

# Chapter 14: Socio-economics, Recreation, Tourism and Land Use

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## 14 Socio-economics, Recreation, Tourism and Land Use

### 14.1 Introduction

- 14.1.1 This chapter considers the potential effects that Carn Fearn Wind Farm (the Proposed Development) may have on the socio-economics, recreation, tourism and land use of the area surrounding the site. Where relevant, effects are also considered within the rest of Scotland and the United Kingdom (UK). The specific objectives of the chapter are to:
- describe the current baseline;
  - describe the assessment methodology and significance criteria used in completing the assessment;
  - describe the potential changes, including direct, indirect and cumulative, and make an assessment of the significance of effect in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) terms;
  - describe the mitigation measures proposed to address the likely significant adverse effects; and
  - assess the residual effects remaining following the implementation of mitigation measures.
- 14.1.2 Effects on socio-economics, recreation, tourism and land use may arise as a direct result of the Proposed Development or as an indirect interaction between the Proposed Development and the area/region. The interactions could be positive or adverse.
- 14.1.3 This chapter is supported by Figures 14.1 and 14.2 and Technical Appendices 14.1 and 14.2 which are referenced in the text where relevant.

### 14.2 Policy and Guidance

- 14.2.1 A summary of the policy and guidance relevant to this chapter is provided in the following sections. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the relevant planning policy position in full.

#### Planning Policy

- 14.2.2 Planning policy relevant to this assessment is briefly considered in the following sections.

#### Onshore Wind Policy Statement 2022

- 14.2.3 The Scottish Government's 'Onshore Wind Policy Statement' (2022) provides the rationale for the development of further onshore wind energy in Scotland as a cheap and reliable source of zero carbon energy. It highlights the lowering costs of the development of onshore wind, whilst encouraging the promotion of community benefits from all sources of renewable energy, as well as shared ownership opportunities. This position is summarised in paragraph 4.2.4, stating:

*"We are committed to increasing access to affordable energy, maximising community benefits from, and ownership of, energy projects, and providing regional and local opportunities to participate in our net zero energy future. We are encouraging developers to offer shared ownership opportunities to communities as standard on all new renewable energy projects, including repowering and extension to existing projects."*

#### National Planning Framework 4 2023

- 14.2.4 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (Scottish Government, 2023) Policy 11: Energy, notes that:
- "Development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities."*
- 14.2.5 Continuing, stating that Proposed Development design and mitigation should demonstrate how impacts on the following have been addressed:
- "public access, impact on long distance walking and cycling routes and scenic routes."*

#### Highland-wide Local Development Plan 2012

- 14.2.6 Policies of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) (The Highland Council, 2012) that are relevant to this assessment include:
- Policy 28 Sustainable Design
  - Policy 29 Design Quality and Place-Making
  - Policy 34 Settlement Development Areas
  - Policy 36 Development in the Wider Countryside

- Policy 43 Tourism
- Policy 44 Tourist Accommodation
- Policy 57 Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage
- Policy 58 Protected Species
- Policy 59 Other Important Species
- Policy 60 Other Important Habitats and Article 10 Features
- Policy 61 Landscape
- Policy 67 Renewable Energy Developments
- Policy 74 Green Networks
- Policy 75 Open Space
- Policy 77 Public Access
- Policy 78 Long Distance Routes

#### Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2, 2024

- 14.2.7 Policies of the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP 2) (adopted 2024) that are relevant to this assessment include:

- Policy 2 Nature Protection, Restoration and Enhancement
- Policy 4 Greenspace
- Policy 5 Green Networks
- Policy 8 Placemaking

#### Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments 2019

- 14.2.8 The Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments (Scottish Government, 2019) guidance places a focus on achieving a lasting legacy for local communities underpinned by well-developed community action plans. The guidance notes that over the 12 months prior to publication in May 2019, 214 projects were offered community benefits packages totalling £15 million. The guidance is supportive of renewable energy businesses that seek to offer communities a flexible package of benefits that might not necessarily be based on Scottish Government's recommended national rate of £5,000 per installed megawatt (MW) per year; such flexible packages of benefit should offer an element of additionality and go beyond the requirements of the planning process, and also recognise the ambition to offer the lowest cost energy for consumers.

- 14.2.9 The package of benefits that a renewable energy business offers may vary in line with the priorities of community/communities involved, and the size and scope of the renewable energy project. However, community benefits should relate to the specific needs and aspirations of local people. The guidance advises that possession of a community action plan is key to delivering a community's aspirations and ambitions, and guidance is provided as to how this should be developed with a view to establishing a lasting legacy.

#### Good Practice Guidance on Wind Farm Construction 2019

- 14.2.10 Good Practice Guidance on Wind Farm Construction (NatureScot et al., 2019) contains advice on management measures to provide for continuing public access to core paths and rights of way. The guidance advises that management measures should be flexible enough to take reasonable account of public access requirements. The guidance emphasises the importance of effective communication.

#### Onshore Wind Sector Deal for Scotland 2023

- 14.2.11 Following engagement between the Scottish Government and renewable energy developers, the Onshore Wind Sector Deal for Scotland (Scottish Government, 2023) was published with plans to reduce permitting timelines and increase the onshore wind capacity in Scotland to 20 Gigawatts (GW) by 2030.
- 14.2.12 The deal aims to further collaboration between the public and private sectors through upskilling/reskilling workers and actions to retain local supply chains.
- 14.2.13 The Sector Deal also builds upon the Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments guidance, with an agreement to engage with communities at the earliest possible opportunity to agree community benefits packages which 'meet or exceed' the principles previously set out in 2019.

#### The Onshore Wind Energy Prospectus 2021

- 14.2.14 The Onshore Wind Energy Prospectus (RenewableUK, 2021) sets out the potential mutual benefit that onshore wind developers and the UK public can receive, through maximising the outcomes from onshore wind energy. The prospectus sets an industry target of 30GW of installed onshore wind capacity by 2030. It notes that Scotland is the location for most of the onshore wind that would be built in the 30GW by 2030 scenario (around 80 %). As a result, Scotland is expected to see an additional £27.8 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) and the creation of 17,000 jobs.

#### Wind Farms and Tourism Trends in Scotland

- 14.2.15 A study by BiGGAR Economics (2021) examined whether there is a link between the development of wind farms and changes in patterns of tourism spend and behaviour, finding that trends at a local authority level showed that *“there is no new evidence to contradict the earlier findings that wind farms have little or no adverse impact on tourism in Scotland”*. Further detail on the findings is discussed in Section 14.8.68 to 14.8.69.

#### Quantifying Benefits of Onshore Wind to the UK 2019

- 14.2.16 A report by Vivid Economics (2019) projected the potential benefit to the UK economy as a result of 35 GW of onshore wind being developed by 2035, at a rate of 1.4 GW annually since the report was published. They estimated that this could:

- reduce UK electricity costs by 7 %;
- save households an average of £50 per year in bills;
- support 14,000 jobs directly;
- support a further 17,000 jobs indirectly;
- enable £360 m in annual exports; and
- increase productivity throughout the UK.

## 14.3 Consultation

- 14.3.1 As described in Chapter 6, consultation with stakeholders was carried out as part of the EIA Scoping process and also via the Pre-Application Advice service offered by The Highland Council (THC). Consultation responses relevant to this chapter are summarised in Table 14.1.

**Table 14.1 - Consultation**

Consultee and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant Response
Contin Community Council – Received 14 September 2023	This development is likely to interact negatively with the informal but popular Round Ben Wyvis mountain bike route.	Construction impacts on Ben Wyvis hill trails and summits are detailed in Section 14.8.41  Operational impacts on Ben Wyvis trails and summits are detailed in Section 14.8.57
	We perceive negligible direct economic benefit from the construction of the proposed development. Net Benefit Retained is rather more important than Gross Value Added. We see an overall disadvantage from the general industrialisation of an area that is attractive to tourists because it is not industrialised. The very high visibility of the proposed development is significant in this regard – visitors to the area via the A835 will see a monumental wind farm at the same time as they first see Ben Wyvis.	Economic impacts from construction and operation of the Proposed Development are discussed in Section 14.8.  Statkraft's approach to socio-economic benefits is discussed in Technical Appendix 14.1 Socio-economic Benefits Report .  Operational impacts on visibility from the A835/North Coast 500 (NC500) are detailed in Section 14.8.79 and Chapter 7 Landscape and Visual.
	There is a potential benefit from payments. The value of these needs to reflect the value of the electricity proposed to be generated and the needs of the area. A substantial number of properties in the Contin area have very poor insulation, leading to EPC ratings of F or G. Householders are struggling with heating bills. Typical improvement costs are of the order of £20-30k/property. Will the developers be contributing sufficient money to fix	Community benefit is discussed in Sections 14.9.7-14.9.9. and in Technical Appendix 14.1 Socio-economic Benefits (Statkraft)

Consultee and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant Response
	these houses over the next 10 years? 1% revenue minimum contribution is suggested, which will allow us to improve 60-70 houses over 10 years.	
Energy Consents Unit – Received 14 September 2023	<p><b>Recreational/fisheries –</b></p> <p>MSS also provide standing advice for onshore wind farm or overhead line development (which has been appended at Annex B) which outlines what information, relating to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries, is expected in the EIA report.</p> <p><b>Annexe B states:</b></p> <p>The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (EIA) (Scotland) Regulations (2017) state that the EIA must assess the direct and indirect significant effects of the proposed development on water and biodiversity, and in particular species (such as Atlantic salmon) and habitats protected under the EU Habitats Directive. <b>Salmon and trout are listed as priority species of high conservation interest in the Scottish Biodiversity Index and support valuable recreational fisheries.</b></p>	<p>Fish Assessment, mitigation and monitoring is detailed in Chapter 8, Ecology.</p> <p>Construction and operational impacts upon anglers are detailed in Sections 14.8.33 and 14.8.59.</p> <p>The completed Marine Science Scotland (MSS) checklist, (as provided in Annex 1 of the standing advice) will be submitted alongside the Section 36 application.</p>
Energy Consents Unit – Received 14 September 2023	<p><b>Socio-Economic, Recreation and Land Use –</b></p> <p>We consider that this should have its own chapter in the EIAR to ensure that these matters are appropriately addressed and not lost in other assessments. The EIAR should estimate who may be affected by the development, in all or in part, which may require individual households to be identified, local communities or a wider socio economic groupings such as tourists and tourist related businesses, recreational groups, economically active, etc.</p> <p>The application should include relevant economic information connected with the project, including the potential number of jobs, and economic activity associated with the procurement, construction, operation and decommissioning of the development.</p> <p>Estimations of who may be affected by the development, in all or in part, which may require individual households to be identified, local communities or a wider socio economic groupings such as tourists and tourist related businesses, recreational groups, economically active, etc. should be included. The application should include relevant economic information connected with the project, including the potential number of jobs, and economic activity associated with the procurement, construction, operation and decommissioning of the development. In this regard wind farm development experience in this location should be used to help set the basis of likely impact. This should set out the impact on the regional and local economy, not just the national economy. Any mitigation proposed should also address impacts on the regional and local economy.</p>	<p>Community benefit is discussed in Sections 14.9.7-14.9.9. and Statkraft's approach to Socio-economic Benefits is discussed in Technical Appendix 14.1 Socio-economic Benefits.</p> <p>Tourism and Recreation impacts are discussed in Sections 14.8.15 to 14.8.38 (construction impacts); and Sections 14.8.50 to 14.8.79 (operational impacts).</p> <p>Economic and employment impacts are discussed in Sections 14.8.2 to 14.8.14 (construction impacts) ; and Sections 14.8.43 to 14.8.49 (operational impacts).</p>

- 14.3.2 Engagement with the local community was undertaken through public exhibition events held in November 2023 and May 2024. The information available at these events was made available online for those who could not attend in person. An online feedback form was also available. Further details on the events, the feedback received, and attendance numbers can be found in the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report.

#### Matters Scoped Out

- 14.3.3 Based on past experience of onshore wind farm projects of this scale, it is not expected that there would be a large influx of workers' families to the area during the construction phase (estimated to last for approximately 23 months) and those who would be working in the area would be there temporarily.

Therefore, it is not expected that there would be a significant effect on the demand for permanent housing, health or educational services.

- 14.3.4 In terms of local direct and indirect jobs creation, the overall total number of jobs that could be created in the Wider Study Area (defined in Section 14.4) is between 11-13 jobs per annum (providing servicing, maintenance, repairs and other operational support) over the 50-year operational lifespan of the Proposed Development,
- 14.3.5 There are expected to be three permanent locally-based jobs created to provide servicing, maintenance, repairs and other operational support over the 50 year operational lifespan of the Proposed Development. The direct jobs will support between eight and ten indirect jobs created through the supply chain in support of the Proposed Development. As such, the increased demand for permanent housing, health or educational services would be negligible and therefore effects on these are scoped out of further assessment.
- 14.3.6 Land use effects during the operational phase are scoped out. The operation of the Proposed Development would have minimal effect on current recreational or grazing activities occurring on the site, and these activities would be able to continue. It is noted that in Technical Appendix 8.5: Outline Nature Enhancement and Management Plan (ONEMP), it is stated that there would be some native tree planting and peatland restoration, although it is considered that this is a slight change only in land use due to the proportion of the site affected.
- 14.3.7 The effects during the decommissioning phase are expected to be largely the same as those during the construction phase, albeit to a lesser degree and in approximately 50 years (and therefore unlikely to be significant in EIA terms). To avoid a repetition of the construction phase assessment, the potential effects on socio-economics, recreation and tourism during the decommissioning phase have been scoped out of the assessment. The methods and mitigation employed will follow best practice and guidance at the time of decommissioning.

## 14.4 Assessment Methodology and Significance Criteria

- 14.4.1 This chapter takes an appropriate and topic-specific approach to the assessment of the Proposed Development. It provides a worst-case or conservative assessment for socio-economic effects and presents enough information for consultees and the decision makers to comment on and determine the application.
- 14.4.2 It considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the economic resource, including employment, within the local, regional and national context, as well as the potential for effects on tourist attractions, recreational facilities and land use within and in the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Development. Where effects are predicted, an assessment is made of the significance of effect in EIA terms.
- 14.4.3 Where appropriate, conclusions from Chapter 7 (LVIA) have been utilised to inform the assessments within this chapter. In those instances, cross references have been provided.

### Study Area

- 14.4.4 The assessment utilises a three-tiered study area which is considered appropriate for the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the assessment. The quantitative economic and employment aspects are defined by the Wider Study Area (WSA). The qualitative accommodation aspects are defined by the Local Study Area (LSA), whilst the qualitative tourism and recreation aspects are defined by the Local Area of Influence (LAI). The LSA and LAI both extend 5km from the site and are shown on Figure 14.1.

### Wider Study Area

- 14.4.5 The WSA encompasses the area where economic and employment effects could occur. The WSA is required for certain receptor groups because the majority of the business and labour market effects that could occur would be experienced by population and business centres located across a wider area than the boundary of the Proposed Development.
- 14.4.6 The WSA is divided into three spatial levels which are used for the assessment as appropriate, and are defined as:
- the local WSA (The Highland Council administrative area (The Highlands));
  - the regional WSA (Scotland); and
  - the national WSA (UK).

### Local Study Area

- 14.4.7 The LSA incorporates the site boundary together with an area extending to 5 km from the site and provides an intermediate study area used in the assessment of potential effects on accommodation in the local



area. It is considered the large number of accommodation providers in the area around the site would be ample to accommodate the construction workforce. It is therefore considered appropriate to reduce the 15 km area proposed in the Scoping Report for the LSA to 5 km for this assessment. The LSA covers Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Localsh (Ward 05) and Dingwall and Seaforth (Ward 08, including Muir of Ord) which are considered to encompass the majority of the accommodation businesses that could be affected by the Proposed Development. The WSA is too large an area to give an accurate representation of the effect of the Proposed Development. The Local Study Area is remote but has a number of accommodation businesses within 5km of the site, specifically in Contin and Strathpeffer to the south and south east.

#### Local Area of Influence

- 14.4.8 The LAI incorporates the site boundary together with an area extending to 5 km from the site. Assessment of the potential for both direct and indirect effects on recreation and tourism receptors is focused on the LAI.

#### **Information and Data Sources**

- 14.4.9 Information used for the socio-economics baseline within the WSA, LSA and LAI was collected through a detailed desktop review of existing studies and datasets. These are summarised in Table 14.2.
- 14.4.10 Technical information used to support the economic modelling of employment and GVA effects has been supplied by the Applicant and is detailed within Technical Appendix 14.1 Socio-economic.

**Table 14.2 – Summary of Key Sources**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Author</b>
Annual Business Survey (ABS)	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/businessservices/methodologies/annualbusinesssurveyabs">https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/businessservices/methodologies/annualbusinesssurveyabs</a>	2024	ONS
Annual Population Survey - Scotland	<a href="https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/population-migration-and-households">https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/population-migration-and-households</a>	2023 mid-year (published 2024)	National Records of Scotland
Estimates for the Population of the UK	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland">https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland</a>	2023 mid-year (published 2024)	ONS
Highland Council Area Profile	<a href="https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/council-area-data-sheets/highland-council-profile.html">https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/council-area-data-sheets/highland-council-profile.html</a>	2023 mid-year (published 2024)	National Records of Scotland
Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings - Resident Analysis	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/placeofresidencebylocalauthorityashetable8">https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/placeofresidencebylocalauthorityashetable8</a>	2024	ONS
Business Register and Employment Survey	<a href="https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/newbr es6pub">https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/newbr es6pub</a>	2023	ONS
Input-output supply and use tables	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/supplyandusetables/datasets/inputoutputsupplyandusetables">https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/supplyandusetables/datasets/inputoutputsupplyandusetables</a>	2022	ONS
Scottish Annual Business Statistics 2021	<a href="https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-annual-business-statistics-2021/pages/headline-results/">https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-annual-business-statistics-2021/pages/headline-results/</a>	2023	Scottish Government
Supply, Use and Input-Output Tables: 1998-2019	<a href="https://www.gov.scot/publications/input-output-latest/">https://www.gov.scot/publications/input-output-latest/</a>	2022	Scottish Government

#### **Desk Study**

- 14.4.11 The assessment uses desk-based information sources to assess the potential effects, supplemented by consultation with relevant stakeholders where necessary, and professional judgement based on previous experience.

#### **Site Visit**

- 14.4.12 No site visit has been undertaken with regard to socio-economics, recreation and tourism, although information has been gathered where relevant from surveys undertaken in respect of other disciplines, notably Chapter 7 (LVIA) and Chapter 11 (Archaeology and Cultural Heritage).

#### **Sensitivity Criteria**

- 14.4.13 There are no published standards that define receptor sensitivity in relation to a socio-economic assessment. As a general rule, the sensitivity of each receptor or receptor group is based on its importance or scale and the ability of the receptor to absorb change or be influenced by the Proposed Development. For example, a receptor (such as a public footpath or an accommodation business) is considered less



sensitive if there are alternatives with capacity within the study area. In assigning receptor sensitivity, consideration has been given to the following:

- the importance of the receptor e.g. local, regional, national, international;
- the availability of comparable alternatives;
- the ease at which the resource could be replaced;
- the capacity of the resources to accommodate identified effects over a period of time; and
- the level of usage and nature of users (e.g. sensitive groups such as people with disabilities).

14.4.14 Based upon professional judgement and experience on other wind developments, four levels of sensitivity have been used, high; medium; low and negligible. These are defined in Table 14.3.

**Table 14.3 – Receptor Sensitivity**

<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Description</b>
High	The receptor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– has little or no capacity to absorb change without fundamentally altering its present character;</li> <li>– is of high socio-economic, recreational or tourism value<sup>1</sup>;</li> <li>– is of national or international importance;</li> <li>– is accorded priority in national policy;</li> <li>– has no alternatives with available capacity within its catchment area; or</li> <li>– is a destination in its own right (as regards tourism and visitor attractions).</li> </ul>
Medium	The receptor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– has moderate capacity to absorb change without fundamentally altering its present character;</li> <li>– has a moderate socio-economic, recreational or tourism value;</li> <li>– is of regional importance;</li> <li>– is accorded priority in local policy;</li> <li>– has some alternatives with available capacity within its catchment area;</li> <li>– is a destination for people already visiting the area (as regards tourism and visitor attractions); or</li> <li>– forms a cluster of low sensitivity receptors.</li> </ul>
Low	The receptor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– is tolerant of change without a detriment to its character;</li> <li>– is of low socio-economic, recreation or tourism value;</li> <li>– is of local importance;</li> <li>– is accorded low priority in policy;</li> <li>– has a choice of alternatives with available capacity within its catchment area; or</li> <li>– is an incidental destination for people already visiting the area (as regards tourism and visitor attractions).</li> </ul>
Negligible	The receptor is resistant to change and is of low socio-economic, tourism or recreation value, or there is a wide choice of alternatives with available capacity within its catchment area.

14.4.15 In considering the sensitivity of a receptor it is important to remember that, in the case of a socio-economic assessment, the sensitivity is often subjective and different receptors will have differing sensitivities depending on matters such as the economic profile of the local area, perception of the type of development and attitude to the potential benefits of a development.

#### **Magnitude of Change**

14.4.16 There are no published standards that define the thresholds of the magnitude of change for socio-economic, tourism or recreation. In order to aid clear and robust identification of significant effects, specific and targeted criteria for defining the magnitude of change have been developed for this assessment based on experience of other similar developments. The following four levels of magnitude have been adopted using professional judgement; high; medium; low and negligible. These changes can be positive, adverse or neutral. Criteria for each of these levels of magnitude for each receptor group are set out in Table 14.4.

**Table 14.4 – Magnitude of Change Criteria**

<b>Receptor Group</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Negligible</b>
WSA economy	A change that would be expected to dominate over	A change that would be expected to result in a moderate change	A change that would be expected to result in a perceptible	A change that would not be expected to result in a

<sup>1</sup> Which may include being of high value to a user group of high sensitivity (e.g. mobility impaired users).

Receptor Group	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
	baseline economic conditions and change these by 10% or more.	to baseline economic conditions (i.e., by at least 5% but less than 10%).	difference from baseline economic conditions by at least 0.1% but less than 5%	measurable variation from baseline economic conditions (i.e., a change of less than 0.1%).
WSA labour market	A change that would dominate over baseline labour market conditions and/or would affect a large proportion (10% or more) of the resident workforce.	A change that would be expected to result in a moderate change to baseline labour market conditions and/or would affect a moderate proportion (i.e., by at least 5% but less than 10%) of the resident workforce	A change that would be expected to result in a perceptible difference from baseline labour market conditions and/or would affect a small proportion of the resident workforce. (i.e., a change of at least 0.1% but less than 5%)	A change that would not be expected to result in a measurable variation from baseline labour market conditions (i.e., a change of less than 0.1%).
Tourism and recreation assets	A change that would be expected to cause a major restriction of access to or availability of tourism and visitor assets in the LAI or would result in a major change to existing patterns of use.	A change that would be expected to have a moderate restriction of access to or availability of tourism and visitor assets in the LAI or would result in a moderate change to existing patterns of use.	A change that would be expected to have a small restriction of access to or availability of tourism and visitor assets in the LAI or would result in a small change to existing patterns of use.	A change that would be unlikely to result in a noticeable difference to tourism and visitor assets in the LAI.
Land Use	A change that would lead to a major restriction on the operation of a receptor, e.g. forestry business, or complete closure of receptor.	A change that would lead to a moderate to major restriction on the operation of the receptor.	A change that would lead to a minor restriction on the operation of the receptor.	A change that would lead to a negligible restriction on the use of the receptor.

### Significance of Effect

14.4.17 The significance of effects on socio-economic, tourism, and recreation and land use receptors is initially assessed by combining the magnitude of the change and the sensitivity of the receptor as shown in the matrix presented in Table 14.5.

14.4.18 Where an effect is classed as major, this is considered likely to be 'significant' in terms of the EIA regulations. Where an effect is classified as moderate, this may be considered to be 'significant' but should always be subject to professional judgement and interpretation, particularly where the sensitivity or magnitude of change levels are not clear or are borderline between categories or the change is intermittent or temporary. Effects may be positive, adverse or neutral.

**Table 14.5 - Significance of Effect Matrix**

Sensitivity or Value of Resource or Receptor	Magnitude of Change			
	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
High	Major	Major	Moderate	Minor
Medium	Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
Low	Moderate	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
Negligible	Minor	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

14.4.19 The significance matrix shown in Table 14.5 therefore provides a guide to assessment but is not a substitute for professional judgement.

14.4.20 Where the potential for significant effects is identified, specific mitigation measures would be proposed and an assessment of residual effects carried out. It should be noted that significant residual effects need not be unacceptable or irreversible.

### Requirements for Mitigation

14.4.21 The assessment takes account of embedded mitigation that is incorporated into the design of the Proposed Development. If relevant, any additional mitigation measures that would reduce the level of any significant adverse effects are set out and considered prior to assessing residual effects.

### Cumulative Assessment

- 14.4.22 In relation to economic effects, cumulative effects depend on the extent to which the supply chain and labour market within the WSA have the capacity to meet demand for construction services from a number of similar developments. The cumulative effects assessment makes a quantitative judgement on potential loss of benefit due to cumulative developments. Enhancement of opportunity (e.g. developing expertise and capacity in the market) is identified only in qualitative terms.
- 14.4.23 Other cumulative effects on recreation and tourism receptors may arise if the construction and/or operation of a number of wind farms or other large developments were to affect receptors in the LAI. In this case, there are no relevant developments other than wind farms to be included in the cumulative assessment. It was agreed with THC that the proposed Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) 400 kilovolt (kV) overhead line (OHL) between Spittal and Beaully will not be included in the cumulative assessment as the route of the line had not yet been finalised at the time of the assessment.
- 14.4.24 The data available at a national level can vary between Great Britain (GB) and the UK. Although it is noted that these terms are often used interchangeably colloquially, it is recognised that there is a geographical difference<sup>2</sup>, therefore a difference in the data may be evident.
- 14.4.25 Where available, particularly from data sourced from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), GB has been used, however, some sources and documentation used for estimations regarding forecasting the economic and labour impacts of developments of this nature may only be available at a UK spatial level. For the avoidance of doubt, the assessments have been based upon UK data unless otherwise stated.
- 14.4.26 The datasets for the population trends have a sharp decrease for the year 2021 (the most recent data available at time of writing). The ONS (2023) notes that this is likely due to mid-year adjustments and the use of interim results. These most recent results will have been modelled after the 2020-based principal projection and would be updated in subsequent projections which incorporate the 2021 census data. Further to this is the uncertainty in the mid-2020 base year and the setting of long-term demographic assumptions following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 14.4.27 The data presented in the baseline has been ascertained from the latest sources, where available and appropriate. The project expenditure estimates utilise a 2024 price base: financial values from ONS datasets have been converted to 2024 prices using GDP price deflators sourced from HM Treasury to allow for expenditure to be related to the ONS datasets used to estimate GVA and employment impacts.
- 14.4.28 In common with projects of a similar nature, no field surveys were undertaken to assess the real-time physical state and usage of the recreational and tourism receptors. Data has, however, been retrieved from other chapters of this EIA Report, where relevant.

### Assumed Development Expenditure

- 14.4.29 The construction phase of the Proposed Development would result in an increase in employment, as well as economic effects resulting from expenditure on items such as site preparation including forestry services (small magnitude due to limited felling proposed), construction and maintenance of access roads, purchase and delivery of materials, plant, equipment and components. To estimate the generation of GVA and employment resulting from the construction of the Proposed Development, it is necessary to adopt assumptions regarding the expenditure.
- 14.4.30 The Applicant has provided technical information relevant to the Proposed Development that has enabled the prediction of broad estimates of the likely development expenditure. Based on this information, it is assumed that the construction period for the Proposed Development is expected to occur over a 23-month duration.
- 14.4.31 A breakdown of this predicted expenditure disaggregated by the main category of spend is given in Table 14.6, showing that project expenditure is estimated to total £101 million in 2024 price terms.

**Table 14.6 – Indicative Pre-development, Construction and Commissioning Cost Estimates (2024 prices)**

Project Component	Cost (£ millions)
Development costs	5.8
Turbines/plant	56.7
Electrical plant	19.5
Civils, Contingency, and Misc. items	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>

- 14.4.32 Based on experience with similar projects elsewhere in Scotland, an assessment of the predicted spatial location of expenditure for each category of costs has been derived. This spatial breakdown of expenditure

<sup>2</sup> Great Britain comprises Scotland, England and Wales (including the outlying islands that they administer, such as the Isle of Wight). The United Kingdom comprises Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

is based on the following areas: the local WSA (THC administrative area); the regional WSA (Scotland); and the national WSA (UK).

## 14.5 Baseline Conditions

14.5.1 This section presents the baseline in the WSA, LSA and LAI.

### Wider Study Area

14.5.2 A baseline review of population and employment has been undertaken which focuses on the local WSA (i.e. in THC administrative area), although data for Scotland and the UK are provided for comparison as appropriate.

### Population

14.5.3 Data from mid-year 2023 (last updated July 2024, National Records of Scotland) confirms the population of The Highlands was 236,330 which represented 4.3% of Scotland's total population of 5,490,100 (mid-year 2023), ranking 7th of Scotland's 32 local authorities. Population of The Highlands over the period from 2001 to 2023, increased by 13.1%. Scotland and the UK populations have grown by approximately 8.4% (NRS) and 13.4% (ONS) respectively, over the same period (2001 mid-year to 2023 mid-year).

14.5.4 The Highlands has a slightly older population than average (within age groups 65-74, 75 and over), with 60.2% considered to be of 'working age' (16-64), compared to 63.2% in Scotland (NRS, 2023 mid-year), and 63.35% in the UK (Statista<sup>3</sup>, 2023 mid-year).

14.5.5 This is reflected in the number of residents aged 65+, which total 24.3% of The Highlands, compared to 20.3% in Scotland (NRS, 2023) and 19.2% in the UK (Statista 2023).

### Labour Market and Supply Chain

14.5.6 There are 125,600 economically active residents in The Highlands (ONS, 2023-2024), which, proportionately, is a higher rate of activity than Scotland or the UK. This shows that despite having a proportionately lower working age population, those living in The Highlands have a greater rate of economic activity.

14.5.7 The higher rate of economic activity is reflected in a lower rate of economic inactivity (those of working age who are not employed nor seeking work; students, sick, retired, for example), in The Highlands when compared to the rest of Scotland and on par with the rest of the UK, whilst The Highlands also has a higher rate of self-employment compared to the rest of Scotland. The unemployment rate in The Highlands is lower (2.6%) than the average in Scotland (3.5%) and the UK (3.7%) (ONS, 2023-2024).

14.5.8 Useful insights into the dynamics of the labour market are often revealed by consideration of the occupational structure of those in employment as shown in Table 14.7 (ONS, 2023-2024).

**Table 14.7 – Employment Occupation by Type<sup>4</sup>**

Sector	The Highlands	Highland Council (%)	Scotland (%)	UK (%)
1: Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	12,500	9.9	8.3	11
2: Professional Occupations	25,400	20.2	26	26.6
3: Associate Professional Occupations	14,300	11.4	15.5	15.3
4: Administrative and Secretarial	9,900	7.9	9.5	9.4
5: Skilled Trades	12,700	10.1	9.3	8.7
6: Caring, Leisure and Other Service	12,100	9.6	9.4	8.4
7: Sales and Customer Service	#	#	6.3	6.2
8: Process, Plant & Machine operatives	9,400	7.5	5.4	5.4
9: Elementary occupations	18,600	14.8	9.8	8.9

# Sample size too small for reliable estimate

<sup>3</sup> Statista, Age Distribution in the UK - <https://www.statista.com/statistics/270370/age-distribution-in-the-united-kingdom/>

<sup>4</sup> Occupation types defined by the Standard Occupational Classification 2020 (SOC 2020) as shown in Table 2: General nature of qualifications, training and experience for occupations in SOC 2020 major groups available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/standardoccupationalclassificationsoc/soc2020/soc2020volume1structureanddescriptionsofunitgroups#principles-and-concepts>

- 14.5.9 Of note in Table 14.7 is the higher proportion of 'Skilled Trades' workers in The Highlands, 0.8 and 1.4 percentage points higher than that of Scotland and the UK respectively. The Highlands also has a higher proportion of 'Process, Plant and Machine Operatives' when compared with Scotland and the UK (a difference of 2.1 percentage points across each). Both of these occupations are likely to include skills and services that would be required for wind farm construction and operation. Conversely, there is a lower proportion of 'Associate Professional' in The Highlands than in its comparatives; and a substantially higher proportion of elementary occupations in The Highlands than that of Scotland and the UK (a difference of 5 and 5.9 percentage points, respectively).
- 14.5.10 Regarding the qualifications attained by the population, degree-qualified (or equivalent) residents of working age account for 48.7% of The Highlands population, which is lower than the Scottish average, but higher than the UK average (ONS, 2023-2024).
- 14.5.11 Regarding qualifications of NVQ1 and above, The Highlands is lower than the average in Scotland and the UK. There are slightly more people with no qualifications (8.7%) than Scotland (8.2%) and the UK (6.5%).
- 14.5.12 According to the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) (ONS, 2023), the average weekly gross earnings for residents of The Highlands was £733.20, which is £6.80 lower than the Scottish average of £740.00, and £3.40 higher than the UK average of £729.80
- 14.5.13 Data on an area's business population can be obtained from the ONS UK Business Counts data series (which is sourced from the Interdepartmental Business Register) (ONS, 2022a). This data source can be used to identify the structure of the local business base by sector; this is potentially useful in assessing the capacity of the local area to host supply chain activity for infrastructure and other large-scale construction projects such as the Proposed Development. Table 14.8 provides data on the structure of the local business base, both in absolute and relative terms.

**Table 14.8 - Employee Jobs by Industry**

Industry	The Highlands (no.)	The Highlands (%)	Scotland (%)	Great Britain (%)
B: Mining and quarrying	400	0.4	1.0	0.1
C: Manufacturing	6,000	5.3	7.0	7.5
D: Electricity, gas, steam and air	1,000	0.9	0.8	0.4
E: Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	2,500	2.2	0.8	0.7
F: Construction	7,000	6.2	5.1	4.8
G: Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	16,000	14.2	13.3	13.7
H: Transportation and storage	6000	5.3	4.6	5.0
I: Accommodation and food service activities	15,000	13.3	8.8	8.0
J: Information and communication	2,250	2.0	3.2	4.6
K: Financial and insurance activities	800	0.7	3.3	3.4
L: Real estate activities	1500	1.3	1.4	1.9
M: Professional, scientific and technical activities	6,000	5.3	7.3	9.3
N: Administrative and support service activities	6,000	5.3	7.0	8.7
O: Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	6,000	5.3	6.5	4.7
P: Education	9,000	8.0	8.5	8.6
Q: Human health and social work activities	20,000	17.7	16.2	13.9
R: Arts, entertainment and recreation	4,000	3.5	2.8	2.6

Industry	The Highlands (no.)	The Highlands (%)	Scotland (%)	Great Britain (%)
S: Other service activities	1,500	1.3	1.7	1.9

14.5.14 While elementary/primary employment in 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' is assumed to be high in Scotland, and more specifically in THC region - these industries are notably important for self-employment. A gap in data exists for Category A: 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' due to complexities in the breaking-down of self-employed workers (in the primary sector) at a local level. Table 14.8 (informed by ONS) does not therefore provide local level data for Category A: 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing'.

14.5.15 The 'Wholesale' and 'Construction' sectors are also above the national average for THC region, indicating potential capacity and skills in the local WSA for manufacturing and construction services, in addition to supply and procurement of equipment.

14.5.16 It should be noted that, due to data limitations, the values for Great Britain have been used instead of the UK, and that persons in self-employment are not included in the data set out in Table 14.8.

#### Tourism Economy

14.5.17 The VisitScotland research and insight statistics for 2023 shows that the total overnight tourism spend for 2023 in The Highlands was £7.64 million (includes both international and domestic visitors). Data from 2023 shows that there were 1,455 tourism business in The Highlands representing 13.6% of all businesses. The tourism related turnover for 2023 was £762 million. Tourism employment for The Highlands in 2022<sup>5</sup> was 18,000 jobs in the sector which represented 14.8% of all employment.

14.5.18 There were 2,285,000 overnight visits to The Highlands by international and domestic visitors in 2023 with an average overnight visitor spend of £333.

14.5.19 The VisitScotland Scotland Visitor Survey 2023 – Highlands Factsheet (2024) shows that 85% of visitors to the area toured around Scotland, staying in two or more places. 85% of respondents in the Highland sample, ranked 'the scenery and landscape' as their number one reason for choosing to visit Scotland.

14.5.20 With regards to overnight visits to The Highlands, 47% were from Scotland and the Rest of Great Britain (12% and 35% respectively), with visitors from Europe, North America, Australasia and the Rest of the World accounting for 22%, 22%, 7% and 1% respectively, as reported in VisitScotland Scotland Visitor Survey 2023 – Highlands Factsheet (2024)<sup>6</sup>.

14.5.21 The VisitScotland Scotland Visitor Survey 2023 – Highlands Factsheet (2024) also includes results from the Scotland-wide Day Visits Survey, showing the most popular leisure attractions or activities in The Highlands region (i.e. the local WSA), where the most popular activity was a hill walk, mountaineering, hike or ramble, closely followed by visiting a castle or a fort etc.

#### **Local Area of Influence**

14.5.22 A baseline review of accommodation businesses in the LAI has been carried out.

#### Accommodation

14.5.23 There are a number of accommodation businesses, including self-catering accommodation and bed and breakfasts, located within the LAI, as illustrated on Figure 14.2. and outlined in **Table 14.9**.

**Table 14-9 Accommodation Businesses within the LAI (5 km)**

Accommodation Receptor	Direction (from site)	Distance (from site)	Potential Visibility (turbines/blades)
Crannach Cottages and Coach House, Strathgarve IV23 2PU	west	388 m	no visibility - potential visibility from grounds
Strathgarve Lodge, Garve IV23 2PU	west	370 m	no visibility - potential visibility from grounds

<sup>5</sup> Note – the VisitScotland research and insight statistics for 2023 did not include values for 2023 tourism employment, 2022 equivalent provided.

<sup>6</sup> Note - 1% accounts for rounding of international visitor numbers, amounting to 53% as per the VisitScotland Scotland Visitor Survey 2023 – Highlands Factsheet (2024)



Accommodation Receptor	Direction (from site)	Distance (from site)	Potential Visibility (turbines/blades)
Rosemount Bothy Cottage, Garve Cottage, Garve, IV23 2PR	west	1 km	Visibility
Silverbridge Lodge, Silverbridge, Garve IV23 2PU	north-west	26 m	Visibility
The Loft, Inchbae Cottage, Garve, IV23 2PG	north-west	5 km	no visibility - potential visibility from grounds
Corriemoillie Lodge, Gorstan, IV23 2PY	west	4.2 km	Visibility
Holly Cottage, Gorstan, IV23 2PX	west	1.9 km	Visibility
The Old Manse, Gorstan IV23 2PX	west	1.6 km	Visibility
Scatwell House, Little Scatwell, Strathconon IV6 7QG	south	5 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
Linsmore Lodges, Tor View, Contin IV14 9EE	south	4.8 km	Visibility
Bluebell Lodge and Others, Larchfield., Contin, Strathpeffer, IV14 9EG	south	4.7 km	Visibility
Loch Achilty Holiday Cottages, Cobblestones, Achilty, IV14 9EG	south	3.9 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
Lochview Guesthouse, Achilty, IV14 9EN	south	3.9 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
Achilty Guest House, Contin, IV14 9EG	south	4.7 km	Visibility
Nutwood House, Nutwood Lane, Strathpeffer IV14 9DT	south-east	4.6 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
Strathview, Windsor Lodge Road, Strathpeffer, IV4 9DX	south-east	4.7 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
Holly Lodge, Golf Course Road, Strathpeffer, IV14 9AR	south-east	4.7 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
Strathpeffer Hotel, The Square, Strathpeffer, IV14 9DF	south-east	4.8 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
Ben Wyvis Hotel, Strathpeffer, IV14 9DN	south-east	4.9 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
The Retreat Hotel, Church Brae, Strathpeffer, IV14 9AW	south-east	4.8 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
OYO Mackays Spa Lodge, 1 The Square, Strathpeffer, IV14 9DW	south-east	4.9 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
The Highland Hotel, Strathpeffer, IV14 9AN	south-east	4.8 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
Woodlands Cottage, Fife Lodge, Strathpeffer, IV14 9AP	south-east	4.7 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)



Accommodation Receptor	Direction (from site)	Distance (from site)	Potential Visibility (turbines/blades)
Highfield Lodge, Strathpeffer, IV14 9BA	south-east	4.7 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
Heatherlie B&B, Strathpeffer, IV14 9AW	south-east	4.8 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
Craigvar, The Square, Strathpeffer, IV14 9DL	south-east	4.9 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
Brunstane Lodge, Golf Course Road, Strathpeffer IV14 9AT	south-east	4.6 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
Strathallan House, Golf Course Road, Strathpeffer, IV14 9AT	south-east	4.6 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
Peffer Lodge, The Lodge, Elsie House, Strathpeffer, IV14 9BT	south-east	5 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)
Kinettas Cottage, 3 Kinettas Cottages, Strathpeffer, IV14 9BB	south-east	4.7 km	no visibility (scoped out of assessment)

14.5.24 Of the individual accommodation businesses identified, each are considered to be of local value and low sensitivity; however, collectively and primarily due to their proximity to NC500 tourist route, they comprise a concentration of tourism-related businesses of regional importance and medium sensitivity.

14.5.25 The Proposed Development is located approximately 35 minutes driving distance from Scotland's largest highland city, Inverness. This greatly expands the catchment area for suitable locations for accommodating the potential workforce, as well as tourists visiting local attractions.

14.5.26 A baseline review of tourism and recreation receptors located within the LAI has been carried out.

#### Recreation

14.5.27 'Formal recreation' facilities are considered to be those with paid or controlled entry, such as a museum. There are three formal recreation facilities within the LAI, these include the Highland Museum of Childhood in Strathpeffer (4.9 km south-east), Strathpeffer Spa Museum (4.8 km south-east) and Strathpeffer Pump Room – temporarily closed (4.9 km south-east). These formal recreation receptors are however located in Strathpeffer, the residential area of which has no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development due to intervening landform (see Figure 7.13b Principal Visual Receptors with ZTV (20 km) in Chapter 7 - LVIA). Formal recreation receptors in Strathpeffer town are therefore not included in the assessment.

14.5.28 The Strathpeffer Spa Golf Club (1888) and 18-hole course is located within 4 km south-east of the site. The course would be considered a formal recreation (and tourism attraction) and includes a shop and clubhouse for function hire, promoting links to Strathpeffer accommodations. The golf course is located on an elevated position north-west of Strathpeffer and the grounds have no visibility of the Proposed Development due to intervening landform. The golf course is therefore excluded from the assessment.

14.5.29 'Informal recreation' facilities are considered to be utilised freely without payment, with outdoor pursuits comprising the predominant recreation type in the LAI, due to the abundance of open upland countryside, scenic hill paths, rivers and lochs locally. Informal recreation activities therefore include walking, hiking, road cycling, mountain-biking, angling, wildlife and bird-watching. These recreation activities typically utilise local hills and mountains (i.e. Ben Wyvis, Little Wyvis); core path networks (i.e. around Strathgarve Forest, Garve and Contin); wildlife reserves (i.e. Ben Wyvis National Nature Reserve); Blackwater River (Ailean Dubh), Loch Garve and numerous smaller lochs and pools south of the site (i.e. Achilty and Tarvie Lochs).

#### Hiking and Hillwalking

14.5.30 Ben Wyvis (1046 m) is the only munro within the LAI and is the closest munro to the population of Inverness. The main summit of the range (Glas Leathad Mor) is approximately 4.4 km north of the site boundary. Three summit Viewpoints within the Ben Wyvis range were selected to represent receptors within the Ben Wyvis Special Landscape Area (SLA); Rounded Mountain Massif: Ben Wyvis unit (LCT 329) and Wild Land Area (WLA29) Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis. These are:

- Viewpoint 4 – Little Wyvis (high point of Little Wyvis);
- Viewpoint 5 – An Cabar (intermediate munro summit, on well-used path route); and
- Viewpoint 6 – Glas Leathad Mor (main munro summit).

- 14.5.31 The Ben Wyvis hill track routes via the Forestry Land Scotland (FLS) access at Garbat approximately 2 km north-west of the site. The path up Ben Wyvis is very well-defined and well-used, which increases accessibility and also reduces “wild character”.
- 14.5.32 While there are few footpaths across much of the area, it is important to note that a well-made vehicular track also zigzags up to Little Wyvis and beyond, commencing from the A835 near Black Water Falls via existing tracks within the site boundary. Little Wyvis (764m) is the only corbett within the LAI and the summit is partially within the site boundary (north-east). See Section 7.10 of Chapter 7 (LIVA) for more information.
- 14.5.33 The hill trails and summits in the Wyvis range are included within the assessment due to proximity to the site, and their value as key recreational receptors within the LAI <sup>7</sup>. Ben Wyvis hill trail and summits are a regional-nationally promoted recreation asset and considered to be of high sensitivity. Little Wyvis hill trail and summit is a regionally promoted recreation asset and considered to be of medium sensitivity.
- 14.5.34 Other popular hill trails include Am Faoghach (18 km north-west), Falls of Measach (24 km north-west), Corrieshalloch (24 km north-west) and A'Chailleach circular (28 km west north-west) – however these lie outwith the LAI and are therefore not included in the assessment.

#### *Cycling*

- 14.5.35 Mountain bikers tend to utilise the popular hill trails in proximity to the site, including the Little Ben Wyvis loop to the Ben Wyvis nature reserve; and the Loch Garve to Rogie Falls loop <sup>8</sup>. The Wyvis loops are therefore assessed as part of the recreational hill trail assessment as detailed previously in Section 14.5.28.
- 14.5.36 Long distance road cycling circuits tend to follow the scenic NC500 routes via either the A835 (0 m adjacent to the site access) to Wester Ross (north-west), Sutherland (north via Ullapool), Beinn Eighe (west via Achnasheen) and Bealach na Ba (south via Achnasheen). The extent of the A835 which is part of the NC500 route (from Contin to Gorstan) is well-utilised by long-distance cyclists, hikers and walkers incorporating Black Water Falls and Rogie routes. This extent of the A835 (NC500) at Garve and Gorstan has visibility of the Proposed Development and is included in the assessment as a key recreational receptor. As this is a regional-nationally promoted route, it is considered to be of high sensitivity.

#### *Fishing*

- 14.5.37 Loch Achonachie Angling Club <sup>9</sup> encompasses an extent of the Upper Blackwater which flows out of Loch Garve down a short stretch into Loch na Croic. The outflow from Loch na Croic to immediately above Rogie Falls marks the boundary of the fishing for salmon and brown trout (fly fishing and spinning) and is approximately 1.9 km south-west. Tarvie Lochs Trout Fishery<sup>10</sup> and Achilty Loch Trout Fishery also operate from the natural lochs midway between the villages of Contin and Garve (c. 2-4 km south of the site) stocked with rainbow, blue and brown trout (permitting for boat, bait and fly fishing available). The south extent of Loch Garve, into Loch na Croic and Blackwater pools are considered to be recreational receptors that will potentially be subject to views of the Proposed Development and are therefore included in the assessment. The waters associated with the Angling Club activities are of local importance and low sensitivity.
- 14.5.38 Loch Luichart and Loch Luichart Estate<sup>11</sup> is located approximately 2.6 km west (at its closest point) and offers stalking (deer, pheasant), salmon fishing, photography activities, ghillie and staking guides. Extents of the estate to the north and west of the Loch will have potential visibility of the Proposed Development.
- 14.5.39 The LVIA (Chapter 7) paragraph 7.10.38 describes visibility from Loch Luichart and surrounding landform:
- “visibility ceases abruptly just to the west of the ridgeline where landform drops steeply down to Loch Luichart, and there is no visibility from the eastern part of the loch. Landform rises steeply again on the western side of Loch Luichart up to the high points of Sgurr Marcasaidh and Crag nan Corrachan, and*

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.alltrails.com/en-gb/scotland/highlands/garve>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.komoot.com/discover/Garve+And+District/@57.6518639,-4.9139181/tours?sport=racebike&map=true&max\\_distance=34574](https://www.komoot.com/discover/Garve+And+District/@57.6518639,-4.9139181/tours?sport=racebike&map=true&max_distance=34574)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.hIGHLANDFISHING.NET/club-waters/upper-black-water>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.tarvielochs.co.uk/about-us>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.lochluichartestate.co.uk/home.aspx>

*intermittent theoretical visibility commences again on the mid slopes of these hills (around the 200 m contour), a minimum of approximately 5 km from the Proposed Development.”*

- 14.5.40 The estate is of local-regional importance and low sensitivity (due to existing and approved wind farms to the north of Loch Luichart).

*Ben Wyvis National Nature Reserve (NNR)*

- 14.5.41 The wildlife, flora and panoramic views associated with Ben Wyvis National Nature Reserve (c. 2 km north of the site) draw visitors to the area in both summer and winter months. Key qualifying interests of the NNR include ptarmigan, mountain hare, nesting dotterel, red deer, dragonflies, butterflies, mosses and rare alpine plants. The nature reserve is a regional-nationally promoted recreation asset, and it is considered to be of high sensitivity.

*Paragliding*

- 14.5.42 The south-western extent of the Ben Wyvis summit plateau is a known paragliding take-off location usually accessed via the car park at Garbat <sup>12</sup>, approximately 4.4 km from the site. The summit of Ben Wyvis is located within the LAI and is assessed as a recreation receptor (as detailed in Section 14.5.28).

*Horse Riding*

- 14.5.43 There are no public facilities for horse riding within the LAI.

*Heritage*

- 14.5.44 Pumping of sulphur and iron-rich wells in Strathpeffer commenced in the 1800s and the wells were utilised for health and recreation purposes, supported by the construction of a railway <sup>13</sup>. Predominant heritage interests are therefore associated with the historic spa village, which is also a Conservation Area, located 4.4 km south-east of the site. Approximately twenty-seven Listed Buildings in Strathpeffer are recorded within and slightly outwith the LAI, and many of these are active accommodation businesses. There are two designated Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Strathpeffer - Castle Leod (GDL00094) and Strathpeffer Spa Gardens (GDL00370), and the Site of Loch Kinellan Crannog (SM6987) is approximately 4.5 km south-east. Locations of designated heritage assets are shown on Figure 11.2a Designated Heritage Assets – Overview (Chapter 11 Archaeology and Cultural Heritage).

- 14.5.45 Woodland is a particular feature of the slopes to the south-east of the Proposed Development, and within the GDL of Castle Leod, as well as the castle itself – which is located on the wooded edge of the strath to the north of Strathpeffer.

- 14.5.46 Loch Kinellan Crannog is located on the water at the centre of Loch Kinellan core path circuit. Although potential visibility is anticipated from the core path itself (see assessment of Viewpoint 8 within the LVIA – Chapter 7), the ZTV (Figure 7.7b ZTV (20 km)) indicates no theoretical visibility across the loch/waterbody extent, including the site of the crannog. Loch Kinellan Crannog is not therefore included in the assessment.

- 14.5.47 Potential impacts upon Viewpoint 8 – Loch Kinellan (i.e. focussing on the core path circuit around Loch Kinellan) are detailed in the LVIA (Chapter 7) and in Sections 14.5.50 and 14.8.59 of this Chapter.

- 14.5.48 Given that the residential extent of Strathpeffer is sheltered to the west and north by intervening landform, the entirety of the town lies outwith the visibility extents of the Proposed Development (see LVIA Figure 7.7b ZTV (20 km)) – this suggests no visibility of the Proposed Development is anticipated from Strathpeffer Conservation Area and Strathpeffer Spa Gardens, and very limited theoretical visibility is anticipated from Castle Leod GDL. These indications are reflected in the LVIA (Chapter 7).

- 14.5.49 Those heritage assets listed in Section 14.5.42 located in Strathpeffer and immediate surrounds are not therefore included in the assessment.

- 14.5.50 Little Garve, Bridge over Black Water (SM2720) located 2.3 km south-west of the site, is a military bridge situated on a military road dating to the 18th century (1757). The Scheduled Monument is a long-humped back bridge, built with arch supports and made of rubble. The bridge forms part of the military road from Contin to Poolewe, Bridge over Blackwater (SM2720) is anticipated to have potential visibility of the Proposed Development (c.4 turbines identified in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Assessment - Chapter 11) and is therefore included in the assessment of recreational assets. The location of this designated heritage asset is shown on Figure 11.2a (Chapter 11).

- 14.5.51 Two Scheduled Monuments lie to the south of the site in proximity to Loch Achilty and Strathconon. SM11056 Carn na Buaille comprises the tumbled stone remains of pre-historic fort. The monument is likely inaccessible to tourists given distance from NC500 and its location on steep rocky ground. The fort is also just outwith the visibility extents of the ZTV, so is discounted from the assessment. The second, a significant and upstanding ceremonial henge, SM1667 Achilty Henge, lies closer to the NC500 on the east

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.paraglidingmap.com/app/site/128019?tab=0>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.strathpeffer.org/visiting-strathpeffer/local-history>

shore of Loch Achilty, and would likely be of historic interest to travellers on the NC500. The henge is however, also outwith the visibility extents of the ZTV and is discounted from assessment.

#### *Long Distance Routes*

- 14.5.52 There are no long-distance routes within the LAI. The Great Glen Way is the closest of Scotland's Great Trails and transects Inverness at approximately 26 km southeast.

#### *Core Paths*

- 14.5.53 There are several Core Path routes outwith the site, within the LAI, that have potential visibility of the site – these are shown on Figure 7.6b Principal Visual Receptors (20 km). The paths are in close proximity to the NC500 tourist route, and provide key recreational connectivity with the historic town of Strathpeffer, in a relatively remote area. The LVIA (Chapter 7) states very broadly that, where there is clear and open visibility of the Proposed Development from core paths within approximately 5.5 km of the Proposed Development, there is potential for significant effects on views – see Figure 7.13b Principal Visual Receptors with ZTV (20 km)
- 14.5.54 As detailed within the LVIA, and also applicable to recreational assessment - visibility effects on views from core paths are not assessed individually due to the number of such routes. Broad conclusions are drawn from the LVIA viewpoint assessment as to the level of visibility and effect that the Proposed Development would have.
- 14.5.55 The core paths listed are considered to be of regional importance and medium sensitivity due to proximity to and connectivity with the NC500 route (Section 14.5.51):
- RC20.02 Tor Breac (c. 330 m west);
  - RC20.01 Silverbridge Circuit (c. 770 m west);
  - RC20.04 Village River Path (c. 390 m west);
  - RC20.03 Kinellan to Strathgarve (c. 425 km south-west, adjoins Contin Core Path network);
  - RC10.02 Rogie Falls (c. 3 km south-east);
  - RC10.06 Contin to Strathgarve (c. 3.3 km south-east);
  - RC10.04 Torrachilty Woods (c. 4.3 km south-east);
  - RC10.01 View Rock (c. 4.3 km south-east);
  - RC10.07 Kinellan Link Path (c. 3.9 km south-east);
  - RC45.01 Loch Kinellan Circuit – north track (c. 4.1 km south-east);
  - RC45.05 Strathpeffer to Jamestown (c. 5.1 km south-east);
  - RC10.03 Mains of Coul (c. 5.1 km south-east); and
  - RC10.05 Contin Island (c. 5.4 km south-east).

#### *Heritage Paths and Rights of Way (RoW)*

- 14.5.56 The historic Fish Road is located approximately 1.8 km west of the site at Gorstan. Fish Road is classified on Scotways<sup>14</sup> as an old Drove Road that provided access for herring traders to curing houses in proximity of Ullapool. The path extends from Little Garve for 10.5 km north to Aultguish Inn, towards Ullapool. The Croick to Black Bridge track extends from Croick approximately 7.1 km north-west and is outwith the LAI. Both paths are also considered Rights of Way within the Highland Council area. As a Right of Way, the Fish Road is located within the LAI and has potential visibility of the Proposed Development. Fish Road is considered to be of regional importance and medium sensitivity. The Croic to Black Bridge RoW lies outwith the LAI and is not included within the assessment. While Fish Road has visibility of the Proposed Development, it is located in close proximity to three or four existing/constructed wind farms north of Loch Luichart, and transects the site boundary of the approved Kirkan Wind Farm (DPEA Reference: WIN-270-14)<sup>15</sup>.

#### *Other Paths*

- 14.5.57 The hill track to Ben Wyvis is accessed via the FLS car park at Garbat approximately 3.2 km north of the site and is included in the LAI. The Little Wyvis hill trail(s) are accessed via Silverbridge within the north-

<sup>14</sup> <https://scotways.com/heritage-path/#zoom=12&lat=57.6306&lon=-4.6335>

<sup>15</sup> Kirkan Wind Farm section 36 Decision Notice (August 2023)  
<https://dpea.scotland.gov.uk/casedetails.aspx?id=121527&T=20>

west of the site. The tracks are not considered RoW or core paths within The Highlands but provide recreational access for both Ben Wyvis and Little Wyvis. The Wyvis hill tracks are therefore included in the assessment as detailed in Sections 14.8.41 and 14.8.57.

#### *Cycling*

- 14.5.58 There are no formal national cycle routes (NCN) located within the LAI. The closest, NCN1 (c.11.5 km east) extends from Inverness to John O'Groats and is part of the Dover to North of Scotland long-distance cycle route. No designated cycle routes are included in the assessment.

#### *Outdoor Access*

- 14.5.59 There are no formal recreation or tourism facilities within the site however, this does not preclude the public from using land or inland waterways within the site for recreational purposes in accordance with the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, as amended, including for walking, cycling or horse riding.
- 14.5.60 From Strava heatmap data (Strava, 2023)<sup>16</sup>, it is evident that land to the north and north-east of the site boundary is used lightly for recreational purposes, mainly hiking and mountain biking.

#### Tourism Attractions

- 14.5.61 Certain recreational activities are of sufficient prominence to draw visitors to the area and are therefore considered to be tourist attractions. Ben Wyvis National Nature Reserve is a nationally important tourism 'destination' that has potential to draw tourists to the area from outwith the LAI. The tourism asset is regional-nationally promoted and is considered to be of high sensitivity.
- 14.5.62 Strathpeffer 'Spa Town' to the south-east of the site has potential to draw tourists to the area from outwith the LAI. As detailed in recreational considerations (Section 14.5.26), several attractions are located within the town including the 19<sup>th</sup> century Spa Gardens pleasure grounds, Strathpeffer Pavillion, the Pump Room, Leod Castle and Gardens, the elevated golf course and a high density of Listed Buildings of high architectural interest. However, the residential centre and much of the surrounds have no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development (as indicated in LVIA, Chapter 7) due to intervening landform to the west of Strathpeffer. Outlying assets i.e. Strathpeffer Golf Course, Castle Leod and the Crannog on Loch Kinellan also have no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development. These tourism attractions in, and in close proximity of Strathpeffer, are therefore not included in the assessment.
- 14.5.63 There are no tourism receptors to the north, west and immediate south of Strathpeffer (within the LAI) that would have potential visibility, other than the southern extents of the core path network (i.e. the Loch Kinellan circuit on the Kinellan to Strathgarve route) as detailed in core path recreational assessment in Section 14.5.52.
- 14.5.64 Garve has few locally important tourism assets (predominantly outdoor recreation), however key interconnected recreational routes (including Tor Breac, Silverbridge Circuit, Village River, Rogie Falls, Contin to Strathgarve, Scatwell circular, Kinellan to Strathgarve) have potential visibility of the Proposed Development and are considered medium sensitivity of local-regional importance. The Contin core path route bypasses the Contin Bridge over the Blackwater, north of Contin (A-Listed Building constructed by Thomas Telford in 1812), this is considered to be of local importance and low sensitivity and is not included in the tourism assessment. Heritage assets in Scatwell have been excluded from the assessment (Scatwell House and Walled Garden 4.9 km south) as ZTV (Figure 7.7b (20 km)) indicates no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development due to intervening landform / topography.
- 14.5.65 Rogie Falls and Black Water Falls are key local tourism receptors in the local area however, would be unlikely to draw visitors from outwith the LAI. These are considered to be of local-regional importance and medium sensitivity due to their proximity to the NC500 road.
- 14.5.66 The A835 is adjacent to the site at the closest north-west boundary (the site access), and at a distance of 1.2 km at the south-west boundary in proximity of Garve. The A835 forms part of the primary route of the NC500, providing NC500 access via Achnasheen, upper Wester Ross etc. Direct access to northern extents of the NC500 can also be achieved from the undesignated A835 north of Gorstan (via Ullapool). These routes are utilised by locals, long-distance road cyclists, hikers, NC500 tourists – drawing visitors from outwith the LAI. The extent of NC500 A835 (from Contin to Gorstan) and undesignated route north of Gorstan (within the LAI) is considered to be of high sensitivity and regional-national importance as a tourism receptor.
- 14.5.67 Loch Luichart Estate and Lodge would also be considered a tourism asset in that visitors would be drawn from outwith the LAI, given the range of activities and services promoted as detailed in Section 14.5.31. The Proposed Development would be potentially visible from the main estate on the north bank, in the northern half of the Loch, and along the entirety of west bank of the loch (north and west of Sgurr

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.strava.com/maps/global-heatmap?sport=All&style=dark&terrain=false&labels=true&poi=true&cPhotos=true&qColor=blue&qOpacity=100#7.14/57.683/-3.984>



Marcasaidh). The estate is considered to be of regional importance and medium sensitivity as a tourism receptor.

#### *Land Use*

- 14.5.68 The site is characterised by elevated open moorland, rocky outcrops (at height), mosaic habitat (peat, blanket bog) and extents of conifer and broadleaved plantation to the south and west boundaries. The land use within the site is associated with rough grazing (sheep) and recreation – and is typically utilised by a wide-range of access-users including hill-walkers, mountain bikers, wildlife observers and potentially passing visitors to the nearby Black Water Falls or NC500 route.
- 14.5.69 Currently the main access track and pedestrian gates to the site are overgrown, and feature cattle grids and dated signage – the track is noted to be ‘green’, natural and enjoyed by walkers<sup>17</sup>.
- 14.5.70 The hill tracks and summits associated with Little Wyvis and Ben Wyvis are utilised by walkers and climbers as detailed in Section 14.5.25; the locally known ‘Wyvis Loops’ are utilised by mountain bikers as detailed in Section 14.5.30; and the natural biodiversity interests associated with the NNR are detailed in Section 14.5.34.
- 14.5.71 The Land Reform Act (Scotland) Act 2003 conferred general access rights over much of rural Scotland. The lack of formally designated paths does not necessarily preclude the right of the public to use it for recreational purposes including for walking, cycling and wildlife observation.

#### **Future Baseline**

- 14.5.72 In the future baseline i.e. ‘do nothing’ scenario, it is considered reasonable to predict that there would be no substantial change to the current baseline for socio-economics, recreation, tourism and land use.

## **14.6 Embedded Mitigation**

- 14.6.1 At this stage in the development process, it is not possible to quantify economic benefits in respect of individual supply chain companies, as contracts would not be let until after consent is granted. However, it is evident from recent wind farm construction experience in Scotland (including a BVGA report on economic benefits) (BVG Associates, 2017) that suppliers of a wide range of goods and services within the local WSA and Scotland as a whole have the potential to benefit from the Proposed Development. The 2023 annual Supply Chain Impact Statement by Scottish Renewables has revealed that 89% of Scotland’s renewable energy supply chain believe renewable energy is the biggest economic opportunity facing Scotland, 83% having recruited new employees as a result of opportunities in the renewable energy industry.
- 14.6.2 Procurement of goods and services can certainly have an important effect on local economies. The potential level of expenditure set out in Table 14.5 provides an opportunity for the supply chain within the local and regional WSAs to benefit from the Proposed Development over the 23-month construction period.
- 14.6.3 The types of supply chain companies that could benefit from this expenditure is wide ranging, and is likely to include the following:
- traffic management;
  - materials supply;
  - plant hire;
  - vehicle servicing;
  - vehicle fuel supply;
  - forestry services;
  - vegetation management;
  - fencing;
  - site security;
  - waste management;
  - drainage;
  - planting and seeding;
  - visiting workforce accommodation; and

<sup>17</sup> A. Danby, Wild Roots Mountain Guiding – email dated 16/09/23.

- food and drink services for the visiting workforce.
- 14.6.4 The Applicant acknowledges the importance of employing good practice measures in maximising local procurement, taking into consideration resources such as the Renewables UK Good Practice Guidance 2014: 'Local Supply Chain Opportunities in Onshore Wind' (RenewableUK, 2014). The Applicant also recognises the value of building upon recent UK best practices in innovative local procurement, which may include implementing a Local Contractor Policy. In this regard, primary contractors that demonstrate a clear commitment to increasing local content in their supply chains may receive additional consideration in the tendering process.
- 14.6.5 The Applicant commissioned Planning Aid Scotland to conduct an independent engagement process with members of the public to inform an Outdoor Management and Enhancement Plan for the Proposed Development. The engagement process has identified a number of opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and outdoor spaces, including improvements to pathways and signage. The addition of information boards, benches, and wildlife hides could offer further learning opportunities, and wildlife management and the planting of native species could enrich the natural environment, enhancing the experience for both the local community and visitors. Further detail is provided in the outline Outdoor Management and Enhancement Plan (Appendix 14.2).
- 14.6.6 The Applicant encourages local businesses and potential suppliers to register with them to ensure they are informed of the procurement process. The Applicant will also hold 'meet the buyer' days ahead of construction if the application is consented.

## 14.7 Receptors Brought Forward for Assessment

- 14.7.1 A review of sensitive receptors within the study areas has identified that the key receptors requiring assessment for the potential for significant effects relating to the Proposed Development are:
- for the WSA – employment and economic figures;
  - in the LSA – local tourism economy with a focus on accommodation; and
  - in the LAI – recreation assets, and tourism assets.
- 14.7.2 The potential for effects is considered for the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development.
- 14.7.3 Based on the review of economic and labour market conditions in the three spatial parts of the WSA, with respect the employment and GVA indicators:
- for the local WSA (i.e., the Highland Council area) – the receptor has a high level of sensitivity;
  - for the regional WSA (i.e., Scotland) – the receptor has a medium level of sensitivity; and
  - for the national WSA (UK) – the receptor has a low level of sensitivity.

## 14.8 Potential Effects

- 14.8.1 The potential for socio-economic effects during construction and operation are assessed in turn for each of three spatial areas: the local authority area (Highland Council administrative area); Scotland; and the United Kingdom.

### Construction Effects

#### Wider Study Area – Socio-economics

#### *Gross Effects during Construction*

- 14.8.2 Estimates of the expected direct construction phase employment implications of the Proposed Development have been derived using commercially confidential information provided for use in the assessment by the Applicant with respect to likely construction and installation phase expenditure, as well as assumptions obtained from the following sources
- employment and GVA multipliers for Scotland, obtained from Input-Output tables for Scotland (1998-2020) published by the Scottish Government;
  - employment and GVA multipliers for the UK obtained from Input-Output tables published by the UK Government; and
  - ratios of turnover per unit of GVA and GVA per employee have been derived from Scottish and UK Government data.
- 14.8.3 Using information supplied by the Applicant as well as benchmark data from the sources summarised above, Table 14.10 sets out estimates of direct gross employment and GVA effects that have been derived



for three spatial areas: local WSA (Highland Council area); regional WSA (Scotland); and national WSA (UK). These estimates are set out for both the anticipated construction period as a whole (i.e., 23 months) and on an average per annum basis during construction. The GVA estimates are expressed in 2024 prices.

**Table 14.10 – Estimates of Gross Construction Phase GVA and Employment Effects**

Spatial area	GVA £million	GVA per annum (£million)	Employment (person years)	Employment p.a. (person years)
Highland Council area)	4.7	2.5	51	26
Scotland (total, including Highland Council area)	16.6	8.7	179	93
UK (total, including Scotland)	28.3	14.7	304	158

14.8.4 Assuming the Proposed Development proceeds as intended by the Applicant, GVA worth a total of £4.7 million is predicted to be generated in the local WSA economy during the construction, and commissioning phase. This is equivalent to £2.5 million per annum over the construction period. This would represent an approximate temporary 0.3% increase in the size of the local WSA economy, so the magnitude of this effect is assessed to be Low.

14.8.5 The equivalent predicted GVA total for the regional WSA is £16.6 million (averaging £8.7 million p.a.) and for the national WSA it is £28.3 million (averaging £14.7 million p.a.). In both cases the magnitude of these effects is less than 0.1%, so the magnitude of the effect on these areas is assessed to be Negligible.

- The sensitivity of the local WSA economy is considered to be high. The magnitude of change is assessed to be low. The result is assessed to be a **moderate** (positive) effect on the local WSA which is not significant in EIA terms.
- The sensitivity of the regional WSA economy is considered to be medium. The magnitude of change is assessed to be negligible. The result is assessed to be a **negligible** (positive) effect on the local WSA which is not significant in EIA terms.
- The sensitivity of the national WSA economy is considered to be low. The magnitude of change is assessed to be negligible. The result is assessed to be a **negligible** (positive) effect on the local WSA which is not significant in EIA terms.

14.8.6 With respect to construction phase employment, a total of 51 person-years of employment are estimated to be generated in the local WSA economy during the anticipated 23-month construction period. This amounts to an average of 26 person-years per annum during the construction period. This would represent an approximate temporary 0.2% increase in the size of the local WSA economy, so the magnitude of this effect is assessed to be Low.

14.8.7 The equivalent predicted employment total for the regional WSA (Scotland) is 179 person-years (averaging 93 p.a.), and for the national WSA (UK) it is 304 person-years (averaging 158 p.a.). In both cases the magnitude of these effects is less than 0.1%, so the magnitude of the effect on these areas is assessed to be Negligible.

- The sensitivity of the local WSA labour market is considered to be high. The magnitude of change could be considered to be low. The result is assessed to be a **moderate** (positive) effect on the local WSA which is not significant in EIA terms.
- The sensitivity of the regional WSA labour market is considered to be medium. The magnitude of change is assessed to be negligible. The result is assessed to be a **negligible** (positive) effect on the local WSA which is not significant in EIA terms.
- The sensitivity of the national WSA economy is considered to be low. The magnitude of change is assessed to be negligible. The result is assessed to be a **negligible** (positive) effect on the local WSA which is not significant in EIA terms.

#### *Net Effect during Construction*

14.8.8 So far, the focus has been on the gross impact of construction activity at three spatial levels. The next step is to consider and quantify the potential net additional impact by taking into account a number of additional concepts:

- **Leakage:** is the proportion of Proposed Development outcomes (e.g. jobs, GVA) that benefit individuals or organisations located beyond the relevant area of impact (e.g. THC local area). Leakage is generally higher at a more local level.
- **Displacement:** is an estimate of the economic activity hosted by the site that would be diverted from other businesses in the spatial impact area under consideration.
- **Multipliers:** an estimate for further economic activity associated with additional income and/or Proposed Development procurement activity stimulated by Proposed Development activity within the spatial impact area under consideration.

14.8.9 The specific values assumed for employment and GVA multipliers for Scotland and the UK are sourced from national Input-Output (Supply and Use) tables dating from 2020 and vary by the Proposed Development expenditure category.<sup>18</sup> Assumptions regarding likely local levels of leakage are based on local labour market and demographic indicators and experience of other wind farm projects located in Scotland.

14.8.10 Table 14.11 summarises the derived estimates for net construction effects on GVA and employment after allowing for the additionality factors. As with the gross effects, the net effects are presented in both overall terms and on an average per annum basis.

**Table 14.11 – Estimates of Net Additional Construction Phase GVA and Employment Effects**

Spatial area	GVA £million	GVA per annum (£million)	Employment (person years)	Employment p.a. (person years)
Highland Council area	4.7	2.4	50	26
Scotland (total, including local WSA)	20.2	10.5	218	113
UK (total, including Scotland)	31.6	16.5	340	177

14.8.11 With respect to employment, a total of 50 person-years of net additional temporary employment is predicted to be generated in the local WSA economy during the anticipated construction phase of the Proposed Development (averaging 26 p.a.). The equivalent total for the regional WSA (Scotland) is 218 person-years (averaging 113 p.a.), and for the national WSA (UK) it is 340 person-years (averaging 177 p.a.).

14.8.12 In 2022 there was an estimated 136,000 jobs located within the Highland Council local authority area (ONS, Jobs Density data series, 2022). The temporary addition of 26 jobs (per annum) to this total would increase the number by 0.02%. The magnitude of this change is therefore assessed to be Low.

14.8.13 In the case of both the regional WSA and national WSA, the magnitude of change for net additional employment is assessed to be negligible.

14.8.14 In terms of the sensitivity assessment for the net additional employment results:

- The sensitivity of the local WSA labour market is considered to be high. The magnitude of change could be considered to be low. The result is assessed to be a **moderate** (positive) effect on the local WSA which is not significant in EIA terms.
- The sensitivity of the regional WSA labour market is considered to be medium. The magnitude of change is assessed to be negligible. The result is assessed to be a **negligible** (positive) effect on the local WSA which is not significant in EIA terms.
- The sensitivity of the national WSA labour market is considered to be low. The magnitude of change is assessed to be negligible. The result is assessed to be a **negligible** (positive) effect on the local WSA which is not significant in EIA terms.

14.8.15 In terms of net additional output (GVA), a net additional total of £2.4 million of GVA per annum is predicted to be generated by the Proposed Development in the local WSA economy during the anticipated construction and commissioning phase. The equivalent predicted total for the regional WSA (Scotland) is £10.5 million and for the national WSA (UK) it is £16.5 million.

14.8.16 As of 2022, the estimated annual value of output in the HC area was approximately £6.96 billion (ONS, 2022). When adjusted to 2024 prices, this value is estimated to be £7.63 billion. The temporary augmentation of the local economy by £2.4 million per annum would increase the size of the local economy by around 0.03%. The sensitivity of the regional WSA economy is considered to be low.

14.8.17 In the case of both the regional WSA and national WSA, the magnitude of change for net additional economic activity (GVA) is assessed to be negligible.

14.8.18 In terms of the sensitivity assessment for the net additional economic output (GVA) results:

- The sensitivity of the local WSA economy is considered to be high. The magnitude of change could be considered to be low. The result is assessed to be a **moderate** (positive) effect on the local WSA which is not significant in EIA terms.
- The sensitivity of the regional WSA economy is considered to be medium. The magnitude of change is assessed to be negligible. The result is assessed to be a **negligible** (positive) effect on the local WSA which is not significant in EIA terms.

<sup>18</sup> A link to the Scottish Government's Supply and Use tables used in the assessment is provided in the Reference section at the end of this chapter.

- The sensitivity of the national WSA economy is considered to be low. The magnitude of change is assessed to be negligible. The result is assessed to be a **negligible** (positive) effect on the local WSA which is not significant in EIA terms.

#### Local Study Area

##### *Effect on the Local Tourism Economy During Construction*

- 14.8.19 The construction period for the Proposed Development would be expected to last approximately 23 months and would be expected to benefit the local economy through expenditure on purchases of accommodation, food, drink, fuel, etc. that are needed to sustain the construction workforce. These positive effects would be experienced mainly by businesses within the tourism sector, or those that are partly dependent on tourism for their income e.g. the retail sector. These likely effects are included within the quantification of the net employment effects that are reported in **Table 14.11**.
- 14.8.20 Anecdotal evidence arising from other wind farm construction projects shows that local businesses such as accommodation providers generally welcome the enhanced level of occupancy that is achieved due to construction contractors using their accommodation during periods of the year that are traditionally considered 'low season'. The sensitivity of these receptors is considered to be medium, and the magnitude of change low due to the intermittent and temporary nature of the change. The effect is **negligible** (positive) and therefore not significant.
- 14.8.21 However, in rural areas peak season occupancy rates are generally high, and consequently the use of holiday accommodation by construction workers during the peak season could potentially lead to displacement of tourism visitors.
- 14.8.22 For accommodation businesses it is unlikely that displacement of tourism visitors would result in an adverse effect to the individual business, as occupancy rates would be maintained at a high level. Indeed, the overall impact of the 23-month construction period is likely to result in increased occupancy during the period of construction activity, because of the need to accommodate workers during the off-season (e.g., the October-March period) when recreational tourism visits are usually much lower compared to the summer months.
- 14.8.23 It is acknowledged that the displacement of tourism visitors from the LSA could result in a temporary reduction in expenditure by visitors at non-accommodation businesses such as visitor attractions and recreational businesses. This potential temporary effect on the non-accommodation tourism economy is likely to be at least partially offset by construction workers spending on goods and services, such as food and drink, but the net effect on the non-accommodation portion of the tourism economy has the potential to be adverse.
- 14.8.24 However, the site is located within an approximate 37-minute driving distance of Scotland's largest Highland city, Inverness. This increases the potential supply of accommodation options for both construction workers and tourists, resulting in a sensitivity of medium.
- 14.8.25 The magnitude of the change accounts for the potential abundance of commutable accommodation locations for the construction workers, as well as the relative commutable distance of the local area from nearby Inverness. This results in a low magnitude of change and a resultant **minor** adverse temporary effect which is not significant.

#### Local Area of Influence (LAI) – Tourism, Recreation and Land Use

##### *Tourism Effects During Construction*

- 14.8.26 Local businesses, such as food and drink businesses and, to a lesser extent due to the location, accommodation businesses, may experience positive effects during construction due to use by construction workers. The magnitude of change may be high for individual businesses, and as the sensitivity of these receptors is low the effect would be **moderate** (positive). However, given the temporary nature of the potential effect it is considered that the effect would not be significant.
- 14.8.27 Analysis of visibility from surrounding settlements (see Figure 7.7b Zone of Theoretical Visibility (20 km)) confirms limited visibility at lower elevations to the east of the Proposed Development – and no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from Strathpeffer and immediate surrounds given intervening landform - notably the hills to the north-west of the golf course which include Creag Ulladail, Cnoc Aulaidh and Raven Rock. Tourism and recreation assets within Strathpeffer residential area and proximal surrounds are therefore scoped out of the assessment as no theoretical visibility is anticipated. Accommodation businesses located in Strathpeffer (with no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development) as listed in **Table 14-9** are therefore not included in the construction and operational assessments.
- 14.8.28 Of the individual accommodation businesses identified (within 5 km and with visibility of the Proposed Development), each are considered to be of local value and low sensitivity; however, collectively and

primarily due to their proximity to NC500 tourist route, they comprise a concentration of tourism-related businesses of regional importance and medium sensitivity. Identified accommodations in the LAI depend on access via the A835 which will be temporarily altered. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be in place to manage the temporary construction impacts on traffic flow and also to ensure access is maintained for accommodations along this route (i.e. Garve, Tarvie, Contin). The magnitude of change associated with construction effects on accommodation businesses is medium. Construction effects on accommodation businesses are therefore considered to be a **Moderate** (Significant, adverse) effect which is reduced to **Minor** due to the intermittent/temporary nature of the works and because impacts on the roads would be managed by the implementation of a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) (see Chapter 13 Site Access, Traffic and Transport for more information). The adverse experience for individual travellers is only likely to be experienced for a short period of time when abnormal loads are being delivered to site and will be limited to the proposed construction hours of working (which excludes evenings and Sundays).

- 14.8.29 Ben Wyvis NNR is a regional-nationally promoted recreation asset of ecological and biodiversity interest (multiple ecological designations include SSSI and SPA) – and it is considered to be a tourism receptor with an associated high-sensitivity. The magnitude of change associated with construction effects on the NNR is low. Vehicular access to the NNR via the FLS carpark at Garbat may be subject to temporary disturbance, considered to be **Moderate** (Significant), reducing to **Minor** due to the temporary nature of works and management of road disturbance via implementation of a CTMP.
- 14.8.30 Little Garve Bridge over Blackwater (SM2720) is a historic tourism asset that could potentially draw visitors from outwith the LAI. It is therefore considered to be of local-regional importance and medium sensitivity. The magnitude of change associated with construction effects on Little Garve Bridge is low. Direct construction effects are unlikely however some minor changes to accessing tourist receptors along the A835 may be experienced on a temporary basis. Construction effects are considered to be **Minor** (Not Significant) due to relative proximity to Proposed Development access. Provided that a CTMP will be in place, pedestrian access will be maintained to the bridge – and construction is unlikely to detract from the amenity of visiting tourists.
- 14.8.31 Rogie Falls and Black Water Falls are key tourism assets in the local area that could potentially draw visitors from outwith the LAI. These are considered to be of local-regional importance and medium sensitivity. The magnitude of change associated with construction effects on Rogie and Blackwater Falls is low. Direct construction effects are unlikely, however some minor changes to accessing the tourist receptors may be experienced on a temporary basis. For Rogie Falls, construction effects are considered to be **Minor** (Not Significant), reduced to **Negligible** given a greater distance from the Proposed Development access. **Minor** (Not Significant) construction effects are anticipated for Black Water Falls due to increased proximity to the Proposed Development access. A CTMP will be provided, and access will be maintained to both tourism receptors – and construction is unlikely to detract from the amenity of visiting tourists.
- 14.8.32 The extent of NC500 A835 (from Contin to Gorstan) and undesignated route north of Gorstan (within the LAI) is considered to be of high sensitivity and regional-national importance as a tourism receptor. The magnitude of change associated with construction effects on this extent of the N500 / A835 is medium. Construction effects on the A835/NC500 would be considered to be **Major**, reducing to **Moderate** (Significant, adverse) due to the temporary nature of the construction works and the adoption of a CTMP. Temporary effects would be managed via the implementation of a CTMP to maintain access, safety and movement of tourist (and local) traffic alongside other recreational road users (i.e. long-distance cyclists) along the identified extent of the route.
- 14.8.33 Loch Luichart Estate is considered to be of regional importance and low sensitivity as a tourism receptor. Access to the Luichart estate is achieved via the A832 (west) at Gorstan. The magnitude of change associated with construction effects on the Loch Luichart Estate is low. Access would not be directly impacted by construction, and CTMP measures would be in place on the A835. Construction would be unlikely to impact low baseline tourist numbers at this remote tourism receptor. Direct construction impacts are unlikely to affect this receptor due to the intervening A835 and distance from the Proposed Development resulting in a **Negligible** and not significant effect.

#### *Recreational Effect During Construction*

- 14.8.34 Ben Wyvis/Little Wyvis Hill Trails and Summits are popular for mountain biking and paragliding as well as hiking and wildlife watching. Ben Wyvis hill trail and summit is a regional and nationally promoted recreation asset and is considered to be of high sensitivity. The magnitude of change associated with construction effects on the Ben Wyvis and Little Wyvis Hill Trails and Summits are medium. A CTMP will be active during the construction phase which may impact access/egress to tracks along the west and south A835. This **Major** and Significant (adverse) effect would be reduced to **Moderate** due to the temporary nature of the works. Ben Wyvis access is located approximately 4km north of the Proposed Development access. Visitors to Ben Wyvis are unlikely to follow the minor trails associated with the lightly-used Little Wyvis trails and summits. Given the intervening distance, and lower recreational usage associated with Little Wyvis, the Moderate (Significant) construction effect may be reduced to Minor (Not Significant). Provisions



for recreational users accessing the FLS carpark (near Garbat) or immediately west of the site would be in place to ensure accesses and safety is maintained for recreational users of Ben Wyvis and Little Wyvis hill trails and summits.

- 14.8.35 The extent of the A835 (NC500) at Garve and Gorstan has partial visibility of the Proposed Development and is considered a regional-nationally promoted route of high sensitivity. The magnitude of change associated with construction effects on this extent of the NC500/A835 is medium. Construction effects on the A835/NC500 would be considered to be **Major**, reducing to **Moderate** (Significant, adverse) due to the temporary nature of the construction works. Temporary effects would be managed via the implementation of a CTMP to maintain access, safety and movement of traffic alongside other recreational road users (i.e. long-distance cyclists) along the identified extent of the route.
- 14.8.36 Waters associated with Loch Achonachie Angling Club i.e. the south extent of Loch Garve, into Loch na Croic and Blackwater pools are considered to be recreational receptors of local importance and with associated low sensitivity due to the number of similar recreational fisheries within the LAI. The magnitude of change associated with construction effects on Loch Achonachie angling waters is low. There may be some temporary construction effects in the form of disturbance to access/egress to the fishery via the A835, which is considered to be a **negligible** and Not Significant effect due to the temporary nature of the works. Access to and egress from the site will be managed via the implementation of a CTMP.
- 14.8.37 Anglers on fishing waters within the LAI – specifically the Black Water River, Loch Garve, Achilty and Tarvie Lochs downstream of the site, would not be adversely affected during the construction of the Proposed Development. Good practice pollution prevention measures (as outlined in Chapters 10, 17 and the outline Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP), Technical Appendix 3.1) would be in place to ensure that water quality and in turn the fish in the River Black Water downstream of the Proposed Development are not adversely affected. The effect on water quality and fish habitats (as presented in Chapters 8 and 10) is assessed as **negligible** which will not result in a significant effect with the good practice measures in place.
- 14.8.38 As noted in Chapter 8, Ecology a Fish Monitoring Plan would be implemented, including provision for pre, during- and post-construction fish monitoring in watercourses on and adjoining the site in consultation with the Cromarty Firth Fishery Board. The magnitude of change on anglers is assessed to be negligible which would result in a **negligible** effect and therefore Not Significant.
- 14.8.39 Access to Loch Luichart Estate is achieved via the A832 (west) at Gorstan. Access would not be directly impacted by construction activities and a CTMP would be implemented on the A835 to maintain traffic flow and access to recreational assets. Visitor numbers are unlikely to be affected during the construction phase, and baseline recreational visitors are anticipated to be relatively low at this remote receptor. Direct construction impacts are unlikely to affect the Loch Luichart Estate due to the intervening A835 and distance from the Proposed Development. Construction effects on the recreational amenity of the estate (low sensitivity/low magnitude) are considered to be **negligible** and Not Significant.
- 14.8.40 Ben Wyvis NNR is a regional-nationally promoted recreation asset of ecological and biodiversity interest and is considered to be of high sensitivity. The magnitude of change associated with construction effects on the NNR is low. Vehicular access to the FLS carpark at Garbat may be subject to temporary disturbance, with such effects considered to be **Moderate** (significant), reduced to **Minor** (not significant, adverse) due to the temporary nature of works and management of road disturbance via implementation of a CTMP. The NNR is approximately 2 km north/uphill of the Proposed Development but is unlikely to generate significant environmental effects in terms of ecological, hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity during construction that would impact the integrity of the NNR as a recreation asset. Relevant management plans will be in place prior to construction (i.e. Final NEMP (Outline NEMP provided as Appendix 8.5), Peat Management Plan (Appendix 10.2). Embedded mitigation and good practice measures, would protect the habitats present within the NNR and with respect to ecology interest of the Ben Wyvis NNR, effects are scoped out of detailed assessment (including watercourses). See Chapter 8 for further detail.
- 14.8.41 The Core Path network serving Garve, Contin and west of Strathpeffer is in proximity to the NC500 tourist route, and provides key recreational connectivity, and essentially form a cluster of low sensitivity receptors. The Core Paths to the west and south of the Proposed Development are therefore considered of regional importance and medium sensitivity. The magnitude of change associated with construction effects on the core path network is negligible. Construction works are unlikely to directly impact the core path network and will have an associated **negligible** magnitude of change, resulting in **negligible** (Not Significant effects from construction). Recreational accesses to these routes via the A835 will be maintained via the implementation of a CTMP.
- 14.8.42 Fish Road is the only RoW and Heritage Path within the LAI with potential visibility of the Proposed Development (of medium sensitivity). Magnitude of change associated with construction effects on Fish Road is low. Fish Road is located adjacent to the west of the Proposed Development, separated by the A835 and intervening distance (1.8 km). Fish Road is in very close proximity to the existing constructed Corriemoillie and Loch Luichart (and Extensions) wind farms, and the heritage path transects the approved Kirkan Wind Farm site boundary from south-east to north-west, resulting in a low magnitude of change

from the existing baseline. Construction effects (landscape) would therefore be **Minor**, reducing to **Negligible** given the existing baseline and temporary nature of works.

#### *Land Use Effects During Construction*

- 14.8.43 Current land uses within the site (hill-walking, mountain-biking, wildlife observation etc.) would be affected throughout the construction period by construction activities. Whilst some parts of the site may not be directly affected for lengthy periods, it is expected that public access would be controlled as part of the site health and safety plan. Data obtained from Strava heatmaps<sup>16</sup> shows the access track is well-utilised, and Wyvis Loops (including the extents of informal hill trails connecting Carn Fearna, Little Wyvis and Ben Wyvis) are lightly utilised for recreation to the north-west and north, whilst the predominant site has little usage in this regard.
- 14.8.44 Given that the Ben Wyvis/Little Wyvis hill trails and summits are regionally and nationally promoted recreation assets considered to be of high sensitivity – this sensitivity would also apply to land use considerations of the tracks within the site, given their connectivity. The magnitude of change associated with construction effects on Ben Wyvis / Little Wyvis Hill Trails and Summits is medium. A CTMP will be active during the construction phase which may impact pedestrian access/egress to the site via the A835. This **Major** and Significant (adverse) effect would be reduced to **Moderate** and Significant (adverse) effect due to the temporary nature of the works. Ben Wyvis access is located approximately 4km north of the Proposed Development access. Visitors to Ben Wyvis are unlikely to follow the minor trails associated with the lightly- used Little Wyvis trails and summits. Given the intervening distance, and lower recreational usage associated with Little Wyvis, the Moderate (Significant) construction effect may be reduced to Minor (Not Significant).
- 14.8.45 If the site is utilised for rough grazing, this would be temporarily suspended during construction to remove the potential for conflict between livestock and construction workers, plant and machinery. The site is considered to be of less than local importance in terms of its use for agriculture. There is suitable alternative land available for grazing in the surrounding area. The site is therefore considered to be of negligible sensitivity, and the magnitude of change considered to be low due to the temporary nature of the construction period. The effect is therefore **negligible**, and not significant.
- 14.8.46 Provisions for recreational users accessing the FLS carpark (near Garbat) or immediately west of the site would be in place in the form of an agreed Access Management Plan (AMP) to ensure accesses and safety is maintained for recreational users of the interconnected informal 'Wyvis Loops' trails and summits.

#### **Operational Effects**

- 14.8.47 The potential for socio-economic effects during the operational phase is assessed for the local WSA (Highland Council area), the regional WSA (Scotland), and for the UK. The operational phase of the Proposed Development is expected to last for 50 years.

#### Wider Study Area – Socio-economics

##### *Potential Effects on the WSA*

- 14.8.48 If the Proposed Development were permitted and built, when it became operational it would require a small team of personnel to provide servicing, maintenance, repairs, and other operational support. Based on information provided by the Applicant, it is estimated that an annual average of three permanent locally-based direct jobs are likely to be created by the Proposed Development during its operational phase.
- 14.8.49 In addition to the direct effects on employment there would also be indirect effects generated throughout the operational phase. Indirect effects arise from the placing of contracts with other businesses, both in the local WSA and elsewhere in the regional WSA (Scotland) supplying services and materials to the Proposed Development during its operational phase. Examples of such supply chain activity would include the procurement of:
- site maintenance services;
  - waste management and recycling services;
  - habitat management services;
  - contractors for road maintenance, ditching, vegetation management, fencing and gate repair, etc;
  - provision of fuel supplies as well as other consumables, such as lubricants, spare parts, office supplies, etc;
  - plant and equipment hire; and
  - turbine inspections.
- 14.8.50 In addition, local businesses such as petrol filling stations, shops, cafes, restaurants, pubs, hotels and other accommodation providers may experience an increase in revenues during the operational phase (e.g. expenditure from visiting technicians needed for wind farm equipment maintenance and servicing).

- 14.8.51 Overall, based on experience with similar projects elsewhere in Scotland it is expected that there is likely to be an annual average of between eight and ten indirect jobs created in the operational and maintenance supply chain for the Proposed Development located within the local WSA.
- 14.8.52 In terms of the local direct and indirect jobs creation, the overall total number of jobs that could be created in the local WSA area is between 11 and 13 jobs during the operational phase.
- 14.8.53 The sensitivity of the local WSA labour market is considered to be high. Given that there are around 136,000 jobs currently located in the local WSA, this stimulus to local job creation is judged to be a negligible change. The effect is **minor** (positive) and therefore is Not Significant.
- 14.8.54 The impact effects for both the regional and national WSA areas are both also assessed to be negligible:
- for Scotland, a medium receptor sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change results in a negligible effect; and
  - for the UK, a low receptor sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change results in a negligible effect.

#### Local Area of Influence – Recreation and Tourism

##### *Recreation Effect During Operation*

- 14.8.55 Visual effects on recreational receptors are assessed in Chapter 7 (LVIA), and the findings have been considered in the assessment below. Although it is important to note that a significant landscape and visual effect does not necessarily result in a significant socio-economic effect.
- 14.8.56 Analysis of visibility from surrounding settlements (see Figure 7.7b Zone of Theoretical Visibility (20 km)) confirms limited visibility at lower elevations to the east of the Proposed Development – and no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from Strathpeffer (and immediate surrounds) given the intervening landform. Intervening topography is associated with the lower slopes of the Ben Wyvis massif and Strath Sgitheach to the immediate north-west of Strathpeffer - Creag Ulladail, Cnoc Aulaidh and Raven Rock provide a backdrop of forested (coniferous) slopes to the town. No Viewpoints representative of Strathpeffer town were selected in the LVIA (Chapter 7) for this reason – the closest located at Loch Kinellan in the far south-west of Strathpeffer (VP8) and Knockfarrel Fort approximately 1.6 km east of Strathpeffer (VP11).
- 14.8.57 Recreation and accommodation receptors within Strathpeffer residential area and immediate surrounds with no theoretical visibility are therefore scoped out of the assessment (including Strathpeffer Golf Course).
- 14.8.58 Visibility of turbines from accommodation businesses is shown in ZTV Figure 14.2 and visibility of turbine numbers varies for each of the accommodation businesses assessed. However, during the operational lifetime of the Proposed Development, baseline numbers of tourists utilising local accommodation businesses are unlikely to change perceptibly, and in line with Biggar's 2021 study, wind farms are unlikely to deter tourists/reduce tourist numbers. There are c.3-4 constructed and approved wind farms within the LAI (Corriemoillie, Luichart and Kirkan) and views of wind turbines are already fairly typical in the study area.
- 14.8.59 The Little Wyvis trail and summit is not signposted, nor is it on the main, more popular Ben Wyvis route – and will likely be subject to smaller numbers of walkers (Viewpoint 4 in the LVIA – Chapter 7). Little Wyvis trail and summit will have visibility of the Proposed Development, specifically from the west and south-facing slopes given the addition of short extent of new access track, and orientation of Little Wyvis landform towards the Proposed Development. There is however an existing vehicular track to the summit of Little Wyvis – providing human feature and accessibility to the edge of the Wild Land Area (LVIA – Chapter 7). Little Wyvis is regionally-promoted and considered of medium sensitivity. The magnitude of change associated with operational effects on the Little Wyvis trail and summit is low. Operational effects of the Proposed Development on Little Wyvis trails and summit is considered to be **Moderate** (Significant, Adverse) reducing to **Minor** given that utilisation or amenity of Mountain Bikers (MTB) and walkers is unlikely to reduce, given the benefit provided by a new extent of track at Carn Fearn.
- 14.8.60 The two key Ben Wyvis Viewpoints assessed as part of the LVIA (Chapter 7) are VP5 – An Cabar (intermediate summit) and VP 6 – Glas Leathad Mor (main summit). Assessment and wirelines concluded theoretical visibility of the blade tips of three turbines from the main summit of Glas Leathad Mor but towers and hubs were shown to be screened by the elevated landform of the Viewpoint. Although some broader visibility is anticipated from the corbett An Cabar and trails at lower elevations, the munro summit of Ben Wyvis is considered 'the main achievement of the walk into the Ben Wyvis massif' (LVIA Chapter 7).
- 14.8.61 Based on visibility impacts from the main munro summit of Glas Leathad Mor, the resulting operational effect is therefore considered to be of Minor significance with the exception of increased intermittent visibility at the lower ridges and trails where some of the informal MTB loops route in from Little Wyvis. Ben Wyvis trails and summits are regionally-nationally promoted and of high-sensitivity. The magnitude of change associated with operational effects on main munro summit of Glas Leathad Mor, Ben Wyvis, is



- low. Operational effects on recreational users of Ben Wyvis trails and summits are considered to be **Moderate** (Significant, adverse) reducing to **Minor** due to elevated landform of Glas Leathad Mor, Ben Wyvis.
- 14.8.62 Four of the relevant (within LAI) Viewpoints selected to represent views from the NC500 (A835/A832) in the LVIA (Chapter 7) include VP1 – at Garve; VP23 – at Contin; VP24 – South of Loch Garve; and VP28 – A832 near Torriegorrie (routes via Achnasheen and the west coast). Assessment concluded very intermittent significant effects on views from the settlements of Contin (VP 23) and Garve (VP 1), restricted to areas where there is a clear, open view with high visibility of the Proposed Development. VP24 captured extremely intermittent views due to landform and screening. VP28 from Torriegorrie indicated a major-moderate and Significant effect due to blades from two turbines being in the line of vision of eastbound travellers on the A832 (routing inland from the coast).
- 14.8.63 There will be very intermittent visibility of the Proposed Development from the A835/NC500 route within the LAI (from Garve and Contin) as much of the A835 at this extent is bordered by forested slopes on both sides. There are also existing/constructed wind farms along the road extent from Garbat to Altguish (Corriemoillie, Luichart, and extensions) - to the north of Loch Luichart. As such wind turbines are fairly typical in the surrounding remote baseline environment – specifically in views from the A835 in this extent of non-designated NC500 road which extends north of the site to Ullapool. The magnitude of change associated with operational effects on the NC500 / A835 is low. This would not be a significant change to the existing baseline environment and views would not be direct but filtered by vegetation and landform. Operational effects upon the A835 and NC500 along this extent are considered to be **Moderate**, reduced to **Minor** due to the existing baseline of the landscape.
- 14.8.64 There will be visibility of the Proposed Development from the recreational waters of Loch Achonachie Angling Club. However, given that many of the fishing waters in this area are located in close proximity to established wind farms i.e. directly north of Loch Luichart, (Corriemoillie, Loch Luichart and Extensions etc), wind turbines are fairly typical in the surrounding remote baseline environment and would be unlikely to detract from the amenity of anglers/fly-fishers. There is also significant established woodland to the north of Loch Garve, Loch na Croic and Rogie pools and views would be at height rather than direct. The magnitude of change associated with operational effects on Loch Achonachie angling waters is low. The operational effects upon Achonachie Angling Club waters are considered to be **Negligible** (Not Significant).
- 14.8.65 Loch Luichart Estate would be considered a low sensitivity receptor due to the existing baseline environment to the immediate north – which accommodates Luichart Wind Farm and Extension(s), Corriemoillie Wind Farm and the approved Kirkan. Views of wind turbines are fairly typical near the estate, and views at distance (i.e. Carn Fearna), would be unlikely to detract further from the amenity of recreational users of the estate. The Loch itself would be subject to views in the north extent only. The magnitude of change associated with operational effects on Loch Luichart Estate is low. Operational effects upon recreational amenity at Luichart Estate would be considered **Negligible** (Not Significant).
- 14.8.66 Ben Wyvis trail and summit lie outwith the Zone of Theoretical Visibility for the Proposed Development, and operational effects upon the NNR are anticipated to be fleeting visibility of turbine blades only given intervening landform and distance to the south – resulting in a **Moderate** effect, reducing to **Minor** due to no visibility of the Proposed Development. Views are generally expansive from Ben Wyvis and as such will incorporate other existing wind farms within the LAI (Corriemoillie, Loch Luichart and Extensions etc). Operational effects are unlikely to detract from amenity of recreational users of the NNR.
- 14.8.67 Visibility of the Proposed Development from Little Garve, Bridge over Black Water is unlikely to detract from the recreational amenity provided by the heritage asset, as views would be filtered at eye level by established, mature woodland on all aspects from the bridge. Operational effects are considered to be **Negligible** (Not Significant).
- 14.8.68 Operational effects on the Core Path network to the west and south of the Proposed Development will increase in proximity to Contin. From the Garve to Tarvie Core Path, there will be potential visibility of 4-9 turbines, At Tarvie, visibility increases to 10-12 turbines, and full visibility is afforded from the paths within and around Contin (13-14 turbines). The ZTV is generated on a bare earth basis and does not account for screening provided by trees and vegetation. The network is afforded medium sensitivity and low magnitude of change during operation, as there are various circuit offshoots on this network and recreational numbers are not shown to be excessive in remote Highland areas. Operational effects on the local core path network are therefore considered to be **Minor** (Not Significant).
- 14.8.69 Operational effects of the Proposed Development upon the Fish Road heritage path and RoW are considered to be **Minor**, reducing to **Negligible** given the low magnitude of change from the existing baseline environment (the path is located within the site boundary of the approved of Kirkan wind farm and is also in close proximity to Corriemoillie Wind Farm). The Proposed Development is separated by distance (c.1.6 km) and views are filtered along the south extent of Fish Road by extensive woodland stands west of the A835.

- 14.8.70 Viewers/visitors considered within the landscape and visual assessment include local residents, tourists, walkers, recreational route users and road users (including long-distance cyclists). The assessment of visual effects in Chapter 7 considers the changes that people would see in views from the various routes (including paths) identified in the LAI. Tourism and recreation receptors are located largely to the west and south of the Proposed Development. Turbines would be visible specifically along the A835 (NC500) and upon other receptors utilising this route and the core path network connecting Strathgarve, Gorstan and Contin. In the worst-case, there would be Moderate significant effects on tourism and recreation receptors to the south and west of the Proposed Development reducing to **Minor** and Not Significant due to screening provided by coniferous woodland and intervening landform screening of turbine bases/towers. The ZTV is limited at lower elevations to the east, specifically in Strathpeffer and immediate surrounds given the intervening landform associated with the lower slopes of Ben Wyvis massif (Creag Ulladail, Cnoc Aulaidh and Raven Rock) north-west of the golf course. Tourism and recreation receptors within Strathpeffer residential area were therefore not included in the assessment as no visibility was anticipated from this settlement and immediate surrounds.
- 14.8.71 The creation of the circular walking route would provide enhancement of access through the site whilst promoting recreation, heritage and ecological interest in the area. There is potential for linkages to be formed between the proposed tracks and other access tracks in the area. This could facilitate the implementation of longer recreational routes and enhance a variety of users' experience of the local and wider area.
- 14.8.72 The creation of the circular walking route would be implemented through an Outdoor Management and Enhancement Plan (an outline version of which is provided in Technical Appendix 14.2). The proposed circular walking route has the potential to become a resource of regional importance and is therefore considered to be of medium sensitivity. The magnitude of change would be low. The effect of the creation of the trail would be positive. The effect would be an increase in recreation within the site and LAI providing enhanced access opportunities from locals and visitors to the area and is not significant in EIA terms.
- 14.8.73 The operational phase of the Proposed Development would not result in any effect on anglers within the LAI.

*Tourism Effect During Operation*

- 14.8.74 Multiple published studies have examined whether there is a link between the development of wind farms and changes in patterns of tourism spend and behaviour, and the consistent conclusion is that there is little or no adverse effect. One of the most recent studies was undertaken by BiGGAR Economics (2021) and found that trends at a local authority level showed there was *"no relationship between the growth in the number of wind turbines and the level of tourism-related employment."*
- 14.8.75 The 2021 study also considered trends at a more localised scale, where an analysis of 16 wind farms which were in the immediate vicinity of tourism-related employment and constructed between 2015 and 2019, as well as a further 28 less recent case studies, found that *"in the majority of cases, tourism-related employment in the vicinity of wind farms had outperformed the trend for Scotland as a whole and for the local authority area in which the wind farm was based"*.
- 14.8.76 Of the full 44 wind farms analysed in the 2021 study, the study found that there was *"no relationship between tourism employment and wind farm development, at the level of the Scottish economy, across local authority areas nor in the locality of wind farm sites."*
- 14.8.77 When conducting academic reviews of other studies as part of the Scottish Government's Renewable Inquiry, a study by ClimateXChange (Dinnie, 2012) found that *that "there is no new evidence to contradict the earlier findings that wind farms have little or no adverse impact on tourism in Scotland"*, and a study by the University of Edinburgh (Aitchison, 2012) found that *"the findings from both primary and secondary research relating to the actual and potential tourism impact of wind farms indicate that there will be neither an overall decline in the number of tourists visiting an area nor any overall financial loss in tourism-related earnings as a result of a wind farm development."*
- 14.8.78 During operation, the patronage of local businesses would be markedly lower than that of the construction phase due to a smaller workforce being needed. The reduced workforce within the site would result in no effect to local businesses. As demonstrated by the BiGGAR study (2021), there would be no effects on tourism assets and the tourism economy in the LAI and local WSA as a result of the Proposed Development.
- 14.8.79 Analysis of visibility from surrounding settlements (see LVIA Figure 7.7b ZTV (20 km)) confirmed limited visibility at lower elevations to the east of the Proposed Development – and no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from Strathpeffer (and immediate surrounds) given the intervening landform (notably the hills to the immediate north west of the golf course including Creag Ulladail, Cnoc Aulaidh and Raven Rock). Tourism receptors within Strathpeffer residential area and surrounds are therefore scoped out of the assessment. Accommodation businesses located in Strathpeffer (with no visibility of the Proposed Development) as listed in Table 14-9 Accommodation Businesses within the LAI (5 km) were not included in the assessment for this reason.

- 14.8.80 Operational effects from the Proposed Development upon Ben Wyvis NNR are anticipated to be fleeting visibility of turbine blades only given intervening topography and distance. Views are expansive from Ben Wyvis and as such will incorporate existing wind farms to the west of the site (constructed Corriemoillie, with Loch Luichart and Kirkan approved.) Wind turbines are fairly typical in this surrounding remote, upland landscape in this LAI. LVIA Figure 7.7b ZTV (20 km) indicates that visibility of the development is not anticipated from the NNR – and the operational wind farm is unlikely to detract from the amenity of tourists visiting the NNR.
- 14.8.81 Rogie Falls is located within a steep-sided gorge and viewing is via a suspension bridge and information boards promoted/managed by Forestry and Land Scotland. The gorges are heavily wooded and as such visibility of the Proposed Development is restricted from Rogie Falls (as shown in LVIA Figure 7.7b ZTV (20 km)). The tourism receptor is of medium sensitivity and the impacts of the Proposed Development represents a low magnitude of change, resulting in a **Minor** effect, reducing to **negligible** given the limited visibility of the Proposed Development as shown on the ZTV.
- 14.8.82 Black Water Falls is located further upstream near the Proposed Development site access, and there is anticipated visibility of between 7-9 turbines. The valley is wider, more exposed and less heavily wooded at this location. The Proposed Development would result in an operational effect of **Minor** significance. It is unlikely that the Proposed Development would detract from the amenity of the tourism receptor or visitor numbers at Black Water Falls, given that wind turbines are typical in the existing baseline within the LAI (north of Loch Luichart and west of the A835).
- 14.8.83 There will be increased visibility of the Proposed Development from the Contin to Strathgarve extent of the NC500 route (between 7 and 9 blade tips as shown on Figure 7.7b ZTV (20 km)). However, much of the A835 is bordered by mature trees on both sides, and there are existing/constructed wind farms along the road extent from Garbat to Altguish (Corriemoillie, Luichart, and extensions) - to the north of Loch Luichart. As such, wind turbines are fairly typical in the surrounding remote baseline environment – specifically in views from the A835 in this extent of non-designated NC500 road which extends north of the site to Ullapool. This would not be a significant change to the existing baseline environment and views would not be direct but filtered by vegetation and topographical elevation. Operational effects upon the NC500 along this extent are considered to be **Moderate**, reducing to **Minor** due to the existing baseline of the landscape. The operational Proposed Development would not detract from the amenity or numbers of tourists visiting this extent of the NC500 route within the LAI, as concluded in the Biggar (2021) study.
- 14.8.84 An expanse of land north of Loch Luichart, approximately 1 km to 1.6 km north of the Luichart Estate and loch accommodates up to three constructed and one approved wind farms. The tourism receptor (i.e. the predominant area of Loch Luichart) is not anticipated to be of medium or high sensitivity to development of a similar nature, albeit at greater distance east, and effects would therefore be **Negligible** and Not Significant for tourists visiting the estate.

#### *Land Use Effect During Operation*

- 14.8.85 Land use activities within the site would be returned to pre-development baseline levels, during the operational phase.
- 14.8.86 The recreation assessment of the Wyvis Loop (mountain bikers), and Ben Wyvis/Little Wyvis Hill Trails and Summit (hill-walkers) concludes these receptors will have only partial visibility of the Proposed Development, and this is unlikely to impact utilisation or amenity of MTB or hikers who will in fact be able to utilise an additional extent of track at Carn Fearna.
- 14.8.87 The Ben Wyvis trail and summit are both located largely outwith any visibility extents due to intervening topography resulting in an effect of **Minor** significance. Views from Ben Wyvis will be largely unaffected by the Proposed Development with the exception of some variations of turbine views immediately south of the summit plateau only, where some of the informal MTB loops route from Little Wyvis.
- 14.8.88 Operational effects on recreational users of Ben Wyvis trails and summits are considered to be **Moderate** (Significant, adverse) reducing to **Minor** due to enhancement of the trail network via the provision of a new track between turbines 9 and 5.
- 14.8.89 Rough-grazing activity is expected to return to pre-development baseline levels during the operational phase. Habitat management principles to be further detailed and implemented in the final NEMP would comprise a sensitive grazing regime. The objective would be to continually manage grazing densities within the site, to prevent overgrazing and encourage and maintain a good overall site condition. Operational effects on land uses within the site and immediate surrounds are therefore considered to be Not Significant.

## 14.9 Additional Mitigation and Enhancement

### **Additional Mitigation**

- 14.9.1 This assessment has demonstrated that there are no predicted significant adverse effects on the socio-economics, tourism or recreational assets of the study area as a result of the Proposed Development. There would be a moderate positive effect as a result of the creation of the circular walking route and

enhancement measures presented in the outline Outdoor Management and Enhancement Plan which will result in a not significant positive effect.

- 14.9.2 Additional mitigation measures are therefore not required.

### **Enhancement Measures and Best Practice**

#### Outline Management Plans

- 14.9.3 During the design of the Proposed Development, an additional section of track was added from T9 to link up with track to the north of T5. This is considered to provide recreational enhancement by enabling a circular walk to be undertaken on the site. In addition, an outline Outdoor Management and Enhancement Plan (included in Technical Appendix 14.2), identified a number of opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and outdoor spaces, including improvements to pathways and signage. The addition of information boards, benches, and wildlife hides could offer further learning opportunities, and wildlife management and the planting of native species could enrich the natural environment, enhancing the experience for both the local community and visitors.
- 14.9.4 The good practice measures for management of the construction works are set out in an outline CEMP, which is provided in Technical Appendix 3.1.
- 14.9.5 An outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) included in Chapter 12 proposes measures for management of delivery of goods and services during construction.
- 14.9.6 The preliminary and outline management plans would be further developed prior to construction commencing; and managed by suitably worded planning conditions.

#### Community Benefit Fund

- 14.9.7 Should the Proposed Development gain consent, a Community Benefit Fund would be made available to the community as set out within the PAC Report and Socio-economic Benefits Report (Appendix 14.1) associated with the Proposed Development. This is offered on the basis of a payment per MW of installed capacity at the Scottish Government recommended rate at the time of commissioning the Proposed Development. At present the recommended rate is £5,000 per MW (Scottish Government (2019) (index linked from first payment)) of installed electricity generating capacity. It is estimated that, depending on the type of investment selected, the community benefit fund alone would accrue benefits to local groups and organisations of approximately £16.2 million over the 50-year life of the Proposed Development. It is likely a proportion of this will be spent with local suppliers.
- 14.9.8 The Applicant is keen to offer Shared Ownership for the Proposed Development, should there be interest from local groups or organisations. The Applicant would be willing to engage locally in order to bring this forward. Local Energy Scotland can provide independent advice and support to communities interested in the shared ownership opportunities. Further details of the consultation effort associated with and response from communities is provided in the PAC Report and Socio-economic Benefits Report (Technical Appendix 14.1) accompanying the application.
- 14.9.9 Although the community benefits would be considered as a benefit of the wider Proposed Development, it is noted that they would not be considered mitigation, nor a material planning consideration, and have not been factored into the assessment.

## **14.10 Residual Effects**

- 14.10.1 No significant adverse residual effect are predicted during construction and operation of the Proposed Development.
- 14.10.2 No significant positive economic effects of the Proposed Development are anticipated – increased revenues generated via the placing of contracts with other businesses during construction phase (supplying services and materials), and via construction-phase expenditure in shops, cafes, restaurants and accommodations are judged to be a positive non-significant effect.
- 14.10.3 As noted above, no significant adverse residual effects are therefore predicted for the decommissioning phase.
- 14.10.4 No significant positive effects on recreation are predicted during the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

## **14.11 Cumulative Assessment**

- 14.11.1 Cumulative effects in relation to socio-economics could arise as a result of competition for materials, workers, accommodation and further supply chain products in relation to the construction of other prospective or consented projects. Cumulative effects could also occur if multiple developments were under construction in close proximity to one another, impacting tourism amenity or restricting recreational access.



- 14.11.2 The construction periods of one consented wind farm within the LAI - Kirkan Wind Farm, and another just outwith the LAI in the same cluster, Loch Luichart Extension II, could potentially overlap with the construction phase of the Proposed Development and are of a scale and proximity that could result in cumulative tourism and/or recreational effects. However, any coinciding construction within the same local authority area could result in economic or employment effects, regardless of being within a distance where tourism and/or recreational effects could occur.
- 14.11.3 Due to the Proposed Development being on the mainland of Scotland, within relatively close proximity to Inverness, there is not expected to be a scarcity of materials and the related supply chain products which can prove difficult in developments elsewhere. The population of the WSA, along with nearby local authorities, would mean that it is reasonable to assume that there is a readily available workforce to construct these developments concurrently. The location of the Proposed Development and cumulative developments within proximity of cities means that a ready supply of accommodation venues is available.
- 14.11.4 The construction effects related to public access assessed for the Proposed Development individually are expected to occur in isolation, with the greatest magnitudes of change occurring to those receptors which are close to the western Proposed Development boundary and the A835.
- 14.11.5 The landscape and visual assessment concludes that significant cumulative effects arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to other operational, consented and application stage wind farms will arise at three viewpoints located within the LAI – Little Wyvis (Viewpoint 4), An Cabar (Viewpoint 5) and Glas Leathad Mor (Ben Wyvis) (Viewpoint 6) – as well as very intermittent and localised cumulative significant effects on part of the Ben Wyvis unit of Rounded Mountain Massif LCT, the Ben Wyvis SLA, and one of the Wild Land Qualities of WLA 29.
- 14.11.6 While significant cumulative effects were found at four of the LVIA viewpoints (3 within the LAI), all arising in specific circumstances of cumulative visibility, there are no significant cumulative effects on LVIA viewpoints that are located on core paths – however, three of the significant cumulative effects found in the viewpoint assessment are in locations accessed by walkers including Little Wyvis, An Cabar and Glas Leathad Mor (both summits on Ben Wyvis). Significant effects are to varying degrees and largely correspond with proximity/orientation and elevation from the proposed development (Viewpoints 4, 5 and 6 respectively).
- 14.11.7 A detailed breakdown of the assessment conclusions is provided for each of the relevant recreational receptors within the LAI (VP4, VP5 and VP6) in Chapter 7 – Landscape and Visual Assessment.
- 14.11.8 The evidence set out from paragraph 14.8.41 to 14.8.45 details the current research on the effect that onshore wind farms have on the volume and value of tourism in Scotland. The evidence shows that wind farms have a negligible effect on tourism, with no relationship between wind farm development and tourism employment within a local authority and, in some cases, tourism levels increasing alongside the number of wind farms being developed.
- 14.11.9 In line with cumulative conclusions of Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual Assessment – no further relevant developments other than wind farms were included in the cumulative assessment. It was agreed with THC that the proposed Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) 400 kilovolt (kV) overhead line (OHL) between Spittal and Beaully will not be included in the cumulative assessment as the route of the line had not yet been finalised at the time of the assessment.
- 14.11.10 Finally, the locale of wind farms currently under application could also result in further local community benefits, through the implementation of the Onshore Wind Sector Deal for Scotland (Scottish Government, 2023b). This could increase the volume of community benefits received locally, both in terms of investment and employment, which could maximise the local positive effects of the proposed and cumulative developments.

## 14.12 Summary

- 14.12.1 The construction of the Proposed Development would result in a total of 50 net additional person-years of employment estimated to be generated in the local WSA economy during the anticipated 23-month construction period. This amounts to an average of 26 person-years per annum during the construction period. The equivalent result for net additional GVA generation in the local WSA would amount to £2.4 million per annum during the construction period.
- 14.12.2 During operation of the Proposed Development there would be limited direct and indirect employment creation. There would therefore be a **negligible (positive)** effect, which is Not Significant, on employment and the local economy of the Highland Council administrative area (the local WSA) as a result of the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.
- 14.12.3 During the construction of the Proposed Development there is the potential for a **negligible (positive)** and not significant effect on accommodation assets through providing construction worker accommodation during the typical 'low season'.

- 14.12.4 For accommodation businesses it is unlikely that displacement of tourism visitors would result in an adverse effect to the individual business, as occupancy rates would be maintained at a high level. The overall impact of the 23-month construction period is likely to result in increased occupancy during the period of construction activity, because of the need to accommodate workers during the off-season (e.g., the October-March period) when recreational tourism visits are usually much lower compared to the summer months.
- 14.12.5 Local businesses, such as food and drink businesses and, to a lesser extent due to the location, accommodation businesses, may experience positive effects during construction due to use by construction workers. The magnitude of change may be high for individual businesses, and as the sensitivity of these receptors is low the effect would be **moderate (positive)**. However, given the temporary nature of the potential effect it is considered that the effect would not be significant.
- 14.12.6 Users of recreational routes and areas, including walkers, cyclists, anglers etc, may experience a temporary **negligible (adverse)** and not significant effect as a result of construction activities. During the operational phase users of the Core Path network to the west and south of the site may experience a **minor**, and not significant, effect as a result of views of the Proposed Development from the recreational routes (i.e. turbine bases are screened to an extent by elevated, forested slopes).
- 14.12.7 The assessment concludes that there are **no significant** adverse effects that would require the implementation of additional mitigation measures and therefore the residual effects of the Proposed Development are effectively the same as the potential effects.

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