

# **Chapter 13: Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism**

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### 13.1. Introduction

- 13.1.1. A Socio-economics, Recreation & Tourism assessment has been scoped out of this EIAR, however this chapter is included as part of this EIAR for information and context. A standalone 'Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension, Socio-Economic Report' (hereinafter referred to as Socio-Economic Report) has been provided as a supporting document to the Section 36C (S36C) planning application for the Proposed Varied Development.
- 13.1.2. Effects on socio-economics, recreation and tourism were scoped out of this EIAR on the grounds that the Proposed Varied Development would not introduce significant changes to the socio-economics, tourism, and recreation baseline established for the Consented Development in the 2021 EIAR. The impacts on socio-economics are expected to be wholly positive on account of the increase in renewable energy output resulting in an enhanced community benefit package and the increased construction and delivery requirements (refer to **Appendix 3.1 – Scoping Report**).
- 13.1.3. Following statutory consultee responses, and feedback at public exhibitions (see Section 13.2 for full details), the Applicant determined that although the decision to scope out socio-economic concerns from the EIAR would remain, a standalone '*Socio-Economic Report*' (hereinafter referred to as the Socio-Economic Report) would be provided as a supporting document for the Proposed Varied Development application.
- 13.1.4. The initiative to submit a stand-alone Socio-economic Report as an alternative to a Socio-economic, Recreation and Tourism Chapter in an EIAR, is part of an ongoing plan to streamline EIARs to focus on *material environmental impacts* and a commitment of the UK, Scottish Government and wind energy industry Onshore Wind Sector Deal<sup>1</sup>. The fundamental aim of this commitment is to accelerate the deployment of onshore wind projects while maintaining environmental integrity.
- 13.1.5. A standalone Socio-Economic report to accompany EIARs is now recognised as being a recommended element of wind farm development applications and this is fully aligned with Policy 11c of NPF4<sup>2</sup> which states that, "*Development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment,*

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<sup>1</sup> [Onshore wind sector deal - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/onshore-wind-sector-deal/)

<sup>2</sup> [National Planning Framework 4](https://www.gov.scot/national-planning-framework-4/)

*associated business and supply chain opportunities*". A summary of the Socio-Economic Report is provided in Section 12.3.

## 13.2. Consultations and Public Exhibition Feedback

13.2.1. **Table 13.1** sets out the consultee responses to the key socio-economic, recreation and tourism issues raised in the Applicants Scoping Report (refer to **Appendix 3.2 Scoping Opinion** for all consultee responses).

**Table 13.1: Consultee Responses for the Proposed Varied Development**

Consultee	Summary of Key Issues	Response to Comments
The Highland Council(THC) Scoping Response - 3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2025	<p>THC state 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>THC's Access Officer states that recreation can be excluded from the assessment if it is solely comparing the amended proposal to the already approved development. However, if a new application is submitted, this would require a full assessment of public access impacts, including an outdoor access plan.</p>	<p>This is noted. A Socio-economic Report, separate to the EIAR, has been prepared and is included with this submission.</p> <p>The assessments regarding public access in the Consented Development 2021 EIAR and 2022 AIR were reviewed as part of the new submission process and found to require no change. The project boundary has remained the same and site layout has not changed with respect to nearby core paths, of which there are none within the boundary, and the closest will not be impacted by construction or operational activities.</p> <p>An Outdoor Access Plan has already been submitted and approved to satisfy Planning Condition 26. This remains unchanged and valid for the Proposed Varied Development.</p>

### 13.3. The Socio-Economic Report

- 13.3.1. The Socio-Economic Report seeks to demonstrate compliance with Scotland's National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Policy 11<sup>3</sup>. Specifically, this report focuses on fulfilling the requirements set out in NPF4 Policy 11 (c) and aims to demonstrate how the Applicant is committed to enabling long-term outcomes to amplify regional benefits by collaborating and engaging with regional partners and monitoring progress to ensure impacts are maximised.
- 13.3.2. The Socio-Economic Report seeks to demonstrate that it is necessary to consider both the economic impacts that are expected and the approach that the Applicant is taking to ensure these benefits are consistent with community needs.
- 13.3.3. The Applicant's approach to maximising the socio-economic benefits for the Proposed Varied Development is explained through their 12 commitments. As well as setting out these 12 commitments, the Socio-Economic Report describes the long term intended outcomes of each commitment and the proposals to monitor them. These commitments reflect the company's strategic approach to deliver long-term value for local communities, the regional economy, and the wider renewable energy sector. These commitments are split into 4 categories: **Supporting Community Empowerment; Supporting Skills and Workforce Development; Developing the Supply Chain and Enhancing the Natural Environment.**
- 13.3.4. An Economic Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the Socio-Economic Report. This established that the Applicant's approach, aligned with the commitments in the Proposed Varied Development, has the potential to create positive economic impact in the Highlands and for Scotland. An economic impact assessment for the Proposed Varied Development was conducted by BiGGAR Economics and a summary of the results are shown in **Table 13.2 and Table 13.3** below.

**Table 13.2: Total Economic Impact Gross (Construction)**

	Highland	Scotland
Total GVA (£m)	24.8	43.1
Total Job Years	310	580

*Source: BiGGAR Economics Analysis*

<sup>3</sup> [National Planning Framework 4](#)

**Table 13.3: Total Annual Operational Impact**

	Highland	Scotland
Total GVA (£m)	1.9	4.2
Total Jobs	16	43

*Source: BiGGAR Economics Analysis*

## 13.4. Conclusion

- 13.4.1. The Applicant is committed to enabling long-term socio-economic benefits by collaborating and engaging with regional partners and monitoring progress to ensure impacts are maximised.
- 13.4.2. These principles highlight that, when considering whether the Proposed Varied Development maximises net economic impact, it is necessary to consider both the economic impacts that are expected and the approach that the Applicant is taking to ensure these benefits are consistent with community needs.