

**TECHNICAL APPENDIX 5.4: BEN KLIBRECK AND LOCH CHOIRE SPECIAL
LANDSCAPE AREA ASSESSMENT**

1.1	Introduction	1-2
1.2	Landscape Character Types	1-3

1. Technical Appendix 5.4: Ben Klibreck and Loch Choire Special Landscape Area Assessment

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This appendix details the assessment of effects of the Proposed Varied Development on the Ben Klibreck and Loch Choire Special Landscape Area (SLA), as compared with the effects of the Consented Development. The effects of the Consented Development are summarised in Table 1.2.1 below. For the full assessment of the Consented Development, please refer to the 2021 EIAR, Technical Appendix 7.4: Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes.
- 1.1.2 The assessment gives consideration to effects on landscape character and identified Special Qualities. Conclusions made during the assessment of Landscape Character Types (LCTs) (see Technical Appendix 5.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types) are used to feed into this assessment and are cross referenced as necessary.
- 1.1.3 This assessment does not include cumulative landscape effects which are discussed in Technical Appendix 5.8: Cumulative Landscape Assessment Tables.

1.2 Assessment of Ben Klibreck and Loch Coire SLA

Table 1.2.1: Ben Klibreck and Loch Choire SLA

Landscape Baseline	
Description	<p>This SLA is located approximately 17.2km to the north-east of the Site. It covers a relatively small area of 53,000ha which includes the mountains of Ben Klibreck and Ben Armine and the linear lochs, Loch Choire and Loch a' Bhlealaibh, which are set in a deep valley between them. Ben Klibreck is one of a number of prominent lone mountains and mountain groups which rise dramatically from an open moorland in central Sutherland and is notable for its distinctive western profile. This is a large scale, open and exposed landscape with wide panoramic views. By contrast, Loch Choire is notable for its remote seclusion and enclosure. The lochs are fringed by areas of improved pasture and scattered mature trees, and the steep surrounding slopes are clothed with remnants of native broad-leaved woodland. A few blocks of coniferous forest plantation appear more incongruous. There is limited human influence within the SLA and therefore a prevailing sense of wildness.</p> <p>Special Qualities of the SLAs are detailed in the document 'Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas' (Horner + Maclellan and Wood, Mike 2011). Special Qualities are set out below along with evaluation of their sensitivity to development of the type proposed and anticipated magnitude of change. Given their Special Quality status, the value of all these elements is assumed to be High, so the evaluation of sensitivity is based on susceptibility to change.</p>
Special Qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctive mountains including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The prominent mountain ridge of Ben Klibreck; and ○ The less dramatic Ben Armine, one of the most remote mountains in Scotland. • Secluded glen with network of tracks • Extensive views from peaks and summits • Historic landscape
Landscape Value	<p>The recognised status of the SLA as a designated landscape as well as its remote qualities (it also forms part of WLA 35 (Ben Klibreck – Armine Forest) and the striking mountain silhouette of Ben Klibreck as a focus for views is considered to give this SLA a High landscape value.</p>
Changes to the Landscape Baseline since 2021 EIAR	<p>The Creag Riabhach Wind Farm has been constructed approximately 2.3km to the west of the SLA. These wind turbines are prominent within the western setting, affecting the extensive views from some peaks and western slopes of Ben Klibreck, bringing the influence of wind development closer to these mountains and reducing qualities of wildness in this area.</p>
Consented Development – Summary of Landscape Effects	
Summary of 2021 LVIA	<p>The 2021 LVIA identified a <u>Minor</u> (not significant) effect to the SLA overall during construction and operation, noting that only very localised areas of the SLA would be potentially indirectly affected by the addition of the 2021 Proposed Development to the surrounding context. The increased extent of wind farm development within the south-westerly context would lead to a perceptible but not significant effect on views from summit areas of Ben Klibreck as illustrated on the Figures 7.21.1-7.21.4 and 7.42.1 - 7.42.6(VP13, Ben Klibreck) within the 2021 EIAR and were predicted to lead to a marginal effect on the sense of remoteness experienced from these localised areas by bringing wind turbines slightly closer within the very extensive context. This was considered to lead to localised perceptible, but not significant effects to the Special qualities '<i>Distinctive mountains</i>' and '<i>Extensive views from peaks and summits</i>'.</p>

Consented Layout	The consented layout of 18 turbines would not change the assessment or conclusions for this LCT.
Proposed Varied Development – Assessment of Landscape Effects	
Landscape Sensitivity	This is a valued landscape with wide reaching views and remote qualities which are susceptible to change of the type proposed. While landscape sensitivity is still considered to be High overall, the introduction of the Creag Riabhach turbines into the close westerly context locally reduces some of the remote qualities of this landscape, reducing sensitivity within the western part of this SLA to Medium .
Magnitude of Change	<p>The Proposed Varied Development would still be experienced in the distant south-westerly landscape context from relatively small areas within the SLA, affecting mountain summits and higher south-westerly facing slopes within the context of the existing Achany and Rosehall Wind Farms (see VP13, Ben Klibreck (Figures V3a-9.1-9.4 and Figure V3b-9.1-9.5)). The ZTV indicates limited areas of new intervisibility and relatively similar numbers of turbines intervisible as the Consented Development. Although the turbines would appear taller and slightly more prominent than the Consented Development turbines, due to the distance at which they would be experienced it is unlikely that the Proposed Varied Development would be perceived as being much closer to the SLA. It is therefore considered unlikely that the Proposed Varied Development would result in an increased impression of wind turbine development within the context compared to the Consented Development, particularly when taking into account the Creag Riabhach Wind Farm which would also now be experienced in a much closer westerly context. Therefore, the magnitude of change to the Special Qualities of '<i>Distinctive mountains</i>' (Ben Klibreck) and '<i>Extensive views from peaks and summits</i>' is not predicted to increase.</p> <p>Magnitude of change is therefore considered to remain Low during construction and operation.</p>
Effect Significance	<p>The addition of the Proposed Varied Development within the south-westerly context, where it would be intervisible with the summit area and parts of the facing slopes of Ben Klibreck, would continue to indirectly affect very localised areas of the SLA likely to lead to some perceptible effects on the appreciation of the Special qualities of '<i>Distinctive mountains</i>' and '<i>Extensive views from peaks and summits</i>', as illustrated on Figures V3a-9.1-9.4 and Figure V3b-9.1-9.5 (VP13, Ben Klibreck). However, due to the distance to the Proposed Varied Development as well as the introduction of Creag Riabhach Wind Farm into the close westerly landscape context, it is not considered that the larger turbines would result in any perceptible increase in effect on the sense of remoteness experienced from these localised areas.</p> <p>The overall effect on the SLA would remain Minor (not significant) during construction and operation.</p>
Change to Effect Significance	No change is predicted to the level of effect on the Ben Klibreck and Loch Choire SLA.