and therefore provide a logical selection process to arrive at a preferred route.

2. Establish current condition of the roads. This work which should be undertaken by a consulting engineer acceptable to the Council and will involve an engineering appraisal of the routes including the following:
    - Assessment of structural strength of carriageway including construction depths and road formation where this is likely to be significant in respect of proposed impacts, including non-destructive testing and sampling as required;
    - Road surface condition and profile;
    - Assessment of structures and any weight restrictions;
    - Road widths, vertical and horizontal alignment and provision of passing places; and
    - Details of adjacent communities.
3. Determine the traffic generation and distribution of the proposals throughout the construction and operation periods to provide accurate data resulting from the proposed development including:
    - nos. of light and heavy vehicles including staff travel;
    - abnormal loads; and
    - duration of works.
4. Current traffic flows including use by public transport services, school buses, refuse vehicles, commercial users, pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.
5. Impacts of proposed traffic including:
    - impacts on carriageway, structures, verges etc.;
    - impacts on other road users;
    - impacts on adjacent communities;
    - swept path and gradient analysis where it is envisaged that transportation of traffic could be problematic; and
    - provision of Trial Runs to be carried out in order to prove the route is achievable and/or to establish the extent of works required to facilitate transportation.
7. Cumulative impacts with other developments in progress and committed developments including other Renewable Energy projects.
8. Proposed mitigation measures to address impacts identified in 5 above, including:
    - carriageway strengthening;
    - strengthening of bridges and culverts;

- carriageway widening and/or edge strengthening;
- provision of passing places;
- road safety measures; and
- traffic management including measures to be taken to ensure that development traffic does not use routes other than the approved routes.

9. Details of residual effects.

Abnormal Load Assessment

3.87 The TA should include an Abnormal Load Assessment of the roads utilised to convent abnormal loads to the site. The assessment will need to confirm the proposed port of entry for AIL components and justify the adequacy of the route for transporting them to the site. Early discussion with the Council's abnormal loads team (the contact is abnormal.loads@highland.gov.uk) and the Council's structures team (the contact is structures@highland.gov.uk) is recommended.

Construction Traffic Management Plan

3.88 THC Transport Planning will require any application for planning permission associated with this proposal to submit a CTMP for the approval of the Planning Authority. A CTMP will normally detail the following issues, however this is not an exhaustive list and the CTMP should be tailored to reflect the issues pertinent to this development:

- Identification of all Council maintained roads likely to be affected by the various stages of the development,
- Predicted volume, type and duration of construction traffic.
- Location of site compound, staff parking and visitor parking.
- Proposed measures to mitigate the impact of general construction traffic and abnormal loads on the local road network following detailed assessment of relevant roads.
- Details of any traffic management signage required for the duration of the construction period.
- Measures to ensure that all affected public roads are kept free of mud and debris arising from the development.
- The developer may also be requested to enter into a Section 96 agreement with the Highland Council to cover any abnormal wear and tear to the Council roads. This will include a requirement for pre and post construction surveys to be undertaken and agreed with the Council and for the provision of a suitable bond.
- If the development involves any abnormal loads a detailed protocol, route and delivery programme will be required and agreed with any interested parties such as Highland Council, the Police, Transport Scotland, and community representatives. The protocol shall identify any requirement for convoy working and/or escorting of vehicles and

include arrangements to provide advance notice of abnormal load movements in the local media.

Detailed Junction Design

3.89 Details of any new site access should be clearly set out on dimensioned drawings related to OS data and include confirmation of geometry, construction form, drainage details to prevent water running out onto the public road and evidence that appropriate visibility splays can be achieved. Vehicle swept paths should also be provided to evidence that the proposed junction form will be suitable for its intended use. Details of reinstatement of any temporary site access at its junction with the public road, post construction is also required. Appropriate junction arrangements and visibility splay information can be found in THC's published Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments.

Socio-Economic, Tourism and Recreation

3.90 We consider that Socio-Economic, Tourism and Recreational impacts should be considered even if this is separate to the EIAR to ensure that these matters are appropriately addressed. The assessment should estimate who may be affected by the development, in all or in part, which may require individual households to be identified, local communities or a wider socio economic groupings such as tourists and tourist related businesses, recreational groups, economically active, etc. The application should include relevant economic information connected with the project, including the potential number of jobs, and economic activity associated with the procurement, construction, operation and decommissioning of the development. In this regard wind farm development experience in this location should be used to help set the basis of likely impact. This should set out the impact on the regional and local economy, not just the national economy. Any mitigation proposed should also address impacts on the regional and local economy.

Public Access

3.91 When assessing the impact on recreational routes please ensure that all core paths, rights of way, national cycle network, and long distance trails are assessed. Other useful information about patterns of recreational use on site include Strava's Global Heatmap and Ramblers Scotland Paths Map. These should help form a more adequate baseline of information for a comprehensive assessment of the proposal's impact on public access during the construction and operation phases of any development.

3.92 The potential impact on and mitigation for public access should be assessed incorporating core paths, public rights of way, long distance routes, other paths and wider access rights across the site. While the Scoping Report and an eventual EIA may include impacts on elements of outdoor access assessed under other headings, THC's Access Officer considers that all the impacts on outdoor access should all be brought together here in a comprehensive assessment of the proposals visual and physical impacts on outdoor

access during the preparatory, construction, operational and post-operational phases. Guidance on assessing that impact as part of an EIA in Appendix 6 of this document:

https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2018-05/Publication%202018%20-%20Environmental%20Impact%20Assessment%20Handbook%20V5.pdf

3.93 Those impacts, along with the mitigation measures, will inform an Access Management Plan which is required to be submitted as part of the EIAR and an assessment of the development's impact on public access included within this Socio Economic section of the EIAR as per the requirements of HwLDP Policy 77 Outdoor Access.

As a point to note, any retained or planned gates should have a pass gate installed by them to accommodate walkers, cyclists and horse riders with an internal width of at least 1.5m – kissing gates are unacceptable.

Aviation, Radar and Telecoms

3.94 The EIAR needs to recognise community assets that are currently in operation for example TV, radio, tele-communication links, aviation interests including radar, MOD safeguards, etc. In this regard the applicant, when submitting a future application, will need to demonstrate what interests they have identified and the outcomes of any consultations with relevant authorities such as Ofcom, NATS, BAA, CAA, MOD, Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd, etc. through the provision of written evidence of concluded discussions / agreed outcomes. We consider the results of these surveys should be contained within the EIAR to determine whether any suspensive conditions are required in relation to such issues.

3.95 There should be continued dialogue with HIAL over the impact on the radar at airports in the area.

If there are no predicted effects on communication links as a result of the development, the EIAR should still address this matter by explaining how this conclusion was reached.

Miscellaneous: Health and Safety and Shadow Flicker

3.96 The EIAR needs to address all relevant climatic factors which can greatly influence the impact range of many of the preceding factors on account of seasonal changes affecting, rainfall, sunlight, prevailing wind direction etc. From this base data information on the expected impacts of any development can then be founded recognising likely impacts for each phases of development including construction, operation and decommissioning. Issues such as dust, air borne pollution and / or vapours, noise, light, shadow-flicker can then be highlighted. Consideration must also be given to the potential health and safety risks associated with lightning strikes and ice throw given the proximity of recreational routes through the site.

3.97 Depending on the proximity of the working area and access route to any houses etc. the applicant may require to submit a scheme for the suppression of dust during construction. Particular attention should be paid to construction traffic movements and routing.

3.98 A number of the aforementioned matters could be addressed by a CEMD for the proposal. While acceptable in principle we would request that an Outline CEMD is included with the application.

Forestry

3.99 The Council's Forestry Officer was consulted, and noted the proposed development does not appear to involve any significant adverse impact on existing trees or woodland. Therefore, no further comments have been made.

3.100 As it stands, a specific chapter on Forestry is required as the layout of the access road, turbines or associated infrastructure will impact on Forestry. The EIAR should provide a baseline survey of the plants (including fungi, lichens and bryophytes) and trees present on the site to determine the presence of any rare or threatened species. The EIAR should indicate areas of woodland / forestry plantation which may by felled to accommodate new development (including the access), including any off site works / mitigation. Compensatory planting of new woodland is a clear expectation of any proposals for felling, and thereby such mitigation needs to be considered within any assessment. If trees are removed then compliance with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy must be demonstrated. For any compensatory planting proposal, this is expected to replicate the functionality of the existing forestry to be removed (i.e. for commercial or habitat value).

4.0 Significant Effects on the Environment

4.1 Leading from the assessment of the environmental elements the EIAR needs to describe the likely significant effects of the development on the environment, which should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development, resulting from:

- the existence of the development;
- the use of natural resources; and
- the emission of pollutants, the creation of nuisances and the elimination of waste.

4.2 The potential significant effects of development must have regard to:

- the extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population);
- the trans-frontier nature of the impact;
- the magnitude and complexity of the impact;
- the probability of the impact; and

- the duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.

4.3 The effects of development upon baseline data should be provided in clear summary points.

4.4 The Council requests that when measuring the positive and negative effects of the development a four point scale is used advising any effect to be either strong positive, positive, negative or strong negative.

4.5 The applicant should provide a description of the forecasting methods used to assess the effects on the environment.

5.0 Mitigation

5.1 Consideration of the significance of any adverse impacts of a development will of course be balanced against the projected benefits of the proposal. Valid concerns can be overcome or minimised by mitigation by design, approach or the offer of additional features, both on and off site. A description of the measures envisaged to prevent, reducing and where possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment must be set out within the EIAR statement and be followed through within the application for development.

5.2 The mitigation being tabled in respect of a single development proposal can be manifold. Consequently the EIAR should present a clear summary table of all mitigation measures associated with the development proposal. This table should be entitled draft Schedule of Mitigation. As the development progresses to procurement and then implementation this carries forward to a requirement for a Construction Environmental Management Document (CEMD) and then Plan (CEMP) which in turn will set the framework for individual Construction Method Statements (CMS). Further guidance can be obtained at:

http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/485C70FB-98A7-4F77-8D6B-ED5ACC7409C0/0/construction_environmental_management_22122010.pdf

This is currently under review by a working party led by SEPA working through Heads of Planning Scotland but for the time being remains relevant.

5.3 The implementation of mitigation can often involve a number of parties other than the developer. In particular local liaison groups involving the local community are often deployed to assist with phasing of construction works – abnormal load deliveries, construction works to the road network, borrow pit blasting. It should be made clear within the EIAR or supporting information accompanying a planning application exactly which groups are being involved in such liaison, the remit of the group and the management and resourcing of the required effort.

If you would like to discuss this scoping response, please contact the undersigned.

Niamh Coyne. Graduate Planner -The Highland Council

A26

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND | ÀRAINNEACHD EACHDRAIDHEIL ALBA

Longmore House
Salisbury Place
Edinburgh
EH9 1SH

Enquiry Line: 0131 668 8716
HMConsultations@hes.scot

By email to: econsents_admin@gov.scot

Energy Consents Unit
4th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay
150 Broomielaw
Glasgow
G2 8LU

Our case ID: 300039922
Your ref: EC00006178

16 July 2025

Dear Scottish Government Energy Consents

The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017
Achany Extension Wind Farm, The Highland Council
Scoping Report

Thank you for consulting us on this Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping report, which we received on 13 June 2025. We have reviewed the details in terms of our historic environment interests. This covers World Heritage Sites, scheduled monuments and their settings, category A-listed buildings and their settings, inventory gardens and designed landscapes, inventory battlefields and Historic Marine Protected Areas.

The relevant local authority archaeological and cultural heritage advisors will also be able to offer advice on the scope of the cultural heritage assessment. This may include topics covered by our advice-giving role, and also other topics such as unscheduled archaeology, category B and C listed buildings, and conservation areas.

Proposed development

We understand that the proposed development comprises an increase to the consented turbine heights of the consented Achany Extension Wind Farm and minor amendments to their layout and infrastructure. The turbines will increase in height from a maximum of 149.9 meters to 200 meters.

Scope of assessment

We welcome that the environmental impact assessment (EIA) undertaken in support of the development will include an assessment of impacts on the historic environment, and we are broadly content with the proposed methodology provided in the report. The EIA should be undertaken by a suitably experienced heritage professional with an understanding of cultural heritage issues. We recommend that the applicant refers to the EIA Handbook for best practice advice on assessing cultural heritage impacts.

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We have identified likely significant effects on our historic environment interests. Our advice on the nature of these impacts, and any potential mitigation measures, are included in an annex to this covering letter. This also includes our requirements for information to be included in the EIA Report.

Further information

Decisions that affect the historic environment should take the Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS) into account as a material consideration. HEPS is supported by our Managing Change guidance series.

We hope this is helpful. If you would like to submit more information about this or any other proposed development to us for comment, please send it to our consultations mailbox, hmconsultations@hes.scot. If you have questions about this response, please contact Sam Fox at samuel.fox@hes.scot.

Yours sincerely

Historic Environment Scotland

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND | ÀRAINNEACHD EACHDRAIDHEIL ALBA

ANNEX

Background

We provided comments to the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) in relation to the original wind farm application in September 2021. In our response, we noted that the extension would introduce several turbines into view of Dail Langwell, broch 1675m NW of Croich (SM 1852), and although we did not object to the proposals, we recommended that the deletion of the most prominent turbine (T2 and that the removal and relocation of T8 also be considered.

In 2022 we were also consulted by the applicant on the removal of two turbines from the proposed scheme (T10 & T20).

Our interests

Dail Langwell, broch 1675m NW of Croich (SM1852)
The monument comprises a broch, which is a complex stone-built roundhouse dating to the Iron Age (between 600 BC and AD 400). The monument is visible as a roughly circular drystone-walled structure. It is located on the south side of Glen Cassley, around 24m above the River Cassley. Standing walls of the broch remain but much of the structure has collapsed forming a large debris field. The outer wall of the structure has an external diameter of 21m and measures up to 3.4m in height and up to 5.5m in width. The entrance passage, at the east, is around 5.5m long. There is evidence of a guard cell on the north side of the entrance passage and a set of projecting door checks and possible bar hole slot also within the entrance passage. An intramural cell is visible on the ground floor to the south of the entrance passage. Sections of the upper-level intramural gallery with associated voids and lintels are visible at the southwest and north of the broch.

Brochs are large complex structures that could have accommodated either an extended family or a small community. While there would have been a social hierarchy within this community, the construction of these elaborate towers is often understood in terms of elite settlement, as it takes a significant amount of effort and manpower to construct them.

Located on a steep slope above the River Cassley in a highly prominent position, monument was positioned as a focal point in the landscape, clearly visible in inward views from within the valley to anyone moving up or down the Strath, as well as from the hills across the river. It is located directly above a narrow and relatively shallow point in the river that acts as a natural fording point, and there are wide outward reciprocal views from the monument up and down the river valley and across to the hills beyond. This land and the rural upland character of the surrounding landscape also form the backdrop to wider views from the broch and reciprocal views.

Brochs likely had a role as fortified or defensive sites, possibly serving a community across a wider area, and as such their relationship to other broadly contemporary monuments is important even if the other monuments do not have a direct visual relationship to them. For instance, there are a pair of unscheduled brochs approximately 10km downstream from Dail Langwell close to where the River Cassley meets the River Oykel, and these brochs

arguably control access into Strath Cassley whilst Dail Langwell monitors movement along the strath. The setting of all three monuments, scheduled or unscheduled, includes a relationship to the others.

Our Advice

We are content that the proposed increase in turbine height will not lead to additional impact on any assets other than Dail Langwell broch (SM1852) and as such no other assets are discussed below. We are content that all other heritage assets within our remit are scoped out of the EIA.

The supplied bare-earth ZTV indicates that all the Achany Wind Farm Extension turbines to be extended would be visible from the broch. As the turbine locations have not moved, the visualisations provided for the consented scheme (Figure 12.3.2 and Figure 12.3.3) still demonstrate that most turbines would be viewed as being beyond the ridgeline, with a single turbine located on the side of the ridgeline closest to the broch (T8).

The turbines would represent the introduction of modern industrial elements on a scale that currently is not present within the landscape and hence represent a significant alteration to the character of the landscape surrounding the broch. This impact would be exacerbated beyond that of the consented scheme by the increase in turbine height. We consider that the increased turbine size has the potential to have an increased adverse impact on the setting of the monument. We will require the provision of updated photomontages to allow us to assess the extent of this impact.

In the EIAR for the consented scheme we were provided with photomontage and wireline visualisations from the monument (Figure 12.3.2 and Figure 12.3.3) which were useful in demonstrating the impact of the proposed development on the monument. We welcome the intention to reproduce these visualisations with the proposed 200m turbine height as part of the EIAR, as is noted in 10.4.2 of the Cultural Heritage and Archaeology Chapter of the Scoping Report.

The visualisations requested above should therefore be added to the list of proposed Viewpoints as set out on Figure 5.1.

Given the limited information provided at this stage we are unable to provide detailed comments on potential mitigation options. We would therefore welcome further engagement as the proposals progress, such as draft visualisations.

Historic Environment Scotland
16 July 2025

NatureScot
Scotland's Nature Agency
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

Niall MacQuarrie
Case Officer
Energy Consents Unit
The Scottish Government
By e-mail: Econsents_Admin@gov.scot

14 July 2025

Our ref: CDM180600
Your ref: ECU00006178

Dear Mr MacQuarrie,

Section 36C Electricity Act 1989
Scoping opinion for Achany Extension wind farm Proposed Varied Development

Thank you for your consultation of 13 June 2025 requesting a scoping opinion for the above proposal and for the extension to the consultation period.

Summary
We are content with the proposed approach to the evaluation and impact assessment methods for the issues which fall within our remit (Ecology and Ornithology) and offer further advice regarding Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

Ecology and Ornithology
We are content with the proposed approach outlined by the Applicant for both Ecology and Ornithology chapters in the Scoping Report and welcome reference to NatureScot 2024 guidance, '*Guidance on dealing with proposals for the variation of section 36 wind farm consents.*'

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
Having reviewed the information in Chapter 5 of the Scoping Report we have the following comments:

- We are content with the landscape designations scoped in for assessment as detailed in Table 5.3 of the Scoping Report.
- Viewpoints 18, 19 and 20 should be included in the assessment.
- Viewpoint 12 (Glencassley road by Langwell Hill) should be included in the night-time assessment along with a night-time photomontage from this location as this would be representative of the Reay-Cassley Wild Land Area. (Viewpoint 12 is in addition to Viewpoint 6 and Viewpoint 9 for the night-time assessment.)
- Visual information should contain comparative wirelines to assist with understanding new or intensified effects from the varied development to that of the consented scheme.

- We advise that NatureScot (2024) document '*Guidance on Aviation Lighting Impact Assessment*' should be drawn on as a resource for informing the assessment of the proposed turbine aviation lighting - https://www.nature.scot/doc/guidance-aviation-lighting-impact-assessment.

The advice in this letter is provided by NatureScot, the operating name of Scottish Natural Heritage.

Please let me know if you require any further information or advice from us in relation to this proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Alexander Macdonald
Operations Officer – North
Alexander.Macdonald@nature.scot

A32

Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Buidheann Dìon Àrainneachd na h-Alba

Niall Macquarrie
ECU

Our Ref: PCS-20005882
Your Ref: EC00006178

By email only to: Econsents_Admin@gov.scot

SEPA Email Contact:
planning.north@sepa.org.uk

27 June 2025

Dear Niall Macquarrie

Electricity Act 1989 - Section 36
EC00006178
Achany Extension Wind Farm
Highland

Thank you for consulting SEPA for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping opinion in relation to the above development. We welcome engagement with the applicant at an early stage to discuss any of the issues raised in this letter and would especially welcome further pre-application engagement once initial peat probing, peat condition assessment and habitat survey work has been completed and the layout developed further as a result.

Our position and advice, given below, is based on the Scottish Ministers ultimately determining that the proposal is classed as development that could be supported for the purposes of assessment under Policies 5 Soils and 22 Flood risk and water management, as defined in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). If this is not the case, please advise so we can re-consider our position and advice. We consider that this also covers the

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requirements in NPF4 Policies 2 Climate mitigation and adaption, 3 Biodiversity and 11 Energy.

Advice for the determining authority

To **avoid delay and potential objection** the EIA submission must contain a series of scale drawings of sensitivities, for example peat depth, peat condition, Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE), proximity to waterbodies, overlain with proposed permanent and temporary development. This is necessary to ensure the EIA process has informed the layout of the development to firstly avoid, then reduce and then mitigate significant impacts on the environment. We request that the issues covered in Appendix 1 below, which provides details of our standard information requirements for EIA development and the form in which they must be submitted, and Appendix 2, which provides additional development type specific advice, be addressed to our satisfaction in the EIA process.

We have also provided site specific comments in the following section which provides pre-application advice and can help the developer focus the scope of the assessment.

1. Site specific comments

1.1 As this proposal overlays much of an existing consent, a certain level of survey information has already been collected. However, we can see from the peat survey submitted with the Scoping Report, that the proposed infrastructure is larger and not exactly in the same location. Therefore, we would expect further detailed peat survey data to be conducted to inform the location of the proposed infrastructure. We would expect peat depths of over 1m to be avoided, in line with the NPF4 Policy 5 mitigation hierarchy. Since the last consent there have been numerous updates to guidance and policy. Please review or Scoping requirements below for what may have changed since the last consent. We would encourage the applicant to send us their peat surveys in draft form at as early a stage as possible to discuss placement of infrastructure in relation to avoidance of peat and peatland condition mapping to avoid near natural habitats.

1.2 Crossings must be designed to accommodate the 0.5% annual exceedance probability flows with an appropriate allowance for climate change, or information provided to justify smaller structures. Our Climate change allowances for flood risk assessment in land use planning guidance sets out required allowances for climate change.

If you have queries relating to this letter, please contact us at planning.north@sepa.org.uk including our reference number in the email subject.

Your sincerely,
Aden McCorkell
Senior Planning Officer
Planning Service

Ecopy to: Niall.Macquarrie@gov.scot

Disclaimer: This advice is given without prejudice to any decision made on elements of the proposal regulated by us, as such a decision may take into account factors not considered at this time. We prefer all the technical information required for any SEPA consents to be submitted at the same time as the planning or similar application. However, we consider it to be at the applicant's commercial risk if any significant changes required during the regulatory stage necessitate a further planning application or similar application and/or neighbour notification or advertising. We have relied on the accuracy and completeness of the information supplied to us in providing the above advice and can take no responsibility for incorrect data or interpretation, or omissions, in such information. If we have not referred to a particular issue in our response, it should not be assumed that there is no impact associated with that issue. For planning applications, if you did not specifically request advice on flood risk, then advice will not have been provided on this issue. Further information on our consultation arrangements generally can be found at sepa.org.uk/environment/land/planning/.

Appendix 1: SEPA Energy generation and transmission EIA scoping requirements

Please note that some of our planning guidance referenced in this response has been reviewed and updated to reflect the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) policies. For example, our Flood Risk Standing Advice, Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Developments on Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems and the Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Developments on Groundwater Abstractions.

This appendix sets out our minimum information requirements and we would welcome discussion around these prior to formal submission to avoid delays. There may be opportunities to scope out some of the issues below and in Appendix 2 depending on the site. Evidence must be provided in the submission to support why an issue is not relevant for this site. If there is a significant length of time between scoping and application submission, the developer should check whether our advice has changed.

1. Site layout

1.1 Each of the drawings requested below must detail all proposed upgraded, temporary and permanent infrastructure. This includes all tracks, excavations, landraising and other groundworks, buildings, borrow pits, pipelines, cabling, site compounds, laydown areas, storage areas and any other construction and built elements. All drawings must be based on an adequate scale with which to assess the information.

1.2 The layout should be designed to minimise the extent of new works on previously undisturbed ground. For example, a layout which makes use of lots of spurs or loops is unlikely to be acceptable, cabling must be laid in ground already disturbed such as verges, and existing built infrastructure must be re-used or upgraded where possible.

1.3 A comparison of the environmental effects of alternative locations of infrastructure elements may be required. We seek absolute avoidance of development on the sensitive habitats detailed below. Where elements of a development haven't avoided for example near-natural peatland, adequate justification should be

provided for the proposed layout. The justification should include how any impacts are considered in relation to example the mitigation hierarchy as demonstrated through the Peat Management Plan (PMP) submission. This should be supported by maps with overlays of the peat maps and any other constraints, such as visual impact, to clearly demonstrate how these constraints have influenced any necessary need for development on peatland and other sensitive habitats within our remit.

2. Peatland and other carbon rich soils (CRS)

2.1 Peatland in near natural condition generally experiences low greenhouse gas emissions, is accumulating and may be sequestering carbon, has high value for supporting biodiversity, helps to protect water quality and contributes to natural flood management, irrespective of whether that peatland is designated for nature conservation purposes or not. Where proposals are on peatland or other CRS, the following should be submitted to address our requirements in relation to NPF4 Policy 5 to protect CRS and the ecosystem services they provide (including water and carbon storage).

2.2 It should be clearly demonstrated that the assessment has informed careful project design and ensured, in accordance with relevant guidance and the mitigation hierarchy in NPF4, that adverse impacts are first avoided and then minimised through best practice.

2.3 The submission should include a series of layout drawings, at a usable scale, showing all permanent and temporary infrastructure, along with the ancillary construction work areas, with the extent of excavation required. These plans should be overlaid on the following:

a) Peat depth survey showing peat probe locations, colour coded using distinct colours for each depth category. This must include adequate peat probing information to inform the site layout in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy

in NPF4, which may be more than that outlined in the Peatland Survey – Guidance on Developments on Peatland (2017).

b) Peat depth survey showing interpolated peat depths.

c) Peatland condition mapping – the Peatland Condition Assessment photographic guide lists the criteria for each condition category and illustrates how to identify each condition category.

2.4 The detailed series of layout drawings above should clearly demonstrate that peat excavation has been avoided where possible. Where complete avoidance of peat and other CRS is not possible, justification should be provided to adequately demonstrate why this is the case, and it should be clearly demonstrated on the drawings that:

a) Development proposals avoid any near natural peatland and the deepest areas of peat.

b) All proposed excavation is on peat less than 1m deep, where feasible.

c) The volumes of peat excavated have been reduced as much as possible, first through layout and then by design, making use of techniques such as floating tracks.

2.5 The Outline Peat Management Plan (PMP) must include:

a) A table setting out the volumes of acrotelmic, catotelmic and amorphous peat to be excavated. These should include a contingency factor to consider variables such as bulking and uncertainties in the estimation of peat volumes.

b) A table clearly setting out the volumes of acrotelmic, catotelmic and amorphous excavated peat: (1) used in making good site specific areas disturbed by development, including borrow pits (quantities used in making good areas

disturbed by development must be the minimum required to achieve the intended environmental benefit and materials must be suitable for the proposed use), (2) used in on and off site peatland restoration, and (3) disposed of, and the proposed means of disposal (if deemed unavoidable after all other uses of excavated peat have been explored and reviewed).

c) Details of proposals for temporary storage and handling of peat – Good Practice during Wind Farm Construction outlines the approach to good practice when addressing issues of peat management on site and minimising carbon loss.

d) Suitable evidence that the use of peat in making good areas disturbed by development, including borrow pits, is genuine and not a waste disposal operation, including evidence on the suitability of the peat and evidence that the quantity used matches and does not exceed the requirement of the proposed use.

e) If peat is to be used in the reinstatement of borrow pits on site, cross sections and plans should be provided showing the proposed maximum peat depth profiles for each category of peat, phasing and final restoration profiles in relation to surrounding land with a clear hydrological justification for the use of catotelmic peat also being given. The target restoration habitat for each borrow pit should be specified, along with how this will be maintained and managed in perpetuity.

f) Use of excavated peat in areas not disturbed by the development itself is no longer a matter we provide planning advice on. Please refer to Advising on peatland, carbon-rich soils and priority peatland habitats in development management | NatureScot 2023, and the Peatland ACTION – Technical Compendium, which provides more detailed advice on peatland restoration techniques. Unless the excavated peat is certain to be used for construction purposes in its natural state on the site from where it is excavated, it will be subject to regulatory control. The use of excavated peat off-site, including for peatland restoration, will require the appropriate level of environmental

authorisation. Excavated peat will be waste if it is discarded, or the holder intends to or is required to discard it. These proposals should be clearly outlined so that we can identify any regulatory implications of the proposed activities. This will allow the developer and their contractors to tailor their planning and designs to accommodate any regulatory requirements. Further guidance on this can be found in the document Is it waste - Understanding the definition of waste.

3. Water environment

3.1 Policy 11 of NPF4 requires that the project design and mitigation demonstrate how impacts on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk are addressed. The proposals should demonstrate how impacts on local hydrology have been minimised and the site layout designed to minimise watercourse crossings and avoid other direct impacts on water features. Measures should be put in place to protect any downstream sensitive receptors.

3.2 The submission must include a set of drawings showing:

a) The footprint of all proposed temporary and permanent infrastructure (including all the ancillary construction work areas, for example excavations, landraising and other groundworks, storage, laydown and working areas) overlain with all waterbodies.

b) The minimum buffer around each waterbody, as detailed in Table 1 of Recommended Riparian Corridor Layer for use in Land Use Planning, from all construction activities including working and storage areas, or 50m where subsurface activities are more than 1m in depth. If these minimum buffers cannot be achieved each breach must be numbered on a plan with an associated photograph of the location, dimensions of the waterbody, drawings of what is proposed in terms of any engineering works, and details of why the minimum buffer cannot be achieved and mitigation measures to protect the feature.

c) A map showing the location, size, depths and dimensions of all borrow pits overlain with all waterbodies within 250m and showing a site-specific buffer around each waterbody proportionate to the depth of excavations. The information provided needs to demonstrate that a site-specific proportionate buffer can be achieved.

3.3 Further advice and our best practice guidance are available on our sepa.org.uk/regulations/water/engineering/ webpage. Guidance on the design of water crossings can be found in the Construction of River Crossings Good Practice Guide.

4. Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems and existing groundwater abstractions

4.1 The construction and operation of developments can disrupt groundwater flow and impact on Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE), which are protected under the Water Framework Directive, and existing groundwater abstractions. The layout and design of the development must avoid adverse impacts on such areas, ensuring the water environment, including GWDTE and existing groundwater abstractions, are protected.

4.2 As detailed in our Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Developments on Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems and the Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Developments on Groundwater Abstractions, a phased approach to the assessment of risks to GWDTE and groundwater abstractions is recommended, with greater detail being required for higher risk sites or activities.

4.3 Where monitoring is required, please note that baseline monitoring is expected to commence at least 12 months ahead of the development works starting on site and this should be factored into the timescales for submitting the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and commencement of development.

Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE)

4.4 A Phase 1 habitat survey should be provided unless the developer is already aware that GWDTE are likely to be present. Where initial assessment results indicate relevant habitats may be present, a National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey should be submitted, along with the following information:

a) A set of drawings demonstrating all GWDTE are outwith a 10m radius of all activities, 100m radius of all excavations shallower than 1m and outwith 250m of all excavations deeper than 1m. The survey needs to extend beyond the site boundary where the distances require it.

b) If the minimum buffers cannot be achieved, a conceptual site model (CSM) should be provided that includes interpretation of the hydrogeological setting, including the groundwater flow regime, and the ecological features present. This may be supported, as appropriate, by intrusive ground investigation, groundwater monitoring, or groundwater modelling in addition to topography, properties of the emergent water and the soil, and underlying geology. Please refer to Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Developments on Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems for further advice on undertaking detailed site specific qualitative and/or quantitative risk assessments and the minimum information we require to be submitted.

c) Please note that while we will accept The UK Habitat Classification System (UKHab) as an alternative to a Phase 1 habitat survey, due to discrepancies in habitat definition and ambiguity in correspondence with NVC types, we do not accept the use of the UKHab as an alternative to NVC.

Existing groundwater abstractions

4.5 The source (rather than the property it supplies) of both public and private water supply groundwater abstractions, both within and outwith the site boundary, should be identified. Scottish Water holds information regarding public water supplies and the Local Authority holds records of private water supplies. Note that the information held by the Local Authority will sometimes relate to the property served by the

private water supply, rather than the location of the source itself (e.g. the house rather than the borehole or spring). Therefore, the details of each private water supply source require confirmation, including a site walkover survey.

4.6 The following information should be submitted where the assessment results indicate groundwater supplies may be present:

a) A set of drawings demonstrating all groundwater abstractions are outwith a 10m radius of all activities, 100m radius of all excavations shallower than 1m and outwith 250m of all excavations deeper than 1m. The survey needs to extend beyond the site boundary where the distances require it.

b) If the minimum buffers cannot be achieved a conceptual site model should be provided that includes interpretation of the hydrogeological setting, including the groundwater flow regime. This may be supported, as appropriate, by intrusive ground investigation, groundwater monitoring, or groundwater modelling. Please refer to Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Developments on Groundwater Abstractions for further advice on undertaking detailed site specific qualitative and/or quantitative risk assessments and the minimum information we require to be submitted.

5. Flood risk

5.1 We reiterate that, as detailed above, our position and advice is based on the determining authority determining that the proposal is supported under Policy 22**,** as defined in NPF4, unless we are advised otherwise.

5.2 Advice on flood risk is available at Flood Risk Standing Advice and reference should also be made to Controlled Activities Regulations (CAR) Flood Risk Standing Advice for Engineering, Discharge and Impoundment Activities.

5.3 Crossings must be designed to accommodate the 0.5% annual exceedance probability flows with an appropriate allowance for climate change, or information

provided to justify smaller structures. Our Climate change allowances for flood risk assessment in land use planning guidance sets out required allowances for climate change.

5.4 In order to establish that the five bullet points within NPF4 Policy 22a have been satisfied and where it is considered the development could result in an increased risk of flooding to a nearby receptor, then a flood risk assessment (FRA) must be submitted. Our Technical Flood Risk Guidance for Stakeholders provides generic requirements for undertaking Flood Risk Assessments as well as our Climate change allowances for flood risk assessment in land use planning guidance.

5.5 The FRA should specifically address the following issues:

a) All existing watercourses and drains on the site are fully identified and flow pathways understood in relation to the 1 in 200 year plus climate change flood levels for the catchment.

b) The modelling should extend far enough upstream to capture any flow pathways which may impact the development site.

c) Demonstration there is no increased flood risk to existing properties in the vicinity of the proposed development and, if possible, demonstrate an improvement.

d) Any intended realignment or alteration of channels should also be outlined and accounted for within the FRA, with analysis showing pre and post development flood risk.

e) Where applicable, flows should be shown to be accommodated within any altered channel to avoid flooding of existing structures, access roads or increased risk for others.

5.6 Generally, we are unable to support landraising within a flood risk area unless it is required for development outlined under the exceptions in Policy 22a of NPF4. Which, as indicated above, we understand this proposal is unless notified otherwise, and as such we may be able to accept. However, where landraising is proposed within the flood risk area identified within the FRA, it should be linked to compensatory storage and demonstrated that there is no reduction in floodplain capacity, or increased risk for others. Notwithstanding this, any landraising must be shown to be minimised as far as possible.

5.7 Culverting for land gain would not be supported by us. If any works to alter watercourse channels are proposed, we would expect betterment to the channel and utilisation of this opportunity to help reduce flood risk to the wider site and any other nearby receptors.

6. Environmental enhancements

6.1 Policy 3 of NPF4 requires all EIA development to demonstrate that the proposal will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks, so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention. EIA development should fully mitigate potential negative effects prior to identifying biodiversity enhancements, with the enhancements provided in addition to mitigation. We have published a data set which identifies where riparian planting would be most beneficial. This is available via the data publication page at sepa.org.uk/environment/environmental-data/. We highlight there may be opportunities for riparian planting along watercourses within landownership boundaries and would welcome the exploration of such planting as part of any biodiversity net gain proposals.

7. Forest removal and forest waste

7.1 If forestry is present on the site, the site layout should be designed to avoid large scale felling, as this can result in substantial amounts of waste material and a peak in release of nutrients which can affect local water quality.

7.2 The submission must include drawings with the boundaries of where felling will take place and a description of what is proposed for this timber in accordance with Use of Trees Cleared to Facilitate Development on Afforested Land – Joint Guidance from SEPA, SNH and FCS and our guidance Management of Forestry Waste.

8. Pollution prevention and environmental management

8.1 The submission must include a schedule of mitigation, which includes reference to best practice pollution prevention and construction techniques (for example, limiting the maximum area to be stripped of soils and peat at any one time) and regulatory requirements. Please refer to the Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPPs), along with our sepa.org.uk/regulations/water/construction/ and sepa.org.uk/regulations/water/pollution-control/water-run-off-from-construction-sites/ webpages, for more information and advice.

8.2 A commitment must also be included in the schedule of mitigation that micrositing will not encroach into sensitive areas, to avoid adversely affecting mitigation measures identified in the EIAR that seek to avoid and/or minimise adverse effects on sensitive receptors (eg peat, watercourse and GWDTE buffers).

9. Life extension, repowering and decommissioning

9.1 The discarding of materials as waste should be avoided and the waste hierarchy applied to waste produced during construction, operation and decommissioning of the development. If there is an intention to discard materials then further guidance on this can be found in Is it waste - Understanding the definition of waste, and our sepa.org.uk/regulations/waste/ and sepa.org.uk/regulations/waste/guidance/ webpages.

10. Other planning matters

10.1 For all other planning matters, we refer you and the developer to the relevant standing advice in our Triage guidance and standing advice, which is also applicable to Electricity Act applications.

11. SEPA authorisation

11.1 We authorise several matters relating to water, waste management, radioactive substances, and pollution prevention and control. In 2018, the Scottish Government brought in the Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations 2018 (EASR 2018). The aim of these Regulations is to provide a standardised, simplified, common framework for environmental authorisations in Scotland, known as an Integrated Authorisation Framework (IAF). A copy of the draft Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2025 can be found at legislation.gov.uk/sdsi/2025/9780111062319/introduction.

11.2 The IAF is being developed in a phased manner during 2025, with the regulations applying initially to radioactive substances activities in early 2025. For further information on the amendment of the regulations please refer to our sepa.org.uk/regulations/how-we-regulate/environmental-authorisations-scotland-regulations-2018/ webpage.

11.3 It is an applicant's responsibility to ensure their proposals will meet all relevant regulatory requirements and they are working within regulatory guidelines. We prefer all the technical information required for any SEPA authorisations to be submitted at the same time as the planning or similar application. We consider it to be at the applicant's commercial risk if planning permission is granted for a development/process which cannot gain authorisation from us, or if any significant changes required during the regulatory stage necessitate a further planning application or similar application and/or neighbour notification or advertising.

11.4 Our sepa.org.uk/regulations/ webpage provides good practice advice and guidance and defines those activities which may require authorisation by SEPA, along with details of how to contact us for more help, advice and how to apply for any necessary authorisations.

Appendix 2: SEPA's additional EIA scoping requirements by type of development

The below advice should be read in conjunction with the scoping advice in Appendix 1 above.

1. Windfarm

1.1 Proposals for life extension, repowering and/or decommissioning of windfarms must demonstrate accordance with our guidance on the Life extension and decommissioning of onshore wind farms. Table 1 of the guidance provides a hierarchical framework of environmental impact based upon the principles of sustainable resource use, effective mitigation of environmental risk (including climate change) and optimisation of long term ecological restoration. The submission must demonstrate how the hierarchy of environmental impact has been applied, within the context of latest knowledge and best practice, including justification for not selecting lower impact options when life extension is not proposed.

Katie Butchart

From: radionetworkprotection@bt.com
Sent: 27 June 2025 11:46
To: Econsents Admin
Cc: radionetworkprotection@bt.com
Subject: RE: WID13890 - Request for Scoping Opinion Achany Extension Wind Farm

BT Group

OUR REF; WID13890

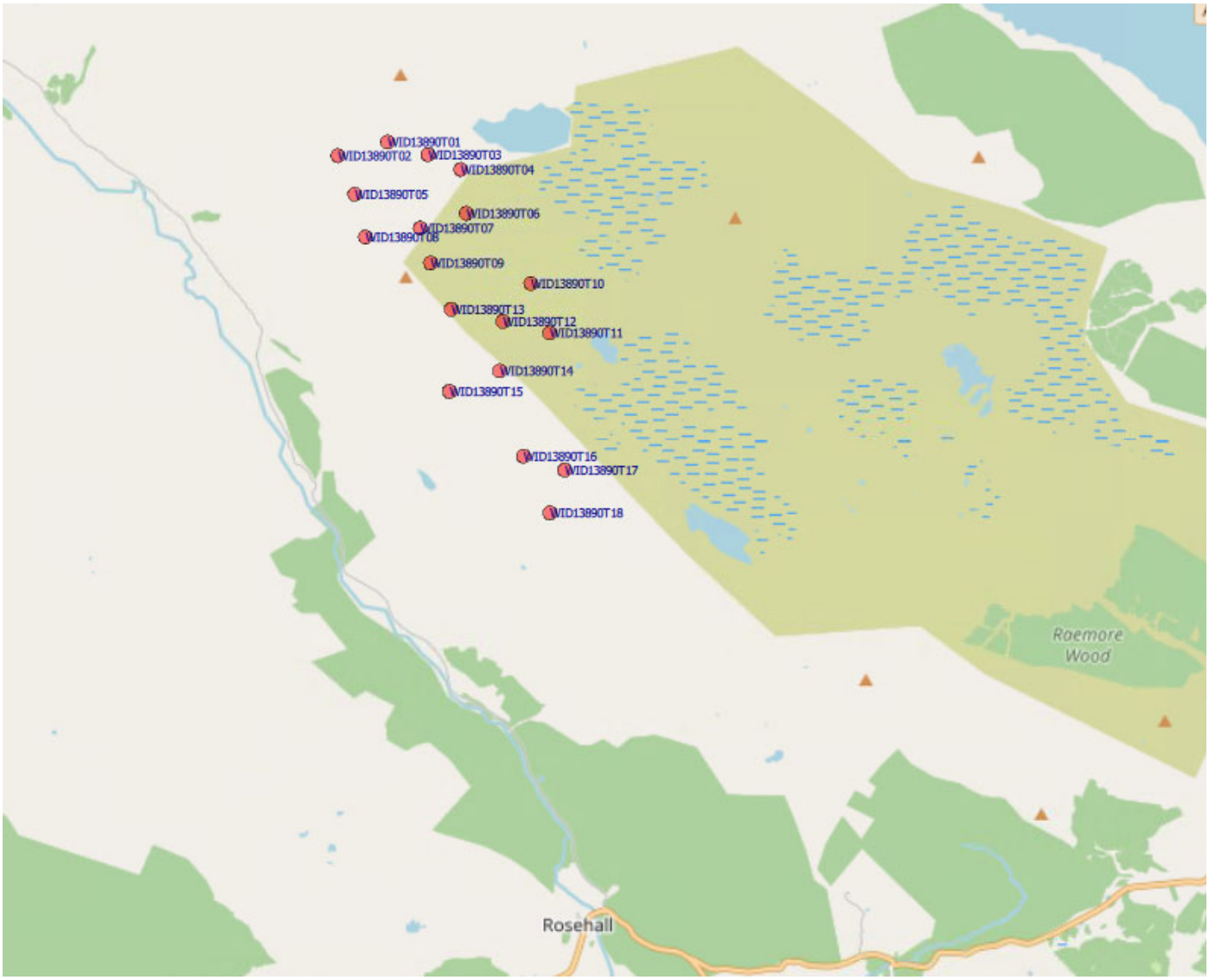
We have studied this proposal using the below co-ordinates with respect to EMC and related problems to BT point-to-point microwave radio links.

The conclusion is that this proposal should not cause interference to BT's current and presently planned radio network.

BT requires 100m minimum clearance from any structure at height to the radio link path. It should be noted that this decision is for the date of its issue as the use of the spectrum is dynamic and can change on an ongoing basis. Therefore, please reconsult us if there are any further changes during the planning process with heights and locations of any structures, and its finalisation, as we may have new links assigned by Ofcom over its duration.

Please note this refers to BT Radio Links only, you will need to contact other providers separately for information relating to other supplier links / equipment.

A49



Kind Regards

Lisa Smith
National Radio Planner
Radio & Satellite Platforms

BT Group

From: Niall.Macquarrie@gov.scot <Niall.Macquarrie@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Econsents_Admin@gov.scot
Sent: 13 June 2025 14:33
Subject: WID13890 **REPLY BY 04/07/25** Request for Scoping Opinion Achany Extension Wind Farm

Dear Consultee,

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989
THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

REQUEST FOR SCOPING OPINION FOR PROPOSED SECTION 36C APPLICATION FOR Achany Extension Wind Farm

On **22nd May 2025**, **SSE Renewables Ltd** (the Applicant) submitted a request for a scoping opinion from the Scottish Ministers for the proposed section **36C** application for the **Achany Extension Wind Farm**. The proposed development is for 18 wind turbines (200m blade to tip height) with a proposed generating capacity of 81MW. Ancillary infrastructure will includes: crane hardstandings, an onsite substation, access tracks, turning heads and a new Aviation Lighting Solution due to turbine height increase. The location lies immediately to the north west of the Applicant's operational Achany Wind Farm.

The proposed development is located in the planning authority area of the **Highland Council**, in line with regulation 12 of The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

Under regulation 12, Scottish Ministers are required to provide a scoping opinion outlining the information they consider should be included in the EIA report. Ministers are also required to consult the relevant consultation bodies and any other interested party which is likely to have an interest in the proposed development by reason of its specific environmental responsibilities or local and regional competencies.

The scoping report and supporting information can be viewed at the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit website www.energyconsents.scot by:

- clicking on ***Search*** tab; then,
- clicking on ***Simple Search*** tab; then,
- typing **Achany Extension Wind Farm** into ***Search by Project Name*** box then clicking on ***Go***;
- then clicking on **EC00006178** and then click on ***Documents*** tab.

The current base case has a **hub height of 132m** and a **rotor diameter of 136m**. The indicative wind turbine OS grid co-ordinates are shown below. T10 is missing as this was one of the two turbines that was dropped through the course of the original determination, the other being T20.

Turbine	Easting	Northing	mAOD
T01	245163.9522	911082.9889	361.8059998
T02	244595.0481	910949.9954	371.1229858
T03	245617.6698	910921.9976	350.4580078
T04	245979.9182	910739.9308	365.697998
T05	244768.0588	910506.2542	320.0499878
T06	246023	910241	392.1579895
T07	245495.0076	910094.9724	357.2139893
T08	244871.8427	910017.8154	317.3469849
T09	245597.4291	909695.3031	406.6990051

T11	246722	909421	352.0650024
T12	246915	908855	325.1929932
T13	246390	909004	345.1369934
T14	245810.4985	909163.2866	340.0780029
T15	246333.9947	908448.0119	293.0190125
T16	245756.0092	908236.9955	277.1580048
T17	246564	907472	287.3389893
T18	247025	907297	320.1820068
T19	246838.0061	906821.0038	296.7030029

To allow Scottish Ministers to provide a comprehensive scoping opinion, we ask that you review the scoping report and advise on the scope of the environmental impact assessment for this proposal. Please advise if there are any further matters you would like Ministers to highlight for consideration and inclusion in the assessment, particularly site-specific information.

I would be grateful for your comments by **4th July 2025.** Please note that reminders will not be issued, therefore if we have not received any comments from you, nor a request for an extension to this date, we will assume that you have no comments to make.

Please send your response (in PDF format if possible) to Econsents_Admin@gov.scot

Regards,

Niall MacQuarrie | Case Officer | Energy Consents Unit

The Scottish Government | email address

To view our current casework please visit www.energyconsents.scot

A52

200 Lichfield Lane
Mansfield
Nottinghamshire
NG18 4RG

T: 01623 637 119 (Planning Enquiries)

E: planningconsultation@coal.gov.uk

W: www.gov.uk/coalauthority

For the attention of: Energy Consents Unit
Energy Development

[By email: Econsents_Admin@gov.scot]

17 June 2025

Dear Energy Consents Unit

Re: ECU00006178 Achany Extension Wind Farm

The proposed development is for 18 wind turbines (200m blade to tip height) with a proposed generating capacity of 81MW. Ancillary infrastructure will includes: crane hardstandings, an onsite substation, access tracks, turning heads and a new Aviation Lighting Solution due to turbine height increase; Immediately To The North West Of The, Applicant's Operational Achany Wind Farm, Planning Authority Area Of The Highland Council

Thank you for your notification of 13 June 2025 seeking the views of the Coal Authority on the above.

The Coal Authority is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. As a statutory consultee, the Coal Authority has a duty to respond to planning applications and development plans in order to protect the public and the environment in mining areas.

The site to which this submission relates is not located within the defined coalfield. On this basis we have no specific comment to make.

Yours

The Coal Authority Planning Team

2/07/2025

SCOPING OPINION FOR PROPOSED SECTION 36C APPLICATION FOR Achany Extension Wind Farm

Creich Community Council Scoping Feedback

Due to the impacts of this project and the scale of concern we are receiving from the residents of the Kyle of Sutherland, we wish to set out our request for a range of items of information which must form part of the project scoping, and which are listed below.

Project scoping is almost always seen by developers as confined to an 'environmental Impact Assessment'. If it is done properly by competent design, construction, and operating organisations it should refer to engineering standards and project target integrity levels. The idea that scoping equals EIA is false. All areas that must be included in planning applications should also be discussed for proper informed consultation to take place.

We also consider that the Scottish Government and Highland Council, should have a moratorium on all wind farm and infrastructure requests that fall within the overall catchment of the Carron, Cassley, Oykel, and Shin Rivers and within the visual horizon of the Creich Community area until such time as a full ecological report is produced for the entire region and a review of engineering interactions and impacts that covers the whole area is performed. We are at risk of being swamped by multiple individual schemes with no overarching control. Different developers; fragmented responsibilities for construction; for access; for generation; for transmission and safety raise major concerns.

- **CUMULATIVE VISUAL IMPACT**: To include every project of this kind proposed along the Kyle of Sutherland and the catchment of its tributaries, in scoping or complete. The rivers, the estuary, and the land, form a substantial unity for life and nature and the community is also a unity within the catchment of the rivers and the shores of the Kyle.
- **CUMULATIVE NEGATIVE ECOLOGICAL IMPACT**. To include every project of this kind proposed within the overall catchment of the Carron, Cassley Oykel and Shin Rivers (including smaller tributaries) and along the Kyle of Sutherland and Inner Dornoch Firth and within the visual horizon of the Creich Community area. To include studies on endangered salmon, freshwater mussels and other river and estuarine life, and but not exclusive raptors, badgers, red squirrels and any species or mammal or insect, which lives on the hillsides and water ways.
- **THE LOCAL ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT BENEFIT**: To include wildlife tourism, scenic tourism, and provide evidence on how these will be enhanced, and not affected, as part of the community benefits from the project. Also to state the employment numbers the area will gain for permanent full-time jobs based solely at the project on completion over the next 30 years.
- **PEACEFUL ENVIRONMENT'S**: To include a report on the health and wellbeing of every resident that will be affected by the project – not just visually - on both sides of the Kyle of Sutherland. **This must include visualisation of night lighting and flicker**
- **WATER SUPPLIES**: To include the impact the project will have on water courses of all kinds. The developers should state their legal position and responsibility, or that of any

future owner or beneficiary, should any property or business have its water supply affected during all phases from inception to closure of the project.

- **ANTISOCIAL**: To include the effect on of strobing and shadow casting for every home, the full length of the Kyle of Sutherland 5 km from north bank. This must include a sun shadow report for a full year, detailing the area a shadow will be cast from each turbine.
- **ACCESS:** To include how and where the site will be accessed during planning, construction, and maintenance for the life of the project.
- **PPREFERRED CONNECTIONS**: To include as early as possible, the preferred connection to the grid. Although this will be a grid operators' decision a preferred choice needs to be presented and should form part of all consultation events.
- **BESS:** If a battery storage system is also being proposed it should be defined and its location given.
- **MAJOR INCIDENTS & DISATERS**
  Due to the remote location of the site, proximity to fragile landscapes, and tributaries, the developer should be required to engage with SEPA, the Health and Safety Executive, and the Scottish Fire Service. The engagement must provide enough information for the relevant bodies to determine response times, specialist emergency personnel, equipment and environmental responsibilities. The results of this will affect local authority and Scottish Government expenditure so therefore is relevant to the public.
- **Should you wish not to act on any point above please state your reasons in writing so that the community can assess and respond.**

We also request that all consultations be held at three locations, Bonar Bridge, Invershin and Rosehall, as all these areas are affected and fall under our care.

Should these locations not be included in any round of consultation we will consider that round to be null and void.

Please ensure these concerns are noted as per your email and we would like the impact assessments to fully explore these points.

Kind Regards

Creich Community Council

A55

Defence Infrastructure Organisation

Teena Oulaghan
Safeguarding Manager
Ministry of Defence
Safeguarding Department
St George's House
DIO Headquarters
DMS Whittington
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS14 9PY

Telephone [MOD]: 07970 170934

E-mail: teena.oulaghan100@mod.gov.uk

Your Reference: ECU00006178

Our Reference: DIO13289

Niall MacQuarrie
Energy Consents Unit
Scottish Government
4th Floor
5 Atlantic Quay
150 Broomielaw
G2 8LU

By email only

01 July 2025

Dear Niall,

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989
THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017
REQUEST FOR SCOPING OPINION FOR PROPOSED SECTION 36C APPLICATION FOR ACHANY EXTENSION WIND FARM.

Thank you for consulting the Ministry of Defence (MOD) in relation to the S36C Scoping through your communication dated 13 June 2025.

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) Safeguarding Team represents the MOD as a consultee in UK planning and energy consenting systems to ensure that development does not compromise or degrade the operation of defence sites such as aerodromes, explosives storage sites, air weapon ranges, and technical sites or training resources such as the Military Low Flying System.

I am writing to advise you that the MOD has concerns with the proposal.

The proposal concerns a development of 18 turbines with maximum blade tip heights of 200 metres above ground level. The proposed development has been assessed using the location data (Grid References) below provided in the developers Achany Extension Wind Farm Varied development – S36C Scoping Report.

Turbine no.	Easting	Northing
1	245164	911083
2	244595	910950
3	245618	910922
4	245980	910740

5	244768	910506
6	246023	910241
7	245495	910095
8	244872	910018
9	245597	909695
11	246722	909421
12	246915	908855
13	246390	909004
14	245810	909163
15	246334	908448
16	245756	908237
17	246564	907472
18	247025	907297
19	246838	906821

The principal safeguarding concerns of the MOD with respect to this development of wind turbines relates to their potential to create a physical obstruction to air traffic movements.

Physical Obstruction

The application site falls within Tactical Training Area 14 (TTA 14T), an area within which fixed wing aircraft may operate as low as 100 feet or 30.5 metres and Low Flying Area 14 (LFA 14), an area within which fixed wing aircraft may operate as low as 250 feet or 76.2 metres above ground level to conduct low level flight training. The addition of turbines in this location has the potential to introduce a physical obstruction to low flying aircraft operating in the area.

To address the impact up on low flying given the location and scale of the development, the MOD would require that conditions are added to any consent issued requiring that the development is fitted with aviation safety lighting and that sufficient data is submitted to ensure that structures can be accurately charted to allow deconfliction.

The development proposed includes wind turbine generators that exceed a height of 150m agl and are therefore subject to the lighting requirements set out in the Air Navigation Order 2016. In addition to CAA requirements, the MOD will require the submission, approval, and implementation of an aviation safety lighting specification that details the installation of MOD accredited aviation safety lighting.

As a minimum the MOD would require that the cardinal turbines are fitted with MOD accredited Infra-red (IR) lighting.

Summary

The MOD has concerns with this proposal due to the potential impact to low flying aircraft operating in the development area.

The MOD must emphasise that the advice provided within this letter is in response to the information detailed in the developer's document titled 'Achany Extension Wind Farm Varied development – S36C Scoping Report'. Any variation of the parameters (which include the location, dimensions, form, and finishing materials) detailed may significantly alter how the development relates to MOD safeguarding requirements and cause adverse impacts to safeguarded defence assets or capabilities. In the event that any amendment, whether considered

material or not by the determining authority, is submitted for approval, the MOD should be consulted and provided with adequate time to carry out assessments and provide a formal response.

I hope this adequately explains our position on the matter. If you require further information or would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Further information about the effects of wind turbines on MOD interests can be obtained from the following websites:

***MOD*:** https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wind-farms-ministry-of-defence-safeguarding

Yours sincerely

REDACTED

Teena Oulaghan
Safeguarding Manager

Kyle of Sutherland District Salmon Fishery Board
Bank House
Ardgay
Sutherland
IV24 3BG

3rd July 2025

Niall MacQuarrie
Case Officer
Energy Consents Unit
The Scottish Government

Dear Sir

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989
THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

REQUEST FOR SCOPING OPINION FOR PROPOSED SECTION 36C APPLICATION FOR ACHANY EXTENSION WIND FARM

Many thanks for consulting with the Kyle of Sutherland District Salmon Fishery Board (KSDSFB) in respect of the proposed Achany Extension Wind Farm.

Increasingly, KSDSFB is of the view that the present EIA process is flawed in that it lacks objectivity, underestimates potential risks, overestimates the efficacy of potential mitigation and fails to meaningfully assess cumulative impacts. Too often, impact assessments are being offered on a piecemeal basis in that they fail to include, for example, full details of all the river crossings required for a development to be constructed. We are also of the view that enforcement of planning conditions is often too weak to protect the environment and that by the time any remedial action is initiated in response to issues significant damage has already occurred.

The IUCN has recently listed the Atlantic salmon as endangered in Great Britain and as such we suggest that they constitute a key potential receptor as part of any assessment. This listing highlights the fragility of salmon populations in particular, and the aquatic environment in general.

In the first instance we would expect any environmental assessment to include:

- Fish habitat data in any potentially affected watercourse both within and out with the physical boundary of the proposed development.

Kyle of Sutherland District Salmon Fishery Board
Bank House
Ardgay
Sutherland
IV24 3BG

- Fish presence, distribution and abundance data in all potentially affected watercourses.
- Macro-invertebrate data in all potentially affected watercourses.
- Freshwater pearl mussel (FWPM) abundance and distribution data in all potentially affected watercourses.
- Hydrology data, including for any artificial drainage watercourses. Any artificial or modified drainage channels need to be fully mapped as part of the assessment process.
- Water quality data (i.e. turbidity, pH, dissolved organic carbon, acid-neutralising capacity etc.) in all potentially affected watercourses.
- Full mapping of the potential visual effect zones for all proposed turbines taking into account salmonid fish vision (i.e. incorporating a detailed understanding of factors such as Snell's Window). This would include both direct visualisation and other effects such as reflection and shadow flicker.
- Full assessment/modelling of the impact on fish behaviour and performance resulting from direct visualisation of moving turbine blades.
- Full assessment/modelling of the impact on fish behaviour and performance resulting from shadow flicker, reflections etc.

Yours Faithfullv
REDACT

Keith Williams

(Director and Clerk, Kyle of Sutherland District Salmon Fishery Board)

From:	LUP enquiries
To:	Econsents Admin
Subject:	RE: Request for Scoping Opinion Achany Extension Wind Farm
Date:	18 June 2025 11:49:07
Attachments:	image003.png image004.png image005.png

Dear Mr Macquarrie,

Thank you for your consultation of 13 June 2025 from the Scottish Ministers (sent to HSE's email address HazSubConsent.CEMHD5@hse.gov.uk), for HSE's view on the proposed S36C application of the Electricity Act 1989 for Achany Extension Wind Farm.

Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

- HSE's response is limited to our role in the land use planning system for the control of major industrial hazards involving hazardous substances.
- HSE is not responding in our regulatory role in the health and safety system

1. The proposed development, is not a type that would store or process hazardous substances in quantities relevant to the potential for industrial major accidents with respect to The Town and Country Planning (Hazardous Substances) (Scotland) Regulations 2015.

2. The development is not located within a safeguarding zone of an Explosives site licensed under the Explosives regulations 2014 or the Dangerous goods in harbour area regulations 2016.

3. The development is not located within HSE's land-use-planning consultation zones for major accident hazard pipelines and hazardous substances consented sites (licensed explosives sites are covered in the previous paragraph).

Due to the above 3 points, HSE have no views on the additional information provided.

4. If there is a major accident hazard establishment with no HSE consultation zones, in the vicinity of the proposed development, and you are concerned that the proposed development might increase the risk or consequences of a major accident at the existing establishment then please directly consult the operator of the establishment, as appropriate.

5. General health and safety at work
HSE realises that Environmental Risk Assessments are not expected to include general health and safety at work however we take this opportunity to point out that it may be beneficial for employer(s) to undertake a risk assessment as early as possible to satisfy themselves that their design and operation will meet requirements of relevant health and safety legislation as the project progresses.

Kind regards,
Ceri

HSE's Land Use Planning Support Team
Health and Safety Executive | Chemicals, Explosives and Microbiological Division 5
lupenquiries@hse.gov.uk

For HSE's Land Use Planning Advice Terms and Conditions, please click on the following link HSE's Planning Advice Web App - Login (hsl.gov.uk) and then click on 'terms and conditions'.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is conducting a programme of research to understand the needs of people using their services for Land Use Planning Advice (including HSE's planning advice web app), Hazardous Substances Consent and their related guidance. This helps us create services that work better for the public and for government. Participation is voluntary. If you would like to be informed about opportunities to participate, please read and complete this consent form: https://forms.office.com/e/twNqwPkE9x. If you need a different format or have questions about this research, please contact the user research team on LUPuserresearch@hse.gov.uk and we will do our best to help. Thank you.

A62

Katie Butchart

From: Safeguarding <Safeguarding@hial.co.uk>
Sent: 30 June 2025 09:17
To: Econsents Admin
Cc: Safeguarding
Subject: RE: Request for Scoping Opinion Achany Extension Wind Farm

OFFICIAL

Your Ref: EC00006178
Our Ref: 2025/140/INV

Dear Sir/Madam,

Proposal: ELECTRICITY ACT 1989
THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017
REQUEST FOR SCOPING OPINION FOR PROPOSED SECTION 36C APPLICATION FOR Achany Extension Wind Farm

The development has been assessed using the criteria below:

Turbine	Easting	Northing	mAOD
T01	245163.9522	911082.9889	361.8059998
T02	244595.0481	910949.9954	371.1229858
T03	245617.6698	910921.9976	350.4580078
T04	245979.9182	910739.9308	365.697998
T05	244768.0588	910506.2542	320.0499878
T06	246023	910241	392.1579895
T07	245495.0076	910094.9724	357.2139893
T08	244871.8427	910017.8154	317.3469849
T09	245597.4291	909695.3031	406.6990051
T11	246722	909421	352.0650024
T12	246915	908855	325.1929932
T13	246390	909004	345.1369934
T14	245810.4985	909163.2866	340.0780029
T15	246333.9947	908448.0119	293.0190125
T16	245756.0092	908236.9955	277.1580048
T17	246564	907472	287.3389893
T18	247025	907297	320.1820068
T19	246838.0061	906821.0038	296.7030029

This proposal is out-with HIAL's safeguarding criteria. Therefore, Highlands and Islands Airports Limited has no objections to the proposal.

Kind regards,

Nyree

Safeguarding
Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd
Inverness Airport Dalcross IV2 7JB
www.hial.co.uk

Our Values

From: Niall.Macquarrie@gov.scot <Niall.Macquarrie@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Econsents_Admin@gov.scot
Sent: 13 June 2025 14:33
Subject: Request for Scoping Opinion Achany Extension Wind Farm

Dear Consultee,

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989
THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

REQUEST FOR SCOPING OPINION FOR PROPOSED SECTION 36C APPLICATION FOR Achany Extension Wind Farm

On **22nd May 2025**, **SSE Renewables Ltd** (the Applicant) submitted a request for a scoping opinion from the Scottish Ministers for the proposed section **36C** application for the **Achany Extension Wind Farm**. The proposed development is for 18 wind turbines (200m blade to tip height) with a proposed generating capacity of 81MW. Ancillary infrastructure will includes: crane hardstandings, an onsite substation, access tracks, turning heads and a new Aviation Lighting Solution due to turbine height increase. The location lies immediately to the north west of the Applicant's operational Achany Wind Farm.

The proposed development is located in the planning authority area of the **Highland Council**, in line with regulation 12 of The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

Under regulation 12, Scottish Ministers are required to provide a scoping opinion outlining the information they consider should be included in the EIA report. Ministers are also required to consult the relevant consultation bodies and any other interested party which is likely to have an interest in the proposed development by reason of its specific environmental responsibilities or local and regional competencies.

The scoping report and supporting information can be viewed at the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit website www.energyconsents.scot by:

- clicking on ***Search*** tab; then,
- clicking on ***Simple Search*** tab; then,

- typing **Achany Extension Wind Farm** into ***Search by Project Name*** box then clicking on ***Go***;
- then clicking on **EC00006178** and then click on ***Documents*** tab.

The current base case has a **hub height of 132m** and a **rotor diameter of 136m**. The indicative wind turbine OS grid co-ordinates are shown below. T10 is missing as this was one of the two turbines that was dropped through the course of the original determination, the other being T20.

Turbine	Easting	Northing	mAOD
T01	245163.9522	911082.9889	361.8059998
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T17	246564	907472	287.3389893
T18	247025	907297	320.1820068
T19	246838.0061	906821.0038	296.7030029

To allow Scottish Ministers to provide a comprehensive scoping opinion, we ask that you review the scoping report and advise on the scope of the environmental impact assessment for this proposal. Please advise if there are any further matters you would like Ministers to highlight for consideration and inclusion in the assessment, particularly site-specific information.

I would be grateful for your comments by **4th July 2025.** Please note that reminders will not be issued, therefore if we have not received any comments from you, nor a request for an extension to this date, we will assume that you have no comments to make.

Please send your response (in PDF format if possible) to Econsents_Admin@gov.scot

Regards,

Niall MacQuarrie | Case Officer | Energy Consents Unit

The Scottish Government | email address

To view our current casework please visit www.energyconsents.scot

A66

Katie Butchart

From: Joint Radio Company <wftracker@jrc.co.uk>
Sent: 20 June 2025 09:51
To: Econsents Admin
Subject: Re: Achany Extension Wind Farm

If any details of this proposal change, particularly the disposition or scale of any turbine(s), this clearance will be void and re-evaluation of the proposal will be necessary.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Site Name: **Achany Extension Wind Farm**

Site Centre / Turbine(s) at NGR:

Turbine	Easting	Northing
T01	245164	911083
T02	244595	910950
T03	245618	910922
T04	245980	910740
T05	244768	910506
T06	246023	910241
T07	245495	910095
T08	244872	910018
T09	245597	909695
T11	246722	909421
T12	246915	908855
T13	246390	909004
T14	245810	909163
T15	246334	908448
T16	245756	908237
T17	246564	907472
T18	247025	907297
T19	246838	906821

Hub Height: 132m **Rotor Radius:** 68m

This proposal is ***cleared* - subject to 50m Micrositing -** with respect to radio link infrastructure operated by the local energy networks.

JRC analyses proposals for wind farms on behalf of the UK Fuel & Power Industry. This is to assess their potential to interfere with radio systems operated by utility companies in support of their regulatory operational requirements.

In the case of this proposed wind energy development, JRC does not foresee any potential problems based on known interference scenarios and the data you have provided. However, if any details of the wind farm

change, particularly the disposition or scale of any turbine(s), it will be necessary to re-evaluate the proposal. Please note that due to the large number of adjacent radio links in this vicinity, which have been taken into account, clearance is given specifically for a location within the declared grid reference (quoted above).

In making this judgement, JRC has used its best endeavours with the available data, although we recognise that there may be effects which are as yet unknown or inadequately predicted. JRC cannot therefore be held liable if subsequently problems arise that we have not predicted.

It should be noted that this clearance pertains only to the date of its issue. As the use of the spectrum is dynamic, the use of the band is changing on an ongoing basis and consequently, you are advised to seek re-coordination prior to submitting a planning application, as this will negate the possibility of an objection being raised at that time as a consequence of any links assigned between your enquiry and the finalisation of your project.

JRC offers a range of radio planning and analysis services. If you require any assistance, please contact us by phone or email.

Regards

Wind Farm Team

Friars House
Manor House Drive
Coventry CV1 2TE
United Kingdom

Office: 02476 932 185

On Fri, 13 Jun at 9:33 AM , econsents_admin <econsents_admin@gov.scot> wrote:
Dear Consultee,

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989
THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

REQUEST FOR SCOPING OPINION FOR PROPOSED SECTION 36C APPLICATION FOR Achany Extension Wind Farm

On **22nd May 2025**, **SSE Renewables Ltd** (the Applicant) submitted a request for a scoping opinion from the Scottish Ministers for the proposed section **36C** application for the **Achany Extension Wind Farm**. The proposed development is for 18 wind turbines (200m blade to tip height) with a proposed generating capacity of 81MW. Ancillary infrastructure will includes: crane hardstandings, an onsite substation, access tracks, turning heads and a new Aviation Lighting Solution due to turbine height increase. The location lies immediately to the north west of the Applicant's operational Achany Wind Farm.

The proposed development is located in the planning authority area of the **Highland Council**, in line with regulation 12 of The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

Under regulation 12, Scottish Ministers are required to provide a scoping opinion outlining the information they consider should be included in the EIA report. Ministers are also required to consult the relevant consultation bodies and any other interested party which is likely to have an interest in the proposed development by reason of its specific environmental responsibilities or local and regional competencies.

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- clicking on ***Search*** tab; then,
- clicking on ***Simple Search*** tab; then,
- typing **Achany Extension Wind Farm** into ***Search by Project Name*** box then clicking on ***Go***;
- then clicking on **EC00006178** and then click on ***Documents*** tab.

The current base case has a **hub height of 132m** and a **rotor diameter of 136m**. The indicative wind turbine OS grid co-ordinates are shown below. T10 is missing as this was one of the two turbines that was dropped through the course of the original determination, the other being T20.

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T19	246838.0061	906821.0038	296.7030029

To allow Scottish Ministers to provide a comprehensive scoping opinion, we ask that you review the scoping report and advise on the scope of the environmental impact assessment for this proposal. Please advise if there are any further matters you would like Ministers to highlight for consideration and inclusion in the assessment, particularly site-specific information.

I would be grateful for your comments by **4th July 2025.** Please note that reminders will not be issued, therefore if we have not received any comments from you, nor a request for an extension to this date, we will assume that you have no comments to make.

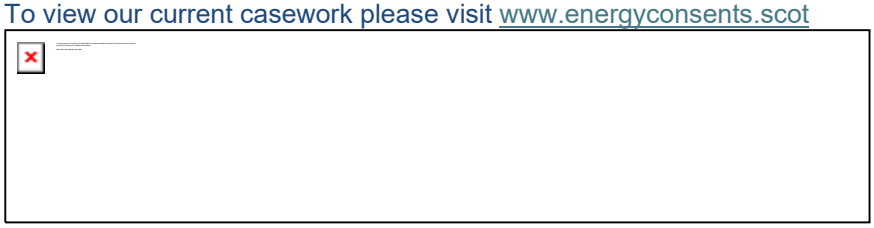
Please send your response (in PDF format if possible) to Econsents_Admin@gov.scot

Regards,

Niall MacQuarrie | Case Officer | Energy Consents Unit

The Scottish Government | email address

To view our current casework please visit www.energyconsents.scot



From: Tim Allott on behalf of metofficesafeguarding
To: Econsents Admin
Subject: RE: Request for Scoping Opinion Achany Extension Wind Farm
Date: 16 June 2025 11:37:04
Attachments: image001.png

OFFICIAL

Dear Niall,
Thanks for consulting the Met Office. The proposal would be approx. 94 km from our nearest weather radar. There is potential that the wind turbines would be detected by the weather radar and have an impact on the data received. However the proposal is outside any of our standard 20 km consultation zones and we would able to manage any impacts on products and services derived from the weather radar data.

Therefore we have no concerns and don't need to be consulted further.

Kind regards,
Tim Allott
Upper Air Observations
Met Office, FitzRoy Road, Exeter, Devon, EX1 3PB, United Kingdom
E-mail: metofficesafeguarding@metoffice.gov.uk
Web: https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/services/business-industry/energy/safeguarding

OFFICIAL

From: Niall.Macquarrie@gov.scot <Niall.Macquarrie@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Econsents_Admin@gov.scot
Sent: 13 June 2025 14:33
Subject: Request for Scoping Opinion Achany Extension Wind Farm

Dear Consultee,

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989
THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

REQUEST FOR SCOPING OPINION FOR PROPOSED SECTION 36C APPLICATION FOR Achany Extension Wind Farm

On **22nd May 2025**, **SSE Renewables Ltd** (the Applicant) submitted a request for a scoping opinion from the Scottish Ministers for the proposed section **36C** application for the **Achany Extension Wind Farm**. The proposed development is for 18 wind turbines (200m blade to tip height) with a proposed generating capacity of 81MW. Ancillary infrastructure will includes: crane hardstandings, an onsite substation, access tracks, turning heads and a new Aviation Lighting Solution due to turbine height increase. The location lies immediately to the north west of the Applicant's operational Achany Wind Farm.

The proposed development is located in the planning authority area of the **Highland Council**, in line with regulation 12 of The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

Under regulation 12, Scottish Ministers are required to provide a scoping opinion outlining the information they consider should be included in the EIA report. Ministers are also required to consult the relevant consultation bodies and any other interested party which is likely to have an interest in the proposed development by reason of its specific environmental responsibilities or local and regional competencies.

The scoping report and supporting information can be viewed at the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit website www.energyconsents.scot by:

- clicking on ***Search*** tab; then,
- clicking on ***Simple Search*** tab; then,
- typing **Achany Extension Wind Farm** into ***Search by Project Name*** box then clicking on ***Go***;
- then clicking on **EC00006178** and then click on ***Documents*** tab.

The current base case has a **hub height of 132m** and a **rotor diameter of 136m**. The indicative wind turbine OS grid co-ordinates are shown below. T10 is missing as this was one of the two turbines that was dropped through the course of the original determination, the other being T20.

Turbine	Easting	Northing	mAOD
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T18	247025	907297	320.1820068
T19	246838.0061	906821.0038	296.7030029

To allow Scottish Ministers to provide a comprehensive scoping opinion, we ask that you review the scoping report and advise on the scope of the environmental impact assessment for this proposal. Please advise if there are any further matters you would like Ministers to highlight for consideration and inclusion in the assessment, particularly site-specific

information.

I would be grateful for your comments by **4th July 2025.** Please note that reminders will not be issued, therefore if we have not received any comments from you, nor a request for an extension to this date, we will assume that you have no comments to make.

Please send your response (in PDF format if possible) to Econsents_Admin@gov.scot

Regards,

Niall MacQuarrie | Case Officer | Energy Consents Unit

The Scottish Government | email address

To view our current casework please visit www.energyconsents.scot

A73

From: NATS Safeguarding
To: Econsents Admin
Subject: RE: Request for Scoping Opinion Achany Extension Wind Farm [SG15221]
Date: 16 June 2025 16:50:48
Attachments: image002.png
image003.png
image004.png
image005.png
image006.png
image007.png
image008.png

Our Ref: SG15221

Dear Sir/Madam

The proposed development has been examined from a technical safeguarding aspect and does not conflict with our safeguarding criteria. Accordingly, NATS (En Route) Public Limited Company ("NERL") has no safeguarding objection to the proposal.

However, please be aware that this response applies specifically to the above consultation and only reflects the position of NATS (that is responsible for the management of en route air traffic) based on the information supplied at the time of this application. This letter does not provide any indication of the position of any other party, whether they be an airport, airspace user or otherwise. It remains your responsibility to ensure that all the appropriate consultees are properly consulted.

If any changes are proposed to the information supplied to NATS in regard to this application which become the basis of a revised, amended or further application for approval, then as a statutory consultee NERL requires that it be further consulted on any such changes prior to any planning permission or any consent being granted.

Yours faithfully

NATS Safeguarding

E: natssafeguarding@nats.co.uk

4000 Parkway, Whiteley,
Fareham, Hants PO15 7FL
www.nats.co.uk

NATS Internal

From: Niall.Macquarrie@gov.scot <Niall.Macquarrie@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Econsents_Admin@gov.scot
Sent: 13 June 2025 14:33
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Request for Scoping Opinion Achany Extension Wind Farm

Dear Consultee,

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989
THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

REQUEST FOR SCOPING OPINION FOR PROPOSED SECTION 36C APPLICATION FOR Achany Extension Wind Farm

On **22nd May 2025**, **SSE Renewables Ltd** (the Applicant) submitted a request for a scoping opinion from the Scottish Ministers for the proposed section **36C** application for the **Achany Extension Wind Farm**. The proposed development is for 18 wind turbines (200m blade to tip height) with a proposed generating capacity of 81MW. Ancillary infrastructure will includes: crane hardstandings, an onsite substation, access tracks, turning heads and a new Aviation Lighting Solution due to turbine height increase. The location lies immediately to the north west of the Applicant's operational Achany Wind Farm.

The proposed development is located in the planning authority area of the **Highland Council**, in line with regulation 12 of The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

Under regulation 12, Scottish Ministers are required to provide a scoping opinion outlining the information they consider should be included in the EIA report. Ministers are also required to consult the relevant consultation bodies and any other interested party which is likely to have an interest in the proposed development by reason of its specific environmental responsibilities or local and regional competencies.

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- clicking on ***Search*** tab; then,
- clicking on ***Simple Search*** tab; then,
- typing **Achany Extension Wind Farm** into ***Search by Project Name*** box then clicking on ***Go***;
- then clicking on **EC00006178** and then click on ***Documents*** tab.

The current base case has a **hub height of 132m** and a **rotor diameter of 136m**. The indicative wind turbine OS grid co-ordinates are shown below. T10 is missing as this was one of the two turbines that was dropped through the course of the original determination, the other being T20.

Turbine	Easting	Northing	mAOD
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To allow Scottish Ministers to provide a comprehensive scoping opinion, we ask that you review the scoping report and advise on the scope of the environmental impact assessment for this proposal. Please advise if there are any further matters you would like Ministers to highlight for consideration and inclusion in the assessment, particularly site-specific information.

I would be grateful for your comments by **4th July 2025.** Please note that reminders will not be issued, therefore if we have not received any comments from you, nor a request for an extension to this date, we will assume that you have no comments to make.

Please send your response (in PDF format if possible) to Econsents_Admin@gov.scot

Regards,

Niall MacQuarrie | Case Officer | Energy Consents Unit

The Scottish Government | email address

To view our current casework please visit www.energyconsents.scot

A77

From:	ONR Land Use Planning
To:	Econsents Admin
Subject:	ONR Land Use Planning - Application EC00006178 - Achany Extension Wind Farm
Date:	16 June 2025 12:15:35
Attachments:	image001.png image001.png

Dear Sir/Madam,

With regard to planning application EC00006178 - Achany Extension Wind Farm, ONR makes no comment on this proposed development as it does not lie within a consultation zone around a GB nuclear site.

You can find information concerning our Land Use Planning consultation process here: (http://www.onr.org.uk/land-use-planning.htm).

Kind regards,

Land Use Planning
Office for Nuclear Regulation
ONR-Land.Use-planning@onr.gov.uk

----Original Message----
From: Econsents - Scottish Government <econsents_admin@gov.scot >
To:
Cc:
Sent: 13/06/2025 14:33
Subject: Request for Scoping Opinion Achany Extension Wind Farm

Dear Consultee,

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989
THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

REQUEST FOR SCOPING OPINION FOR PROPOSED SECTION 36C APPLICATION FOR Achany Extension Wind Farm

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The proposed development is located in the planning authority area of the **Highland**

Council, in line with regulation 12 of The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

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- typing **Achany Extension Wind Farm** into ***Search by Project Name*** box then clicking on ***Go***;
- then clicking on **EC00006178** and then click on ***Documents*** tab.

The current base case has a **hub height of 132m** and a **rotor diameter of 136m**. The indicative wind turbine OS grid co-ordinates are shown below. T10 is missing as this was one of the two turbines that was dropped through the course of the original determination, the other being T20.

Turbine	Easting	Northing	mAOD
T01	245163.9522	911082.9889	361.8059998
T02	244595.0481	910949.9954	371.1229858
T03	245617.6698	910921.9976	350.4580078
T04	245979.9182	910739.9308	365.697998
T05	244768.0588	910506.2542	320.0499878
T06	246023	910241	392.1579895
T07	245495.0076	910094.9724	357.2139893
T08	244871.8427	910017.8154	317.3469849
T09	245597.4291	909695.3031	406.6990051
T11	246722	909421	352.0650024
T12	246915	908855	325.1929932
T13	246390	909004	345.1369934
T14	245810.4985	909163.2866	340.0780029
T15	246333.9947	908448.0119	293.0190125
T16	245756.0092	908236.9955	277.1580048
T17	246564	907472	287.3389893
T18	247025	907297	320.1820068
T19	246838.0061	906821.0038	296.7030029

To allow Scottish Ministers to provide a comprehensive scoping opinion, we ask that you review the scoping report and advise on the scope of the environmental impact assessment for this proposal. Please advise if there are any further matters you would like Ministers to highlight for consideration and inclusion in the assessment, particularly site-specific information.

I would be grateful for your comments by **4th July 2025.** Please note that reminders will not be issued, therefore if we have not received any comments from you, nor a request

for an extension to this date, we will assume that you have no comments to make.

Please send your response (in PDF format if possible) to Econsents_Admin@gov.scot

Regards,

Niall MacQuarrie | Case Officer | Energy Consents Unit

The Scottish Government | email address

To view our current casework please visit www.energyconsents.scot

A80

This letter is sent by email only

Niall MacQuarrie
Case Officer
Energy Consents Unit
The Scottish Government

Email: econsents_admin@gov.scot

Date: 28th July 2025

Dear Niall,

REQUEST FOR SCOPING OPINION FOR PROPOSED SECTION 36C APPLICATION FOR ACHANY WIND FARM EXTENSION (VARIED DEVELOPMENT)

ECU Reference: ECU00006178

Thank you for consulting RSPB Scotland on the above scoping request to vary the consent of the Achany Extension wind farm. The proposal is to increase the tip height of all 18 consented turbines to 200m, which will also require larger hardstanding and foundations for each turbine, and the addition of eight new turning heads to the site access track design. We understand all other infrastructure will remain largely unchanged.

Ornithological surveys and assessment

We note that due to the nature of the varied proposed development, it is considered that the assessment of effects on previously identified IOFs will not change, apart from the collision risk calculations (section 7.3.1 of the Scoping Report). We would generally agree and therefore welcome an updated collision risk analysis presented in the EIAR.

However, we note that this would be undertaken using data presented in the 2021 EIAR, which we understand was collected between 2018 and 2020, and is therefore more than five years old. We are concerned that no further bird surveys are proposed to be undertaken.

NatureScot guidance on bird surveys[1] states that *"For proposals being revised, information is often available from previous EIAs which will inform a revised or smaller proposal in the same area if it has covered the same area of ground. This information can be used for the EIA for the new proposal provided that:*

[1] https://www.nature.scot/doc/recommended-bird-survey-methods-inform-impact-assessment-onshore-windfarms

RSPB North Scotland
Inverness Office
Etive House, Beechwood Park
Inverness
IV2 3BW

Tel: 01463 715000
@RSPBScotland
@RSPBScotland
rspb.org.uk/Scotland

- *the data are reliable and collected within last five years or within three years if the populations of key species are known to be changing rapidly"*

Although we understand that new Nature Scot (2024) 'Guidance on dealing with proposals for the variation of section 36 wind farm consents' states that *"For birds, in the majority of cases where the number and location of turbines are not changing, all that will be needed is a re-working of the collision risk model, rather than new survey work"* as outlined in section 7.4.1 of the Scoping Report, we would strongly recommend updated baseline data is collected over a minimum of one year.

This is because we understand the ornithological baseline has changed, specifically with regards to White-tailed Eagle, which is a species susceptible to collision with turbines. There have been at least eight collision incidents in Scotland that have had injuries believed to be from turbine blades. A robust assessment of impacts on this species is therefore required.

As highlighted in our consultation response to the consented application, dated 17th September 2021, the 2021 EIAR reported that a newly established breeding pair was recorded for the first time within the wider area in 2021, prior to the surveys being undertaken for the consented development. The proposed varied development is located between the nest site and a number of suitable feeding lochs such as Loch Shin.

Although the NatureScot published core foraging distance during the breeding season for this species is 5km, with a maximum range of 13km[2], breeding birds are known to range much further from nest sites if there are no neighbouring territorial pairs and when populations are sparse or expanding like in Sutherland. Birds will fly 10-20km to exploit the easiest sources of food available at different times of the year[3]. We are concerned that this pair could cross the turbine array to hunt at lochs on the SPA and at Loch Shin, which could increase the likelihood of collision.

We therefore recommend that the Highland Raptor Study Group is contacted for further information about this pair of White-tailed Eagles, and further Vantage Point surveys are undertaken to inform a collision risk assessment.

<u>Cumulative Assessment</u>

We welcome that the S36c submission will provide a review of any potential changes to the cumulative collision risk assessment. We recommend that the revised cumulative assessment should include the grid connection for the proposal itself (ECU00004847), the Allt an Tuir Energy Park (ECU00005008) and the Balblair Wind Farm (ECU00005055). There are also a number of proposals in the vicinity that are at the scoping stage which should also be considered for inclusion, such as the Invercassley Wind Farm (ECU00006064), the Inveroykel Wind Farm (ECU00005210) and the Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beauly 400kV Connection (ECU00006008).

[2] https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2022-12/Assessing%20connectivity%20with%20special%20protection%20areas.pdf
[3] Dr. Alison MacLennan, pers. comm.

Habitat Management Plan (HMP) and Biodiversity Enhancement

Section 6.3.1 of the Scoping Report states, "The measures outlined in the Habitat Management Plan for the Consented Development will be reviewed in line with the updated assessment, and refinements will be considered in light of the potential change in habitat loss and disturbance, as well as updated policy, specifically NPF4." This is welcomed and we have the following comments.

The proposed HMP should outline any mitigation and compensation actions required, as well as proposals for Biodiversity Enhancement. We believe that development should leave nature in a better state than before it took place and welcome NPF4's commitment to deliver positive effects for biodiversity through development.

Policy 1 of NPF4 states that 'when considering all development proposals significant weight will be given to the global climate and **nature crises**' (emphasis added). Policy 3 states that, 'Development proposals for national or major development or for development that requires an Environmental Impact Assessment will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will conserve and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention'.

It goes on to list a number of criteria which applicants must demonstrate they have met, including 'significant biodiversity enhancements are provided, **in addition to** (emphasis added) any proposed mitigation'. Scottish Government guidance is expected later this year on biodiversity and the implementation of NPF4 Policy 3 for EIA and major development.

The Applicant should therefore give early consideration as to how positive effects for biodiversity would be delivered once impacts are mitigated and/or compensated, taking into account NatureScot guidance on developing on peatland[4] which states restoration to achieve offsetting (i.e. compensation rather than biodiversity enhancement) would be in the order of 1:10 (lost: restored)' plus 'an additional 10% of the baseline assessment of the extent of priority peatland habitat for biodiversity enhancement'.

The Outline Habitat Management Plan (or Outline Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (OBEMP)) must include an indication of size of any areas to be restored, as well as a comprehensive monitoring programme for any habitat improvements, breeding birds on the site and SPA-qualifying species.

In addition to the production of a draft Outline HMP and OBEMP, appropriate Species Protection Plans (SPPs) and a Deer Management Plan (DMP) should be drafted.

Lastly, the Outline Habitat Management Plan (or other document) should include a protocol for reporting collisions to NatureScot.

[4] https://www.nature.scot/doc/advising-peatland-carbon-rich-soils-and-priority-peatland-habitats-development-management

Yours sincerely,

REDACTED

Bea Ayling
Conservation Officer
bea.ayling@rspb.org.uk

From: Bryan Young
To: Econsents Admin
Subject: Request for Scoping Opinion Achany Extension Wind Farm
Date: 13 June 2025 14:46:56

Classified as Internal

Good afternoon,

SGN do not have any High Pressure assets within the vicinity of the above consultation and as such would have no comment/objection,

Kind regards

Bryan Young
Pipeline Officer
Bryan.young@sgn.co.uk
Axis House Edinburgh
sgn.co.uk
Find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter: @SGNgas

Smell gas? Call 0800 111 999
Find out how to protect your home from carbon monoxide

Scotland Gas Networks plc (company registration number SC264065) is registered in Scotland and has its registered office address at Axis House, 5 Lonehead Drive, Newbridge, Edinburgh EH28 8TG

A86

Development Management and Strategic Road Safety
Roads Directorate

5th Floor, 177 Bothwell Street, Glasgow, G2 7ER
george.smith@transport.gov.scot

TRANSPORT SCOTLAND
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

Niall MacQuarrie
Energy Consents Unit
The Scottish Government
5 Atlantic Quay
150 Broomielaw
Glasgow
G2 8LU

Econsents_Admin@gov.scot

Your ref:
EC00006178

Our ref:
GB01T19K05

Date:
19/06/2025

Dear Sirs,

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989

THE ELECTRICITY (APPLICATIONS FOR CONSENT) REGULATIONS 2017

REQUEST FOR SCOPING OPINION FOR PROPOSED SECTION 36C APPLICATION FOR ACHANY EXTENSION WIND FARM

With reference to your recent correspondence on the above development, we acknowledge receipt of the Scoping Report (SR) prepared by SSE Renewables Ltd in support of the above development.

This information has been passed to SYSTRA Limited for review in their capacity as Term Consultants to Transport Scotland – Roads Directorate. Based on the review undertaken, Transport Scotland would provide the following comments.

Proposed Development

We understand that the Applicant is seeking to vary an existing consent for Achany Extension Wind Farm which comprises the construction and operation of 18 turbines with a tip height of up to 149.9m. The site lies immediately northwest of the operational Achany Wind Farm and approximately 11km west-northwest of Lairg. The Section 36 consent was granted on May 22nd 2023. We note, however, that due to challenges affecting the onshore wind industry, the project as consented is not considered to be economically viable, resulting in the submission of a Varied application. The proposed variation application comprises 18 turbines with a blade to tip height of up to 200m.

Transport Scotland was consulted on the EIAR which supported the consented development and we provided comment in our letter dated 2nd September 2021.

The nearest trunk road to the site is the A9(T) which lies approximately 36km to the east at Loch Fleet.

Assessment of Environmental Impacts

Chapter 11 of the SR indicates that as neither Transport Scotland nor The Highland Council objected to the original development (subject to various Conditions being attached), it is proposed that no further assessment of Traffic and Transport effects is required within the EIAR for the Section 36C application and, therefore, this is 'scoped out.' We note from our previous 2021 response that the maximum total percentage increase on the trunk road occurred on the A9(T) between Tain and Dornoch Bridge, with a projected increase in total traffic levels of 1.62% (14.6% increase in HGVs). We also note that these results were based upon an assumption that Borrow Pits had the potential to provide 100% of the stone requirement for the construction, with an assumption of 80% on-site and 20% imported being used within the assessment. Transport Scotland commented at that time that the information provided did not provide sufficient evidence that 80% of the construction stone requirement would be won on-site, with only 20% being imported. There was no guarantee that the borrow pits can produce the quantity of stone required for the project at the quality required, however, we noted at that time that with a maximum trunk road increase of 14.6% HGVs, we were comfortable that the trunk road had capacity to cater for the increase in traffic.

Given the above and the increase in turbine height and associated supporting infrastructure, in particular, the hardstands, we consider that a screening assessment for the new development content is necessary. This should be carried out in accordance with the thresholds as indicated within the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Guidelines entitled Environmental Assessment of Traffic and Movement (July 2023). These specify that road links should be taken forward for further detailed assessment where the following two rules are breached:

- Rule 1: Include road links where traffic flows will increase by more than 30% (or the number of heavy goods vehicles will increase by more than 30%)
- Rule 2: Include road links of high sensitivity where traffic flows have increased by 10% or more.

Given the age of the base traffic used with the original assessment, we would also request that updated trunk road base traffic flows be used in this screening exercise. We would suggest that an appropriate source of traffic data is Traffic Scotland's National Traffic Data System. In addition, Transport Scotland would state that National Road Traffic Forecast (NRTF) Low Traffic Growth assumptions will require to be used to provide a common future year baseline to coincide with the expected construction traffic peak.

Abnormal Loads Assessment

We acknowledge there is no change to the proposed route for Abnormal Loads, however, given the 50m increase in tip height of the turbines, Transport Scotland will require to be satisfied that the size of turbines proposed can negotiate the selected route and that transportation will not have any detrimental effect on structures within the trunk road route path.

A full Abnormal Loads Assessment report should be provided that identifies key pinch points on the trunk road network. Swept path analysis should be undertaken and details provided with regard to any required changes to street furniture or structures along the route.

I trust that the above is satisfactory but should you wish to discuss any issues raised in greater detail, please do not hesitate to contact me or alternatively, Alan DeVenny at SYSTRA's Glasgow Office can assist on 0141 343 9636.

Yours faithfully

REDACT

George Smith

Transport Scotland
Roads Directorate

cc Alan DeVenny – SYSTRA Ltd.

ANNEX B

Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital (MD-SEDD) advice on freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries in relation to onshore wind farm developments.

July 2020 updated September 2023

Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital (MD-SEDD) provides internal, non-statutory, advice in relation to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU) for onshore wind farm developments in Scotland.

Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), sea trout and brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) are of high economic value and conservation interest in Scotland and for which MD-SEDD has in- house expertise. Onshore wind farms are often located in upland areas where salmon and trout spawning and rearing grounds may also be found. MD-SEDD aims, through our provision of advice to ECU, to ensure that the construction and operation of these onshore developments do not have a detrimental impact on the freshwater life stages of these fish populations.

The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (EIA) (Scotland) Regulations (2017) state that the EIA must assess the direct and indirect significant effects of the proposed development on water and biodiversity, and in particular species (such as Atlantic salmon) and habitats protected under the EU Habitats Directive. Salmon and trout are listed as priority species of high conservation interest in the Scottish Biodiversity Index and support valuable recreational fisheries.

A good working relationship has been developed over the years between ECU and MD-SEDD, which ensures that these fish species are considered by ECU during all stages of the application process of onshore wind farm developments and are similarly considered during the construction and operation of future onshore wind farms. It is important that matters relating to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries, particularly salmon and trout, continue to be considered during the construction and operation of future onshore wind farms.

In the current document, MD-SEDD sets out a revised, more efficient approach to the provision of our advice, which utilises our generic scoping and monitoring programme guidelines (https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/Freshwater/Research/onshoreren). This standing advice provides regulators (e.g. ECU, local planning authorities), developers and consultants with the information required at all stages of the application process for onshore wind farm developments, such that matters relating to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries are addressed in the same rigorous manner as is currently being carried out and continue to be fully in line with EIA regulations. At the request of ECU, MD-SEDD will still be able to provide further and/or bespoke advice relevant to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries e.g. site specific advice, at any stage of the application process for a proposed development, particularly where a development may be considered sensitive or contentious in nature.

MD-SEDD will continue undertaking research, identifying additional research requirements, and keep up to date with the latest published knowledge relating to the

impacts of onshore wind farms on freshwater and diadromous fish populations. This will be used to ensure that our guidelines and standing advice are based on the best available evidence and also to continue the publication of the relevant findings and knowledge to all stakeholders including regulators, developers and consultants.

MD-SEDD provision of advice to ECU

- MD-SEDD should not be asked for advice on pre application and application consultations (including screening, scoping, gate checks and EIA applications). Instead, the MD-SEDD scoping guidelines and standing advice (outlined below) should be provided to the developer as they set out what information should be included in the EIA report;
- if new issues arise which are not dealt with in our guidance or in our previous responses relating to respective developments, MD-SEDD can be asked to provide advice in relation to proposed mitigation measures and monitoring programmes which should be outlined in the EIA Report (further details below);
- if new issues arise which are not dealt with in our guidance or in our previous responses, MD-SEDD can be asked to provide advice on suitable wording, within a planning condition, to secure proposed monitoring programmes, should the development be granted consent;
- MD-SEDD cannot provide advice to developers or consultants, our advice is to ECU and/or other regulatory bodies.
- if ECU has identified specific issues during any part of the application process that the standing advice does not address, MD-SEDD should be contacted.

MD-SEDD Standing Advice for each stage of the EIA process

Scoping

MD-SEDD issued generic scoping guidelines (https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/Freshwater/Research/onshoreren) which outline how fish populations can be impacted during the construction, operation and decommissioning of a wind farm development and informs developers as to what should be considered, in relation to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries, during the EIA process.

In addition to identifying the main watercourses and waterbodies within and downstream of the proposed development area, developers should identify and consider, at this early stage, any areas of Special Areas of Conservation where fish are a qualifying feature and proposed felling operations particularly in acid sensitive areas.

If a developer identifies new issues or has a technical query in respect of MD-SEDD generic scoping guidelines then ECU should be informed who will then co-ordinate a response from MD-SEDD.

Gate check

The detail within the generic scoping guidelines already provides sufficient information relating to water quality and salmon and trout populations for developers at this stage of the application.

Developers will be required to provide a gate check checklist (annex 1) in advance of their application submission which should signpost ECU to where all matters relevant to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries have been presented in the EIA report. Where matters have not been addressed or a different approach, to that specified in the advice, has been adopted the developer will be required to set out why.

EIA Report

MD-SEDD will focus on those developments which may be more sensitive and/or where there are known existing pressures on fish populations (https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/fishreform/licence/status/Pressures). The generic scoping guidelines should ensure that the developer has addressed all matters relevant to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries and presented them in the appropriate chapters of the EIA report. Use of the gate check checklist should ensure that the EIA report contains the required information; the absence of such information may necessitate requesting additional information which may delay the process:

Developers should specifically discuss and assess potential impacts and appropriate mitigation measures associated with the following:

- any designated area, for which fish is a qualifying feature, within and/or downstream of the proposed development area;
- the presence of a large density of watercourses;
- the presence of large areas of deep peat deposits;
- known acidification problems and/or other existing pressures on fish populations in the area; and
- proposed felling operations.

Post-Consent Monitoring

MD-SEDD recommends that a water quality and fish population monitoring programme is carried out to ensure that the proposed mitigation measures are effective. A robust, strategically designed and site specific monitoring programme conducted before, during and after construction can help to identify any changes, should they occur, and assist in implementing rapid remediation before long term ecological impacts occur.

MD-SEDD has published guidance on survey/monitoring programmes associated with onshore wind farm developments (https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/Freshwater/Research/onshoreren) which developers should follow when drawing up survey and/or monitoring programmes.

If a developer considers that such a monitoring programme is not required then a clear justification should be provided.

Planning Conditions

MD-SEDD advises that planning conditions are drawn up to ensure appropriate provision for mitigation measures and monitoring programmes, should the development be given consent. We recommend, where required, that a Water Quality Monitoring Programme, Fisheries Monitoring Programme and the appointment of an Ecological Clerk of Works, specifically in overseeing the above monitoring programmes, is outlined within these conditions and that MD-SEDD is consulted on these programmes.

Wording suggested by MD-SEDD in relation to water quality, fish populations and fisheries for incorporation into planning consents:

1. No development shall commence unless a Water Quality and Fish Monitoring Plan (WQFMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital (MD–SEDD) and any such other advisors or organisations.

2. The WQFMP must take account of the Scottish Government's MD-SEDD guidelines and standing advice and shall include:

    a. water quality sampling should be carried out at least 12 months prior to construction commencing, during construction and for at least 12 months after construction is complete. The water quality monitoring plan should include key hydrochemical parameters, turbidity, and flow data, the identification of sampling locations (including control sites), frequency of sampling, sampling methodology, data analysis and reporting etc.;

    b. the fish monitoring plan should include fully quantitative electrofishing surveys at sites potentially impacted and at control sites for at least 12 months before construction commences, during construction and for at least 12 months after construction is completed to detect any changes in fish populations; and

    c. appropriate site specific mitigation measures detailed in the Environmental Impact Assessment and in agreement with the Planning Authority and MD-SEDD.

3. Thereafter, the WQFMP shall be implemented within the timescales set out to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority in consultation with MD- SEDD and the results of such monitoring shall be submitted to the Planning Authority on a 6 monthly basis or on request.

Reason: To ensure no deterioration of water quality and to protect fish populations within and downstream of the development area.

Sources of further information

NatureScot (previously “SNH”) guidance on wind farm developments - https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/planning-and-development/advice- planners-and-developers/renewable-energy-development/onshore-wind- energy/advice-wind-farm

Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) guidance on wind farm developments – https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/energy/renewable/#wind

A joint publication by Scottish Renewables, NatureScot, SEPA, Forestry Commission Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, Marine Scotland Science (now MD-SEDD) and Association of Environmental and Ecological Clerks of Works (2019) Good Practice during Wind Farm Construction - https://www.nature.scot/guidance- good-practice- during-wind-farm-construction.

Annex 1 (revised September 2023)

Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital (MD-SEDD) – EIA Checklist

The generic scoping guidelines should ensure that all matters relevant to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries have been addressed and presented in the appropriate chapters of the EIA report. Use of the checklist below should ensure that the EIA report contains the following information; the absence of such information ***may necessitate requesting additional information*** which could delay the process:

MD-SEDD Standard EIA Report Requirements	Provided in application YES/NO	If YES – please signpost to relevant chapter of EIA Report	If not provided or provided different to **MD-SEDD** advice, please set out reasons.
1. A map outlining the proposed development area and the proposed location of: ○ the turbines, ○ associated crane hard standing areas, ○ borrow pits, ○ permanent meteorological masts, ○ access tracks including watercourse crossings, ○ all buildings including substation, battery storage; ○ permanent and temporary construction compounds; ○ all watercourses; and ○ contour lines;			

2. A description and results of the site characterisation surveys for fish (including fully quantitative electrofishing surveys) and water quality including the location of the electrofishing and fish habitat survey sites and water quality sampling sites on the map outlining the proposed turbines and associated infrastructure. **This should be carried out where a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is present and where salmon are a qualifying feature, and in exceptional cases when required in the scoping advice for other reasons. In other cases, developers can assume that fish populations are present**;			
3. An outline of the potential impacts on fish populations and water quality within and downstream of the proposed development area;			
4. Any potential cumulative impacts on the water quality and fish populations associated with adjacent (operational and consented) developments including wind farms, hydro schemes, aquaculture and mining;			

5. Any proposed site specific mitigation measures as outlined in **MD-SEDD** generic scoping guidelines and the joint publication "Good Practice during Wind Farm Construction" (https://www.nature.scot/guidance-good-practice-during-wind-farm-construction);			
6. Full details of proposed monitoring programmes using guidelines issued by **MD-SEDD** and accompanied by a map outlining the proposed sampling and control sites in addition to the location of all turbines and associated infrastructure. **At least 12 months of baseline pre-construction data should be included. The monitoring programme can be secured using suitable wording in a condition.**			
7. A decommissioning and restoration plan outlining proposed mitigation/monitoring for water quality and fish populations. **This can be secured using suitable wording in a condition.**			

Developers should specifically discuss and assess potential impacts and appropriate mitigation measures associated with the following:	Provided in application YES/NO	If YES – please signpost to relevant chapter of EIA Report	If not provided or provided different to **MD-SEDD** advice, please set out reasons.
1. Any designated area **(e.g. SAC),** for which fish is a qualifying feature, within and/or downstream of the proposed development area;			
2. The presence of a large density of watercourses;			
3. The presence of large areas of deep peat deposits;			
4. Known acidification problems and/or other existing pressures on fish populations in the area; and			
5. Proposed felling operations.			