

Appendix 6.1 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

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Appendix 6.1 – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This appendix presents the assessment criteria adopted for the assessment of landscape and visual effects arising from the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.2 The primary source of best practice for LVIA in the UK is The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013). The assessment criteria adopted to inform the assessment of effects has been developed in accordance with the principles established in this best practice document. It should however be acknowledged that GLVIA3 establishes guidelines not a specific methodology. The preface to GLVIA3 states:
‘This edition concentrates on principles and processes. It does not provide a detailed or formulaic ‘recipe’ that can be followed in every situation – it remains the responsibility of the professional to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the task in hand.’
- 1.1.3 The criteria set out below have therefore been developed specifically for this appraisal to ensure that the methodology is fit for purpose.
- 1.1.4 The purpose of an LVIA when undertaken in the context of an EIA is to identify any likely significant landscape and visual effects arising as a result of the proposals. An LVIA must consider both:
- effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right (the landscape effects); and
 - effects on specific views and visual amenity more generally (the visual effects).
- 1.1.5 Therefore, separate criteria are set out below for the assessment of landscape and visual effects.

1.2 Nature (Sensitivity) of Landscape Features

- 1.2.1 The nature or sensitivity of an individual landscape feature or element reflects its susceptibility to change and any values associated with it. It is therefore a function of factors such as its quality, rarity, contribution to landscape character, degree to which the particular element can be replaced and cultural associations or designations that apply. A particular feature may be more ‘sensitive’ in one location than in another often as a result of local values associated with the feature. Therefore, it is not possible to simply place different types of landscape feature into sensitivity bands. Where individual landscape features are affected, professional judgement is used as far as possible to give an objective evaluation of its sensitivity. Justification is given for this evaluation where necessary.
- 1.2.2 The nature or sensitivity of individual landscape features has been described as very high, high, medium, low or very low.

1.3 Nature (Sensitivity) of Landscape Character

- 1.3.1 The nature or sensitivity of landscape character reflects its susceptibility to change and any values associated with it. It is essentially an expression of a landscape’s ability to accommodate a particular type of change. It varies depending on the physical and perceptual attributes of the landscape including but not necessarily limited to: scale; degree of openness; landform; existing land cover; landscape pattern and complexity; the extent of human influence in the landscape; the degree of remoteness/wildness; perception of change in the landscape; the importance of landmarks or skylines in the landscape; intervisibility with and influence on surrounding areas; condition; rarity and scenic quality of the landscape, and any values placed on the landscape including any designations that may apply.
- 1.3.2 In this assessment, the nature or sensitivity of landscape character is considered with reference to published landscape character areas/types. Information regarding the key characteristics of these character areas/types has been extrapolated from relevant published studies. Together with on-site appraisal, an assessment of

landscape sensitivity to wind energy development has been undertaken employing professional judgement for relevant character areas/types.

- 1.3.3 The nature or sensitivity of landscape character has been described as very high, high, medium, low or very low.

1.4 Nature (Sensitivity) of Visual Receptors

- 1.4.1 The nature or sensitivity of a visual receptor group reflects their susceptibility to change and any values associated with the specific view in question. It varies depending on a number of factors such as the occupation of the viewer, their viewing expectations, duration of view and the angle or direction in which they would see the site. Whilst most views are valued by someone, certain viewpoints are particularly highly valued for either their cultural or historical associations, and this can increase the sensitivity of the view. The following criteria are provided for guidance only and are not exclusive:
- Very Low Sensitivity – People engaged in industrial and commercial activities or military activities.
 - Low Sensitivity - People at their place of work (e.g. offices); shoppers; users of trunk/major roads and passengers on commercial railway lines (except where these form part of a recognised and promoted scenic route).
 - Medium Sensitivity - Users of public rights of way and minor roads which do not appear to be used primarily for recreational activities or the specific enjoyment of the landscape; recreational activities not specifically focused on the landscape (e.g. football);
 - High Sensitivity – Residents at home; users of long distance or recreational trails and other sign posted walks; users of public rights of way and minor roads which appear to be used for recreational activities or the specific enjoyment of the landscape; users of caravan parks, campsites and ‘destination’ hotels; tourist attractions with opportunities for views of the landscape (but not specifically focused on a particular vista); slow paced recreational activities which derive part of their pleasure from an appreciation of setting (e.g. bowling, golf); allotments.
 - Very High Sensitivity - People at recognised vantage points (often with interpretation boards), people at tourist attractions with a focus on a specific view, visitors to historic features/estates where the setting is important to an appreciation and understanding of cultural value.

- 1.4.2 It is important to appreciate that it is the visual receptor (i.e. the person) that has a sensitivity and not a property, public right of way or road. Therefore, a large number of people may use a motorway for example, but this does not increase the sensitivity of the receptors using it. Conversely, a residential property may only have one person living in it, but this does not reduce the sensitivity of that one receptor. The number of receptors affected at any given location may be a planning consideration, but it does not alter the sensitivity of the receptor group.

- 1.4.3 Where judgements are made about the sensitivity of assessment viewpoints, the sensitivity rating provided is an evaluation of the sensitivity of the receptor group represented by the viewpoint and not a reflection of the number of people who may experience the view.

- 1.4.4 It is important not to confuse the concept of visual sensitivity with the perception of wind turbines. It is acknowledged that some people consider wind turbines to be unattractive, but many people also enjoy the sight of them.

1.5 Nature (Magnitude) of Change – General Note

- 1.5.1 The following discussion sets out the approach adopted in this LVIA in relation to a specific issue arising in GLVIA3 which requires a brief explanation.
- 1.5.2 Prior to the publication of GLVIA3, LVIA practice had evolved over time in tandem with most other environmental disciplines to consider significance principally as a function of two factors, namely: sensitivity of the receptor and magnitude of change (the term ‘magnitude’ being a word most commonly used in LVIA and most other environmental disciplines to describe the size or scale of an effect).

- 1.5.3 Box 3.1 on page 37 of GLVIA3 references a 2011 publication by IEMA entitled ‘The State of EIA Practice in the UK’ which reiterates the importance of considering not just the scale or size of the change but other factors which combine to define the ‘nature of the change’ including factors such as the probability of an impact occurring and the duration, reversibility and spatial extent of the change.
- 1.5.4 The flow diagram on page 39 of GLVIA3 now suggests that the magnitude of change is a function of three factors (the size/scale of the change, the duration of the change and the reversibility of the change). This is somewhat problematic in the context of assessing wind energy development.
- 1.5.5 The approach taken in this LVIA is therefore to consider magnitude of change solely as the scale or size of the impact in the traditional sense of the term ‘magnitude’. Having identified the magnitude of change as defined above, the LVIA also describes the duration and reversibility of the identified impact before drawing a conclusion on significance.
- 1.5.6 In the context of the above discussion the following criteria have been adopted to describe the magnitude of change.

1.6 Nature (Magnitude) of Change on Landscape Features

- 1.6.1 Professional judgement has been used as appropriate to determine the magnitude of direct physical change on individual existing landscape features using the following criteria as guidance only:
- Very Low Magnitude of Change - No loss or alteration to existing landscape features;
 - Low Magnitude of Change - Minor loss or alteration to part of an existing landscape feature;
 - Medium Magnitude of Change - Some loss or alteration to part of an existing landscape feature;
 - High Magnitude of Change - Major loss or major alteration to an existing landscape feature; and
 - Very High Magnitude of Change - Total loss or alteration to an existing landscape feature.

1.7 Nature (Magnitude) of Change on Landscape Character

- 1.7.1 The magnitude of change on landscape character is influenced by a number of factors including: the extent to which existing landscape features are lost or altered, the introduction of new features and the resulting alteration to the physical and perceptual characteristics of the landscape. Professional judgement has been used as appropriate to determine the magnitude using the following criteria as guidance only. In doing so, it is recognised that usually the landscape components in the immediate surroundings have a stronger influence on the sense of landscape character than distant features whilst acknowledging the fact that more distant features can have an influence on landscape character as well.
- Very Low Magnitude of Change - No notable loss or alteration to existing landscape features; no notable introduction of new features into the landscape; and negligible change to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.
 - Low Magnitude of Change - Minor loss or alteration to existing landscape features; introduction of minor new features into the landscape; or minor alteration to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.
 - Medium Magnitude of Change - Some notable loss or alteration to existing landscape features; introduction of some notable new features into the landscape; or some notable change to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.
 - High Magnitude of Change - A major loss or alteration to existing landscape features; introduction of major new features into the landscape; or a major change to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.
 - Very High Magnitude of Change - Total loss or alteration to existing landscape features; introduction of dominant new features into the landscape; a very major change to the key physical and/or perceptual attributes of the landscape.

1.8 Nature (Magnitude) of Change on Views and Visual Amenity

- 1.8.1 Visual effects are caused by the introduction of new elements into the views of a landscape or the removal of elements from the existing view.
- 1.8.2 Professional judgement, has been used to determine the magnitude of impacts using the following criteria as guidance only:
- Very Low Magnitude of Change - No change or negligible change in views;
 - Low Magnitude of Change - Some change in the view that is not prominent but visible to some visual receptors;
 - Medium Magnitude of Change - Some change in the view that is clearly notable in the view and forms an easily identifiable component in the view;
 - High Magnitude of Change - A major change in the view that is highly prominent and has a strong influence on the overall view.
 - Very High Magnitude of Change – A change in the view that has a dominating or overbearing influence on the overall view.
- 1.8.3 Using this set of criteria, determining levels of magnitude is primarily dependant on how prominent the Proposed Development would be in the landscape, and what may be judged to flow from that prominence or otherwise.
- 1.8.4 For clarification, the use of the term ‘prominent’ relates to how noticeable the features of the Proposed Development would be. This is affected by how close the viewpoint is to the Proposed Development but not entirely dependent on this factor. Other modifying factors include: the focus of the view, visual screening and the nature and scale of other landscape features within the view. Rather than specifying crude bands of distance at which the turbines will be dominant, prominent or incidental to the view etc., the prominence of the turbines in each view is described in detail for each viewpoint taking all the relevant variables into consideration.

1.9 Duration of Change

- 1.9.1 For the purposes of this assessment, the temporal nature of each impact is described as follows:
- Long Term – over 5 years
 - Medium Term – between 1 and 5 years
 - Short Term – under 1 year

1.10 Reversibility of Change

- 1.10.1 The LVIA also describes the reversibility of each identified impact using the following terms:
- Permanent – impact is non reversible
 - Non-permanent – impact is reversible

1.11 Significance of Effect

- 1.11.1 The purpose of an LVIA when produced in the context of an EIA is to identify any significant effects on landscape and visual amenity arising from the Proposed Development.
- 1.11.2 Neither EC Directive 2011/12/EU nor the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 define a threshold at which an effect may be determined to be significant. In certain other environmental disciplines there are regulatory thresholds or quantitative standards which help to determine the threshold of what constitutes a significant effect. However, in LVIA, any judgement about what constitutes a significant effect is ostensibly a subjective opinion expressed as in this case by a competent and appropriately qualified professional assessor.

- 1.11.3 The level (relative significance) of the landscape and visual effects is determined by combining judgements regarding sensitivity of the landscape or view, magnitude of change, duration of change and the reversibility of the change. In determining the level of residual effects, all mitigation measures are taken into account.
- 1.11.4 The level (relative significance) of effect is described as **major, moderate/major, moderate, moderate/minor, minor, slight/no effect** or **no effect**. No Effect may also be recorded as appropriate where the effect is so negligible it is not even noteworthy.
- 1.11.5 In the LVIA, those effects described as **major, moderate/major** and in some cases **moderate** may be regarded as significant effects as required by the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. These are the effects which the authors of the LVIA consider to be most material in the decision making process.

Appendix 6.2 – Photography, Photomontage and Wireline Methodology

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Appendix 6.2 – Photography, Photomontage and Wireline Methodology

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This appendix provides background information in relation to the suite of visualisations presented in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA Report).
- 1.1.2 The following text explains how the visualisations have been prepared and presented; includes instructions for how the visualisations should be viewed and explains the limitations of the visualisation material.
- 1.1.3 The visualisations in this EIA Report have been prepared in accordance with the published best practice, Visual Representation of Wind Farms, Version 2.2 (February 2017) Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and The Highland Council (THC) Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments, July 2016.

1.2 Viewpoint Photography

- 1.2.1 The following text explains how the baseline photography was taken for each viewpoint.
- 1.2.2 Baseline photographs of the existing view were taken using either a high quality Canon 5D Mark II digital camera with a Canon EF 50mm f/1.4 USM lens or a high quality Nikon D600 with a 50mm f/1.4 lens. In accordance with the SNH guidance (2017), both cameras have a full frame digital sensor.
- 1.2.3 Neutral density graduated filters were used as appropriate at some viewpoints to balance the exposure within some scenes – typically where there was a contrast between bright sky and darker landform. Other than this, no other filters were used during photography.
- 1.2.4 Photographs were captured in high resolution JPEG and RAW format.
- 1.2.5 At each viewpoint the camera was mounted on a levelled tripod at a height of approximately 1.5 m above ground level (providing an approximation of average adult eye level).
- 1.2.6 The camera was set up on a panoramic rotating head and photographs were taken at 30 degree increments of rotation from left to right.
- 1.2.7 In each case the camera focus was locked on the distant horizon (infinity). In doing so, the photographs are in each case focused on the development site, whilst very close objects in the foreground may in some cases be out of focus. This approach is in line with best practice photography techniques. The exposure was set correctly for the centre of the development site and then locked off so that it remained constant as the camera was rotated through the panorama.
- 1.2.8 As far as possible, photographs were taken in good weather and clear visibility conditions. Wherever possible photographs were taken with the sun behind the camera although this was not possible for all viewpoints i.e. those that are broadly north of the site.
- 1.2.9 Inevitably with distance from the site, atmospheric moisture increasingly reduces the clarity of visibility and therefore photographs from the distant viewpoints typically depict the development site less clearly than the nearby viewpoint photographs. This is an unavoidable limitation of viewpoint photography.

1.3 Stitching of Panoramas and Post-Photographic Processing – SNH Visuals

- 1.3.1 Each of the panoramic images presented is comprised of three single frame photographs stitched together in Adobe Photoshop (for cylindrical projection images) and in PTGui (for planar projection images) and then cropped down to a particular horizontal and vertical field of view.
- 1.3.2 The panoramic baseline photographs which illustrate a 90 degree horizontal angle of view are stitched in cylindrical projection as per the SNH guidance (2017).

- 1.3.3 The photomontages which show a 53.5 degree horizontal field of view have been based on the same single frame panoramic photographs but have been stitched in planar projection in accordance with the SNH guidance (2017).
- 1.3.4 A limited amount of post photography processing of the image files has been undertaken to enhance the quality of the baseline photographs. As stated in the SNH guidance (2017):
‘Photographic processing involves judgements - there is no process by which a ‘pure’ photograph can be produced without the application of human decision-making, from exposure timing to the specification of the camera, and whether this is applied manually or automatically.’
‘In reality there is no way to avoid a photograph being enhanced as this is an integral part of photography and photomontage production.’
‘Overall, there should be a minimum of post-processing image enhancement’.
- 1.3.5 The extent of image enhancement undertaken in the production of the photomontages has been limited to that which would conventionally occur in a darkroom to improve the clarity of an image and does not in each case change the essential character of the image. Overall, there has been minimal post-photography image enhancement and during the stitching process none of the photographs were distorted in terms of scaling (other than that which is an inherent and unavoidable product of stitching photography in planar projection).

1.4 Stitching of Panoramas and Post-Photographic Processing – THC Visuals

Images for Landscape Assessment

- 1.4.1 The photographs used for these are taken with a 50mm lens.
- 1.4.2 Stitching three 50mm photographs together in planar projection to form the baseline photo. When printed at an image size of 390mm x 142mm have a focal length of a 50mm lens, vertical field of view (VFOV) 27° x 28mm horizontal field of view (HFOV) 65.5°. The photographs and wirelines are generally centred on the visible turbines of the Proposed Development.

Images for Visual Impact Assessment

- 1.4.3 The photographs used for these are taken at the standard focal length of 50mm and conform to the 39.6 degree horizontal field of view (HFOV) x 27 degree vertical field of view (VFOV). The photographs are generally centred on the visible turbines of the Proposed Development. However, if the Proposed Development cannot be contained within the full extents of the HFOV of the frame, the view has been centred on the nearest visible turbine.
- 1.4.4 The 39.6 degree HFOV single frame photomontages, are reproduced at a size of 390mm x 260mm. When viewed at a comfortable arm’s length (approx. 500mm), these images are representative of the maximum field of view of clear vision but are not representative of scale and distance. This viewing distance is based on Highland Council Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments (March 2015) which states that ‘when viewed with both eyes, the natural viewing distance is approximately the diagonal of the page regardless of focal length’.
- 1.4.5 A set of single frame photomontages with a 75mm focal length is also included. These images are extracted from the 50mm focal length photomontage and conform to a 27 degree HFOV x 18 degree VFOV. When reproduced at a size of 390mm x 260mm this image should be viewed at a comfortable arm’s length (approx. 500mm) in order to gain as accurate an impression as possible of the real effect on the views. This viewing distance is based on Highland Council Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments (March 2015) which states that ‘when viewed with both eyes, the natural viewing distance is approximately the diagonal of the page regardless of focal length’.

1.5 Wirelines

- 1.5.1 A wireline visualisation (sometimes also referred to as a wireframe visualisation) is a computer generated 3D outline of a particular structure (in this the proposed wind farm) placed on top of a 3D ground terrain model, which again is represented by a wireline. No rendering is given to any of the surfaces.

- 1.5.2 The wireline images of the Proposed Development (as well as any other cumulative turbines modelled) were generated utilising the actual dimensions of the proposed turbines and a model of the structures was placed in position over a ground terrain model generated from Ordnance Survey Landform Panorama height data.
- 1.5.3 The coordinates of the viewpoints were recorded using a Global Positioning System (GPS) in the field. Checks on these coordinates were made with reference to Google Earth. These coordinates were used to set up viewpoints in the model from which to view the turbines. The wirelines were generated using Resoft Windfarm.
- 1.5.4 The wireline images are generated on a bare ground model and therefore do not take account of any vegetation or the built environment between the viewpoint and the Proposed Development. As such, they represent a worst-case view. Each of the wirelines was checked on site to ascertain whether there was any screening of the view caused by vegetation or buildings.
- 1.5.5 For each THC visualisation, a 65.5 degree cumulative wireline is presented on the second sheet below the baseline photograph to illustrate the view from each viewpoint.
- 1.5.6 For each SNH visualisation, a 90 degree wireline is presented to scale beneath the baseline photograph to illustrate the view from each viewpoint. This wireline illustrates the Proposed Development with other operational and consented wind farms (including those under construction).
- 1.5.7 In addition, for each viewpoint an enlarged 53.5 degree planar projection wireline is presented on a second sheet to correspond in scale with the subsequent photomontage. Again, this wireline illustrates the Proposed Development with other operational and consented wind farms (including those under construction).
- 1.5.8 For each of the viewpoints which is illustrated as a cumulative viewpoint, another wireline image has been produced (again in 53.5 degree planar projection) and this time shows other schemes in planning (i.e. as yet undetermined applications) as well as the Proposed Development and other operational and consented wind turbines.
- 1.5.9 The wireline images only illustrate the anticipated scale and position of the turbines in relation to the terrain. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the images, it must be appreciated that no wireline image could ever claim to be 100 % accurate as there are a number of technical limitations to the model which are discussed further below.
- 1.5.10 It should be noted that wirelines are just a 'snap shot' of the view from a single fixed location and the wirelines presented in this EIA Report represent only a small number of locations where the Proposed Development will be visible from. In reality views will change as receptors move through the landscape. Therefore, the wirelines are simply a tool to assist the Landscape Architect in their assessment of effects. The assessment of visual effects in this chapter does not rely solely on the accuracy of the wireline images. Professional judgement has been used to evaluate the significance of effects.

1.6 Photomontages

- 1.6.1 In simple terms, a photomontage is the superimposition of a rendered, photorealistic, computer generated model of a development (in this case the proposed wind farm) on to a baseline photograph to illustrate how it will appear in the surrounding landscape context.
- 1.6.2 A 3D wireline model was generated of the turbines as described above. Resoft Windfarm software was used to generate the 3D model of the turbines. The model of the structures was rendered and lighting was set appropriate to the date, time and orientation on which the photograph was taken.
- 1.6.3 A digital ground terrain model was generated in Resoft Windfarm and the Proposed Development was overlaid on top of it. Using world coordinates in the computer modelling programme the photographic viewpoints were replicated such that a view was set up looking at the turbines from exactly the same location as where the baseline photograph was taken from. The view from the model was then superimposed over the original photograph and edited as necessary in Adobe Photoshop to give a final photomontage.
- 1.6.4 The photomontages illustrate the Proposed Development set in the current view (i.e. in the context of just operational wind farms where visible). In addition, cumulative photomontages have been produced for certain viewpoints as identified in the LVIA. The cumulative photomontages show the Proposed Development with all other operational, consented and submitted wind farms.

- 1.6.5 Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the photomontages, it must be appreciated that no photomontage could ever claim to be 100 % accurate as there are a number of technical limitations in the model relating to the accuracy of information available from Ordnance Survey and from the GPS. In particular, it should be recognised that baseline photographs on which photomontages are based can, at best, only ever be a 'flattened' 2D representation of what the eye sees in 3D on site. A photograph will never capture as much detail as the eye would see in the field, it therefore follows that a photomontage can never truly capture the sense of perspective and detail which would be possible in reality. In some of the photomontages, the visibility of the turbines has been slightly digitally enhanced to ensure that they are visible when printed out. Taking account of the inherent technical limitations in producing and presenting photomontages, the photomontages have been produced according to best practice.

- 1.6.6 The photomontages are simply a tool to assist the Landscape Architect in his/her assessment of effects. The assessment of visual effects in this assessment does not rely solely on the accuracy of the photomontages. Professional judgement has been used to evaluate the significance of effects. Each of the photomontages should be viewed flat and at comfortable arms length.

1.7 Presentation of Visualisation Sheets – SNH

- 1.7.1 The following visualisation sheets are presented in the EIA Report:

Sheet A: Baseline Photograph and Cumulative Wireline of the Proposed Development

- 1.7.2 This sheet provides a cumulative wireline image of the Proposed Development directly beneath the corresponding baseline photograph. Both images present a 90 degree horizontal field of view and a 14.2 degree vertical field of view. This sheet presents the information required of the 'Baseline Panorama and Wireline' as set out in Annex C of the SNH guidance (2017). Both of the images on this sheet are presented in cylindrical projection and the principal viewing distance (the distance at which one should view the image to obtain a geometrically accurate impression) is 500 mm when the image is curved through the same radius.

- 1.7.3 For the purposes of clarification, the cumulative wireline on this sheet illustrates the Proposed Development and other operational, consented wind farms/turbines and any schemes in planning.

Sheet B: Wireline of the Proposed Development

- 1.7.4 This sheet provides an enlarged and cropped wireline image of the Proposed Development. The image illustrates a 53.5 degree horizontal field of view and an 18 degree vertical field of view. Whilst it is essentially an enlargement of the 90 degree wireframe, this wireframe is presented in planar projection. As such the image should be viewed on a flat surface. The principal viewing distance (the distance at which one should view the image to obtain a geometrically accurate impression) is 812.5 mm. This sheet presents the information required of the 'Wireline' as set out in Annex C of the SNH guidance (2017).

- 1.7.5 For the purposes of clarification, the wireline on this sheet illustrates the Proposed Development only.

Sheet C: Photomontage of the Proposed Development

- 1.7.6 This sheet provides an enlarged and cropped photomontage of the Proposed Development. The image illustrates a 53.5 degree horizontal field of view and an 18 degree vertical field of view. It is presented in planar projection, and as such the image should be viewed on a flat surface. The principal viewing distance (the distance at which one should view the image to obtain a geometrically accurate impression) is 812.5 mm. This sheet presents the information required of the 'A1 Panorama' as set out in Annex C of the SNH guidance (2017).

- 1.7.7 For the purposes of clarification this sheet illustrates only the Proposed Development in conjunction with existing operational wind farms. It does not show consented but as yet unbuilt turbines or any schemes that are in planning.

1.8 Presentation of Visualisation Sheets – THC

- 1.8.1 The following visualisation sheets are presented in the EIA Report in line with the requirements of Highland Council Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments (March 2015):

- Sheet 1: Map and Location Information;

- Sheet 2: Photomontage – 65.5 degrees;
- Sheet 3: Baseline Photograph and Cumulative Wireframe;
- Sheet 4: Photomontage – 39.6 degrees; and
- Sheet 5: Photomontage – 27 degrees.

1.9 Limitations of the Visualisations

1.9.1 Annex A of 'Visual Representation of Wind Farms', Version 2.2 (SNH, February 2017) sets out a summary of the key limitations of visualisations and recommends that these are set out for each wind farm application. The following text is therefore reproduced from Annex A of the aforementioned SNH guidance (2017):

'Visualisations of wind farms have a number of limitations which you should be aware of when using them to form a judgement on a wind farm proposal. These include:

- *A visualisation can never show exactly what the wind farm will look like in reality due to factors such as: different lighting, weather and seasonal conditions which vary through time and the resolution of the image;*
- *The images provided give a reasonable impression of the scale of the turbines and the distance to the turbines, but can never be 100% accurate;*
- *A static image cannot convey turbine movement, or flicker or reflection from the sun on the turbine blades as they move;*
- *The viewpoints illustrated are representative of views in the area, but cannot represent visibility at all locations;*
- *To form the best impression of the impacts of the wind farm proposal these images are best viewed at the viewpoint location shown;*
- *The images must be printed at the right size to be viewed properly (260mm by 820mm);*
- *You should hold the images flat at a comfortable arm's length. If viewing these images on a wall or board at an exhibition, you should stand at arm's length from the image presented to gain the best impression.*
- *It is preferable to view printed images rather than view images on screen. If you do view images on screen you should do so using a normal PC screen with the image enlarged to the full screen height to give a realistic impression. Do not use a tablet or other device with a smaller screen to view the visualisations described in this guidance.'*

Appendix 6.3 - Viewpoint Assessment

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1 6.3 - Viewpoint Assessment

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Appendix provides an assessment of the visual effects of the Proposed Development from a selection of 18 viewpoints. For each of the assessment viewpoints a short description is given of the baseline view followed by a description of the features of the Proposed Development which would be visible from that viewpoint. For each viewpoint there is a comment on how vegetation, buildings or topography would affect the visibility of the turbines, as well as giving a comment on the sensitivity of the viewpoint, the magnitude of change experienced and the significance of visual impacts. Finally, a judgement is provided regarding whether the overall effect for each viewpoint is considered to be significant or not in terms of the EIA Regulations.

1.1.2 A summary of the sensitivity of the viewpoint, magnitude of change in the view and significance of effect is given in Table 1.3.1 of this Appendix and is replicated at Table 6.11 of Chapter 6 within the EIA Report. Where a viewpoint is representative of more than one type of visual receptor, the significance rating carried forward to Table 1.3.1 is the rating that represents the most sensitive receptor group represented by the viewpoint. Each assessment viewpoint is illustrated in Volumes 4 and 5 of the EIA Report.

1.2 Viewpoint 1 - Doll

1.2.1 Viewpoint 1 is located approximately 8.4 km to the south-west from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

1.2.2 This viewpoint is representative of views available from this minor single-track road which provides access to a series of scattered properties within Doll. The location of the view is positioned to the north of Doll. Dense areas of gorse and broom vegetation are present in the foreground and a number of overhead powerlines attached to telegraph poles follow the roads around the settlement.

1.2.3 Glimpses of residential properties within Doll are visible above foreground vegetation, views of properties to the west of Brora are also possible beyond the River Brora in between intervening vegetation, located on gently undulating land which is broken up by farmland. The hills in the background rise steeply and form a backdrop to the view, which are mostly formed of moorland.

1.2.4 As the viewpoint represents the view from a minor road used by local residents, but which is also representative of local residents within Doll, it is therefore considered to be of high sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

1.2.5 From this viewpoint, a number of turbines would be notable above the backdrop of hills, most notably turbine nos. 11, 12, 13 and 15, which appear as a cluster, along with turbine no. 14 just behind it. Only the base of the tower of these turbines would be obscured by intervening landform.

1.2.6 Most other proposed turbines would be either glimpsed above the intervening landform, limited to blade tips or occasional hubs, or obscured completely by the intervening landform. All views of the turbines would be seen in context of residential development and overhead powerlines in the foreground.

1.2.7 Due to the notable addition of the Proposed Development above the steep sided hills beyond Doll, limited in part by roadside vegetation, the magnitude of change is assessed as Medium.

Significance of Effect

1.2.8 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **moderate** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by receptors using the road throughout the year. Although intervening landform serves to obscure views of a number of proposed turbines, limiting views mostly towards a single cluster, the level of effect is deemed to be **significant**.

1.3 Viewpoint 2 – Lower Brora

1.3.1 Viewpoint 2 is located approximately 8.1 km to the south from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

1.3.2 This viewpoint is representative of views available from this local vantage point and visitor attraction on the south-eastern edge of Brora. It is located close to a coastal car park with benches facing the sea and a picnic area, with the focus of views mainly towards the Moray Firth. The viewpoint is located along part of ‘The Brora Village Trail’ which indicates select viewpoints towards the Moray Firth and also towards The Duke of Sutherland Monument located on top of Ben Braggie to the south-west of the viewpoint. The viewpoint is also located adjacent to the John O’Groats Trail, specifically forming part of Stage 6 – Golspie to Brora.

1.3.3 Foreground views are dominated by residential properties on the edge of Brora along Salt Street, Market Street, Harbour Road and George Street, 1 to 1½ storey stone and rendered properties and white rendered bungalows. Other built form is visible beyond the residential streets including the Brora Golf Club clubhouse and dominant 3 storey Links View Apartments which overlook Brora Golf Course and the Moray Firth.

1.3.4 The hills in the background rise steeply and form a backdrop to the view, which are mostly formed of moorland.

1.3.5 As the viewpoint represents the view from a recognised vantage point on the Brora Village Trail, is located adjacent to the John O’Groats Trail and is from a coastal tourist destination, it is considered to be of very high sensitivity to change in the view. However, it should be noted that the views towards the site do not form part of the composition of the recognised vantage points.

Magnitude of Change

1.3.6 Almost all of the proposed turbines would be visible above the backdrop of hills, forming a prominent feature on the hill side, albeit seen in context of development and associated infrastructure in the foreground. Most notably turbine nos. 11, 12, 13 and 15 appear as a cluster along with turbine no. 14 just behind it.

1.3.7 Most other turbines would appear partly obscured, limited to views of turbine hubs and associated blades. Only turbine no. 3 would be obscured completely by intervening landform. The chimneys on the adjacent residential properties, which break the skyline in the foreground would limit views of some of the turbines.

1.3.8 Due to the prominence of the proposed turbines above the steep sided hills beyond Brora, and when considering the context of development within Brora in the immediate foreground, the magnitude of change is assessed as medium to high.

Significance of Effect

1.3.9 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **major** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by receptors using the Brora Village Trail and John O’Groats Trail. This level of effect is deemed to be **significant**.

1.4 Viewpoint 3 – Victoria Road (A9), North Brora

1.4.1 Viewpoint 3 is located approximately 7 km to the south from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

1.4.2 This viewpoint is representative of views available from this A-road on the departure from Brora close to the local petrol station. The road is characterised by the petrol station with sheltered forecourt and motor vehicle garage with parked vehicles, as well as residential properties with garden fencing, vegetation, bins and driveways directly leading onto Victoria Road (A9).

1.4.3 The foreground of the view is dominated by urban features, including lighting columns, powerlines, street signage, a local post box and passing traffic. Views of the hills are possible beyond the foreground development, which rise steeply, partially obscured by intervening foreground features. The distant hills are made up of areas

- of woodland on lower slopes, crossed by pylons with associated overhead powerlines, with open moorland on upper slopes.
- 1.4.5 Although the viewpoint represents the view from an A-road, it is acknowledged that the A9 forms part of the North Coast 500 tourist route and part of an alternative cycling route between Lands' End to John O'Groats, therefore, it is considered to be of high sensitivity to changes in the view.
- 1.4.6 **Magnitude of Change**
- 1.4.7 Whilst travelling northward along the road, a number of the proposed turbines would be seen on the skyline, above the hills in the background. Most notably turbine nos. 11, 12, 13 and 15, which appear as a cluster, along with turbine no. 14 just behind it, however, vertical elements in the foreground would limit these views.
- 1.4.8 Most other proposed turbines would be either glimpsed above the intervening landform, limited to blade tips or occasional hubs, or obscured completely by the intervening landform. All views of the turbines would be seen in context of the manmade features in the foreground.
- 1.4.9 The Proposed Development would not appear in views when travelling southward along the A9.
- 1.4.10 Although a number of the proposed turbines are visible above the skyline, due to the presence of man-made features in the foreground characterising this section of the A9, the magnitude of change is assessed as Medium to low.
- 1.4.11 **Significance of Effect**
- 1.4.12 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **moderate to minor** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by road users using the route throughout the year. This level of effect is deemed to be **not significant**.
- 1.5 Viewpoint 4 – Beinn Dhorain**
- 1.5.1 Viewpoint 4 is located approximately 3.9 km to the north-east from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.
- Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View***
- 1.5.2 This elevated viewpoint is representative of views available from the peak of Beinn Dhorain (628m AOD), one of a number of peaks located to the north-west of the site. From this high point, there is opportunity to take in 360 degree views over the surrounding landscape, including over the Moray Firth. There is no formal walking route to this peak.
- 1.5.3 Open and uninterrupted views towards the site are possible beyond Glen Sletdale. To the north-west of the site, views of the adjacent Gordonbush Wind Farm are visible, however, due to the elevated nature of the viewer, the turbines do not break the skyline.
- 1.5.4 Views are possible along the wooded Glen Loth, including towards the minor road providing a connection between Lothbeg to the south and Kildonan further to the north. Beyond the immediate coast and the site, views towards the distant Dornoch Firth are possible. In the opposite direction of the site, views are possible along the coast toward Helmsdale and beyond, as well as towards the peaks of Creag Scalabsdale and Morven, beyond the Strath of Kildonan.
- 1.5.5 The viewpoint represents the view from the peak of Beinn Dhorain by walkers that would appear to be undertaking recreational activities or the enjoyment of the landscape, as well as being located within the Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth Special Landscape Area (SLA). It is therefore considered to be of high sensitivity to changes in the view.
- Magnitude of Change***
- 1.5.6 The proposed turbines would appear prominent on the opposing hills, appearing in three separate clusters, with a number of turbines breaking the skyline. In most cases, due to the elevated location of the viewpoint, the entire turbine would be visible, including the tower and associated infrastructure, including connecting access tracks below. The view towards turbines would be foreshortened in the view, with the existing Gordonbush Wind Farm appearing to extend up the hillside.

- 1.5.7 Views towards Glen Strath and out towards the Moray Firth would remain unaffected, however, the proposed turbines would partly interrupt distant views towards Dornoch Firth.
- 1.5.8 Due to open and uninterrupted views towards the Proposed Development by walkers to this peak, the magnitude of change is assessed as high.
- Significance of Effect***
- 1.5.9 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in **major** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by walkers of Beinn Dhorain. This level of effect is deemed to be **significant**.
- 1.6 Viewpoint 5 – Creag Nam Fiadh**
- 1.6.1 Viewpoint 5 is located approximately 11 km to the north-west from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.
- Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View***
- 1.6.2 This elevated viewpoint is representative of views available from the trig point at Creag Nam Fiadh (387m AOD), a locally high point within a series of hills dissected by numerous water courses. From this high point, there is opportunity to take in 360 degree views over the surrounding landscape, which mostly consists of open moorland. There is no formal walking route to this peak. The viewpoint is located close to the south-eastern edge of Ben Klibreck – Armine Forest Wild Land Area.
- 1.6.3 Views of the site are possible across moorland and towards higher land close to the coastline, seen on the distant skyline. To the north-west of the site, Gordonbush Wind Farm is visible, which breaks the skyline in a number of places. Kilbruar Wind Farm is also visible from the trig point at the foot of Meall Horn and Ben Horn beyond.
- 1.6.4 The viewpoint represents the view from the peak of Creag Nam Fiadh by walkers that would appear to be undertaking recreational activities or the enjoyment of the landscape, as well as being located within Wild Land. It is therefore considered to be of high sensitivity to changes in the view.
- Magnitude of Change***
- 1.6.5 Most of the proposed turbines would appear above the skyline in a single cluster, with turbine nos. 1,2, 3, 5 and 6 being most notable. Most other turbines appear either set back in comparison or limited to views of blade tips only, obscured by intervening landform.
- 1.6.6 The proposed turbines would be seen in context of the turbines associated with Gordonbush Wind Farm, where the Proposed Development would appear as an extension to these turbines, albeit the Proposed Development would be located upon marginally higher ground.
- 1.6.7 Although a number of the proposed turbines are visible above the skyline, they are viewed in context of the adjacent Gordonbush Wind Farm, therefore, the magnitude of change would be medium.
- Significance of Effect***
- 1.6.8 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **moderate** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by walkers of Creag Nam Fiadh. However, due to the context of the adjacent Gordonbush Wind Farm, this level of effect is deemed to be **not significant**.
- 1.7 Viewpoint 6 – Hope Hill**
- 1.7.1 Viewpoint 6 is located approximately 12 km to the north-west from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.
- 1.7.2 ***Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View***
- 1.7.3 This viewpoint is representative of views available from the trig point at Hope Hill (253m AOD), an isolated high point within a vast area of open moorland. Although 360 degree views are possible from this local high point, the surrounding topography is gently sloping, therefore, some outward views are limited by surrounding local high points. The viewpoint is located within Ben Klibreck – Armine Forest Wild Land Area, close to its southern edge.

- 1.7.4 Views towards the site are possible, seen as distant hills on the skyline. The Gordonbush Farm appears between the site and viewpoint, located to the north-west of the site boundary. Some of the Gordonbush turbines break the skyline above higher land within the site.
- 1.7.5 Views towards Kilbruar Wind Farm are also visible to the south-west of the site, seen below higher ground associated with Meall Horn and Ben Horn.
- 1.7.6 The viewpoint represents the view from the Hope Hill by walkers that would appear to be undertaking recreational activities or the enjoyment of the landscape, as well being located within Wild Land. It is therefore considered to be of high sensitivity to changes in the view.
- 1.7.7 **Magnitude of Change**
- 1.7.8 Most of the proposed turbines would be seen above intervening land on the skyline, particularly turbine nos. 1-3 and 5-8. Other turbines would be partly obscured by the landform, limited to only their hubs and blades with a select few turbines screened completely.
- 1.7.9 The Proposed Development would be introduced to a landscape which is already influenced by wind energy, including those at Gordonbush and Kilbraur. The proposed turbines would be seen in context of the turbines associated with Gordonbush Wind Farm, where the Proposed Development would appear as an extension to these turbines, albeit the Proposed Development would be located upon higher ground above.
- 1.7.10 Although a number of the proposed turbines are visible above the skyline, they are viewed in context of the adjacent Gordonbush Wind Farm, therefore, the magnitude of change would be medium.
- 1.7.11 **Significance of Effect**
- 1.7.12 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **moderate** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by walkers to Hope Hill. However, due to the context of Gordonbush Wind Farm, this level of effect is deemed to be **not significant**.

1.8 Viewpoint 7 – Track to Ben Armine Lodge

- 1.8.1 Viewpoint 7 is located approximately 12.9 km to the north-west from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

- 1.8.2 This viewpoint is representative of views available from the track providing a connection to Ben Armine Lodge, an isolated rental property located some 8 miles from the nearest road. The viewpoint is located approximately 4.75 km north-west along this track from Holm Park, the nearest highway on locally high ground adjacent to Lochan Dubh Cul na h-Amaite and close to Loch Bad na h-Earba.
- 1.8.3 The site is visible when travelling in a south-easterly direction along the track away from the lodge. Views to the south-west and west are limited by landform and nearby woodland, however, open views are possible towards the site as well as towards the north-east and east over the adjacent lochs. To the north-west of the site, Gordonbush Wind Farm is visible, which breaks the skyline in a number of places.
- 1.8.4 The viewpoint represents the view from the access track to Ben Armine Lodge a destination property, albeit by limited number of people staying at the lodge, it is therefore considered to be of high sensitivity to changes in the view.

Magnitude of Change

- 1.8.5 All of the proposed turbines would appear above the skyline in a single cluster with variable visibility, with turbine nos. 1-8 being most notable. Most other turbines appear either set back in comparison or limited to views of blade tips only, obscured by intervening landform.
- 1.8.6 The proposed turbines would be seen in context of the turbines associated with Gordonbush Wind Farm, where the Proposed Development would appear as an extension to these turbines, albeit the Proposed Development would be located upon marginally higher ground.
- 1.8.7 Although a number of the proposed turbines are visible above the skyline, they are viewed in context of the adjacent Gordonbush Wind Farm, therefore, the magnitude of change would be no greater than medium.

Significance of Effect

- 1.8.8 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **moderate** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by visitors to the lodge when travelling in a south-westerly direction. However, due to the context of Gordonbush Wind Farm, this level of effect is deemed to be **not significant**.

1.9 Viewpoint 8 – Brora to Rogart Minor Road near Sciberscross

- 1.9.1 Viewpoint 8 is located approximately 10.4 km to the west from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

- 1.9.2 This viewpoint is representative of the views available along this minor single-track road providing a link between Pittentrail and Brora along the River Brora valley.
- 1.9.3 The road is located on the northern side of the valley, which is made up of the meandering River Brora with scattered trees interspersed between farmland. Views to the north are curtailed by woodland and vegetation on the northern side of the valley. Land rises steeply to the south of valley which is made up of areas of woodland and moorland, which is dominated by turbines associated with the Kilbraur Wind Farm.
- 1.9.4 Beyond the valley, land rises steeply into hillsides covered by moorland. The Gordonbush Wind Farm is visible, which is partially seen on the skyline. The hills are crossed by a line of pylons. The site is located beyond the distant hills, behind local peaks such as the prominent Beinn Smeorail (486m AOD).
- 1.9.5 As the viewpoint represents the view from a minor road used by local residents, who do not appear to be used primarily for recreational activities or the specific enjoyment of the landscape, it is therefore considered to be of medium sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

- 1.9.6 From this minor road overlooking the River Brora valley, a number of turbines are visible above the intervening hills on the skyline, most notably turbine nos. 1-6 and 8. All other proposed turbines are obscured by intervening landform, including by Beinn Smeorail, or limited to glimpses of blade tips only.
- 1.9.7 The Proposed Development would extend the influence of wind energy on the distant hills adjacent to the existing Gordonbush Wind Farm, by appearing as an extension to this wind farm.
- 1.9.8 The proposed turbines would only be visible when travelling in an easterly direction along the road, appearing behind the users of the road when travelling in a westerly direction.
- 1.9.9 The valley is already in proximity to Kilbraur Wind Farm, as well as being influenced by the Gordonbush Wind Farm, therefore the Proposed Development is assessed as having a medium to low magnitude of change.

Significance of Effect

- 1.9.10 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **moderate to minor** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by users of the minor road, with the subsequent level of effect deemed to be **not significant**.

1.10 Viewpoint 9 – Brora to Rogart Minor Road near Dalreavoch

- 1.10.1 Viewpoint 9 is located approximately 13.5 km to the west from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

- 1.10.2 This viewpoint is representative of the view from a minor single track road within the River Brora valley. Whilst the river is not visible, glimpses of farmland are possible. The valley sides are covered in woodland or moorland and rise steeply either side of the River Brora. Powerlines attached to telegraph poles cross the landscape in the foreground and within the valley. Views to the north are curtailed by vegetation adjacent to the road.

- 1.10.3 Distant views of the hills beyond the valley are possible with glimpses of select turbines associated with the Gordonbush wind farm. The site is partly obscured by intervening landform to the south of the valley, which prevent views of the southern part of the site. This landform also prevents views towards the nearby Kilbraur wind farm.
- 1.10.4 As the viewpoint represents the view from a minor road used by local residents, who do not appear to be used primarily for recreational activities or the specific enjoyment of the landscape, it is therefore considered to be of medium sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

- 1.10.5 Glimpses of seven proposed turbines would be possible from the road, which would be visible on the skyline, with all other views obscured either by the valley side to the south of the road, or by landform close to the site.
- 1.10.6 The glimpsed views of the proposed turbines would be seen in context of the turbines associated with the Gordonbush Wind Farm, located to the north-west of the site.
- 1.10.7 The proposed turbines would only be visible when travelling in an easterly direction along the road, appearing behind the users of the road when travelling in a westerly direction.
- 1.10.8 Due to the limited nature of the view towards the Proposed Development from this location, the magnitude of change is assessed as low.

Significance of Effect

- 1.10.9 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **minor** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by users of the minor road. This level of effect is deemed to be **not significant**.

1.11 Viewpoint 10 – Craggie Beg

- 1.11.1 Viewpoint 10 is located approximately 15.4 km to the south-west from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

- 1.11.2 This viewpoint is representative of views possible from a minor road close to Craggie Beg property. The view is from locally high ground and open across the foreground moorland, albeit viewed at an oblique angle to the site. Land gently falls into the River Brora valley with scattered properties located either side of the valley. The valley becomes wooded in appearance, as does the northern edge of the valley.
- 1.11.3 To the south of the valley numerous turbines associated with the Kilbraur Wind Farm is prominent on the skyline. Gordonbush Wind Farm is visible on the distant hills and are located to the north of the site. The distant hills are covered in moorland.
- 1.11.4 As the viewpoint represents the view from a minor road used by local residents, who do not appear to be used primarily for recreational activities or the specific enjoyment of the landscape, it is therefore considered to be of medium sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

- 1.11.5 From this elevated location along a minor road overlooking the River Brora valley, a number of turbines are visible above the intervening hills on the skyline, most notably turbine nos. 1-9. All other proposed turbines are obscured by intervening landform, including by Beinn Smeorail, or limited to glimpses of blade tips only.
- 1.11.6 The Proposed Development would extend the influence of wind energy on the distant hills adjacent to the existing Gordonbush Wind Farm, by appearing as an extension to this wind farm. The Proposed Development would also be seen in context of the Kilbraur Wind Farm which occupies higher land to the south and therefore would appear within a landscape already influenced by wind energy.
- 1.11.7 The valley is already in proximity to Kilbraur Wind Farm, as well as being influenced by the Gordonbush Wind Farm, therefore the Proposed Development is assessed as having a medium to low magnitude of change.

Significance of Effect

- 1.11.8 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **moderate to minor** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by users of the minor road, with the subsequent level of effect deemed to be **not significant**.

1.12 Viewpoint 11 – Ben Horn

- 1.12.1 Viewpoint 11 is located approximately 9.5 km to the south-west from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

- 1.12.2 This viewpoint is representative of views possible from the top of Ben Horn (520m AOD), the highest peak within an area of higher land between Dunrobin Glen the valley associated with River Brora and Loch Brora. From this high point, there is opportunity to take in 360 degree views over the surrounding landscape, including towards the Moray Firth. There is no formal walking route to this peak.
- 1.12.3 Kilbraur Wind Farm occupies lower ground which is noticeable beyond local high peaks to the north and north-west of Ben Horn. Open and uninterrupted views towards the site are possible beyond foreground peaks and beyond the valley formed by Loch Brora, occupied by moorland. Gordonbush Wind Farm is visible to the north-west of the site, which in some instances breaks the skyline. Higher peaks are visible on the skyline beyond the site, which include Creag Scalabsdale and Morven.
- 1.12.4 The viewpoint represents the view from the peak of Ben Horn by walkers that would appear to be undertaking recreational activities or the enjoyment of the landscape, as well as being located within the Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth Special Landscape Area (SLA). It is therefore considered to be of high sensitivity to changes in the view.

Magnitude of Change

- 1.12.5 Most of the proposed turbines would appear above the skyline, with turbine nos. 1-8 being most notable. Most other turbines appear either set back in comparison or limited to views of blade tips only, obscured by intervening landform within and surrounding the site.
- 1.12.6 The proposed turbines would be seen in context of the turbines associated with Gordonbush Wind Farm, where, despite the apparent visual gap between the two areas, would appear as an extension to these turbines, albeit the Proposed Development would be located upon higher ground. The Proposed Development would be introduced to a landscape which is already influenced by wind energy, including those at Gordonbush and Kilbraur.
- 1.12.7 Although a number of the proposed turbines are visible above the skyline, they are viewed in context of the adjacent Gordonbush Wind Farm with limited visibility of a number of the proposed turbines, as well as forming only a part of a wider panoramic view. Therefore, it has been assessed that the magnitude of change would be medium.

Significance of Effect

- 1.12.8 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **moderate** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by walkers to the peak of Ben Horn. However, due to the context of nearby Gordonbush Wind Farms and the panoramic nature of the view, this level of effect is deemed to be **not significant**.

1.13 Viewpoint 12 – Ben Bhraggie

- 1.13.1 Viewpoint 12 is located approximately 13 km to the south-west from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

- 1.13.2 This viewpoint is representative of views from the locally high peak of Ben Bhraggie (397m AOD) adjacent to the Duke of Sutherland Monument (The Mannie), with an opportunity for open panoramic views encompassing the

coastline and Moray Firth, including the settlements of Brora and Golspie adjacent to the sea, as well as over surrounding hills and mountains.

1.13.3 The site is visible beyond the intervening foreground hills of Cagar Feosaig (378m AOD) and Meall Coire Aghaisgeig (394m AOD). The site and surrounding hills are covered by moorland. Gordonbush Wind Farm is visible to the north-west of the site on the skyline and the Kilbraur Wind Farm is glimpsed beyond intervening landform along Dunrobin Glen. Distant glimpses of peaks beyond the site are possible on the skyline.

1.13.4 As the viewpoint represents the view from higher ground adjacent to a monument, forming part of a number of core paths, as well as being located within the Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth Special Landscape Area (SLA), it is considered to be of high sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

1.13.5 Most of the proposed turbines would appear above the skyline to some degree, forming two distinct clusters in between the peak of Col-bheinn on the western edge of the site and visible on the distant skyline. Views towards turbine nos. 9 and 10 would be limited to glimpses of blade tips behind the peak of Col-bheinn.

1.13.6 The proposed turbines would be seen in context of the turbines associated with Gordonbush Wind Farm, where, the Proposed Development would extend views of turbines further towards the coastline, with the Proposed Development occupying higher ground. The Proposed Development would be introduced to a landscape which is already influenced by wind energy.

1.13.7 Although a number of the proposed turbines are visible above the skyline, they are viewed in context of the adjacent Gordonbush Wind Farm, as well as forming part of a wider panoramic view. Therefore, it has been assessed that the magnitude of change would be medium.

Significance of Effect

1.13.8 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **moderate** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by walkers to the peak of Ben Bhraggie, as well as visitors to the monument. However, due to context of the adjacent Gordonbush Wind Farm, the panoramic nature of the view and distance from the site, this level of effect is deemed to be **not significant**.

1.14 Viewpoint 13 – Viewing Point on Minor Road near Skelbo Castle

1.14.1 Viewpoint 13 is located approximately 18.9 km to the south-west from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

1.14.3 This viewpoint is representative of views possible from this viewing point close to Skelbo Castle. The view provides car parking with interpretation board and benches to enjoy and appreciate the view. The view is over Loch Fleet which is a tidal loch connected to the Moray Firth, which is primary to the view.

1.14.4 Beyond the loch, the shores are nearby hills are covered in woodland which rises steeply into moorland, where the Duke of Sutherland Monument is visible on the skyline at the peak to Ben Bhraggie. The site is not visible beyond Ben Bhraggie which obscures all direct views towards the site. Skelbo Castle is located behind the viewpoint on higher ground and obscures views to the south.

1.14.5 As the viewpoint represents the view from a recognised vantage point over a tidal loch near to a tourist attraction with opportunities for views of the landscape, it is considered to be of very high sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

1.14.6 Most views of the proposed turbines are limited to glimpses of turbine blades above intervening landform either side of Dunrobin Glen as well as subsequent intervening higher ground beyond.

1.14.7 Due to the limited nature of the view towards the Proposed Development from the viewing point, the magnitude of change is assessed as no greater than low.

Significance of Effect

1.14.8 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **moderate to minor** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by visitors to the viewpoint point, due to its very high sensitivity, however, this level of effect is deemed to be **not significant**.

1.15 Viewpoint 14 – Dornoch, Coastal Footpath near Royal Dornoch Golf Club

1.15.1 Viewpoint 14 is located approximately 23.4 km to the south-west from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

1.15.2 This viewpoint is representative of views from the coastal path including users of the beach and from users of the Royal Dornoch Golf Club. The view is close to the coastline located on lower ground, close to sea level, with development within Dornoch visible to the west and north-west. Views are possible along both sides of the coast, with the site located in north-easterly views. Outward views from the beach are primarily focused upon the Dornoch Firth in an easterly direction.

1.15.3 The site is located on part of the distant moorland hills which rise steeply from the edge of the coastline. The Duke of Sutherland Monument is visible on the skyline at the peak to Ben Bhraggie, located to the south-west of the site. Embo, a small village north of Dornoch can be seen above foreground sand dunes, with other development also visible along the coastline of the Moray Firth.

1.15.4 As the viewpoint represents the view of users of recreational trails and slow-paced recreational activities which derive part of their pleasure from an appreciation of setting, for example playing golf, it is therefore considered to be of high sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

1.15.5 When looking in a north-easterly direction, most of the turbines would be visible to some degree above the distant hills, appearing on the skyline. Intervening landform serves to limit views of some turbines, with a few limited to glimpses of blade tips only. The proposed turbines would appear in two separate clusters grouped together behind two separate hills.

1.15.6 Due to the distance from the site and the wider panoramic view from this location, it is assessed as giving rise to a medium to low magnitude of change to the view.

Significance of Effect

1.15.7 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **moderate to minor** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by walkers using recreational trails and to those playing golf. This level of effect is deemed to be **not significant**.

1.16 Viewpoint 15 – Portmahomack

1.16.1 Viewpoint 15 is located approximately 26.9 km to the south from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

1.16.2 This viewpoint is representative of the view from the north-western edge of Portmahomack village and is close to the start of core path RC38.01 – Portmahomack to Tarbatness. The view is from a minor road providing access to residential properties, all of which face the adjacent Dornoch Firth.

1.16.3 The view over Dornoch and Moray Firth is open and panoramic, with the skyline made up of distant hills above the coastline. Built form is visible along the coastline, including Brora which is visible below the site in the view.

1.16.4 The viewpoint represents the view from residents on the north-western edge of the village and users of the minor road which appear to be used for recreational activities or the specific enjoyment of the landscape (link to a core path), therefore, it is considered to be of high sensitivity to changes in the view.

Magnitude of Change

1.16.5 When looking in a northerly direction, most of the turbines would be visible to some degree above the distant hills, appearing on the skyline. The proposed turbines would appear clustered with some set down within a small valley in between higher points. Intervening landform serves to limit views of some turbines, with a few limited to glimpses of hubs and blade tips only.

1.16.6 The Proposed Development would appear directly above the settlement of Brora which is visible adjacent to the coastline.

1.16.7 Due to the distance from the site and the wider panoramic view from this location, it is assessed as giving rise to a magnitude of change no greater than medium to low upon the view.

Significance of Effect

1.16.8 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **moderate to minor** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by local residents in Portmahomack where adjacent to the coastline and local walkers. This level of effect is deemed to be **not significant**.

1.17 Viewpoint 16 – Dornoch Firth Bridge (A9)

1.17.1 Viewpoint 16 is located approximately 28.9 km to the south-west from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

1.17.2 This viewpoint is representative of views from the bridge when travelling along the A9. The Dornoch Firth Bridge crosses the estuary of the Kyle of Sutherland over a 1.5 km expanse of bridge and causeway. Views towards the site are possible when travelling in a northerly direction only.

1.17.3 Views from the bridge are panoramic and open in nature with little or no vegetation either side of the causeway section of the crossing. The site forms part of the distant view towards moorland hills, which appear to rise gradually from the surrounding low lying land adjacent to the estuary.

1.17.4 Although the viewpoint represents the view from an A-road, it is acknowledged that the A9 forms part of the North Coast 500 tourist route and part of an alternative cycling route between Lands’ End to John O’Groats, therefore, it is considered to be of high sensitivity to changes in the view.

Magnitude of Change

1.17.5 When travelling in a northerly direction, most of the proposed turbines would be visible to some degree above the distant hills, appearing on the skyline. Intervening landform serves to limit views of some turbines, with some limited to glimpses of blade tips or hub and blade tips only. The proposed turbines would appear in two separate clusters, with turbine nos. 11-15 partly separated from the others.

1.17.6 Due to the distance from the site and the wider panoramic views from the bridge, it is assessed as giving rise to a low magnitude of change to the view.

Significance of Effect

1.17.7 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **minor** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by vehicles travelling along the A9 in a northerly direction. This level of effect is deemed to be **not significant**.

1.18 Viewpoint 17 – A897, Kinbrace

1.18.1 Viewpoint 17 is located approximately 17 km to the south-west from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

1.18.2 This viewpoint is representative of views from the A678 single track road in proximity to Kinbrace when travelling in a south-easterly direction. The view is located to the south-east of Kinbrace from an elevated location along the A897 following the Strath of Kildonnan. An overhead powerline follows the route of the road and the railway line is glimpsed within the valley to the west of the road. Locally high ground limits outward views to the east, however, open views over surrounding moorland hills are possible to the south and west of the road.

1.18.3 The site is located beyond the foreground hills to the south-east which include the peaks of The Craggan (482m AOD), Ben Uarie (623m AOD) and Beinn Dhorian (628m AOD), which serve to obscure direct views of the site itself. Turbines associated with the Gordonbush Wind Farm can be glimpsed above the skyline to the north-west of the site.

1.18.4 As the viewpoint represents the view from a road used by local residents, who do not appear to be used primarily for recreational activities or the specific enjoyment of the landscape, it is therefore considered to be of medium sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

1.18.5 When travelling in a south-easterly direction, most of the turbines would be visible to some degree above the distant hills, appearing on the skyline. Intervening landform serves to limit views of some turbines, with some limited to glimpses of blade tips only, or not visible at all. Those proposed turbines which are visible would appear as a single cluster.

1.18.6 Due to the distance from the site and the limited expanse of the cluster on the skyline, it is assessed as giving rise to a no greater than medium to low magnitude of change to the view.

Significance of Effect

1.18.7 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **moderate to minor** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by users of the A987 when travelling in a south-easterly direction. This level of effect is deemed to be **not significant**.

1.19 Viewpoint 18 – B871

1.19.1 Viewpoint 18 is located approximately 30.4 km to the south-west from the nearest turbine, with its location illustrated by Figure 6.23 for the viewpoint location.

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

1.19.2 This viewpoint is representative of views from the B871, a single track road with passing places between Syre and Kinbrace. The road passes across open moorland with panoramic views including towards numerous lochs, interspersed by plantation woodland which limit views in select locations.

1.19.3 The site is located beyond the foreground hills to the south-east at an oblique angle from the road, with direct views limited by foreground and distant hills.

1.19.4 The viewpoint represents the view from a road used by local residents, who do not appear to be used primarily for recreational activities or the specific enjoyment of the landscape, however, it is located close to the north-western edge of Bens Griam and Loch nan Clàr SLA. It is therefore considered to be of high sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

1.19.5 When travelling in a south-easterly direction, a select number of the proposed turbines would be visible to some degree above the distant hills, appearing on the skyline. Intervening landform serves to limit views of some turbines, with some limited to glimpses of blade tips or hub and blade tips only.

1.19.6 Due to the distance from the site and the wider panoramic views from the road, it is assessed as giving rise to a low magnitude of change to the view.

Significance of Effect

1.19.7 It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a **minor** level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by vehicles travelling along the B871 in a south-easterly direction. This level of effect is deemed to be **not significant**.

1.20 Summary of Effects

1.20.1 Table 1.3.1 below provides a summary of operational visual effects from the 15 viewpoint locations.

Table 1.3.1 – Summary of Operational Effects on Assessment Viewpoints

<i>Name Receptor / OS grid ref</i>	<i>Distant from nearest turbine</i>	<i>Sensitivity</i>	<i>Magnitude of Change</i>	<i>Level of Effect</i>	<i>Significance</i>	
1. Doll	288433, 903280	8,389m (T8)	High	Medium	Moderate	Significant
2. Lower Brora	290972, 903629	8,085m (T13)	Very High	Medium to High	Major	Significant
3. Victoria Road (A9), North Brora	290516, 904608	7,166m (T13)	High	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant
4. Beinn Dhorain	292880, 915398	3,864m (T14)	High	High	Major	Significant
5. Creag Nam Fiadh	284109, 923704	11,076m (T1)	High	Medium	Moderate	Not Significant
6. Hope Hill	277863, 918873	12,072m (T3)	High	Medium	Moderate	Not Significant
7. Track to Ben Armine Lodge	275707, 913983	12,916m (T3)	High	Medium	Moderate	Not Significant
8. Brora to Rogart Minor Road near Sciberscross	278487, 910447	10,404m (T8)	Medium	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant
9. Brora to Rogart Minor Road near Dalreavoch	275548, 909120	13,513m (T8)	Medium	Low	Minor	Not Significant
10. Craggie Beg	273827, 908175	15,392m (T8)	Medium	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant
11. Ben Horn	280899, 906400	9,508m (T8)	High	Medium	Moderate	Not Significant
12. Ben Bhraggie	281328, 901030	13,005m (T8)	High	Medium	Moderate	Not Significant

13. Viewing Point on Minor Road near Skelbo Castle	279274, 895364	18,886m (T8)	Very High	Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant
14. Dornoch, Coastal Footpath near Royal Dornoch Gold Club	280732, 889652	23,448m (T8)	High	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant
15. Portmahomack	291536, 884818	26,905m (T13)	High	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant
16. Dornoch Bridge (A9)	274785, 886443	28,860m (T8)	High	Low	Minor	Not Significant
17. A897, Kinbrace	286456, 930659	17,005 (T1)	Medium	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant
18. B871	273582, 939950	30,407 (T1)	High	Low	Minor	Not Significant

Appendix 6.4 – Effects on Special Landscape Areas

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Appendix 6.4 – Effects on Special Landscape Areas

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This appendix provides an assessment of effects upon Special Landscape Areas (SLA) within the study area, as illustrated on Figure 6.4.1, namely:

- Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth SLA;
- Flow Country and Berriedale Coast SLA;
- Ben Klibreck and Loch Choire SLA; and
- Ben Griam and Loch nan Clar SLA.

1.2 Relevant Adopted Planning Policy

1.2.1 Firstly, in order to consider the likely effects of the Proposed Development upon the SLA designation, an understanding of adopted policy context in relation to the designated landscape is necessary.

1.2.2 The Highland Wide Local Development Plan (2012), identifies SLAs as being of local/regional importance, and within Appendix 2 states:

‘These areas were identified by the Council by virtue either as being large scale areas of regional importance for scenic quality, or as being small scale areas of local scenic and recreational value. The Council will consider the potential impacts of development proposals on the integrity of the SLAs, including impacts on the wider setting. There may be cases where the setting of an SLA could be adversely affected by development in the foreground which would interrupt important views into and out of the SLA. When determining the impact on the landscape character and scenic quality and overall integrity of the SLA, attention will be given to its citation and in particular the Key Landscape and Visual Characteristics, its Special Qualities, and its Sensitivities to Change.’

1.2.3 Policy 57 of the Highland Wide Local Development Plan in relation to Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage, states:

‘All development proposals will be assessed taking into account the level of importance and type of heritage features, the form and scale of the development, and any impact on the feature and its setting, in the context of the policy framework detailed in Appendix 2. The following criteria will also apply:

1. For features of local/regional importance we will allow developments if it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that they will not have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, amenity and heritage resource...’

1.2.4 The Highland Council has produced ‘Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (2011)’, which provides key landscape and visual characteristics, the special qualities for which it is valued, its key sensitivities to landscape change and possible measures for its enhancement. Further details from the report in relation to each SLA is set out below.

1.3 Effects upon the Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth SLA

1.3.1 The site is located within the Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth SLA, including all locations of proposed turbines. The site’s location within the SLA is illustrated by Figure 6.4.1.

Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (2011)

1.3.2 The location and extent of the SLA is described in the report as:

‘Lying along the east coast of Sutherland, this area stretches from the southern slopes of Strath Ullie in the north to Loch Fleet in the south, including areas of coastal shelf and interior moorland and hills.’

1.3.3 The key landscape and visual characteristics of the SLA as set out in the report are described as follows:

- *A relatively simple uniform, rolling plateau of interior broad, interwoven rounded hills, clothed by an open mosaic of heather and grass moorland. As this composition is fairly simple, and extends throughout the area, there is a strong consistency of this backdrop to the coast.*
- *The hill area is breached by major straths and glens which have differing local character derived from the varying combination of native woodland, forest plantation, moorland and water bodies. They provide sheltered access routes through the hills and provide physical and visual connections between the interior and the coastal shelf and North Sea.*
- *To the east lies a narrow but relatively fertile coastal shelf contains the main road and rail routes in this area, and small farms and settlements at fairly regular intervals. A distinctive field pattern of pasture runs parallel to the coast, marked in places by windswept trees and stone walls.*
- *The linear coastal shelf, is defined on its interior side by the edge formed by the adjacent hill slopes, the elevation which provide expansive views both along the coastal edge and outwards across the open sea. Interior views are limited by the convex nature of the hill slopes.*
- *Loch Fleet is the most northerly inlet on the east coast. Where an inlet occurs, defined by its distinctive opposing spits of land, a sheltered, enclosed tidal basin is fringed with shingle shores and pine woods. At low tide, exposed mudflats create a distinctive feature whose character is enlivened by large flocks of wading birds.*
- *Views are obtained from some areas of wind turbines and overhead electricity lines whose large scale and man-made character can seem to diminish the scale of the interior hills and their wildness qualities.*
- *Along the coast and around the inlet, there are a number of historic built features that form prominent focal features and landmarks.*

1.3.4 The SLAs sensitivity to change as set out in the report are as follows:

- *Additional large scale features could, in combination with the existing wind turbines and overhead electricity line to the west of the SLA, could diminish the perceived scale of the hills and their qualities of wildness and tranquillity.*
- *Additional features within the moorland hills could appear to compromise the simplicity of the existing land cover and landform shape.*
- *Additional access tracks within the moorland hills could contrast to its simple cover, by introducing dominant lines and reduce its sense of remoteness.*
- *Widening of roads within the straths and glens could result in faster travel which could mean that historic features are noticed less. It could also result in a reduction in the sense of seclusion if it results in increased visitor numbers.*
- *Large-scale offshore development could introduce focal features that could impinge on panoramic sea views.*
- *Increased forest cover on the exposed and open moorland could mask and fragment its subtle landform pattern and reduce its consistency of character.*

Theoretical Visibility

1.3.5 From the part of the SLA which covers the site itself, the majority of the proposed turbines would be visible, however, due to the elevated location of the turbines, a few lower lying areas sloping away from the proposed turbines to the south and east, would have no visibility of the proposals despite their proximity to them.

1.3.6 To the east of the SLA, the proposed turbines would be visible from higher areas, including Beinn Mhealaich (592m AOD) and Creag Riasgain (415m AOD). These hills serve to limit visibility further east within the SLA with no theoretical visibility present within and close to Helmsdale or along the coastline to the north-east.

1.3.7 To the south-west of the site, there would be theoretical visibility on hills west of Loch Brora including Ben Horn (520m AOD) (refer to Viewpoint 11), Kibraur Hill (324m AOD) and Carrol Rock (208m AOD). These hills would limit visibility within Dunrobin Glen with theoretical visibility only possible from higher ground, including Ben Braggie (397m AOD) and Beinn Lunndaigh (446m AOD).

1.3.8 Within the furthest south-western areas of the SLA, there would be some theoretical visibility towards the site from coastal areas close to Littleferry and Skelbo, however, these areas are over 15km from the site.

Effects upon Landscape Character

1.3.9 The LVIA has considered the potential for significant effects upon landscape character types (LCT) within the SLA. Some LCTs within the SLA were deemed not to have any potential significant adverse landscape effects and these were not considered further within the LVIA. Those which were assessed within the LVIA are set out in the table below:

Table 1.4.1 – Assessment of LCTs within Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth SLA

Landscape Character Type	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect	Significance
135: Rounded Hills – Caithness & Sutherland (Area A)	Within 1km	High	Very High	Major	Significant
	Between 1-4km	High	High	Major	Significant
	Between 4-6km	High	Medium	Moderate	Not Significant
	Beyond 6km	High	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant
135: Rounded Hills – Caithness & Sutherland (Area B)	Beyond 6km	High	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant
144: Coastal Crofts & Small Farms	Within 5km	Medium to High	Low	Minor	Not Significant
140: Sandy Beaches and Dunes (between 3 and 5km south and south-east of the site)	Within 5km	High	Low	Minor	Not Significant
140: Sandy Beaches and Dunes (17km south-west of the site)	Beyond 17km	High	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant
142: Strath – Caithness and Sutherland	Between 4-7km	Medium to High	Low	Minor	Not Significant

1.3.10 Despite the direct effects upon the part of the SLA in which the turbines would be located, the assessment concluded that there would only be significant effects upon 135: Rounded Hills – Caithness & Sutherland (Area A) LCT up to 4km from the site, as a result of the Proposed Development. Beyond 4km, these effects would change to not significant, in part due to the existing influence of the Gordonbush Wind Farm on the landscape. To the north-west of the LCT these effects would only extend to under 1km within the SLA.

1.3.11 Although adverse effects would occur within other LCTs located within the boundaries of the SLA, these are deemed to be not significant.

1.3.12 It should be noted that although the LVIA identifies significant effects upon 140: Sandy Beaches and Dunes LCT between 5-8km from the site and upon 144: Coastal Crofts & Small Farms LCT between 5-9km of the site, these areas are outside the boundaries of the SLA and therefore, not of relevance to its assessment.

1.3.13 In summary, significant effects upon the landscape character of the Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth SLA would extend up to 4km from the proposed turbines in 135: Rounded Hills – Caithness & Sutherland (Area A) LCT only.

Effects upon Visual Amenity

1.3.14 The LVIA has considered the potential for significant visual effects upon four viewpoints located within the SLA, alongside the visual experience from other receptors such as users of rights of way and public roads.

1.3.15 A summary of all the principal visual receptors assessed, located within the SLA are set out in the table below:

Table 1.4.2: Assessment of Visual Receptors within Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth SLA

Name / Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect	Significance
Properties at Clynemilton	High	Low	Minor	Not Significant
Littleferry	High	Low	Minor	Not Significant
Skelbo	High	Low	Minor	Not Significant
Highland Wildcat bike trails – Black Route	High	Medium	Moderate	Not Significant
Loch Brora – West Track (ref: SU06.02)	High	Low	Minor	Not Significant

1.3.16 It should be noted that although some of the visual receptors assessed are located within the SLA, they have been excluded from the table above, due to the lack of theoretical visibility along these receptors within the SLA boundary. These include, the John O’Groats Trail, the A9 which forms the North Coast 500 driving route, the railway line and the minor road to the east of Loch Brora.

1.3.17 In addition to the above, the following four assessment viewpoints in the table below are also located within the SLA:

Table 1.4.3 – Summary of Assessment Viewpoints within Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth SLA

Name Receptor	OS grid ref	Distant from nearest turbine	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect	Significance
4. Beinn Dhorain	292880, 915398	3,864m (T14)	High	High	Major	Significant
11. Ben Horn	280899, 906400	9,508m (T8)	High	Medium	Moderate	Not Significant
12. Ben Bhraggie	281328, 901030	13,005m (T8)	High	Medium	Moderate	Not Significant
13. Viewing Point on Minor	279274, 895364	18,886m (T8)	Very High	Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant

Name Receptor / OS grid ref	Distant from nearest turbine	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect	Significance
Road near Skelbo Castle					

- 1.3.18 Elevated land within the SLA to the east of the site would have open and uninterrupted views toward the Proposed Development, as illustrated by the view from Beinn Dhorain (Viewpoint 4) and experienced by local walkers. From this location, the Proposed Development would give rise to significant visual effects. However, it should be noted that Beinn Dhorain and nearby peaks are already influenced to some degree by the presence of Gordonbush Wind Farm located to the north-west of the proposed turbines.
- 1.3.19 Views from higher land to the south-west of the SLA are represented by Viewpoint 11 from the peak of Ben Horn and by Viewpoint 12 from Ben Bhraggie. Although the Proposed Development would be notable in the view and seen on the skyline, views are already influenced by the presence of other wind farm developments at Kilbraur and Gordonbush in the foreground.
- 1.3.20 Some theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development is possible along the coastline within the SLA in proximity to Littleferry and Skelbo, and represented by Viewpoint 13. Although the proposed turbines would be visible on the distant skyline, the site is over 15km from these coastal settlements, seen as part of wider panoramic views focussed upon the Moray Firth and as such would give rise to any significant visual effects.
- 1.3.21 It should be noted that there would be no visual effects from those coastal areas within the SLA closest to the proposed turbines, as demonstrated by Figure 6.4.1.
- 1.3.22 Overall, the assessment of visual effects concludes that there would be some inevitable significant effects experienced within the SLA, largely within 4 km of the proposed turbines. However, the Proposed Development is visually separated from those coastal areas closest to site and where these effects would occur, is generally already visually influenced by other nearby operational wind farm developments.

Summary

- 1.3.23 In summary, whilst it is acknowledged there will be some direct and indirect significant effects upon landscape character and visual amenity experienced from parts of the Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth SLA, particularly to the north-east, up to a distance of around 4km from the site, these will not affect the ability to appreciate the underlying landscape. The landscape as a whole would remain attractive and legible, with much of the SLA either having no view of the turbines, or only minor views of the proposed turbines at a distance, within a much wider overall panorama.

1.4 Flow Country and Berriedale Coast SLA

- 1.4.1 The Flow Country and Berriedale Coast SLA is located approximately 10km to the north-east of the site. The location of the SLA in relation to the site is illustrated by Figure 6.4.1.

Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (2011)

- 1.4.2 The location and extent of the SLA is described in the report as:
'This area extends from the coastal shelf and cliffs near Berriedale in the south, including Badbea, to Loch More in the north. It includes the wide expanse of interior peatland known as The Flow Country and extends westwards to include Knockfin Heights and the highly distinctive range of hills in the south that includes the peaks of Morven, Maiden Pap and Scaraben.'
- 1.4.3 The key landscape and visual characteristics of the SLA as set out in the report are described as follows:
- A striking combination of mountains rising abruptly from surrounding extensive areas of peatland that is vast in scale, with a long low horizon and broadly very simple in character, although containing numerous lochs, lochans and pools. The peatland areas are very difficult to access or cross due to the lack of tracks and roads

and because of the drainage conditions. As a consequence, these areas tend to possess a strong sense of wildness.

- The isolated mountains are typified by exposed rock, rocky outcrops and scree, and montane vegetation. They form distinctive and offer extensive views over the Flow Country and out to sea.
- The moorland foothills which flank the lone mountains typically comprise undulating and sloping broad convex hills, plateaux, rocky outcrops and crags, dense heather and grassland mosaics. The landform sweeps gently north from impressive elevations across vast open moorland to the flat peatland.
- Views of peatland are typically very simple in composition at a broad scale. However, at a more detailed level, lochs, pools and patches of surface water, networks of watercourses and tussocky wetland grass and heather provide variation of detail including sounds, colours and textures.
- The peatland expanse is incised in places by deeply carved, meandering wooded glens. Parallel tracks and footpaths, penetrate some interior parts of these glens, also occupied by isolated lodges and bothies utilising the shelter and protection offered by these glen slopes. These build structures empathises and contrast the vast scale of the surrounding peatlands.
- Settlement only occurs at the south eastern part of this area, restricted to the sheltered glens and coastal areas. This leaves the area largely undeveloped and consequently possessing strong qualities of wildness.

Theoretical Visibility

- 1.4.4 Due to a number of intervening hills, including Beinn Dhorain, Beinn Dubhain and Cnoc na Maoile, theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines within the SLA would be mostly limited to higher peaks. There would be theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines from such peaks as Creag Scalabsdale (555m AOD) to the south-west of the SLA (refer to Wireframe D in Appendix 6.6), from Morven (706m AOD) located centrally within the SLA (refer to Wireframe E in Appendix 6.6) and from Scaraben (626m AOD) to the south-east of the SLA (refer to Wireframe F in Appendix 6.6). Beyond these peaks, at a distance of over 20km, there would be very limited theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development.
- 1.4.5 Some theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development would be possible beyond the Strath of Kildonan towards western areas of the SLA on higher land east of Kinbrace, in an area called Knockfin Heights.
- 1.4.6 There would be no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development where the SLA is located by the coastline.

Effects upon Landscape Character

- 1.4.7 The LVIA has considered the potential for significant effects upon landscape character types (LCT) within the SLA. Most LCTs within the SLA were deemed not to have any potential significant adverse landscape effects and these were not considered further within the LVIA. The only LCT which was assessed within the LVIA is set out in the table below:

Table 1.4.4 – Assessment of LCTs within Flow Country and Berriedale Coast SLA

Landscape Character Type	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect	Significance
135: Rounded Hills – Caithness & Sutherland (Area C)	Beyond 7.5km	High	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant

- 1.4.8 In summary, due to the distance from the site of over 10km, there would be no significant effects upon the LCTs within the SLA.

Effects upon Visual Amenity

1.4.9 The LVIA has considered the potential for significant visual effects for viewpoints and visual receptors, however, none are included within the boundaries of the LVIA. However, a number of wireframes have been produced from higher peaks and set out in Appendix 6.6, which include:

- Creag Scalabsdale, illustrated by Wireframe D;
- Morven, illustrated by Wireframe E; and
- Scaraben, illustrated by Wireframe F.

1.4.10 Although the LVIA does not include an assessment of visual effects, it is concluded from the wireframes produced, that due to the presence of Gordonbush and Kilbraur wind farms in the landscape, and although the Proposed Development would appear closer in the views from higher points within the SLA, the Proposed Development would not bring about any significant visual effects.

Summary

1.4.11 In summary, whilst it is acknowledged there will be some indirect adverse effects upon landscape character and visual amenity experienced from limited parts of the Flow Country and Berriedale Coast SLA, these would be mostly restricted to areas of higher ground and would be not significant, in part due to the presence of the existing Gordonbush Wind Farm which is already visible in the same broad location as the Proposed Development would be seen and serves to already characterise the part of the landscape in the vicinity of the site with the presence of wind energy. The Proposed Development would not affect the ability to appreciate the underlying landscape and the SLA as a whole would remain attractive and legible.

1.5 Effects upon the Ben Klibreck and Loch Choire SLA

1.5.1 The Ben Klibreck and Loch Choire SLA is located approximately 18km to the north-west of the site. The location of the SLA in relation to the site is illustrated by Figure 6.4.1.

Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (2011)

1.5.2 The location and extent of the SLA is described in the report as:

‘Centred on Loch Choire, to the southeast of Altnaharra in Sutherland, the area includes Ben Klibreck and part of the neighbouring massif of Ben Armine.’

1.5.3 The key landscape and visual characteristics of the SLA as set out in the report are described as follows:

- *A very large-scale, open and exposed landscape in which a prominent, high isolated mountains rise conspicuously from the surrounding moorland with its very distinctive profile. The contrasting lower, hill massif is characterised by less distinctive landforms. Exceptional panoramic views are available from the high ridges and summits in clear conditions. Remote lochs occupy the trough between the mountains.*
- *At a broad level the landform is very simple. However at a more detailed level there is a diversity of upland habitats characterised by mosaics of heathland and grassland, with frequent rocky outcrops, screes and crags. Fragments of broadleaf woodland also occur on the lower ground that provides shelter.*
- *Pockets of gently sloping improved pasture fringe the shores of the two main lochs scattered with mature trees and stone sheepfolds. Occasional coniferous plantations appear particularly incongruous, contrasting in shape, colour and texture. This incongruity is particularly prominent when viewing from the isolated hill tops and distracts from the open panoramas seen from these areas.*
- *The isolated mountains, the lowland enclosed between them, the open moorland, and the extremely sparse settlement all contribute to a very strong sense of wildness within this area.*

1.5.4 The SLAs sensitivity to change as set out in the report are as follows:

- *This area is very sensitive to development that could interrupt the relationship between the open moorland and the isolated mountains.*
- *Development or landuse change could impinge on the secluded character and wildness qualities of the central glen.*
- *Structures, such as access tracks and fences, are likely to contrast to the open character and undifferentiated pattern of vegetation within this landscape, creating prominent lines, new edges and fragmenting open space.*
- *This landscape is sensitive to construction operations, due to the sensitivity of the soil, drainage and vegetation conditions to disturbance and the difficulty of restoring or repairing impacts.*

Theoretical Visibility

1.5.5 There is theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from the southern slopes and high peaks of Creag Mhor (703mAOD) and Ben Armine, including from the high point of Creag a Choire Ghlais, albeit most of these locations are over 20km from the site.

1.5.6 There would be no visibility from Loch Choire and adjacent lower slopes as a result of the intervening higher ground to the south-east of the loch. However, some theoretical visibility is possible along the ridgeline of Ben Klibreck, over 30km from the site, including from Meall nan Con (961m AOD).

Effects upon Landscape Character

1.5.7 The LVIA has considered the potential for significant effects upon landscape character types (LCT) within the SLA. Some LCTs within the SLA were deemed not to have any potential significant adverse landscape effects and these were not considered further within the LVIA. Those which were assessed within the LVIA are set out in the table below:

Table 1.4.5 – Assessment of LCTs within Ben Klibreck and Loch Choire SLA

<i>Landscape Character Type</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Sensitivity</i>	<i>Magnitude of Change</i>	<i>Level of Effect</i>	<i>Significance</i>
135: Rounded Hills – Caithness & Sutherland (Area E)	Beyond 14km	High	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant
134: Sweeping Moorland and Flows	Beyond 10km	Medium to High	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant

1.1.1 In summary, due to the distance of over 18km from the site, there would be no significant effects upon the LCTs within the SLA. It is considered that, due to the additional distance from the site of those parts of the LCTs within the SLA which would be affected (over 18km, compared to the closer parts of the LCTs outside the SLA which lie up to only 10km from the site), the magnitude of change as a result of the Proposed Development is likely to reduce, therefore, the results set out in Table 1.4.5, are deemed to be a worst-case scenario.

Effects upon Visual Amenity

1.5.9 The LVIA has considered the potential for significant visual effects for viewpoints and visual receptors, however, none are included within the boundaries of the LVIA. However, a number of wireframes have been produced from higher peaks and set out in Appendix 6.6, which include:

- Creag Mhor, illustrated by Wireframe B; and
- Ben Armine, illustrated by Wireframe C.

1.5.10 Whilst the LVIA does not include an assessment of visual effects, it is concluded from Wireframe B and C, that although the Proposed Development would be seen on the skyline, at over 18km the distance from the SLA, as

well as the presence of Gordonbush and Kilbraur wind farms in the landscape, the Proposed Development would not give rise to any significant visual effects.

Summary

1.5.11 In summary, whilst it is acknowledged there will be some indirect adverse effects upon landscape character and visual amenity experienced from limited parts of the Ben Klibreck and Loch Choire SLA, these would be restricted to areas of higher ground and would be not significant. The Proposed Development would not affect the ability to appreciate the underlying landscape and the SLA as a whole would remain attractive and legible.

1.6 Bens Griam and Loch nan Clar SLA

1.6.1 The Bens Griam and Loch nan Clar SLA is located approximately 18km to the north of the site. The location of the SLA in relation to the site is illustrated by Figure 6.4.1.

Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (2011)

1.6.2 The location and extent of the SLA is described in the report as:

'This area of remote hills and large lochs lies just west of the Kinbrace-Forsinard section of the A897 in east Sutherland. It extends from Loch Rimsdale in the west to Loch an Ruathair in the east. It's northern boundary takes in Loch Druim a' Chliabhain while the southern boundary includes Loch Badanloch. just south of Forsinard Station in the north east to Achentoul in the south east, including Loch an Ruathair, and stretching westwards to include the lochs and lochans to the north and west of Ben Griam Mòr.'

1.6.3 The key landscape and visual characteristics of the SLA as set out in the report are described as follows:

- A conspicuous cluster of peaks pierce a wider lower-lying landscape of lochs, watercourses and sweeping moorland.
- The hills are covered by a Montane grassland scattered with rocky outcrops, areas of scree and incised with watercourses cutting into the slopes.
- The open moorland is vast in extent with a unifying mosaic of rough grassland and heathers. This forms a simple composition which changes with the seasons and light conditions, with the strong reds of deer grass prevailing in autumn.
- Coniferous plantations appear highly incongruous in this landscape as stark, angular, dark blocks which contrast with the muted colours, textures and sinuous patterns of the moorland vegetation.
- Flat boggy ground is criss-crossed by a series of larger burns and tributaries providing connections between the lochs and lochans and presenting barriers to access. Because of the predominant flatness of the peatland these are not always obvious from a distance.
- Pockets of sheep grazings, stone walls, post and wire fencing and telegraph poles mark the transition from isolated mountain and moorland to the road and rail corridor.
- Lightly peppered across the landscape are the remains of prehistoric settlement, cleared later medieval townships and shielings. Frequent archaeological features such as cairns and hut circles are commonly found within the shelter of landform, in proximity to open water, and atop Ben Griam Mòr.
- Views are expansive across the peatlands, with the interior hills forming the dominant visual foci and the lochs being of secondary prominence.
- The isolated nature of this mountain, moorland and loch landscape means that it is little disturbed and retains a sense of wildness which increases with distance from the main roads. Land use tends to be limited to fishing, deer stalking and forestry with some hill walkers.

Theoretical Visibility

1.6.4 There is some theoretical visibility possible to the north of Kinbrace along lower lying land within eastern areas of the SLA, in between Loch Arichlinie and Loch an Ruathair, which continues further north to occupy rocky high ground at Creag Sail a Bhathaich (349m AOD) and Meall a Bhuirich (407m AOD).

1.6.5 In southern and central areas, some theoretical visibility is possible above Badanloch Lodge, limited in part by coniferous plantation woodland and at the peak of Ben Griam Mor (590m AOD). To the north of the SLA, some theoretical visibility is possible from Ben Griam Beg, at a distance of approximately 27km from the site.

1.6.6 To the west of the SLA, theoretical visibility is curtailed by intervening areas of coniferous woodland, however, as land rises views would be possible from higher land close to and from the summit of Beinn a Mhadaigh (403m AOD).

Effects upon Landscape Character

1.6.7 The LVIA has considered the potential for significant effects upon landscape character types (LCT) within the SLA. Some LCTs within the SLA were deemed not to have any potential significant adverse landscape effects and these were not considered further within the LVIA. Those which were assessed within the LVIA are set out in the table below:

Table 1.4.6 – Assessment of LCTs within Bens Griam and Loch nan Clar SLA

Landscape Character Type	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect	Significance
134: Sweeping Moorland and Flows	Beyond 10km	Medium to High	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant

1.1.2 In summary, due to the distance of over 18km from the site, there would be no significant effects upon the LCTs within the SLA. It is considered that, due to the additional distance from the site of those parts of the LCTs within the SLA which would be affected, (over 18km, compared to the closer parts of the LCTs outside the SLA which lie up to only 10km from the site), the magnitude of change as a result of the Proposed Development is likely to reduce, therefore, the results set out in Table 1.4.6, are deemed to be a worst case scenario.

Effects upon Visual Amenity

1.6.9 The LVIA has considered the potential for significant visual effects upon four viewpoints located within the SLA, alongside the visual experience from other receptors such as users of rights of way and public roads.

1.6.10 A summary of all the principal visual receptors assessed, located within the SLA are set out in the table below:

Table 1.4.7: Assessment of Visual Receptors within Bens Griam and Loch nan Clar SLA

Name / Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect	Significance
A897	Medium	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant
B871	High	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant

1.6.11 The LVIA has also considered the potential for significant visual effects for viewpoints, however, none are included within the boundaries of the LVIA, although Viewpoint 18 is close to the north-western site boundary and is set out below:

Table 1.4.8 – Summary of Assessment Viewpoints within Bens Griam and Loch nan Clar SLA

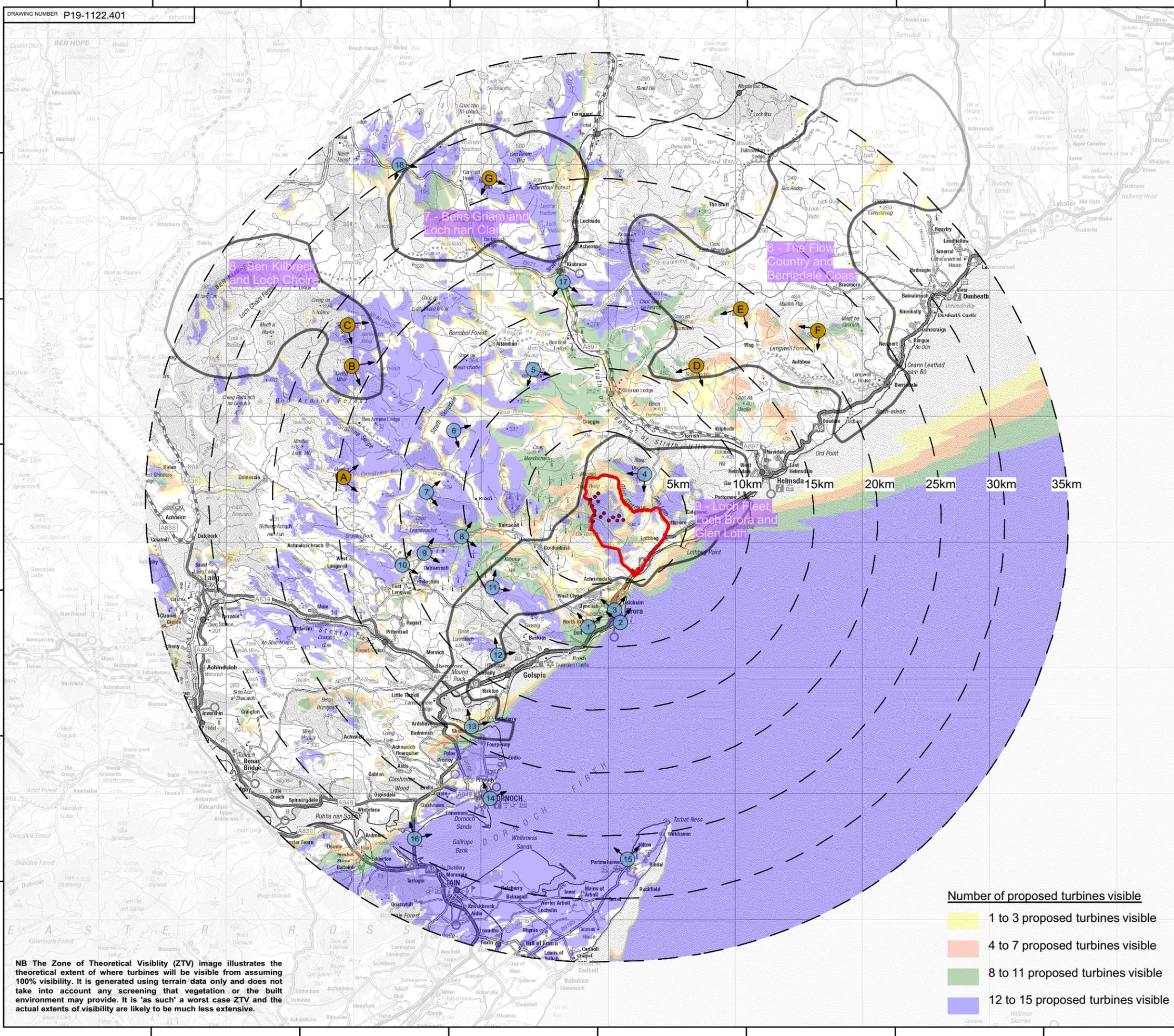
<i>Name Receptor</i>	<i>OS grid ref</i>	<i>Distant from nearest turbine</i>	<i>Sensitivity</i>	<i>Magnitude of Change</i>	<i>Level of Effect</i>	<i>Significance</i>
18. B871	273582, 939950	30,407 (T1)	High	Low	Minor	Not Significant

1.6.12 In addition, a wireframe has been produced from Ben Griam Mor, a peak within the SLA and is included in Appendix 6.6 (Wireframe G).

1.6.13 Overall, the assessment of visual effects concludes that there would be some inevitable adverse effects experienced within the SLA, these would be not significant.

Summary

1.6.14 In summary, whilst it is acknowledged there will be some indirect adverse effects upon landscape character and visual amenity experienced from limited parts of the Bens Griam and Loch nan Clar SLA, these would be not significant. At a distance of over 18km from the site, the Proposed Development would not affect the ability to appreciate the underlying landscape and the SLA as a whole would remain attractive and legible.



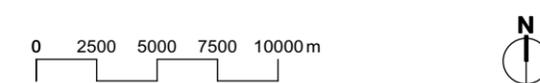
Key

- Red Line Boundary
- Radii from Turbine Centres
- Proposed Turbines
- X Viewpoint

1. Doll
2. Lower Brora
3. Victoria Road (A9), North Brora
4. Beinn Dhorain
5. Creag Nam Fiadh
6. Hope Hill
7. Track to Ben Armine Lodge
8. Brora to Rogart minor road near Sciberscross
9. Brora to Rogart minor road near Dalreavoch
10. Craggie Beg
11. Ben Horn
12. Ben Bhraggie
13. Viewing Point on minor road near Skelbo Castle
14. Dornoch, coastal footpath near Royal Dornoch Golf Club
15. Portmahomack
16. Dornoch Firth Bridge (A9)
17. A897, Kinbrace
18. B871

- X Appendix 6.6 - Wireframe Locations
- A. Meall a Phioaire
- B. Creag Mhor
- C. Ben Armine
- D. Creag Scalabsdale
- E. Morven
- F. Scaraben
- G. Ben Griam Mor

Special Landscape Area



1	TH	Sept 20	HS	Sept 20	FIRST ISSUE
ISSUE	DRAWN	DATE	APPD	DATE	REVISION NOTES
LAYOUT DWG	N/A			LAYOUT NO.	N/A
DRAWING NUMBER		Figure 6.4.1 P19-1122.401			
COORDS		British National Grid			
PURPOSE		Application			
				ORIGINAL PLOT SIZE	A3
PROJECT TITLE					
KINTRADWELL WIND FARM					
DRAWING TITLE					
Blade tip ZTV up to 35km with Special Landscape Areas and Viewpoints					

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NB The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) image illustrates the theoretical extent of where turbines will be visible from assuming 100% visibility. It is generated using terrain data only and does not take into account any screening that vegetation or the built environment may provide. It is 'as such' a worst case ZTV and the actual extents of visibility are likely to be much less extensive.

Number of proposed turbines visible

- 1 to 3 proposed turbines visible
- 4 to 7 proposed turbines visible
- 8 to 11 proposed turbines visible
- 12 to 15 proposed turbines visible

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Appendix 6.5 – Effects upon Wild Land

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Appendix 6.5 – Effects upon Wild Land

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This appendix provides an assessment of effects upon areas of Wild Land as a result of the Proposed Development, specifically upon Ben Klibreck - Armine Forest (35) Wild Land Area, approximately 4km to the north-west of the site at its closest point, Causeymire Knockfin Flows (36) Wild Land Area, approximately 8km to the north-east of the site at its closest point and East Halladale Flows (39) Wild Land Area approximately 33km to the north of the site at its closest point.
- 1.1.2 A detailed description of the Proposed Development is set out in Chapter 2 of the EIA Report. The Proposed Development principally consists of 15 wind turbines up to a height of 149.9m to blade tip, with associated infrastructure.
- 1.1.3 The assessment is supported by a series of Wireframes produced at Appendix 6.6, as well as the following which are contained within Annex 6.5.1 of this appendix:
- Figure 6.5.1 – Blade tip ZTV up to 35km with Wild Land Areas and Viewpoints;
 - Figure 6.5.2 – Blade tip ZTV up to 20km with Wild Land Areas and Viewpoints; and
 - Figure 6.5.3 – Cumulative Operational Blade tip ZTV up to 35km with Wild Land Areas and Viewpoints.

1.2 Relevant Adopted Planning Policy and Guidance

- 1.2.1 Firstly, in order to consider the likely effects of the Proposed Development upon the Wild Land designation, an understanding of adopted policy context and guidance in relation to the designated landscape is necessary.
- Scottish Planning Policy (SPP 2014)**
- 1.2.2 SPP paragraph 161 Table 1 identifies wild land as a nationally important mapped environmental interest as shown on the 2014 SNH map of wild land areas.
- 1.2.3 SPP identifies wild land in Group 2 of the Spatial Framework which states that even within a wild land area (WLA): *‘wind farms may be appropriate in some circumstances. Further consideration will be required to demonstrate that any significant effects on the qualities of these areas can be substantially overcome by siting, design or other mitigation.’*
- 1.2.4 It is important to note that Wild Land Areas are not a natural heritage designation and their inclusion as a mapped interest in Group 2 recognises that wild land is less highly valued than National Parks or National Scenic Areas. There is also no guidance in SPP regarding development located outwith WLAs. SPP paragraph 215 is not engaged here as the site is outside the WLA.
- National Planning Policy (NPF3 2014)**
- 1.2.5 NPF3 also reflects this overarching position at paragraph 4.4, stating that: *‘wild land is a nationally important asset’.*
- Highland-wide Local Development Plan (2012)**
- 1.2.6 Appendix 2 of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) identified wild land to be of local/regional importance. However, the HwLDP was published prior to the SPP and the NPF and as such is superseded.

Spatial Planning for Onshore Wind Turbines – natural heritage considerations (SNH 2015)

- 1.2.7 Section 1.1.1 further reflects the position that wild land is not a designation but is afforded significant protection by Table 1 in SPP. Annex 1 identifies a series of approaches to accommodating wind farm development, and states that:
- ‘The aim of landscape accommodation is to retain the overall character of the landscape yet accepting that development may be allowed which will have an impact on the landscape at the local scale. Development fits within the landscape and does not change its character to a significant extent.’*
- Landscape accommodation implies that there may be important landscape-related constraints in terms of the siting, design and scale of wind farms, but that suitably designed wind farms can be compatible with this objective.*
- Within local landscape designations and Wild land Areas, the degree of landscape protection will be less than for National Scenic Areas. In these areas, an appropriate objective may be to accommodate wind farms, rather than seek landscape protection.’*
- 1.2.8 Paragraph 4.88 of the PLI Report states that *‘Wild land policy provided by SPP principally relates to development proposals within wild land’.* It goes on to explain that SPP paragraph 215 cannot apply to development wholly outside of the WLA and that SPP paragraph 169 must be relied upon which recognises effects on wild land as one of a number of considerations.

Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas – Technical Guidance (2017)

- 1.2.9 Although still under consultation, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) advise to use the 2017 draft guidance in place of the 2007 guidance. The guidance sets out a methodology and general principles for assessing the impact of Proposed Development upon Wild Land using Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition, 2013 (GLVIA3), and requires an appropriate level of information to enable the decision maker, and consultees, to reach a view on the effects of the proposal on the Wild Land Area. *(NB. It is noted that since the LVIA was completed a new Wild Land Technical Guidance Document has been published by NatureScot, but that this is broadly in line with the previous Consultative Draft on which the assessment has been based).*
- 1.2.10 The guidance sets out the following set of attributes commonly found within Wild Land:
- ‘WLAs have the following physical attributes:*
- *A high degree of perceived naturalness;*
 - *The lack of modern human artefacts or structures;*
 - *Little evidence of contemporary land uses;*
 - *Landform which is rugged, or otherwise physically challenging; and*
 - *Remoteness and / or inaccessibility.*
- The perceptual responses evoked by these physical attributes include:*
- *A sense of sanctuary or solitude;*
 - *Risk or, for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety;*
 - *Perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities; and*
 - *Fulfilment from the physical challenge required to penetrate into these places.’*
- 1.2.11 The approach to considering impacts upon Wild Land is summarised by Box 1 within the guidance, which is set out in Table 6.5.1:

Table 6.5.1 – Box 1: Summary of wild land area impact assessment approach

Box 1: Summary of wild land area impact assessment approach	
Step 1 - Define the study area and scope of the assessment	Identify a study area appropriate to the scale of development and extent of likely significant effects on the WLA.
Step 2 – Establish the baseline	Confirm the wild land qualities of the study area and the nature of their contribution to the WLA. The assessment should identify which qualities are likely to be significantly affected by the proposal.
Step 3 – Assess the sensitivity of the study area	Identify which wild land qualities of the WLA, including the physical attributes and perceptual responses that contribute to those qualities, are most sensitive to the type and scale of change proposed.
Step 4 – Assess the effects	Given the size or scale of change, extent and duration, describe the effects on individual qualities and / or combinations of qualities, drawing out which physical attributes and perceptual responses will be affected and how, and the potential for mitigation.
Step 5 – Judgement of the significance of effect	Describe the significance of residual effects on the wild land qualities of the Wild Land Area. This should take into account mitigation.

- 1.2.12 Paragraph 4 of the Draft 2017 guidance advocates that a Wild Land Assessment should be carried where proposals could result in a significant effect on the qualities of a WLA and that where effects are not expected to be significant, no such assessment is required.
- 1.2.13 Paragraph 5 goes on to state that a Wild Land Assessment is highly likely to be required where a Proposed Development falls, wholly or partly in a WLA and that where a development falls outwith a WLA, the need for an assessment is likely to be an exception and only where significant effects on WLA qualities are likely.
- 1.2.14 Paragraph 9 identifies that WLAs are areas where wildness is most strongly expressed and are not ‘wilderness’ free of human activities or influence. They reflect Scotland’s long history of past occupation and present use and management, albeit that evidence of such is often light and limited in extent.
- 1.2.15 Paragraph 11 also notes that development outwith a WLA may only impact on perceptual responses.
- 1.2.16 Annex 1 of the Draft 2017 guidance provides further guidance on development outside of WLAs as follows:

‘5. How can wild land qualities be affected by development located outwith a WLA?’

Development outwith a WLA can affect the wildness qualities within the WLA where it effects the experience of these qualities. The baseline condition of the WLA is described within the wild land description as a set of wild land qualities. Where any of these qualities are affected by development, regardless of where it is sited, they should be considered. Where impacts are identified that affect the strength of wildness within the WLA to the degree that one or more of the qualities is substantially eroded this is considered to be significant.’

1.3 Step 1 – Define the study area and scope of the assessment

Ben Klibreck - Armine Forest WLA (35)

- 1.3.1 The Ben Klibreck – Armine Forest WLA is located approximately 4km to the north-west of the site and encompasses an area of 530km² between the settlements of Lairg, Altnaharra and Kinbrace. The area is distinguished by extensive low lying peatland used mainly for deer stalking and fishing, with its hills and ridges contributing to the visual backcloth of several settlements lying outside the area. The location and extent of the wild land area is illustrated by Figure 6.5.1 and Figure 6.5.2 in Annex 6.5.1.

- 1.3.2 The scale and extent of effects upon the Proposed Development, is initially defined by the extent of theoretical visibility as defined by the Blade Tip Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) illustrated by Figures 6.5.1 and 6.5.2 in Annex 6.5.1.
- 1.3.3 Although the Proposed Development is not physically with the WLA, due to the extent of theoretical visibility within the WLA and proximity to the site, all of the key attributes and qualities within the entire area of the WLA are considered further.
- 1.3.4 Due to the proximity of consented or in planning wind farm proposals in proximity to the site and the WLA, potential cumulative effects upon the WLA are considered further in the appendix.

Causeymire Knockfin Flows Wild Land (36)

- 1.3.5 The Causeymire Knockfin Flows Wild Land area is located approximately 8km to the north-east of the site, to the north of Helmsdale and encompasses an area of 514km². The area is distinguished by extensive low lying peatland with some contrasting landmark hills on sandstone, including Morven and Maiden Pap. The location and extent of the WLA within the study area is illustrated by Figure 6.5.1 and Figure 6.5.2 in Annex 6.5.1.
- 1.3.6 The scale and extent of effects upon the Proposed Development, is initially defined by the extent of theoretical visibility as defined by the Blade Tip Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) illustrated by Figures 6.5.1 and 6.5.2 in Annex 6.5.1.
- 1.3.7 Although the Proposed Development is not physically with the WLA, due to the extent of theoretical visibility within the WLA and proximity to the site, all of the key attributes and qualities within the entire area of the WLA are considered further.
- 1.3.8 Due to the proximity of consented or in planning wind farm proposals in proximity to the site, potential cumulative effects upon the WLA are considered further in the appendix.

East Halladale Flows Wild Land

- 1.3.9 The East Halladale Flows WLA is located approximately 33km to the north of the site and encompasses an area of 159km² to the south of the A836 and the village of Reay and east of the A897. The area is distinguished by extensive low lying peatland recognises as the largest expanse of blanket bog in Europe, is completely uninhabited and is surrounded on its north, east and southern sides by large conifer plantations. The location and extent of the WLA within the study area is illustrated by Figure 6.5.1 and Figure 6.5.2 in Annex 6.5.1.
- 1.3.10 The scale and extent of effects upon the Proposed Development, is initially defined by the extent of theoretical visibility as defined by the Blade Tip Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) illustrated by Figures 6.5.1 and 6.5.2 in Annex 6.5.1. Due to the lack of theoretical visibility within the WLA and distance from the site, the East Halladale Flows WLA is not considered further within this assessment.

1.4 Step 2 – Establish the baseline

Ben Klibreck - Armine Forest Wild Land

Key Attribute and Qualities

- 1.4.1 The key attributes and qualities of the Ben Klibreck - Armine Forest WLA is set out as:
- *‘An awe-inspiring simplicity of landform and landcover and a perception of ‘emptiness’, so that the peatland often seems greater than it is.*
 - *Arresting, isolated mountains rise up in stark contrast to surrounding peatland and glens, amplifying the awe-inspiring qualities of each.*
 - *A remote interior where access involves long distances and lengthy time via penetrating glens or crossing over and around rugged landforms and waterbodies.*
 - *An extensive area of peatland with a prevailing strong sense of naturalness.*

- *A secluded, elevated and remote interior plateau shielded by an outer rim of hills, in which there is a strong sense of solitude, sanctuary and risk.'*
- 1.4.2 No known changes have occurred within the wild land area since the description of the wild land area was compiled in 2017.
- Baseline Conditions**
- 1.4.3 The areas of WLA closest to the site are defined by areas of undulating moorland/peatland with numerous peaks, interspersed by glens defined by streams, with occasional lochs.
- 1.4.4 There are no roads through the WLA, however, the B871 between Syre and Kinbrace is located close to the north-eastern boundary, the A836 borders the area to the north-west and the B873 is located to the north, separated by Loch Naver.
- 1.4.5 There are a number of metalled tracks which cross the area located mainly within glens, either to access remote lodges, including Ben Armine Lodge and Loch Choire Lodge, or used as farm, hunting or timber extraction routes. No core paths cross the Wild Land Area, however, there are numerous defined walks across the area focussed mainly upon climbing various higher peaks.
- 1.4.6 A number of visual detractors are located between the Proposed Development and the south-eastern boundary of the WLA, namely:
- 35 turbines associated with the operational Gordonbush Wind Farm within 1km of the south-eastern WLA boundary;
 - the substation and associated access track for the operational Gordonbush Wind Farm site located partly within the WLA; and
 - a 275kV transmission line that forms the eastern boundary of the WLA over a length of over 5km.
- 1.4.7 In addition, the Kilbraur Wind Farm is located to the south of the WLA, at a distance of approximately 5km from the boundary at its closest point.
- 1.4.8 The baseline conditions closest to the site are characterised by Viewpoints 5 and 6 from Hope Hill and Creag nam Fiadh included within the main Chapter, which include views of the above mentioned visual detractors.
- Extent of Visibility**
- 1.4.9 Where closest to the site to the south-east of the area, most of the proposed turbines would be visible, in particular from higher land, including Cnoc Meadhonach (344m AOD), Cnoc Coir'an Eion (278m AOD) and Cnoc na h-Innse Moire (337m AOD), as well as from higher land further to the north-west associated with Hope Hill (refer to Viewpoint 6 in the Chapter), Hectors Hill, Cnoc Blarach and Cnoc Eachain. There would be limited or no visibility within the valley to the north of these hills as defined by Tuaric Burn, however, land rises to the north towards the peak of Creag nam Fiadh (387m AOD) (Refer to Viewpoint 5 in the Chapter) amongst others, where the Proposed Development would be theoretically visible.
- 1.4.10 There would be limited or no visibility within Strath Skindale, however, as land rises gently to the north-west of the strath to form a rolling area of moorland, the proposed turbines would be theoretically visible over this extensive area. Theoretical visibility extends as far as the peaks of Cnoc na Breun-choille (365m AOD) and Cnoc an Llath-bhaid Mhoir (432m AOD).
- 1.4.11 To the south-west corner of the Wild Land Area, whilst there would be no theoretical visibility within Strath na Seilge, however where land rises steeply either side of the strath, theoretical visibility would be possible on higher land, including the peaks of Cnoc na Feanaig (384m AOD) and Creag Dail nan Gilleann (412m AOD), as well as Meall a' Phiobaire (372m AOD) (refer to Wireframe A in Appendix 6.6) and Meallan Laith Mor (416m AOD) further to the south-west.
- 1.4.12 Within central areas of the Wild Land Area, the larger peaks of Ben Armine (704m AOD) (refer to Wireframe C in Appendix 6.6) and Creag Mhor (713m AOD) (refer to Wireframe B in Appendix 6.6) serve to limit theoretical visibility beyond them to the north and north-west. Any remaining theoretical visibility to the north-west is limited to higher peaks such as Meall a Bhara (581m AOD) and the Ben Klibreck range of hills, both over 25km from the site. There would be no theoretical visibility within the Loch Choire Forest valley.

Causeymire Knockfin Flows Wild Land

- 1.4.13 The key attributes and qualities of the Causeymire – Knockfin Flows WLA are set out as:
- *'Awe inspiring simplicity of wide open peatland from which rise isolated, arresting, steep mountains.*
 - *Irregular peatland and dubh lochan, comprising a complex mix of hidden pools, bogs and lochans that contribute to perceived naturalness and limit access.*
 - *An extensive remote interior with few visitors in contrast to the margins of the area from which many people view into the WLA.*
 - *Wide glens containing meandering rivers that limit access and are often the focus for isolated historic features. Rolling, interlocking hills in the south containing remote, sheltered glens with limited visibility.'*
- 1.4.14 No known changes have occurred within the Wild Land Area since the description of the Wild Land Area was compiled in 2017.
- Baseline Conditions**
- 1.4.15 The areas of WLA closest to the site are defined by areas of steeply rising land from the Strath of Kildonan forming step sided peaks close to the coastline and settlement of Kildonan, with numerous water courses forming areas of lower lying and expansive moorland/peatland in between, with a backdrop of steep sided mountains in the form of Morven and Scarben beyond.
- 1.4.16 There are numerous tracks through the area, which are used by local farmers or by a number of estate houses. A number of roads surround the area, including the A897 to the west and south, the A9 to the east and B870 to the north-east. A railway route runs adjacent to the north-western site boundary providing a rail connection between Wick and Thurso to the north and to Inverness to the south.
- 1.4.17 There are a select number of core paths located within the area, including CA05.11 – Braemore in Bye access to hills, CA04.05 – Glutt to Braemore and in part CA04.04 – Achnaclyth track to Toutnagoul. In addition to the core paths, there are numerous defined walks across the area, in particular focussed upon gaining access to some of the higher peaks, including Morven, Scaraben, Maiden Pap and Creag Scalabsdale.
- Extent of Visibility**
- 1.4.18 To the south-east of the WLA, there would be theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines to low lying land to the west of the settlements of Kinbrace and Kildonan, as well as from higher land including Beinn Dubhain (417m AOD), Creag Scalabsdale (555m AOD) (refer to Wireframe D in Appendix 6.6) and Cnoc na Maoiile (402m AOD). Visibility beyond these areas of higher land becomes limited further by the intervening hills, with no visibility from lower lying land and only some areas of visibility from higher peaks including Scaraben (626m AOD) (refer to Wireframe F in Appendix 6.6), Morven (706m AOD) (refer to Wireframe E in Appendix 6.6) and The Gull (369m AOD). Beyond these peaks, over 25km from the site, there is very little or no visibility within the Wild Land Area.

1.5 Step 3 – Assess the sensitivity of the study area

- 1.5.1 Following the guidance set out in GLVIA3, sensitivity is the product of combining separate judgements of value and susceptibility. The assessment uses the LVIA criteria as set out in Appendix 6.1.

Ben Klibreck - Armine Forest Wild Land

- 1.5.2 As identified above in Section 2, wild land is not statutorily designated and its inclusion in Group 2 recognises that wild land is less highly valued than National Parks or National Scenic Areas. However, central and northern parts are designated as a Special Landscape Area, and as such its value is assessed as high.
- 1.5.3 There are a number of visual detractors in proximity to the south-eastern edge of the WLA in the form of Gordonbush Wind Farm with its associated infrastructure and the 275kv line, which are visible over southern and central areas of the WLA. These elements serve to influence the physical wild land attributes and temper the perceptual responses they evoke. This reduces the susceptibility of the WLA to the Proposed Development to medium, which when combined with a high value results in an overall **medium to high sensitivity** for the WLA.

Causeymire Knockfin Flows Wild Land

- 1.5.4 As identified above in Section 2, wild land is not statutorily designated and its inclusion in Group 2 recognises that wild land is less highly valued than National Parks or National Scenic Areas. However, most of the WLA is designated as a Special Landscape Area, and as such its value is assessed as high.
- 1.5.5 The WLA is surrounded by human influences in the form of settlements, roads and rail routes, however these are restricted to the surrounding straths, glens and along the coastline. At over 8km, the visual detractors in the form of Gordonbush Wind Farm and powerlines have less influence upon the WLA. Therefore, the susceptibility of the WLA to the Proposed Development is deemed to be high, which when combined with a high value results in an overall **high sensitivity** for the WLA.

1.6 Step 4 – Assess the effects

- 1.6.1 This section of the assessment considers the magnitude of the effect of the Proposed Development. As noted in the landscape and visual impact assessment criteria in Appendix 6.1, magnitude of change is a function of the size/scale of change and the duration of the change. Therefore, the approach has been to consider the magnitude of change to wildness qualities solely as the size or scale of the impact on the wild land qualities, without any regard to matters of reversibility.
- 1.6.2 The location of the Proposed Development outside both of the WLAs, meaning that there would be no direct effects on either area as a result of the proposed turbines.
- 1.6.3 The results of the assessment have been tabulated for each WLA below.

Table 6.5.2 – Ben Klibreck – Armine Forest WLA Magnitude of Effect

<i>Wild Land Quality</i>	<i>Magnitude of Change</i>
1. An awe-inspiring simplicity of landform and landcover and a perception of ‘emptiness’, so that the peatland often seems greater than it is	Medium to Low – From most places to the south-east and central areas of the WLA the Proposed Development would be theoretically visible, as illustrated by Figures 6.5.1 and 6.5.2. However, with reference to Figure 6.5.3, the theoretical visibility from operational wind farms in the vicinity of the WLA replicate those areas of theoretical visibility created by the Proposed Development. Therefore, the perception of emptiness is already influenced by other development in proximity to the WLA. It should be noted however, that, although views towards the site are influenced by nearby wind farms and cable routes, the Proposed Development does appear upon the skyline, either above or adjacent to the adjacent Gordonbush Wind Farm and therefore, would increase the perception of development on the WLA to some degree (refer to Viewpoints 5 and 6 and Wireframes in Appendix 6.6).
2. Arresting, isolated mountains rise up in stark contrast to surrounding peatland and glens, amplifying the awe-inspiring qualities of each.	Low – The mountainous areas are located to the north-west of the WLA at over 20km from the Proposed Development. Therefore, the transition and contrast between the two distinct landscape areas would not be affected by the Proposed Development. However, as demonstrated by Wireframes B and C in Appendix 6.6, the outlook from these isolated mountains over the surrounding peatlands and glens would bring about some change as a result of the Proposed Development, albeit seen in context of other nearby wind farms and at a distance of over 20km.

<i>Wild Land Quality</i>	<i>Magnitude of Change</i>
	The effect of the Proposed Development would decrease in views from hills north-west of Loch Choire, over 30km from the site.
3. A remote interior where access involves long distances and lengthy time via penetrating glens or crossing over and around rugged landforms and waterbodies.	Very Low - the Proposed Development would not affect the perception of a ‘remote interior’ experienced within the WLA, with no direct effects upon any of the glens, rugged landforms or waterbodies.
4. An extensive area of peatland with a prevailing strong sense of naturalness.	Low – the sense of naturalness would only be affected by the Proposed Development to a minor degree, when seen in context of the other nearby wind farms and cable routes.
5. A secluded, elevated and remote interior plateau shielded by an outer rim of hills, in which there is a strong sense of solitude, sanctuary and risk.	Low – the Proposed Development would have some limited effect upon the secluded interior of the WLA, however, it would introduce a man-made element into the landscape where there is already influence of numerous visual detractors.

Table 6.5.3 – Causeymire Knockfin Flows Wild Land Magnitude of Effect

<i>Wild Land Quality</i>	<i>Magnitude of Change</i>
1. Awe inspiring simplicity of wide open peatland from which rise isolated, arresting, steep mountains.	Medium to Low - As demonstrated by Figures 6.5.1 and 6.5.2, theoretical visibility is mostly limited to areas to the south-west of the WLA. With reference to Figure 6.5.3 however, the theoretical visibility from operational wind farms within the surrounding landscape replicate those areas of theoretical visibility created by the Proposed Development. Therefore, the simplicity of the landscape is already influenced by other development in proximity to the WLA. Although the Proposed Development would have limited effect upon lower lying areas of peatland, the proposed turbines would introduce an additional man made feature into the landscape over and above existing features already present (refer to Wireframe D in Appendix 6.6). This effect would be far reaching within the higher ground of the WLA, for example from the more prominent steep sided hills of Morven (Refer to Wireframe E in Appendix 6.6) and Scaraben (Refer to Wireframe F in Appendix 6.6), however, these effects would be over 15km from the site, which would serve to limit the effect on the wild land quality in the context of

Wild Land Quality	Magnitude of Change
	the wider panoramic views available from these locations, the majority of which would be unaffected by the proposals.
2. Irregular peatland and dubh lochan, comprising a complex mix of hidden pools, bogs and lochans that contribute to perceived naturalness and limit access.	Very Low – most lower lying areas within the WLA would have limited or no visibility of the Proposed Development, therefore, the perceived naturalness of the areas of pools, bogs and lochans would not be adversely affected.
3. An extensive remote interior with few visitors in contrast to the margins of the area from which many people view into the WLA.	Very Low – the Proposed Development would not affect the function of the WLA in this respect.
4. Wide glens containing meandering rivers that limit access and are often the focus for isolated historic features. Rolling, interlocking hills in the south containing remote, sheltered glens with limited visibility	Medium to Low – the outlook from some glens and surrounding hills from southern areas of the WLA would be influenced by the Proposed Development to some degree (refer to Wireframe D in Appendix 6.6). However, most outward views towards the site are already influenced by other nearby wind farms within the landscape and again, views would be of turbines over 15km from the site, which would serve to limit the effect on the wild land quality in the context of the wider panoramic views available from these locations, the majority of which would be unaffected by the proposals.

Wild Land Quality (WLQ)	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect	Significance
WLQ 5		Low	Minor	other effects upon the WLA would be limited in nature.

Table 6.5.5 – Causeymire Knockfin Flows WLA Assessment

Wild Land Quality (WLQ)	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect	Significance
WLQ 1	High	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant – Although it is acknowledged that the Proposed Development would have some influence upon the qualities of southern areas of the WLA, these are limited due to the distance between the WLA and the site.
WLQ 2		Very Low	Minor	
WLQ 3		Very Low	Minor	
WLQ 4		Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	

1.7 Step 5 – Judgement of the significance of effect

1.7.1 Table 6.5.4 and Table 6.5.5 combine the judgements made in respect of magnitude of change upon the wild land qualities and their identified sensitivities to define the level of effect upon WLAs and the significance of the effects.

Table 6.5.4 – Ben Klibreck – Armine Forest WLA Assessment

Wild Land Quality (WLQ)	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect	Significance
WLQ 1	Medium to High	Medium to Low	Moderate to Minor	Not Significant – Although it is acknowledged that the Proposed Development would have some limited influence upon the qualities of the WLA, particularly in proximity to the south-eastern edge, due to the influence of other intervening visual detractors, the
WLQ 2		Low	Minor	
WLQ 3		Very Low	Minor	
WLQ 4		Low	Minor	

1.8 Cumulative effects

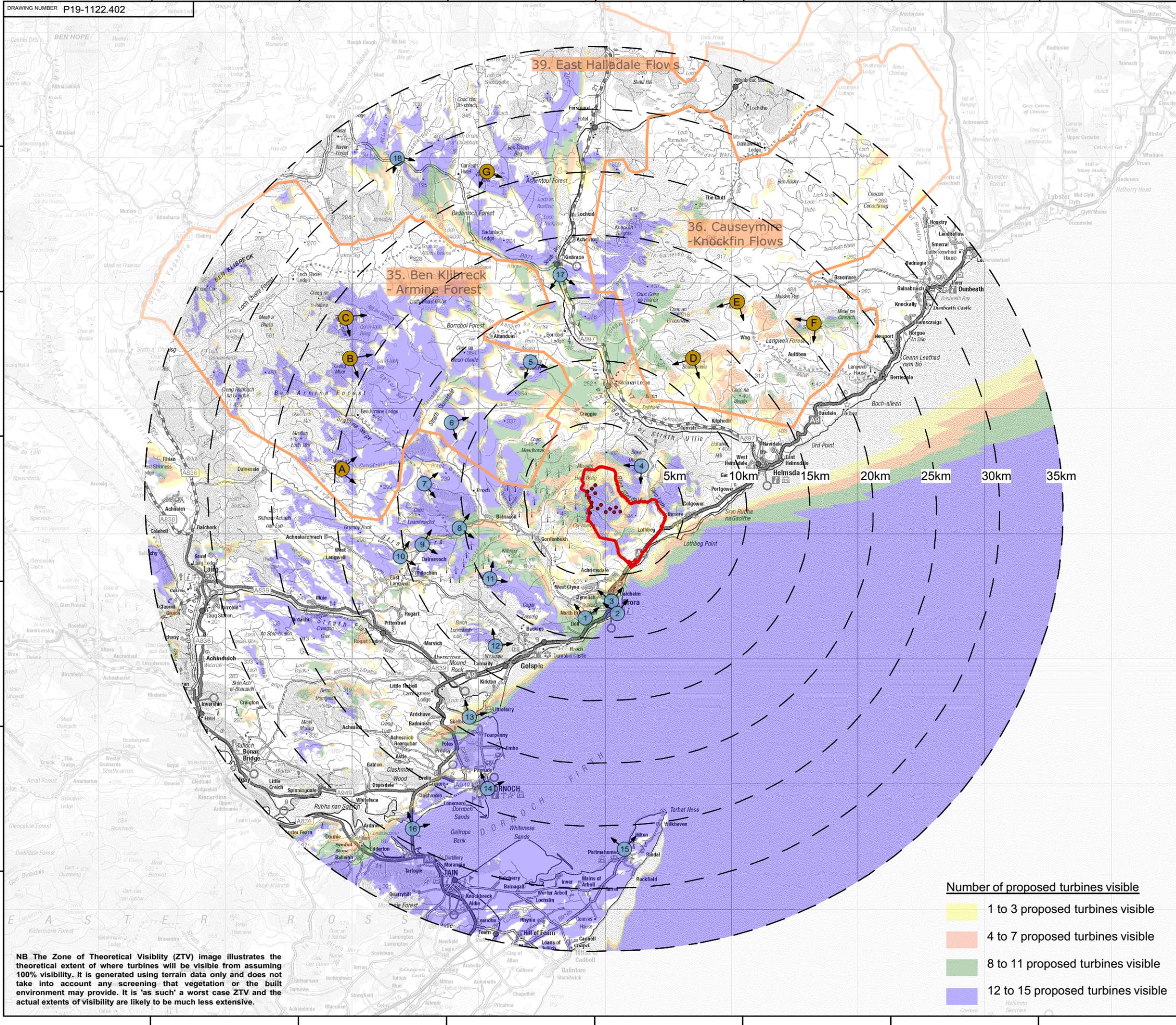
1.8.2 The above assessment has been prepared on the basis that baseline landscape includes all operational wind farms, but not those which are consented or in planning. As such, the consented Gordonbush Extension (variation scheme), which lies in close proximity to the Proposed Development has not been considered as part of the assessment (albeit it is acknowledged that construction has now begun). This site would serve to further reinforce the effects on the Wild Land Areas that are already brought about by the Gordonbush Wind Farm, particularly on the Ben Klibreck – Armine Forest to which it lies in immediate proximity. In this context the effect of the Proposed Development on the WLAs would serve to reduce when compared to that set out above, as wind energy would already be an even greater characteristic of the baseline.

1.8.3 It is however recognised that the overall totality of the combined effect of all the operational and consented schemes on the WLAs would be greater than that identified for the Proposed Development. The greater part of those effects would however already come about, irrespective of the Proposed Development, which would only serve to reinforce an already existing effect that would arise from the nearby Gordonbush and Gordonbush Extension (variation scheme) wind farms.

1.9 Conclusion

1.9.1 It is acknowledged that the Proposed Development would have some limited influence upon the qualities of the Ben Klibreck – Armine Forest WLA particularly in proximity to the south-eastern edge, due to the influence of other intervening visual detractors, including Gordonbush Wind Farm and a 275kV transmission line, the other effects upon the WLA would be limited in nature. Any adverse effects upon the Ben Klibreck – Armine Forest WLA are deemed to be not significant.

1.9.2 It is also acknowledged that the Proposed Development would have some influence upon the qualities of southern areas of the Causeymire Knockfin Flows WLA. However, it is deemed that these are limited due to the distance between the WLA and the site. Any adverse effects upon the Causeymire Knockfin Flows WLA are deemed to be not significant.



Key

- Red Line Boundary
 - Radii from Turbine Centres
 - Proposed Turbines
 - Wild Land
 - X Viewpoint
1. Doll
 2. Lower Brora
 3. Victoria Road (A9), North Brora
 4. Beinn Dhorain
 5. Creag Nam Fiadh
 6. Hope Hill
 7. Track to Ben Armine Lodge
 8. Brora to Rogart minor road near Sciberscross
 9. Brora to Rogart minor road near Dalreavoch
 10. Craggie Beg
 11. Ben Horn
 12. Ben Bhraggie
 13. Viewing Point on minor road near Skelbo Castle
 14. Dornoch, coastal footpath near Royal Dornoch Golf Club
 15. Portmahomack
 16. Dornoch Firth Bridge (A9)
 17. A897, Kinbrace
 18. B871

- X Appendix 6.6 - Wireframe Locations
- A. Mealla a Phiobaire
- B. Creag Mhor
- C. Ben Armine
- D. Creag Scalabsdale
- E. Morven
- F. Scaraben
- G. Ben Griam Mor



1	TH	Sept 20	HS	Sept 20	FIRST ISSUE
ISSUE	DRAWN	DATE	APPD	DATE	REVISION NOTES
LAYOUT DWG	N/A			LAYOUT NO.	N/A

DRAWING NUMBER Figure 6.5.1
P19-1122.402

COORDS British National Grid

PURPOSE Application

PROJECT TITLE
KINTRADWELL
WIND FARM

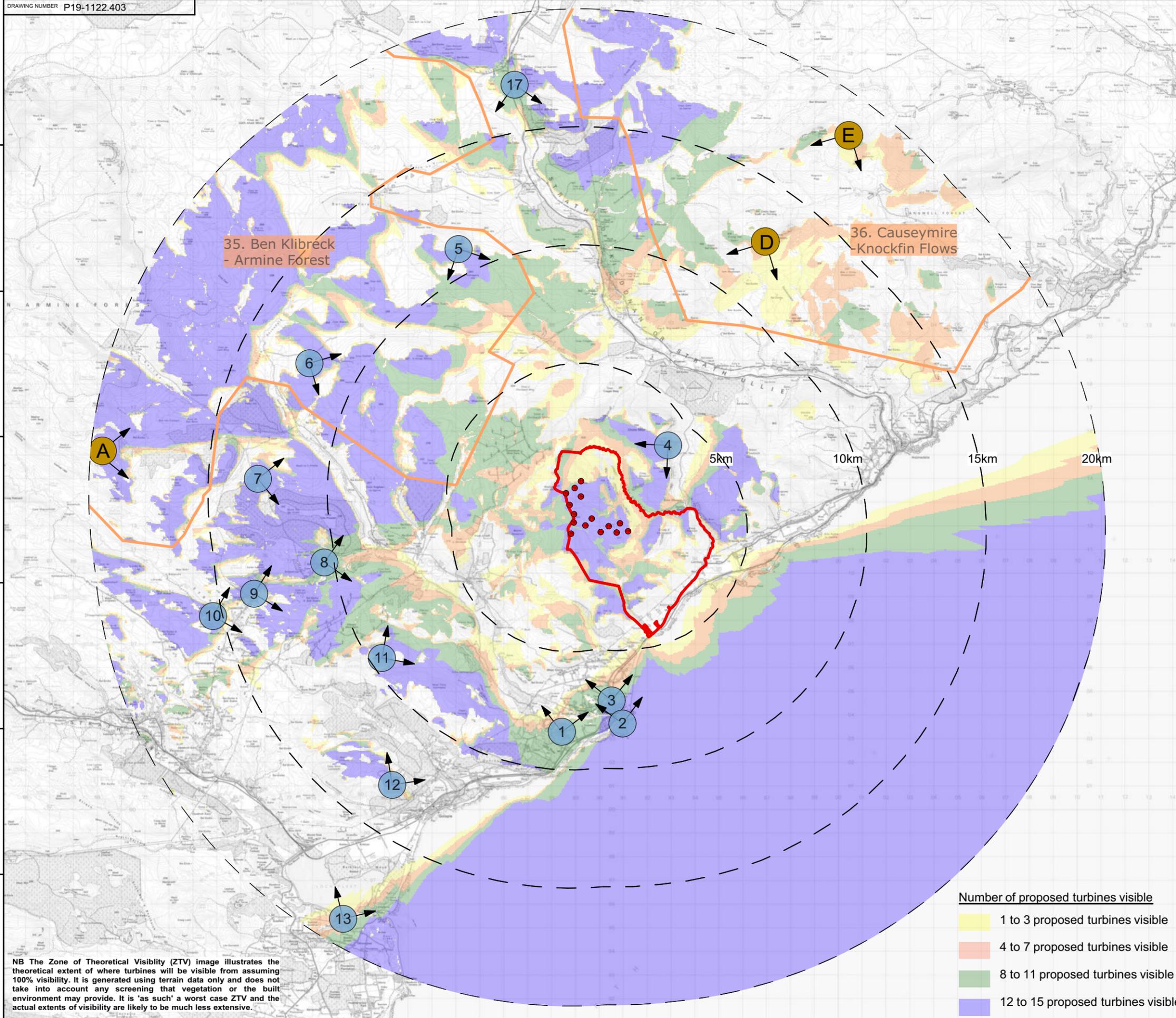
DRAWING TITLE
Blade tip ZTV up to 35km with Wild Land
Areas and Viewpoints

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Number of proposed turbines visible

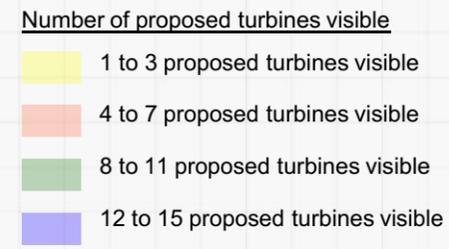
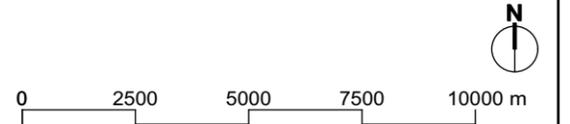
- 1 to 3 proposed turbines visible
- 4 to 7 proposed turbines visible
- 8 to 11 proposed turbines visible
- 12 to 15 proposed turbines visible

NB The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) image illustrates the theoretical extent of where turbines will be visible from assuming 100% visibility. It is generated using terrain data only and does not take into account any screening that vegetation or the built environment may provide. It is 'as such' a worst case ZTV and the actual extents of visibility are likely to be much less extensive.



Key

- Red Line Boundary
 - Radii from Turbine Centres
 - Proposed Turbines
 - Wild Land
 - X Viewpoint
1. Doll
 2. Lower Brora
 3. Victoria Road (A9), North Brora
 4. Beinn Dhorain
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 12. Ben Bhraggie
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 - D. Creag Scalabsdale
 - E. Morven
 - F. Scaraben
 - G. Ben Griam Mor

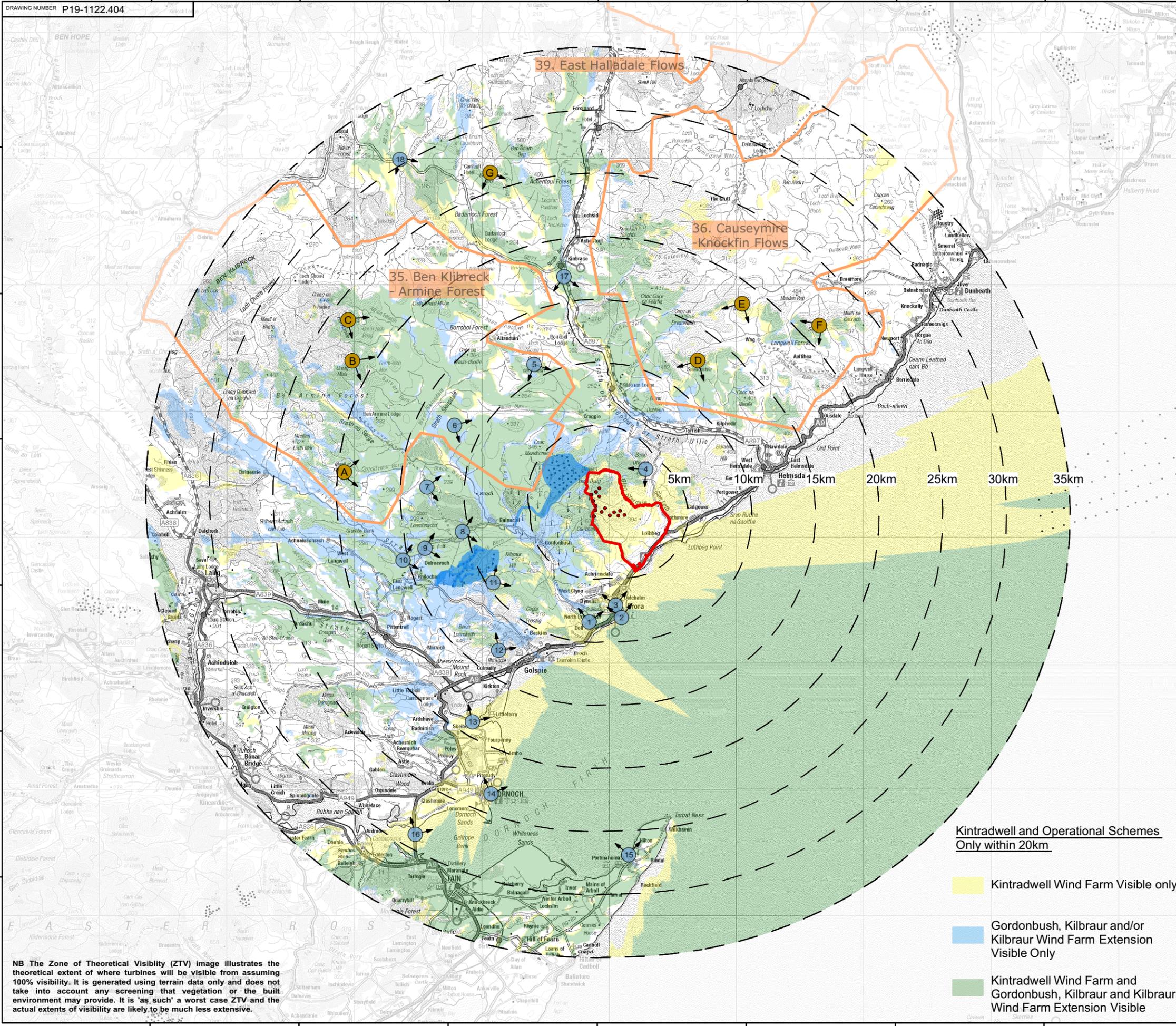


NB The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) image illustrates the theoretical extent of where turbines will be visible from assuming 100% visibility. It is generated using terrain data only and does not take into account any screening that vegetation or the built environment may provide. It is 'as such' a worst case ZTV and the actual extents of visibility are likely to be much less extensive.

1	TH	Sept 20	HS	Sept 20	FIRST ISSUE
ISSUE	DRAWN	DATE	APPD	DATE	REVISION NOTES
LAYOUT DWG	N/A			LAYOUT NO.	N/A
DRAWING NUMBER		Figure 6.5.2 P19-1122.403			
COORDS		British National Grid			
PURPOSE		Application			
				ORIGINAL PLOT SIZE	A3
PROJECT TITLE					
KINTRADWELL WIND FARM					
DRAWING TITLE					
Blade tip ZTV up to 20km with Wild Land Areas and Viewpoints					

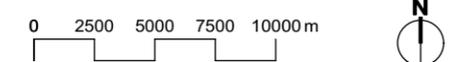
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Key

- Red Line Boundary
 - Radii from Turbine Centres
 - Proposed Turbines
 - Wild Land
 - Operational Wind Farms within 20km
 - X Viewpoint
1. Doll
 2. Lower Brora
 3. Victoria Road (A9), North Brora
 4. Beinn Dhorain
 5. Creag Nam Fiadh
 6. Hope Hill
 7. Track to Ben Armine Lodge
 8. Brora to Rogart minor road near Sciberscross
 9. Brora to Rogart minor road near Dalreavoch
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1	TH	Sept 20	HS	Sept 20	FIRST ISSUE
ISSUE	DRAWN	DATE	APPD	DATE	REVISION NOTES
LAYOUT DWG	N/A			LAYOUT NO.	N/A
DRAWING NUMBER		Figure 6.5.3 P19-1122.404			
COORDS		British National Grid			
PURPOSE		Application			
				ORIGINAL PLOT SIZE	A3
PROJECT TITLE		KINTRADWELL WIND FARM			

DRAWING TITLE
Cumulative Operational Blade tip ZTV up to 35km with Wild Land Areas and Viewpoints

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NB The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) image illustrates the theoretical extent of where turbines will be visible from assuming 100% visibility. It is generated using terrain data only and does not take into account any screening that vegetation or the built environment may provide. It is 'as such' a worst case ZTV and the actual extents of visibility are likely to be much less extensive.

Kintradwell and Operational Schemes Only within 20km

- Kintradwell Wind Farm Visible only
- Gordonbush, Kilbraur and/or Kilbraur Wind Farm Extension Visible Only
- Kintradwell Wind Farm and Gordonbush, Kilbraur and Kilbraur Wind Farm Extension Visible

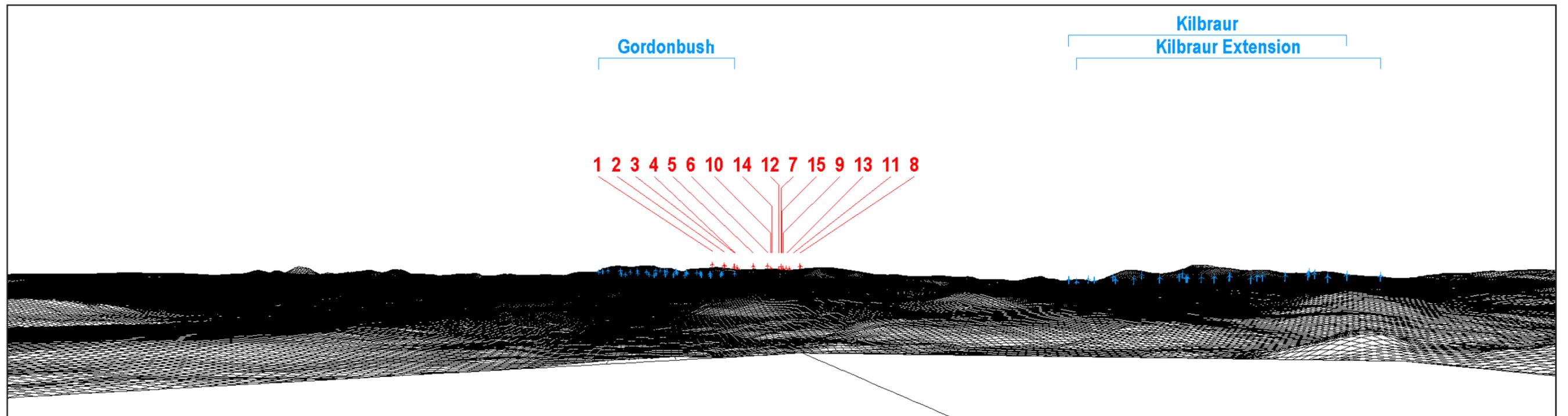


Figure 6.6.1 - A - Meall a Phiobaire Wireframe

OS Reference: 269198, 915164

Ground level: 374m (AOD)

Distance to nearest turbine: 19,493m (T3)

Bearing to centre of photograph: 98.8°

KEY:

Proposed Kintradwell Wind Farm

Operational Schemes



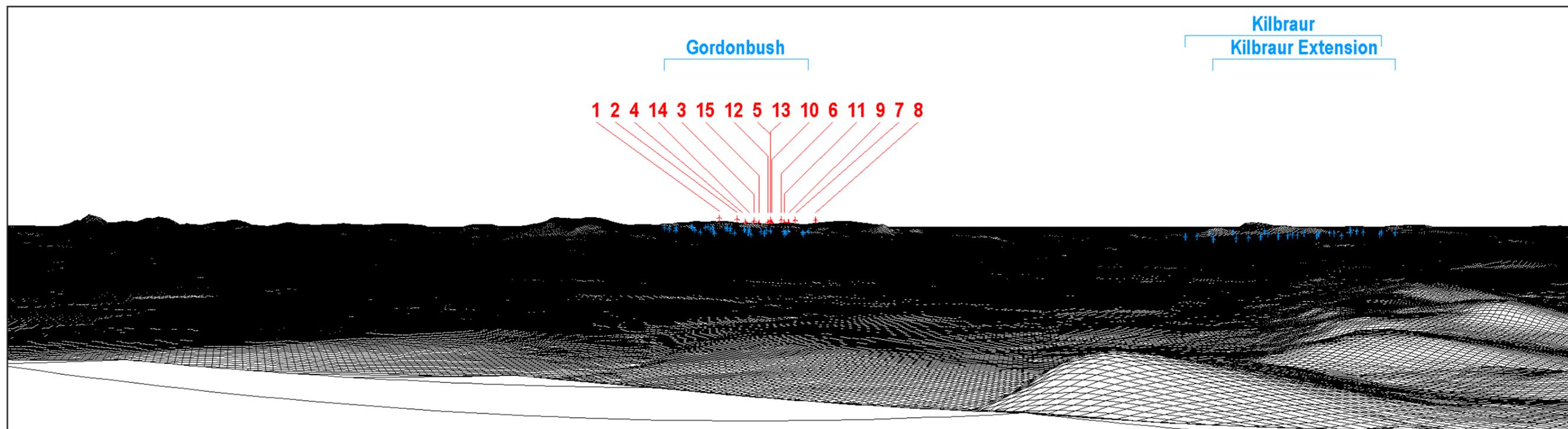


Figure 6.6.2 - B - Creag Mhor Wireframe

OS Reference: 269844, 923996

Ground level: 712m (AOD)

Distance to nearest turbine: 21,564m (T3)

Bearing to centre of photograph: 121.8°

KEY:

Proposed Kintradwell Wind Farm

Operational Schemes



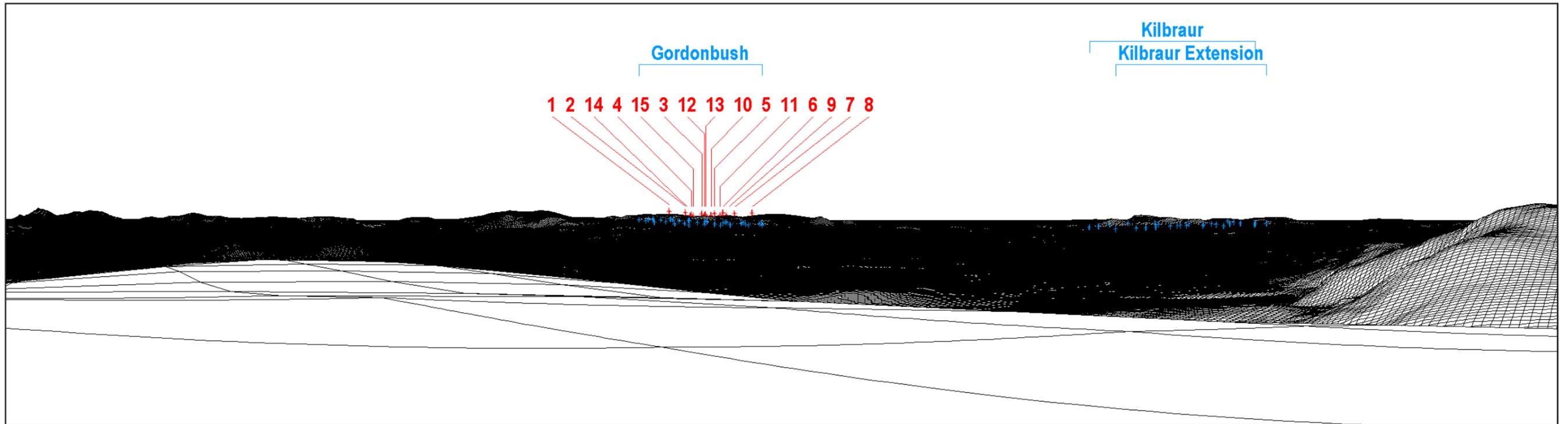


Figure 6.6.3 - C - Ben Armine Wireframe

OS Reference: 269522, 927232

Ground level: 705m (AOD)

Distance to nearest turbine: 23,589m (T3)

Bearing to centre of photograph: 130.6°

KEY:

Proposed Kintradwell Wind Farm

Operational Schemes



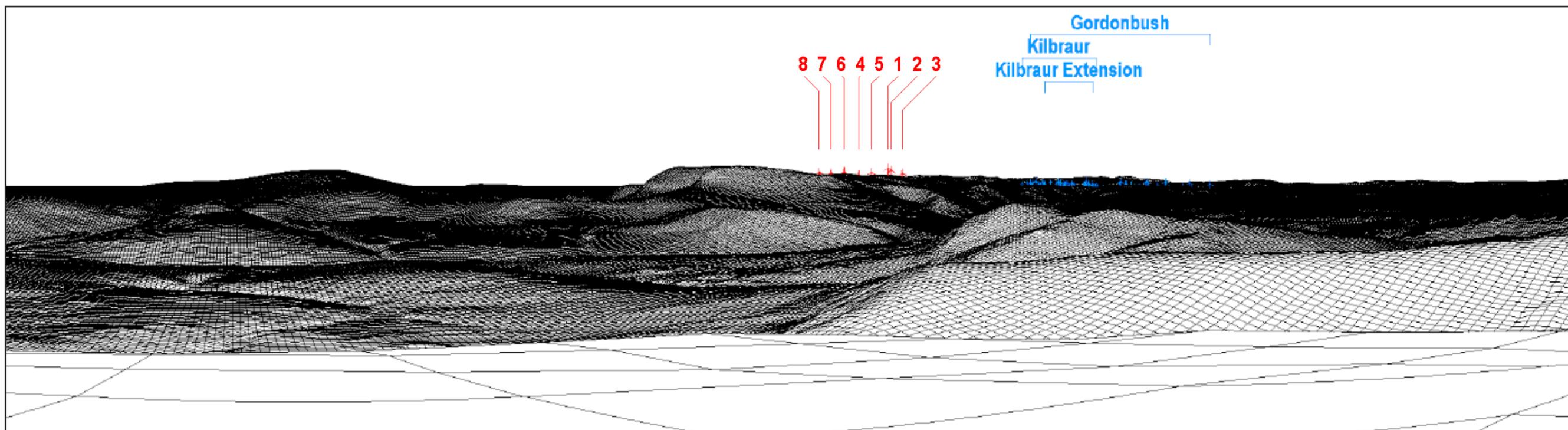


Figure 6.6.4 - D - Creag Scalabsdale Wireframe

OS Reference: 296953, 924024

Ground level: 552m (AOD)

Distance to nearest turbine: 12,743m (T1)

Bearing to centre of photograph: 211.8°

KEY:

Proposed Kintradwell Wind Farm

Operational Schemes



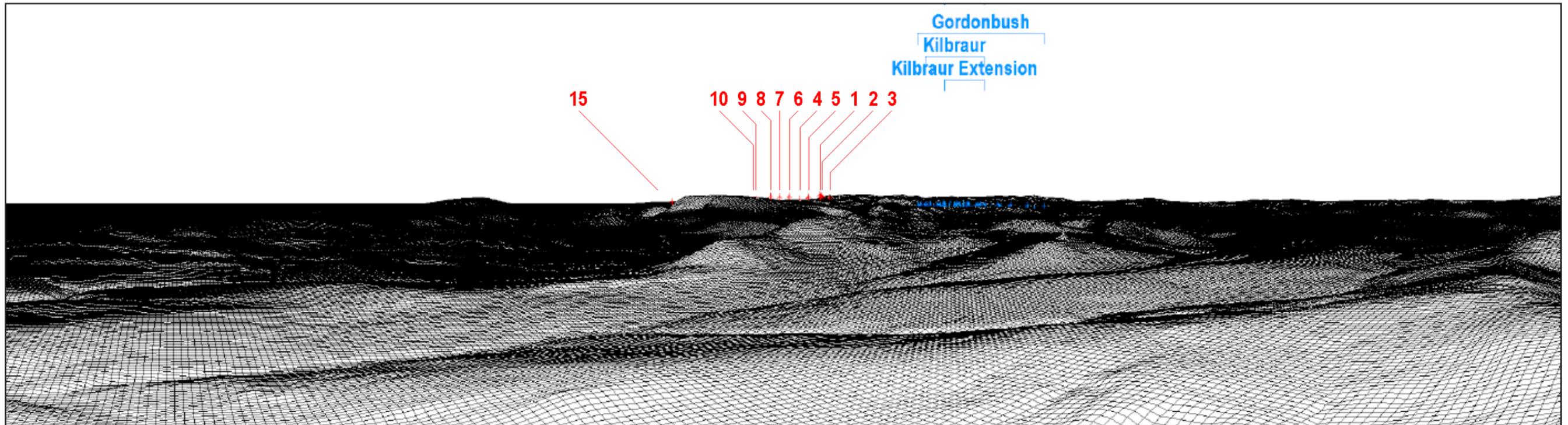


Figure 6.5.5 - E - Morven Wireframe

OS Reference: 300447, 928517

Ground level: 692m (AOD)

Distance to nearest turbine: 18,434m (T1)

Bearing to centre of photograph: 215.3°

KEY:

Proposed Kintradwell Wind Farm

Operational Schemes

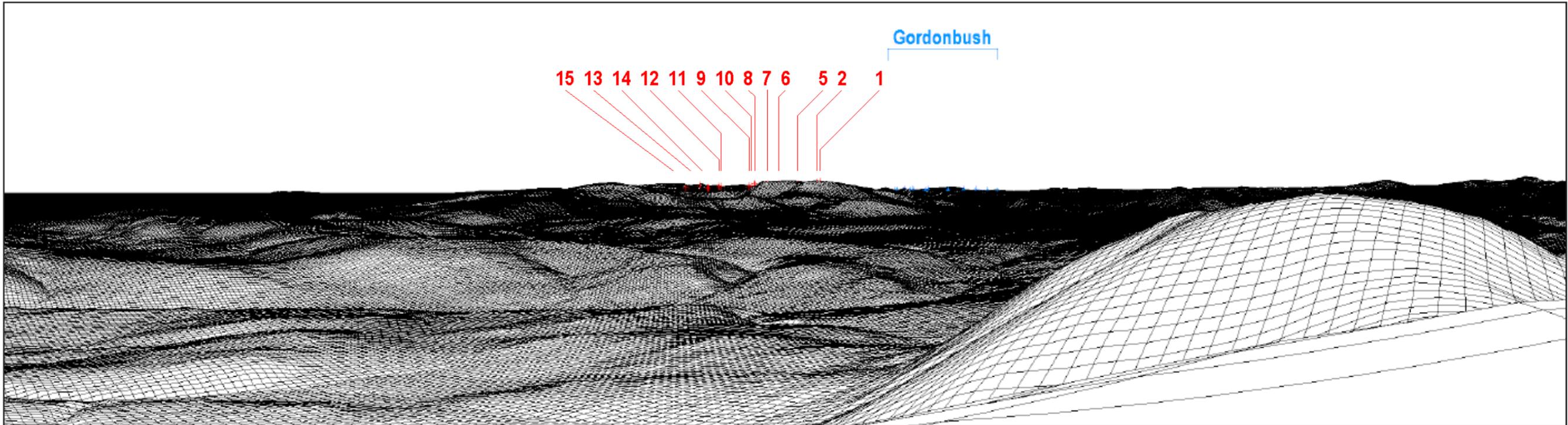


Figure 6.6.6 - F - Scaraben Wireframe

OS Reference: 306508, 926796
 Ground level: 622m (AOD)
 Distance to nearest turbine: 21,449m (T15)
 Bearing to centre of photograph: 231.2°

KEY:
 Proposed Kintradwell Wind Farm
 Operational Schemes



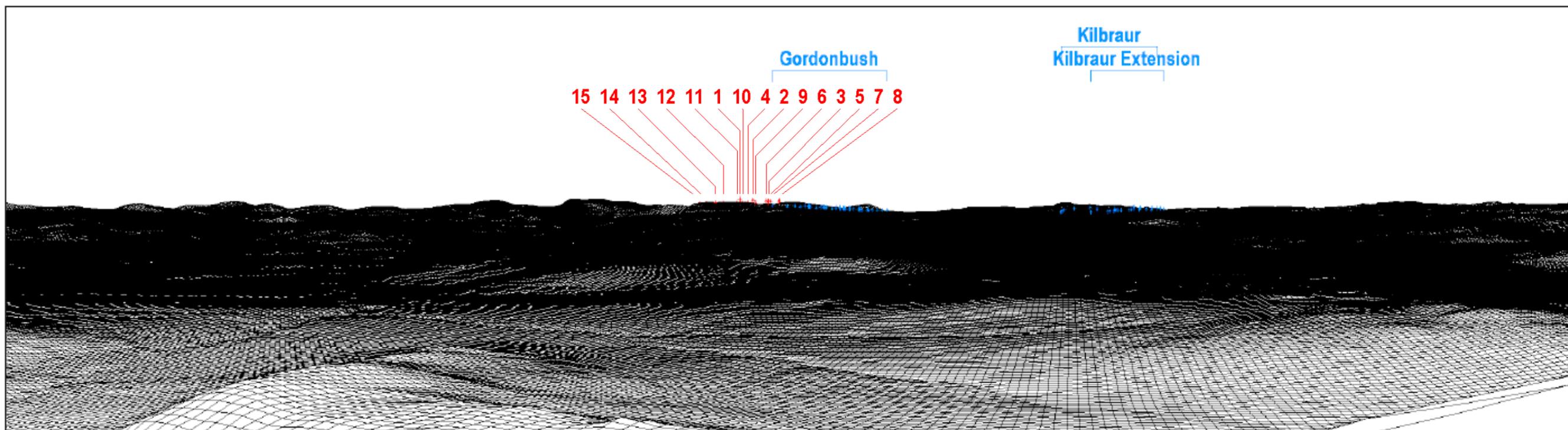


Figure 6.6.7 - G - Ben Griam Mor Wireframe

OS Reference: 280674, 938906

Ground level: 583m (AOD)

Distance to nearest turbine: 26,448m (T1)

Bearing to centre of photograph: 164.1°

KEY:

Proposed Kintradwell Wind Farm

Operational Schemes



THC SG Commentary		Applicant's Assessment	
Criterion	Measurement		
1	Relationship between Settlements/Key locations and wider landscape respected.	The extent to which the proposal contributes to perception of settlements or key locations being encircled by wind energy development	The Proposed Development would not contribute to the perception of settlements or key locations being encircled by wind energy development. This is due in part to its location adjacent to the existing Gordonbush Wind Farm and its consented extension and it being well separated from the Kilbraur turbines.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Turbines are not visually prominent in the majority of views within or from settlements/Key Locations or from the majority of its access routes	A small number of significant visual effects have been identified from visual receptors. However, the Proposed Development would not be visually prominent in the majority of views from settlements, or other notable visual receptors such as individual residential properties, footpaths or the highway network.
2	Key Gateway locations and routes are respected	The extent to which the proposal reduces or detracts from the transitional experience of key Gateway Locations and routes	The Addendum to Supplementary Guidance: 'Part 2b', considers six geographical areas in relation to the potential for wind energy development. The site is not located in any of the six areas and therefore there are no 'key gateways' identified in relation to the area around the site. However, it is acknowledged that the Glossary of the Supplementary Guidance defines a 'Key Route' as 'An important route that captures the essence of an area's particular qualities'. There are a number of highways in the vicinity of the site and these have been considered in the LVIA (Chapter 6, Volume 2). In no cases however were any significant visual effects identified for any of the roads or railways in the study area. It is therefore considered that the Proposed Development would not detract from any key route or gateway within the study area.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise detract from landscape characteristics which contribute the distinctive transitional experience found at key gateway locations and routes	On the basis that no significant visual effects were identified for any of the roads or railways in the study area, the Proposed Development would not overwhelm or otherwise detract from the visual characteristics of any route that might be considered to form a 'key gateway' location.
3	Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected	The extent to which the proposal affects the fabric and setting of	The Addendum to Supplementary Guidance: 'Part 2b', considers six geographical areas in relation to the potential for wind energy development. The site is not located in any of the six areas and therefore there are no

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		valued natural and cultural landmarks	'Landmarks' identified in relation to the area around the site. However, it is acknowledged that the Glossary of the Supplementary Guidance defines a 'Landmark' as ' <i>A prominent or conspicuous landscape feature, building or other place, often visible over distance, that is of historical, aesthetic or cultural significance</i> '. The matter of impact to heritage assets is considered separately in the Cultural Heritage Assessment (Chapter 7, Volume 2). However, it is understood that there would be no significant landscape or visual effects on any recognised landmark features in the landscape.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	The development does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting	There would be no significant landscape or visual effects on any recognised landmark features in the landscape. Therefore, it is understood that the Proposed Development would not diminish the prominence of any such landmark or disrupt its relationship to its landscape setting.
4	The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected	The extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of key recreational routes and ways (e.g. Core Paths, Munros and Corbetts, Long Distance Routes etc.)	<p>The Addendum to Supplementary Guidance: 'Part 2b', considers six geographical areas in relation to the potential for wind energy development. The site is not located in any of the six areas and therefore there are no 'key gateways' identified in relation to the area around the site. However, it is acknowledged that the Glossary of the Supplementary Guidance defines a 'Key Route' as '<i>An important route that captures the essence of an area's particular qualities</i>'.</p> <p>There are a number of recreational routes in the vicinity of the site and these have been considered in the LVIA (Chapter 6, Volume 2). It is acknowledged that a significant visual was identified for a section of the John O'Groats Trail (between 6.5-8.5km of the site) and the Brora Village Trail. However, no significant effects were identified for any of the other recreational routes within the study area.</p> <p>Having considered the nature of the effects on the recreational receptors, it is considered that notwithstanding the localised significant effects which would arise, each route would remain pleasant and enjoyable and that overall when the effects on the routes are considered in the round the Proposed Development would not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of any key route or gateway within the study area.</p>
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual	It is acknowledged that a significant visual was identified for a section of the John O'Groats Trail (between 6.5-8.5km of the site) and the Brora Village Trail. However, no significant effects were identified for any of the other recreational routes within the study area.

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		appeal of key routes and ways	Having considered the nature of the effects on the recreational receptors, it is considered that notwithstanding the localised significant effects which would arise, each route would remain pleasant and enjoyable and that overall when the effects on the routes are considered in the round the Proposed Development would not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of any key route or gateway within the study area
5	The amenity of transport routes is respected	The extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of transport routes (tourist routes as well as rail, ferry routes and local road access)	There are a number of transport routes in the vicinity of the site and these have been considered in the LVIA (Chapter 6, Volume 2). In no cases however were any significant visual effects identified for any of the roads or railways in the study area. It is therefore considered that the Proposed Development would not significantly affect the amenity of any transport route in the study area.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of transport routes	There are a number of transport routes in the vicinity of the site and these have been considered in the LVIA (Chapter 6, Volume 2). In no cases however were any significant visual effects identified for any of the roads or railways in the study area. It is therefore considered that the Proposed Development would not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of transport routes.
6	The existing pattern of Wind Energy Development is respected.	<p>The degree to which the proposal fits with the existing pattern of nearby wind energy development, considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turbine height and proportions • density and spacing of turbines within developments, • density and spacing of developments, • typical relationship of development to the landscape. • previously instituted mitigation measures • Planning Authority stated aims for 	<p>It is considered that the Proposed Development would relate well to the existing pattern of nearby wind energy development. With regard to the specific considerations noted in the criterion it is noted as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst the turbine height and proportions would be different and slightly greater than that of the adjacent Gordonbush Wind Farm and its consented Extension, they would still only bring about relatively localised significant effects to landscape character or visual amenity, whilst seeking to maximise potential energy generation. • The density and spacing of the turbines would be typical of a well-designed commercial wind energy development, allowing visual permeability through the site and not appearing unbalanced. • The Proposed Development would relate well to the density and spacing of existing wind energy development in the area, consolidating development adjacent to the Gordonbush Wind Farm and its consented Extension. • The relationship of the Proposed Development to the landscape would be that of a well-

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		development of area	<p>designed commercial wind energy development, in that it would give rise to relatively localised significant effects to landscape character or visual amenity, whilst seeking to maximise potential energy generation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Proposed Development would not undermine the mitigation associated with any previous wind farm. Whilst it is acknowledged that the Proposed Development would be seen in combination with both the existing Gordonbush Wind Farm and the consented Extension in some views, collectively the schemes would relate well to each other and would serve to consolidate wind energy development in the same tract of the landscape. It is noted that the site lies within the 'Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth' Special Landscape Area (SLA). As such, it is understood that with regard to landscape and visual matters the Highland Council's 'stated aims for development in the area' would be for the Proposed Development to be in line with the guidance set out in Appendix 2 of The Highland Wide Local Development Plan (2012), as follows: <i>'The Council will consider the potential impacts of development proposals on the integrity of the SLAs, including impacts on the wider setting. There may be cases where the setting of an SLA could be adversely affected by development in the foreground which would interrupt important views into and out of the SLA. When determining the impact on the landscape character and scenic quality and overall integrity of the SLA, attention will be given to its citation and in particular the Key Landscape and Visual Characteristics, its Special Qualities, and its Sensitivities to Change'</i>. It is understood with regard to the localised and limited nature of the significant impacts identified to the SLA that the Proposed Development does not compromise the integrity of the SLA, or its special qualities. A full assessment of the effects on the SLA is included in Appendix 6.4 (Volume 6) of the EIA Report.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	The proposal contributes positively to existing pattern or objectives for development in the area	The location of the Proposed Development as an extension to the existing wind energy development at Gordonbush Wind Farm and its consented extension is such that it would reflect the existing established pattern of wind energy development in the local landscape. Regarding the objectives for development in the area, it is acknowledged that unlike the Gordonbush Wind Farm the Proposed Development is located within the 'Loch

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			Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth' Special Landscape Area (SLA). Therefore, there is a requirement to ensure that the integrity of the SLA, or its special qualities are not compromised by the Proposed Development. It is understood that the localised and limited nature of the significant impacts identified to the SLA are such that this requirement would be met. A full assessment of the effects on the SLA is included in Appendix 6.4 (Volume 6) of the EIA Report.
7	The need for separation between developments and/or clusters is respected	The extent to which the proposal maintains or affects the spaces between existing developments and/ or clusters	The location of the Proposed Development is such that it would serve as an extension to the existing Gordonbush Wind Farm and its consented extension. It would therefore serve to join an existing cluster of wind energy in the landscape, whilst retaining separation from the other schemes in the wider area at Kilbraur.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	The proposal maintains appropriate and effective separation between developments and/ or clusters	The Proposed Development would form part of an existing cluster of wind energy whilst retaining an appropriate and effective separation from other schemes in the wider landscape.
8	The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected	The extent to which the proposal maintains or affects receptors' existing perception of landscape scale and distance	There would be only limited significant effects on visual receptors as a result of the Proposed Development. Where such effects would arise, it is understood that the receptor's perception of the scale of the landscape would be maintained. The Proposed Development would generally be seen in broad, open views, located in the upland landscape, well separated from surrounding receptors.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	The proposal maintains the apparent landscape scale and/or distance in the receptors' perception	As a result of its siting in a broad, open, upland landscape, well separated from surrounding visual receptors, the Proposed Development would maintain the apparent overall scale of the landscape in all views from the surrounding locality, even from those limited locations where a significant effect on visual amenity would arise.
9	Landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is respected	The extent to which the landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is affected by the proposal	It is not considered that the Proposed Development would compromise the landscape setting of any other existing wind energy development. Rather the scheme would relate well to the adjacent wind farm at Gordonbush and its consented extension and would serve to consolidate wind energy in the same tract of the landscape.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Proposal relates well to the existing landscape setting and does not increase the perceived visual prominence of	The Proposed Development would not bring about any additional undue visual prominence to any existing wind energy development. Rather it would serve to minimise overall potential impacts to the landscape through its location adjacent to the existing Gordonbush Wind Farm and its consented extension. Collectively the three

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		surrounding wind turbines	schemes would relate well to one another in the landscape.
10	Distinctiveness of Landscape character is respected	The extent to which a proposal affects the distinction between neighbouring landscape character types, in areas where the variety of character is important to the appreciation of the landscape	The Proposed Development would bring about some limited and localised significant effects on landscape character. However, it is not considered that these effects would be such as to compromise the integrity of the different landscape types and areas which cover the study area. In each case the underlying key characteristics of each landscape character type would remain appreciable. The Proposed Development would add views of wind energy to the list of characteristics which apply to the landscape in the vicinity of the site, however for the most part this would serve to reinforce such views of wind energy development which are already brought about by the existing Gordonbush Wind Farm, which will be further increased following construction of its consented extension.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Integrity and variety of Landscape Character Areas are maintained	Proposed Development would relate well to its landscape context and would be located adjacent to other wind energy development which already form a component of the landscape. It is therefore considered that the integrity and variety of the Landscape Character Areas would be maintained following the introduction of the Proposed Development.