

# Chapter 12: Socio-Economic, Recreation and Tourism

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## 12. Socio-Economic, Recreation and Tourism

### 12.1. Introduction & Context

- 12.1.1. 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 '**Maximising Socio-Economic Benefits Report**' (hereinafter referred to as Socio-Economic Report) has been provided as a supporting document to the Section 36C planning application for the Proposed Varied Development.
- 12.1.2. Effects on socio-economics, recreation and tourism were scoped out of the EIAR on the grounds that the increased construction and delivery requirements of the Proposed Varied Development would increase the positive impacts previously identified in the 2021 EIAR for the Consented Development (refer to **Technical Appendix 3.1: Scoping Report**).
- 12.1.3. Following statutory consultee responses, and feedback at public exhibitions (see Section 12.2 for full detail), the Applicant determined that although the decision to scope out socio-economic concerns from the EIAR would remain, a standalone '*Maximising Socio-Economic Benefits Report*' (hereinafter referred to as the Socio-Economic Report) would be provided as a supporting document for the application to vary the Consented Development.
- 12.1.4. 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.
- 12.1.5. A stand-alone 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, associated business and supply chain opportunities*". A summary of the Socio-Economic Report is provided in Section 12.3.

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

<sup>2</sup> [National Planning Framework 4](#)

## 12.2. Consultations and Public Exhibition Feedback

12.2.1. **Table 12.1** sets out relevant consultee responses with respect to socio-economic, recreation and tourism following submission of the Scoping Report for the Proposed Varied Development (**Technical Appendix 3.2: Scoping Opinion and Consultation Responses**).

**Table 12.1: Consultee Responses for the Proposed Varied Development**

Consultee	Summary of Key Issues	Response to Comments
THC Scoping Response 25 July 2025	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.	This is noted. A Socio-economic Report, separate to the EIAR, has been prepared and is included with this submission.
THC Scoping Response 25 July 2025	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.  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.	The assessment regarding public access has not changed in comparison to the Consented Development 2021 EIAR and 2022 AIR. 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.
THC Scoping Response 25 July 2025	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	The existing outdoor access plan ( <b>2021 EIAR, Technical Appendix 14.2</b> ) remains applicable to the Proposed Varied Development, however it is expected that an updated version will be required for the project post-consent in line with condition 31 of the Consented Development.
Creich Community Council Scoping Response 02 July 2025	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	These topics are not within the scope of the EIA, as discussed in <b>Chapter 6: Ecology</b> .

Consultee	Summary of Key Issues	Response to Comments
	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.	
Creich Community Council  Scoping Response  02 July 2025	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.	The topic of tourism is included in the accompanying Socio-Economic Report.

## 12.3. The Socio-Economic Report

- 12.3.1. 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 Paragraph 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.
- 12.3.2. 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.
- 12.3.3. 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 provides a description of 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.
- 12.3.4. In consideration of the economic impacts, an Economic Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the Socio-Economic Report. It was established through this

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

assessment that with the Applicant's approach and commitments in the framework of the Proposed Varied Development, it 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 is included in the Socio-Economic Report which estimates the following:

**Table 12.1: Total Economic Impact Gross (Construction)**

	Highland	Scotland
Total Gross Value Added (£m)	£30.5	£49.3
Total Job Years	390	680

*Source: BiGGAR Economics Analysis*

**Table 12.2: Total Annual Operational Impact**

	Highland	Scotland
Total Gross Value Added (£m)	£1.9	£4.1
Total Job Years	15	40

*Source: BiGGAR Economics Analysis - Achany Extension Wind Farm S36C - Socio-economic report*

## 12.4. Conclusion

- 12.4.1. In reference to the Socio-Economic Report, it is evident that the Applicant is committed to enabling long-term outcomes to amplify regional benefits. The Applicant proposes to do this by collaborating and engaging with regional partners and monitoring progress to ensure impacts are maximised.
- 12.4.2. 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.